First of all, the spirit of that report is, any time we have somebody hurt, they deserve the best possible care, and their family needs strong support. We've provided that in many cases, but to the extent we haven't, we're going to adjust. In that recommendation, there are things the United States Congress should do, and I call upon them to do it.

In that report, there are a lot of things that the executive branch of Government can do, the Veterans Administration and the Department of Defense. And I've instructed Secretary Gates and Secretary Nicholson to look at every one of these recommendations and to take them seriously and to implement them, so that we can say with certainty that any soldier who has been hurt will get the best possible care and treatment that this Government can offer.

I'm working with two men who have been hurt, two men who refuse to allow their current circumstances to get them down or to keep them down. I am proud to be with you guys. Neil, thank you.

Sergeant Neil Duncan. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. God bless you, Max.

Specialist Max Ramsey. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. He wanted me to jump out of airplanes with him. I respectfully declined.

President's Run

Q. How does it feel to be with the Commander in Chief running around the track?

Sgt. Duncan. Fantastic. It's an accomplishment. It's like the pinnacle of recovery, I think. Being a wounded vet, coming out of Afghanistan a little over a year and a half ago, and then being here, running around this track is just amazing. I couldn't ask for anything better.

The President. Don't ask him why he outran me.

Q. Why did he outrun you?

The President. Because he's a faster runner. Anyway, thank you guys. It's a proud moment for me, a proud moment.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:25 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Spc. Max Ramsey, USA, who was injured in Iraq in March 2006; Sgt. Neil Duncan, USA (Ret.), who was injured in Afghanistan in December 2005; former Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna E. Shalala and former Senator Bob Dole, Cochairs, President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors; and Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates.

Remarks to the American Legislative Exchange Council in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

July 26, 2007

Thank you very much. Thanks for the warm welcome. It's good to be back with my friends here at ALEC. Kenny, thanks. He was a silver-tongued devil when he was a State legislator; he still is as a United States Congressman. I appreciate Kenny Marchant coming from Washington with me today. It's not all that rough a trip when you're on Air Force One, Ken, so it's a—[*laughter*]. I'm glad to get my hot cup of coffee and visit about the old days of working together in the State legislator—with the State legislature and about the challenges we face today. And I'm going to spend a little time talking to you all about those challenges. But I appreciate you coming, Ken.

I'm also proud to be with two members of the Pennsylvania congressional delegation, the United States Senator, Arlen Specter—proud you're here, Senator; thanks for coming—Congressman Jim Gerlach. When Kenny and I were reminiscing about what it was like to be in Texas worrying about schools and budgets and criminal justice, I think they were somewhat amazed by the stories we were telling.

Speaking about the Texas legislature, I am proud to be here with the speaker of the Texas House, a friend of mine from my old hometown of Midland, Texas, Tom Craddick. Proud you're here, Tom—and his wife, Nadine, and his daughter, Christi.

Laura was just out in Midland, visiting her mother. That would be First Lady Laura Bush, who sends her greetings to you all. You know, I'm a really lucky guy to have a wife who is patient enough to put up with me as President of the United States, is wise enough to seize the moment, and is compassionate enough to worry about the lives of

our fellow citizens. She's a fabulous First Lady, and I—[*applause*].

The one thing I can assure the Craddicks, we always remember where we came from. And part of making good decisions in a complex world and in a complex environment is to make decisions based upon basic principle, is to stand for something. I believe in that old Texas adage, if you don't stand for something, you don't believe in anything. And I believe in some certain principles that I hold inviolate, such as, there is an Almighty, and a great gift of that Almighty to each man, woman, and child on the face of Earth is liberty and freedom.

I appreciate Dolores Mertz and all the leadership of ALEC. I appreciate Jerry Watson, the private sector chairman. Thank you all. Thank you for serving. Our government is only as good as the willingness of good people to serve. And it's not easy to serve in public life. Sometimes it can get a little testy. [*Laughter*] Sometimes people would rather throw a punch than put out a hand of fellowship. But that's okay. What matters is, is that our democracy flourish, that people have an opportunity to exchange ideas, that there be constructive debate. And that requires good people willing to sacrifice, to serve. And one of the reasons I wanted to come back today is to encourage you to continue serving your States, to continue representing the people.

