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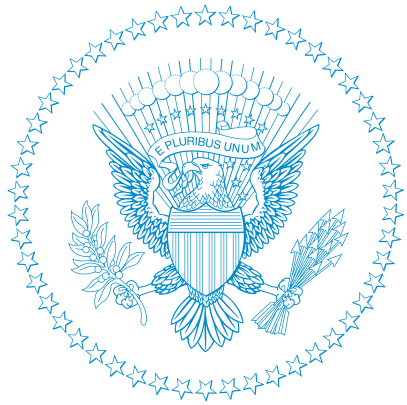
OF THE
UNITED STATES

George W. Bush



2004

(IN THREE BOOKS)

BOOK I—JANUARY 1 TO JUNE 30, 2004

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Foreword

This volume collects my speeches and papers from the first 6 months of 2004. During this period, my Administration worked to address many key domestic priorities. I urged the Congress to adopt policies that would make health care more affordable and accessible; give Americans the skills needed for the jobs of the 21st century; reduce high energy prices; and protect job creators from frivolous lawsuits. In January, I outlined my vision for immigration reform and border security, including a temporary worker program that would decrease pressure on our borders by legally matching willing foreign workers with willing employers for jobs Americans are not doing.

We also acted to reflect the compassionate spirit and values of America. To turn the tide against HIV/AIDS in our country, I announced new funding to deliver life-saving drugs to people in America living with HIV/AIDS. In April, I signed into law the Unborn Victims of Violence Act, which extended the protection of Federal law to unborn children who are harmed or killed in crimes against their mothers. And in May, we dedicated a national historic site in Topeka, Kansas, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Supreme Court's decision in Brown v. Board of Education, which outlawed segregation in America's public schools.

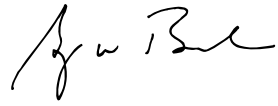
These months also brought solemn reminders of the sacrifices made during the past century to protect our liberty. In May, we dedicated the World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C., honoring a generation of Americans who gave so much to ensure freedom's triumph. In June, I traveled to France to attend ceremonies marking the 60th anniversary of the D-Day invasion, when free nations came together to reclaim Europe from Nazi tyranny. That same month, America mourned the passing of one of freedom's greatest champions: President Ronald Reagan, whose steadfast leadership helped the free world to win the Cold War.

As we honored the legacy of freedom's past defenders, we also worked to protect and spread freedom's blessings in our own time. Thanks to the support of the United States and our Coalition partners and the sacrifices of our men and women in uniform, Afghanistan and Iraq continued their remarkable journeys toward freedom and democracy. At the beginning of 2004, Afghanistan adopted a new constitution that provided a framework for national elections later in the year. In early March, the Iraqi Governing Council approved a Transitional Administrative Law that laid the foundation for democratic elections and a new constitution. This document included a bill of rights that was uprecedented in the Arab world—providing essential freedoms and rights to all Iraqis regardless of gender, religion, or ethnic origin. And on June 28th, the Coalition Provisional Authority transferred sovereignty back to the Iraqi people.

In the midst of all this progress, we were also reminded that freedom's enemies remained evil and ruthless. On the morning of March 11th, members of a terrorist cell in Spain exploded bombs on commuter trains in Madrid, killing nearly 200 people and injuring more than 1,500. In Iraq, illegal militias and remnants of the old regime, joined by foreign terrorists, tried to take by force the power they could not gain by the ballot. Terrorists brutally murdered innocent civilians and committed other acts of unspeakable savagery in Iraq, hoping to shake the will of our Coalition and convince us to abandon the Iraqi people.

I vowed that America would never retreat in the face of thugs and assassins, because any concession or retreat on our part would only embolden the terrorist enemy and invite more bloodshed. As I told the American people in April: "The defeat of violence and terror in Iraq is vital to the defeat of violence and terror elsewhere; and vital, therefore, to the safety of the American people. Now is the time, and Iraq is the place, in which the enemies of the civilized world are testing the will of the civilized world. We must not waver."