I urge you to not rely upon the latest opinion poll to tell you what to believe. I ask you to stand strong on your beliefs, and that will continue to make you a worthy public servant.

I want to spend a little time talking about a couple of issues. I'd like to spend time talking about the budget and the economy, a little time talking about how we can educate our children, how best to educate our children. And then I'd like to spend some time talking about a serious obligation that I have and the people in Washington have, and that is to protect the American people from harm.

First, the budget—there's an interesting philosophical debate that's now playing out in the United States Congress, and it really boils down to how much money we need and who do we trust to handle the people's money. A basic principle from which I have operated as Governor and now as President is this: I think it's wise for government and government officials to trust the people to spend their money. See, I think you can spend your money, and I think you know how to save your money better than the Federal Government knows how to spend your money.

And that's what I've acted on. That's been the basis of a lot of our fiscal policy in Washington, DC. I also acted on the belief that if there is more money circulating in the economy, if more families have more money of their own to spend, and if small businesses have more money in their treasury, it is more likely that an economy can recover from difficult times. And we have faced some difficult times since I've been your President. We had a recession right after I got in office. We had a terrorist attack that affected our economy. We had corporate scandals that sent a chill throughout the investment community and caused some citizens to wonder whether or not their savings were being treated with the respect that they should be. We had uncertainty.

But I acted. I acted with the—at that time, a Republican-controlled Congress on the principle that if we can get more money in circulation, if we can let the people have more of their own money to save, invest, and spend, we would overcome these difficulties. And it worked. We cut the taxes on everybody who pays taxes in the United States of America.

On average, our taxpayers this year will save—this is on average, now—amongst all the taxpayers, they'll save about $2,200 on their taxes. Now, Washington, we spend—we throw out a lot of big numbers. In the statehouse you talk millions; Washington, we talk trillions. But 2,200—it may not sound like a lot when we're talking big numbers in Washington, but you ask the family that's trying to save for a child's education whether $2,200 means a lot, and they'll tell you, it sure does. You talk about the working family that's struggling to get ahead, that $2,200 means a lot. You talk about the farmer out there who's worried about making crop, that $2,200 means a lot. It may sound small to the opiners in Washington, but you ask the average American family, would they rather

have the $2,200 to spend on their own or would they rather send it to Washington, DC, they'll say, "Let me have my money; I can do a good job with it."

Since August of 2003, when these tax cuts took full effect, we've increased new jobs by 8.2 million. In other words, people are working. Unemployment rates and—are pretty low around the United States of America. Real wages are going up; inflation is relatively stable. In other words, this economy is strong. And I would argue with the doubters and the skeptics that one of the reason is because of the tax cuts we passed. And the fundamental question facing this Congress is, will they be wise enough to keep taxes low?

Now, let me talk about the deficit and the budget. You know, there's an argument in Washington that says, well, we've got to raise the taxes in order to balance the budget. Well, you all know how government tends to work. Generally, when you raise the taxes, those monies don't go to balance the budget; they tend to go to new programs. They tend to expand the size and scope of government.

We have a different strategy in Washington, and that is, rather than raise taxes to balance the budget, we believe you ought to keep taxes low to balance the budget. And here's why. Low taxes have yielded a strong economy; a strong economy produces more tax revenues. As a matter of fact, tax revenue increase this year are—the Federal tax revenues this year are expected to rise $167 billion higher than last year. In other words, we kept the taxes low; the economy was strong; and we're receiving about $167 billion more tax revenues.

Then all of a sudden, you begin to get a sense of our strategy on how to handle the deficit: Keep the economy growing by keeping taxes low, which is yielding more tax revenues. But we've got to be wise on how we spend the money. We've held the growth of domestic discretionary spending below the rate of inflation for the past 3 years, which has enabled us to report to the country that the deficit is down to $205 billion. That is 1.5 percent of GDP; that is lower than the national average over the last 10 years.

And then we submitted another budget that showed you can keep taxes low, prioritize Federal spending, and be getting surplus by $33 billion by 2012. The best way to balance this budget is to keep the economy strong by letting you keep your money and being wise about how we spend your money in Washington, DC.