In a speech in Istanbul in late June, I declared that just as the defense of freedom in the 20th century had brought peace to Europe, the defense of freedom in the 21st century would bring peace to the broader Middle East. "The historic achivement of democracy in the broader Middle East will be a victory shared by all," I said—and I recognized that "this transformation is one of the great and difficult tasks of history." Yet "by our own patience and hard effort, and with confidence in the peoples of the Middle East, we will finish the work that history has given us."



Preface

This book contains the papers and speeches of the 43d President of the United States that were issued by the Office of the Press Secretary during the period January 1–June 30, 2004. The material has been compiled and published by the Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Administration.

The material is presented in chronological order, and the dates shown in the headings are the dates of the documents or events. In instances when the release date differs from the date of the document itself, that fact is shown in the textnote. Every effort has been made to ensure accuracy: Remarks are checked against a tape recording, and signed documents are checked against the original. Textnotes and cross references have been provided by the editors for purposes of identification or clarity. At the request of the Office of the Press Secretary, the Bush property known as Prairie Chapel Ranch in Crawford, Texas, is referred to simply as the Bush Ranch. Speeches were delivered in Washington, DC, unless indicated. The times noted are local times. All materials that are printed full-text in the book have been indexed in the subject and name indexes, and listed in the document categories list.

The Public Papers of the Presidents series was begun in 1957 in response to a recommendation of the National Historical Publications Commission. An extensive compilation of messages and papers of the Presidents covering the period 1789 to 1897 was assembled by James D. Richardson and published under congressional authority between 1896 and 1899. Since then, various private compilations have been issued, but there was no uniform publication comparable to the Congressional Record or the United States Supreme Court Reports. Many Presidential papers could be found only in the form of mimeographed White House releases or as reported in the press. The Commission therefore recommended the establishment of an official series in which Presidential writings, addresses, and remarks of a public nature could be made available.

The Commission's recommendation was incorporated in regulations of the Administrative Committee of the Federal Register, issued under section 6 of the Federal Register Act (44 U.S.C. 1506), which may be found in title 1, part 10, of the Code of Federal Regulations.

A companion publication to the Public Papers series, the Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents, was begun in 1965 to provide a broader range of Presidential materials on a more timely basis to meet the needs of the contemporary reader. Beginning with the administration of Jimmy Carter, the Public Papers series expanded its coverage to include additional material as printed in the Weekly Compilation. That coverage provides a listing of the President's daily schedule and meetings, when announced, and other items of general interest issued by the Office of

the Press Secretary. Also included are lists of the President's nominations submitted to the Senate, materials released by the Office of the Press Secretary that are not printed full-text in the book, and proclamations, Executive orders, and other Presidential documents released by the Office of the Press Secretary and published in the *Federal Register*. This information appears in the appendixes at the end of the book.

Volumes covering the administrations of Presidents Herbert Hoover, Harry S. Truman, Dwight D. Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson, Richard Nixon, Gerald R. Ford, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, George Bush, and William J. Clinton are also included in the Public Papers series.

The Public Papers of the Presidents publication program is under the direction of Frances D. McDonald, Managing Editor, Office of the Federal Register. The series is produced by the Presidential and Legislative Publications Unit, Gwendolyn J. Henderson, Chief. The Chief Editor of this book was Stacey Adia Mulligan, assisted by William K. Banks, Loretta F. Cochran, Kathleen M. Fargey, Stephen J. Frattini, Alison M. Gavin, Diane Hiltabidle, Alfred Jones, Ashley Merusi, and Michael J. Sullivan.

The frontispiece and photographs used in the portfolio were supplied by the White House Photo Office. The typography and design of the book were developed by the Government Printing Office under the direction of Bruce R. James, Public Printer.

Raymond A. Mosley
Director of the Federal Register

Allen Weinstein
Archivist of the United States

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Attorney General	John Ashcroft
Secretary of the Interior	Gale A. Norton
Secretary of Agriculture	Ann M. Veneman
Secretary of Commerce	Donald L. Evans
Secretary of Labor	Elaine L. Chao
Secretary of Health and Human Services	Tommy G. Thompson
Secretary of Housing and Urban Development	Alphonso R. Jackson (appointed April 1)
Secretary of Transportation	Norman Y. Mineta
Secretary of Energy	Spencer Abraham
Secretary of Education	Roderick R. Paige
Secretary of Veterans Affairs	Anthony J. Principi
Secretary of Homeland Security	Tom Ridge
Chief of Staff	Andrew H. Card, Jr.

Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency ..... Michael O. Leavitt

United States Trade Representative ..... Robert B. Zoellick

Director of the Office of Management and Budget ..... Joshua B. Bolten

Director of National Drug Control Policy ..... John P. Walters

Remarks on New Year's Day and an Exchange With Reporters in Falfurrias, Texas

January 1, 2004

The President. Wish everybody a happy New Year. It's a good way to start the new year, outdoors—in my case, with my dad. And it's—I know this part of Texas real well. It's a spectacular part of our State. And we were just on a ranch with—owned by a lady who knows it's important to protect the environment by taking care of the land. And as a result of her taking care of the land, worrying about bird habitats, we happened to see a lot of birds today. But most importantly, I was with my dad. It's a great way to start 2004.

I'm looking forward to 2004. We'll continue to stay focused on our economy, so people can find work, and stay focused on working to keep the peace and—by spreading freedom and by holding people to account who are willing to harm innocent people around the world. But it's a—I think 2004 is going to be a great year.

And in the spirit of great years, I'll answer a few questions.

President's Hunting Trip

Q. How was the hunt?

The President. It was good fun. You know, when you hunt quail, you get a lot of exercise. As you know, I like exercise. And so my dad and I and Ms. Negley, whose ranch we were on, walked a lot of territory, watched the dogs work, and knocked down some birds.

Q. How many?

The President. I think I shot five. The limit in Texas, I believe, is 15. I'm not that good a shot, but it was a lot of fun.

Special Presidential Envoy James A. Baker III's Meetings on Iraqi Debt Relief

Q. Did you talk to Mr. Baker?

The President. Pardon me?

Q. Did you talk to Secretary Baker?

The President. I did talk to Secretary Baker. He came by for lunch. First, I thanked him for spending as much time as he did on the road for our country. As you know, he went to Europe first and then recently went to the Far East. He reported on his visits with Prime Minister Koizumi and President Hu Jintao. And he was very positive about his meetings. He's going to come back up and brief Condi and me in a little bit of time.

Yes, ma'am.

Q. Where's he going next?

The President. Where's he going next? He's yet to go to the Middle East, and he's going to let me know when he thinks the timing is good for that.

Earthquake Relief and Iran-U.S. Relations

Q. Can I ask you about what you did for Iran, in terms of the easing restrictions for humanitarian aid?

The President. Yes.

Q. Does this ease—represent an easing of our relationship with Iran?

The President. What we're doing in Iran is we're showing the Iranian people the American people care, that we've got great compassion for human suffering. And I eased restrictions in order to be able to get humanitarian aid into the country. The Iranian Government must listen to the voices of those who long for freedom, must turn over Al Qaida that are in their custody, and must abandon their nuclear weapons

program. In the meantime, we appreciate the fact the Iranian Government is willing to allow our humanitarian aid flights into their country. And it's a good thing to do. It's right to take care of people when they hurt, and we're doing that.

Q. Do you see any signs that the Iranian Government is doing any of the things that could lead to a stronger relationship?

The President. My hope is, is that they will hand over Al Qaida to their countries of origin, that they will get rid of their nuclear weapons program in a verifiable way, that they will listen to the IAEA and the United Nations and get rid of the programs they said that they're willing to do.