As you know, we've had a change of leadership in Washington, DC. That was not my first choice. [*Laughter*] But nevertheless, it is a situation that we're dealing with. And I would remind those who are now running the Congress that they have a responsibility when it comes to leadership. They have proposed a budget—and I told you there's a debate raging in Washington, and I'd like to share with you why I said that. Earlier this year, the Democrats passed a resolution calling for $205 billion in additional domestic spending over the next 5 years. That's what their budget resolution said. I just told you what our budget proposal was, and there's a different approach. There's a different feeling in Washington among some—good people, fine people, they just have a different philosophy than I do, and they proposed 205 billion additional dollars in spending over a 5-year period.

The problem is, is that spending promises out of the Nation's Capital have a way of shrinking American wallets in the heartland because you've got to figure out how to pay for that spending increase. And so it's no surprise that their budget framework includes the largest tax increase in American history. In order to pay for the promises they have made, their budget framework includes the largest tax increase—not the second largest or close to the largest—the largest tax increase in American history.

Here's what that would mean. It means if you have a child, your taxes would go up by $500 per child. Remember, we cut the—we increased the child tax credit from 500 to 1,000. Their plan would reduce it to 500. I don't agree with that approach. I think it's important to help people with children by keeping taxes low. If you're a family making $60,000 a year and you have two children, your taxes would go up by more than $1,800. Under their plan that would increase Federal spending by over $200 billion, the average American family making—of four making $60,000 would see their bill go up by $1,800.

Twenty-six million small-business owners would see their taxes increase by an average of $4,000. You see, one of the reasons why I thought it was important to cut taxes was to stimulate the small-business sector of our economy. Now, most small businesses pay tax at the—or many small businesses pay tax at the individual income tax rate. You talk to your average small-business owner in your State, many of them will be subchapter S corporations or limited liability partnerships. In other words, they pay tax at the individual income tax rate, so when you heard me talking about reducing individual income taxes, you're really stimulating the small-business sector.

And that's important because about 70 percent of new jobs in America are created by small-business owners. When the small-business sector is strong, America is strong. And cutting taxes on small businesses was good policy. And the Democrats, under their budget resolution, would raise small-business taxes by about $4,000, on average, for 26 million small businesses. And more than 5 million low-income Americans who now pay no income taxes because of our relief would once again pay.

What I'm telling you is, is that there's a philosophical debate in Washington, and the bunch now running Congress want to return to the tax-and-spend policies of the past that did not work then and will not work in the future. And that's why I plan on using my veto to keep your taxes low.

Not only has the leadership proposed their idea on the budget; they have a responsibility to set an agenda that will get the spending bills to my desk, one at a time, in a reasonable time frame. In other words, they're now in charge, and it's important that they exercise their responsibility. That's what the American people expect.

And part of that responsibility is to get the 12 basic spending bills that are needed to keep the Federal Government running to my desk in a timely fashion. Unfortunately, they've been dragging their feet on these bills. They're now getting ready to leave for their August recess without having passed a single spending bill. Look, the legislative process is complicated, no doubt. But in a time of war, one spending bill should take precedence over all the rest. And so at the very least, Members of Congress ought to finish the spending bill for the Department of Defense before they go on recess, so I can sign it into law.

We got troops in harm's way. They need to exercise their responsibility and get this defense bill passed. There's time to do it. I'll hang around if they want me to—[*laughter*]—to get the bill passed. And when Members come back in September, they need to pass the rest of the basic spending bills to keep the Federal Government running.

Now, I believe these bills need to be passed one at a time because the alternative is to pass a massive spending bill that no one can read and into which anyone can hide wasteful spending. They need to get the work done before the fiscal year ends on September the 30th. If they're responsible leaders, that's what they will do.

The other thing we need to do is confront this business about earmarks. You know, earmarks are these special spending projects that get stuck in these bills, that really never see the light of day. Somebody has got a good idea about how to spend your money, and they just put it in the bill. This year, I proposed reforms that would make the earmark process more transparent, that would end the practice of concealing earmarks in so-called report language, that would eliminate wasteful earmarks and cut the overall number by at least half.

There's been some agreement on this issue in Washington. Democrats and Republicans have taken a good step by agreeing to list all earmarks before the bills are passed. You see, we want the public to see them. I believe in accountability when it comes to spending your money. We want there to be transparency. We want there to be a chance for lawmakers to strike them out if they think that they're frivolous and don't meet national concerns. Congress needs to uphold its commitments, and the Senate needs to make transparency a part of its formal rules.