And as well it's very important for them to listen to those voices in their country who are demanding freedom. And we stand strongly with those who demand freedom.

Yes, Mark [Mark Knoller, CBS Radio].

Assassination Attempts on Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf

Q. Mr. President, how worried are you about the attempts on the life of President Musharraf, and what does it mean for the security of Pakistan's nuclear weapons?

The President. Well, I appreciated talking to President Musharraf. I told him how much I was hopeful that he continued to join us in the war on terror. Obviously, terrorists are after him. And he sounded very confident that his security forces would be able to deal with the threat.

President Musharraf has been a friend of the United States. He's been a standup guy when it comes to dealing with the terrorists. We are making progress against the Al Qaida because of his cooperation. We need to do more, particularly on the Pakistan-Afghan border. He sounded confident, and therefore I feel confident about his security situation.

South Asia Nuclear Weapons/Pakistan-India Relations

Q. And what about Pakistan's nuclear weapons? Are they secure?

The President. Yes, they are secure. He is—and that's important. It's also important that India as well have a secure nuclear weapons program.

We're hopeful that the Indians and the Pakistanis in upcoming meetings will be able to begin a dialog on a variety of issues. It looks like they're making progress toward reconciling differences. Slowly but surely, positive things are taking place, and I commend the leaders of both countries for taking steps toward a peaceful reconciliation of major issues that have divided them.

CIA Employee Identity Disclosure Investigation

Q. Did Attorney General Ashcroft take too long to recuse himself from the leak investigation?

The President. Did he take too long?

Q. Why did he take so long to recuse himself?

The President. You're going to have to ask him. I mean, I don't know the details which caused him to recuse himself. That's up to people inside of DC to tell you what's going on with the case. He doesn't talk to me about it; he doesn't brief me on it. My only point is, is that I'd like to find out the truth as quickly as possible.

Q. Are you concerned that it's taking as long as it is?

The President. I'm not involved with the investigation in any way, shape, or form. I've told the members of the White House to totally cooperate. I think you'll find that there has been total cooperation. And the Justice Department and the investigative team—which, by the way, is a team comprised of professionals who have done this in the past—will proceed at a pace necessary to find out the truth. And the sooner they find out the truth, the better, as far as I'm concerned.

Last question, and then we've got to go back to Crawford.

Mad Cow Disease

Q. Your administration has announced some measures with regard to mad cow.

The President. Did we do what?

Q. With regard to mad cow, do you think there is more that needs to be done, and——

The President. Well, I've talked to Secretary Veneman about this issue. I told her that I want her to take the steps necessary to make sure that the food supply is safe and that the American consumer can be confident. And she is looking at different ways to do that. As a matter of fact, she announced some measures the other day.

Q. How much time do you think Americans can feel safe eating beef?

The President. I think they should be. As a matter of fact, I ate beef today and will continue to eat beef.

Thank you all very much.

President's New Year's Resolution

Q. What are you going to do for your New Year's resolution?

The President. Oh, my New Year's resolution this year is to work—stay physically fit to the point where I can run—in other words, rehab my knee. I miss running. The elliptical machine is good, but it just doesn't have that same sense of—that running gave me. So that's one of my resolutions, which may require eating less desserts, kind of getting a little trimmer, to take the pressure off the knee.

I wish everybody a happy New Year, and 2004 is going to be a great year for this country. It's going to be a year in which the world will become more peaceful and more people will be able to find work, and that's important.

Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:32 p.m. at the Brooks County Airport. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan; and President Hu Jintao of China. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Statement on Representative Ralph M. Hall's Joining the Republican Party
January 2, 2004

I welcome Congressman Ralph Hall to the Republican Party. Ralph is a close friend of the Bush family. He is a well-respected leader of the highest integrity and a tireless advocate for the people of Texas. We have worked closely together on the important challenges facing our Nation. I strongly support his re-election.

The President's Radio Address
January 3, 2004

Good morning. Two years ago this month, I signed into law the No Child Left Behind Act, the most important reform of public education in a generation.