And then there's the issue of entitlements—in other words, I'm going through the list of the items that will make this budget process not only better and more transparent. But I want Congress to understand that I'm going to continue talking about big

issues because I firmly believe that we, those of us in public office, have a responsibility to confront serious problems now and not pass them on to future Congresses or future generations. And such a serious problem is in our entitlement programs, Social Security and Medicare and Medicaid.

The programs are growing faster than our economy, faster than inflation and, therefore, faster than our ability to pay. Old guys like me will be taken care of in the system. I'm worried about younger people paying into a system that won't be around for them. And we can solve these problems. It takes political will and political courage. And I've called on Congress to work with my administration to deal with these significant problems now, so our children know they'll be paying in a system that is not bankrupt.

Oh, there's a lot of issues we'll be working on over the next months. We'll be working hard to make sure that our economy continues to run with good energy policy. I firmly believe that we can use technologies to help change our—how we use energy. I think it's in the national interest to become less dependent on foreign sources of oil. I know it's in our national—our economic interest to become less dependent on foreign sources of oil. After all, when demand for crude oil goes up in other parts of the world, it causes the basic price of oil to go up if corresponding supply is not found, which causes the price of gasoline to go up.

We're on the verge of some unbelievable technologies in this country. And I believe that you'll be driving to work over the next couple of years in a automobile that's powered by electricity, and it won't have to look like a golf cart. In other words, Tommy, we'll be driving pickup trucks that may not be running on gasoline. I know they're going to be running on ethanol, which, by the way, I like the idea of our farmers growing energy that help us become less dependent on foreign sources of oil.

What I'm telling you is, I'm optimistic about our future when it comes to energy diversification, which, by the way, will enable us to be better stewards of the environment. Some optimistic things that are coming, and we're spending a fair amount of taxpayers' money to be a part of these new technologies, whether they be safe nuclear power or clean coal technologies or the ability to explore for oil and gas in offshore regions that, heretofore, were unimaginable for people to find energy. I mean, we've got a comprehensive plan that says, technology and free enterprise can help us achieve energy independence. That's what we want.

Another way to make sure this economy grows is to be smart about our education system. The No Child Left Behind Act is an important piece of legislation. I'm a big believer in it, and I'll tell you why. First of all, as the speaker will tell you, I'm a strong advocate for local control of schools. I don't believe Washington ought to be telling local districts how to run their school system. I do not believe that.

But I do believe this: I believe that when you spend money, you ought to insist upon results. That's what I believe. I believe that every child can learn, and I believe that we ought to expect every school to teach. And when we spend money, I think it makes sense to ask simple questions. Can the child you're educating read, write, add, and subtract? I don't think it's too much to ask. As a matter of fact, I think it's good for society that we do ask. It's what I call challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations. If you have low expectations, you're going to get lousy results. If you have high expectations for every child, you're not afraid to measure.

No Child Left Behind says, we're going to spend Federal money, and we want you to develop an accountability system that will show the parents and taxpayers that the schools are meeting high standards. That's what it says, and it's working.

You know, one of the real problems we have in America is an achievement gap. I guess that's a fancy word for saying that, generally, Anglo kids are doing better in the basics than African American or Latino kids. And that's not good for this country, and it's not right. And it seems like to me, we've got to focus our efforts and energies on solving that problem if we want this country to be a hopeful country with a strong economy.

See, the economy is going to demand brainpower as we head into the 21st century, and therefore, now is the time to make sure our fourth graders can read, write, and add

and subtract and our eighth graders are more proficient in math and when you graduate from high school, your diploma means something. And the best place to start is to measure. And when you see a problem, fix it, before it's too late. When you find an inner-city kid that may not have the right curriculum to get he or she up to the grade level at the fourth grade, let's solve it now; let's not wait. No Child Left Behind is working, and it needs to be reauthorized by the United States Congress.

Finally, I want to spend some time talking about securing this country. September the 11th changed my way of thinking, and it should change the way our country views the world as well. We were attacked by a group of ruthless killers who have an ideology. In other words, they believe something. These people are—it's hard for you and your constituents to imagine a frame of mind that says, "I'm going to kill innocent men, women, and children to achieve a political objective." But that's the nature of this enemy. That's exactly what they're like.

They preyed upon hopelessness to convince 19 kids to get on airplanes to come and kill nearly 3,000 of our people. And when that happened, I vowed that I would do everything in my power to protect the American people. And we've got a strategy to do that. On the one hand, we have altered how we view protecting the homeland. We've created a whole Department of Government that brought disparate parts of our Government together, with the main aim of protecting the people.

But protection requires more than just making sure we know who is coming in and out of the country and who is leaving and screening cargo and making people take off their shoes at airports. It requires more than that. I believe it requires a relentless search, relentless pressure on an enemy that wants to do us harm again. I would rather defeat them over there than face them here. And that's why—[*applause*].

I say that because you can't negotiate with these people. You cannot hope for the best, that, oh, maybe if we don't pressure them, then they'll just retreat. These are determined adversaries that have stated their ambitions. They would like to see their point of view spread as far and wide as possible. That's when I talk about a caliphate that stretches from Spain to Indonesia, that means that they want to impose their ideology on people.

And what would that mean? Well, I just want you to remember—think back what it—think what it would be like to be a young girl growing up in Afghanistan, when they were able to find their safe haven and impose their vision across that country. I mean, you couldn't be educated; you were forced to be a second-class citizen. If you stepped out of line, you were whipped. These people are—they're smart; they're tough. And we need to be tougher every single day. The best way to protect you is to keep them on the run, is to keep the pressure on them. And that is exactly what the United States of America is doing and will continue to do, so long as I'm the President of the United States.

But that's not enough to defeat them. I have told the American people, we're in an ideological struggle, and the best way to defeat their ideology of darkness in the long term is with an ideology of hope. The ideology of hope is based upon the universality of liberty. I told you, I believe in the universality of liberty. I don't believe there's a debate on that. I believe every man, woman, and child wants to be free. And I know that free societies yield the peace we want. And therefore, the strategy is on—the short-term strategy of defeating them is to finding them and bringing them to justice. And the long-term strategy is to help others realize the blessings of liberty.

And this is a great challenge for the United States of America. It's a different kind of war. It's akin to the cold war in some ways, where we had an ideological struggle. But in this war, there's an enemy that uses asymmetrical warfare, and they're propagandists. They kill the innocent to affect the conscience of those of us who feel like we need to keep pressuring them. See, they understand when they fill our TV screens with death and misery, it causes a compassionate people to recoil. They know that we value human life, and therefore, when they take human life, it affects how the American people feel.

And so I understand the angst amongst the American people. I know that people are

weary of war. I fully understand that these hard images that these killers get on our TV screens ask people—causes people to question whether or not the cause is worth it and whether or not we can succeed. Well, I believe the cause is worth it. I wouldn't ask a mother's child to go into combat if I didn't think it was necessary to protect the American people, to stay on the offense. And I do believe we can succeed if we don't lose our nerve. Because freedom has had the capacity over time to change enemies to allies and to lay the foundation of peace for generations to come.

And right now what you're seeing is this global war against these extremists and radicals unfolding in two major theaters: Afghanistan, where we liberated 25 million people from the clutches of a barbaric regime that had provided safe haven for Al Qaida killers who plotted and planned and then killed 3,000 of our people, and in Iraq.

The Iraq theater has gone through several stages. The first stage was the removal of Saddam Hussein. Let me just be as blunt as I can about that. It was his choice to make as to whether or not he was able to survive in power. The free world, through the United Nations, spoke clearly to Saddam Hussein. He made the choice. We removed Saddam Hussein, and the world is better off without Saddam Hussein in power.

And then the society which had been traumatized by his tyranny did something remarkable, and that is, they went to the polls in three historic elections and voted for a modern Constitution and expressed their desire to have Iraqi-style freedom, Iraqi-style democracy. It was an amazing moment. It seems like several decades ago to some, but that happened in the end of 2005.

And then this enemy—and the enemy, by the way, is comprised of people who wish they were still in power, disgruntled militia that are trying to make—see if they can't take advantage of some chaos. But the enemy that is causing the biggest spectaculars is Al Qaida.