In that landmark law, we made our expectations clear: Every child in America will learn to read, write, add, and subtract at grade level. Schools are now required to test children regularly to make sure students are learning and that schools are teaching well.

And when schools do not show progress toward high standards, we're giving parents better options, including tutoring for their

children or a transfer to a better public school. Above all, the No Child Left Behind Act required a change in attitude from the educators and public officials responsible for our schools.

We will no longer write off some children as hopeless. We will no longer accept or excuse schools that do not effectively teach the basics. We will insist on high standards and accountability because we believe that every school should teach and every child can learn.

For the past 24 months, schools and State governments have been putting the new reforms into action. All 50 States, plus the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, have drawn up plans to hold every public school accountable for student achievement. We're measuring results. We're giving teachers the information they need to improve instruction and giving parents new options to help their children when schools do not measure up.

We have recently received test results that show America's children are making progress. In 2003, math scores for fourth graders nationwide were nine points higher than in 2000. Math scores for eighth graders improved by five points. And a higher percentage of fourth graders tested at or above their grade level in reading.

To mark the anniversary of the No Child Left Behind Act, I will travel this coming week to schools in St. Louis, Missouri, and Knoxville, Tennessee. Children at these schools once struggled, but in recent years, they have risen to meet our new standards. Their example shows that high expectations, a commitment to measuring achievement, and a belief in every child can change lives and turn schools around.

Some critics have objected to these reforms because they believe our expectations are too high or that it is unfair to hold all students to the same standards regardless of background or that we're punishing schools that are not making progress. But the time for excuses has passed. Our reforms insist on high standards because we know every child can learn. Our reforms call for testing because the worst discrimination is to ignore a school's failure to teach every child. And our reforms identify underperforming schools because we need to direct our help to the schools that need it most.

In 2003, we provided $234 million to assist the lowest performing schools that need the most improvement. In 2004, we plan to more than double that amount. We have increased Federal funding for elementary and high school education from about $25 billion in 2001 to more than $33 billion in 2003, an increase of about 36 percent and the highest level ever.

We've committed $1.8 billion in grants to help train tens of thousands of teachers to use effective reading instruction methods and materials. We expect schools to do their job, and we're helping them to do their job. So there's no excuse for failure. When we set a high standard, we are showing our belief in the capacities of every child. And when we prepare them to meet a high standard, we're giving them a better chance in life. High expectations set children on a path to success. I'm pleased to report that the No Child Left Behind Act is helping put more of America's children on that path so they succeed in school and in life.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 9:55 a.m. on January 2 at the Bush Ranch in Crawford, TX, for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on January 3. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 2 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Statement on Afghanistan's Adoption of a New Constitution
January 4, 2004

I congratulate the people of Afghanistan on the adoption of their new constitution. This document lays the foundation for democratic institutions and provides a framework for national elections in 2004. A democratic Afghanistan will serve the interests and just aspirations of all of the Afghan people and help ensure that terror finds no further refuge in that proud land. This new constitution marks a historic step forward, and we will continue to assist the Afghan people as they build a free and prosperous future.

Remarks in a Discussion at Pierre Laclede Elementary School in St. Louis, Missouri
January 5, 2004

The President. Well, I'm glad to be here, Madam Principal. [*Laughter*] One of the things you find in a successful school is a strong-willed, smart, capable principal. And that's obviously the case here, and I appreciate your hospitality.

I'm here at Laclede because this is a school that has defied expectations. It's defied expectations by raising the bar and believing that every child can learn. That's not the case in some parts of our country, unfortunately. In some parts of the country, schools just shuffle kids through, and that's not right. That's not the American way.

This school is a school that has performed, you have to say, brilliantly. Since 1999, 7 percent of the kids could read, and now 80 percent can read at grade level in the third grade. That speaks to strong principals. It speaks to really good teachers. It says this school has got teachers that believe in the capability of every child. It says the school has raised standards and is not afraid to measure.