Now, there's a debate in Washington—I gave a speech about this in South Carolina the other day—is, well, is the Al Qaida in Iraq have anything to do with the Al Qaida that's hiding out somewhere in the regions of Afghanistan and Pakistan? There's some actually who say, "Well, they're different; they're not to be—we don't need to worry about them. All they care about is Iraq." Well, I reminded the audience in that speech that the person who started Al Qaida in Iraq was not an Iraqi; he was from Jordan. And after we killed him, the next person was not from Iraq, that started Al Qaida in Iraq; he was from Egypt.

And they have sworn allegiance to Usama bin Laden, and they agree that Iraq is the central part of this war on terror, with Usama bin Laden. And they agree with his ambition to drive us out so they could have a safe haven from which to plot further attacks. Yes, Al Qaida in Iraq is dangerous to the United States of America. They blew up the holy shrine. They saw the progress being made. They can't stand the thought of a free society that will thwart their ambitions, and they blew up the shrine.

And why did they do it? They did it because they saw that progress was being made, that the Iraqis might be actually able to have a government of, by, and for the people, and they wanted to create sectarian violence. And they were successful. In other words, there wasn't enough security at the time—in other words, enough confidence in the security at the time amongst the Iraqi people to be able to stop people from fighting each other.

And so I had a decision to make, and I made the decision—it's rather than pulling out and hoping for the best in the capital of this new democracy, recognizing that in the long run, a system based upon liberty will be a major defeat for these radical extremists, I sent more troops in. Rather than say, let's hope for the best, I said, we can do a better job of providing security to give this young Government a chance to grow and thrive and to give the people confidence in the Constitution that they voted for.

And David Petraeus became a new general there on the ground—the new general on the ground. He's a expert in counterinsurgency. The mission is to help protect Baghdad and the people inside Baghdad and to keep relentless pressure on those extremists who are trying to stop the advance of democracy. And he's making progress.

And I believe it's in the interests of this country, for our own security, for the United States Congress to fully support General Petraeus in his mission and to give him time to come back and report to the United States Congress the progress that he's making.

It's really interesting to watch this counterinsurgency strategy work. I mean, when people on the ground begin to have confidence, they, all of a sudden, start making good decisions for a state that will represent their interests. There is such thing as top-down reconciliation. That's the passage of law. And the Iraqi Parliament has passed quite a few pieces of legislation, and they're working, trying to work through their differences. Sometimes legislative bodies aren't real smooth in getting out a piece of legislation in timely fashion, as some of you might recognize. But nevertheless, they're working hard to—learning what it means to have a Parliament that functions.

But there's also bottom-up reconciliation. That's when people on the ground begin to see things change and start making decisions that will lead to peace. See, I believe most Muslim mothers, for example, want their child to grow up in peace. I believe there's something universal about motherhood. I don't think mothers in America think necessarily different from mothers in Iraq. I think the mother in Iraq says, "Gosh, I hope for the day when my child can go outside and play and not fear violence. I want my child to be educated. I have hopes that my child can grow up in a peaceful world." And when people begin to see that these thugs that have a dark vision begin to get defeated, people begin to change attitudes. And that's what's happened in Anbar Province.

Last November, many experts said that Anbar Province, which Al Qaida in Iraq had stated as their—that they wanted as a safe haven—this was going to be where they were going to launch their caliphate from—they said, we can't win there. And all of a sudden, we put more marines in; the people saw things change on the ground; local leaders started turning in Al Qaida—they don't like to be—people don't like to be intimidated by thugs and murderers. And the whole situation is changing for the better. Progress is being made there.

Now, I know that the car bombs that take place tend to cloud people's vision. What I'm telling you is that we gave David Petraeus a mission—the troops just fully got there one month ago—and he's accomplishing that mission. And my point to you is, it's worth it and necessary because if we were to leave before the job is done, these radicals like Al Qaida would become emboldened, there would be chaos, mass casualties in Iraq. And that chaos could spill out across the region. And if that were to happen, there would be significant competition among radical groups, whether they be Sunni or Shi'a, all aiming to destabilize the region in order to be able to achieve power. But they would have one thing in common, and that would be to inflict harm on the United States of America.