And see, one of the things I'm here to talk about is the No Child Left Behind Act. Laclede has been named a No Child Left—Blue Ribbon No Child Left Behind School. And the—inherent in this No Child Left Behind Act is the desire to spend Federal money and spend it wisely. We've increased budgets. The Title I money is up 43 percent since 2001—41 percent. The teacher training money is up. The reading program money is up by 4 times. But finally, the Federal Government has said, "Why don't you show us whether or not that money is being well-spent. Show us whether or not you believe every child can learn. Show us whether or not objectives are being met."

And this is exactly what's happening here at Laclede. As I was reminded, Laclede was doing this before No Child Left Behind Act was passed. Joyce was quick to point it out. [*Laughter*] She may point it out again. [*Laughter*]

But the important thing is, inherent in the No Child Left Behind Act was not only the desire to measure, the need to measure, the need to show, the need to track each child, but it's also the trust of local people to make the right decisions. See, you can't have a system that is—meets objectives if you're hamstrung by Federal rules and regulations. And so, inherent in the No Child Left Behind Act is trust, trust of the principals, trust of the teachers, trust of the parents, trust of the local officials, like Speaker Hanaway and Peter Kinder

from the State house and State senate who are with us. I want to thank you for coming, by the way.

I appreciate all the State officials who are here. I know we've got some school board officials. You've got the ball in our—in terms of how to achieve excellence. It's up to you. The Federal Government is a source of money. It's now a source of inspiration. It's a source of measurement. But it's up to the local people to really make it work.

I also appreciate so very much that Senator Jim Talent is with us. Senator, thank you for coming. Congresswoman Jo Ann Emerson and Kenny Hulshof, and of course, Congressman Lacy Clay, whose district we are in. Congressman, thank you very much for joining us today.

I went into a classroom of fourth graders. I asked this question, I said, "How many of you are going to go to college?" You'll be happy to hear that every hand went up. That's a good sign. They were also doing something that was fundamentally important. They were practicing their reading. I also asked the question, "How many of you read more than you watch TV?" About 50 percent of the hands went up. [*Laughter*]

But what's important is for schools like—around the country to understand what's happening here, and that is that the people here use reading programs based upon what works—not what sounds good—reading programs based upon the science of reading. And it's working.

And so I'm here to congratulate this school and to really hold you up for the Nation to see what is possible when you raise the bar, when you're not afraid to hold people to account, when you empower your teachers and your principals to achieve the objective we all want. And that's to make sure no child, not one single child in America, is left behind.

I'm honored to be here at this Blue Ribbon School. And I appreciate your time, and I look forward to hearing from you.

[*At this point, the discussion continued.*]

The President. Yes, you are. Listen, one of the things you hear, of course, is that you can't test kids, see. You can't test. We test too much. How do you know if a child isn't reading if you don't test? How do you know who needs help? I mean, if the idea is to make sure not one child is left behind, you better test.

The test isn't a punishment, you know. It's not to punish anybody. The test is to determine who needs extra help. And that's exactly why Laclede is doing well, I'm convinced, or one of the main reasons why. They've got a book here that says, "Every child matters. Every child can learn, and therefore we're going to measure as to whether or not we're meeting expectations for every child, not a few of the children but every child."

And so when you hear this talk about testing, testing is bad, testing is—you know, teach the test, what testing is—what testing does and what measuring does is determines whether or not every child is learning and, if not, whether that child is getting the help he or she needs early, before it is too late.

We've got to stop this business about just shuffling kids through the schools in America. We've got to stop social promotion and focus on whether or not each child is getting the instruction he or she needs, and that's exactly what this book says, and that's why I'm here at Laclede to tout this program, because you're making great sense.