It's in our interests that there be a stable government that is an ally against these extremists, not only in Iraq but elsewhere. It's in our long-term interest for peace and security. Failure in Iraq would undermine that long-term interests. See, unlike some wars, this enemy wouldn't be content to stay in Iraq. They would follow us here. They would use the resources of Iraq to be able to acquire additional weaponry or use economic blackmail to achieve their objectives. They're dangerous in Iraq, and they'll be dangerous here. And that is why we must defeat them in Iraq. And we can.

I have spent a lot of time sharing this story with people, so I'm going to share it with you. If you've heard me tell it, play like you hadn't heard it. [*Laughter*] One of my close friends in the international arena over the last 6½ years is Prime Minister Koizumi of Japan. He was such a close friend that Laura and I took him down to Elvis's place—[*laughter*]—which was really fun. I'm also a close friend of his successor, Prime Minister Abe.

The reason I bring this up is that, as you know—or may not know—my dad, professionally known as 41, fought the Japanese. As a young kid, he got out of high school, went down and trained in Corpus—part of his training mission—and then fought the Japanese as the sworn enemy of the United States of America. I'm sure some of your relatives did the same thing.

And yet, here, some 60-odd years later, his son is sitting down at the table with the head of the former enemy talking about keeping the peace. We were talking about, when I was visiting with Prime Minister Koizumi, and now his successor, the fact that it's important to help these young democracies survive in the face of this radicalism and extremism that can affect our homelands. See, we share this great—same philosophical belief that liberty can prevail, and that we have a duty to help liberty to prevail if we want there to be security.

I've always found that to be very interesting. My dad fought the Japanese, and the son, one lifetime later, is talking about keeping the peace. We talk about Afghanistan and helping that young democracy. Of course, we talk about North Korea, to make sure that we deal with any weapons proliferation that might be happening. We talk about a lot of issues, but they're issues about peace. Something happened between the 18-year-old kid who joined up to be in the Navy and the 60-year-old son being the President. And what happened is, is that liberty has got the capacity to convert an enemy into an ally.

I don't know how many people would have been predicting in 1947 or '48 or after the peace treaty was signed when President Truman was the President that there would be this kind of accommodation made between two former enemies for the sake of peace. I'm not sure how many would have—particularly right after World War II. I suspect a lot of people would say this never would have happened. They were the enemy then; they'll be the enemy now.

And the reason I tell you this story is that if you really look at history, you'll find examples where liberty has transformed regions that were warlike, where a lot of people died, into regions of peace. And that's going to happen again, so long as we have faith in that fundamental principle, so long as we don't lose our confidence in certain values—that are not American values, but they're universal values.

I believe the most important priority of our Government is to protect the American people from further harm. And you just need to be reassured and so do your constituents that a lot of good people are spending every hour of every day doing just that. But I would remind you, in the long run, the best way for your children and grandchildren to be able to say that when given a tough task, this generation didn't flinch and had certain faith—had faith in certain values, is that we stay strong when it comes to liberty as a transformative agent to bring the peace we want.

Thanks for letting me come. God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:11 a.m. at the Philadelphia Marriott. In his remarks, he referred to Dolores Mertz, executive board of directors national chair, and Jerry Watson, private enterprise board chairman, American Legislative Exchange Council; Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; and Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq.

Remarks at a Special Olympics Global Law Enforcement Torch Run Ceremony

July 26, 2007

Thank you all. Welcome to the Rose Garden. Thanks for that touching introduction, Laura. [*Laughter*] I am proud to salute an outstanding group of athletes, the men and women of Team USA. And I'm pleased to announce today that Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings, who is with us today, will lead the impressive delegation to the World Games in Shanghai. Thank you, Madam Secretary. Appreciate your service.

I'd also like to extend our greetings to the representatives from Team China. You're welcome here in the Rose Garden, and I appreciate you bringing this warm weather with you. I thank Secretary Mike Leavitt for joining us. Michael, it's good to see you. Thanks for being here. We are really proud that Eunice Kennedy Shriver, the founder of the Special Olympics, took time to be here in the Rose Garden. Welcome back to the White House. Great to see you. And I'm glad you brought your boy with you—[*laughter*]—the chairman of the Special Olympics, Tim Shriver. Thanks for being here, Tim. These are good people.

I'm proud to be here, as well, with Liu Peng—he's the Chinese Minister of Sports—