[*The discussion continued.*]

The President. Yes, I think it's important. The Federal Government can help, and we have. I think we've increased the teacher training and recruitment budget significantly, like by about 40 percent since 2001. And that's important to make sure teachers have the skills necessary to be able to teach. I mean, it's one thing to have a good heart; it's another thing to be able to have the skills necessary to put—to

match the good heart with the capacity to pass on knowledge.

And so the Federal Government is helping on teacher recruitment, teacher training, and that's an important aspect of the No Child Left Behind Act. It's essential that we continue to monitor what works, whether the curriculum you're using makes sense—that's what measurement helps a school to understand—and whether or not a teacher needs a little extra help in order to be able to impart the knowledge that he or she is desirous of doing.

I know we've got a parent here. By the way, the first teacher of any child is a mom and a dad. And it's—this parent right here is a good teacher. Thank you for being here.

[*The discussion continued.*]

The President. Speaking about volunteers, one of the really true strengths of our country is the heart and soul of the American people. Today with us—I met a fellow at the airport who is now with us here today. His name is Jeff Tank. Probably never heard of Jeff. He is a volunteer with Big Brothers and Big Sisters. January happens to be National Mentoring Month.

Where are you, Jeff? There he is. Jeff, by the way, when I went to the airport, he said, "This isn't about recognition, recognizing me." I said, "Yes, it is, because you represent a lot of other good people who are taking time out of your lives to make a difference in a child's life."

Schools need volunteers. Schools need mentors. Big Brothers and Big Sisters is a fabulous program that provides that kind of—that provides that kind of mentoring and help. Whether you're the superintendent of schools or the chairman of the school board or the President, we all need to be out encouraging people to volunteer.

I always say that part of ushering in a era of personal responsibility means that people have to be responsible for the communities—for the schools in the community in which they live. You just can't trust that some faraway Government is going to make the correct decisions for the local communities. And if you're interested in the quality of education and you're paying attention to what you hear at Laclede, why don't you volunteer? Why don't you help and mentor a child how to read? Why don't you join us all in changing America one child at a time?

And so, Jeff, I want to thank you for coming. I want to thank you for the example you have set for others in the community of St. Louis and hope that others will follow your example. And a great place to start to volunteer is to show up at a local public school and ask the principal what you can do to help change a child's life.

So thank you for reminding me about the importance of being a good mom and a great volunteer as well.

Listen, making sure every child learns to read and making sure every child is educated is a—the number one domestic priority of this country. It is essential we get it right.

Laclede Elementary School shatters stereotypes. It shows that we can have excellence in every single classroom across this country, that it's not just suburban America where we find excellence. You can find excellence in inner-city America. You find excellence in rural America. You find excellence where you've got great principals and teachers and leadership willing to raise the standards, willing to challenge every child, because you believe in every child. You find excellence where you're willing to measure and then correct when things aren't going the way they should. You find excellence when you've got skilled teachers carrying around a book that measures the ability of each child, not a collection of children but every child, and so that you can then qualify the curriculum to meet the needs of that child.

And I am here for the simple reason to show what is possible all across America. And what is possible is to take reading

scores from 7 percent to 80 percent in places like St. Louis, Missouri, and elsewhere. I want to congratulate you for setting the standard. And keep raising the bar. Make sure that other 20 percent gets up to grade level at third grade—I know you will—and you will have done your duty as educators and Americans to make sure that our children, the very future of the country, have got the capacity to succeed in the greatest land on the face of the Earth.

Thank you all for coming. God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:33 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Yolanda Moss, principal, and Regina Davis, parent and volunteer, Pierre Laclede Elementary School; Joyce Roberts, executive director, Middle School and Priority School Education, St. Louis Public Schools, and former principal, Pierre Laclede Elementary School; Catherine Hanaway, speaker, Missouri State House of Representatives; and Peter Kinder, president pro tempore, Missouri State Senate. He also referred to Title I of the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 (Public Law No. 103–382), which amended Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (Public Law No. 89–10).

Remarks at a Bush-Cheney Reception in St. Louis
January 5, 2004

Thank you all very much. Thanks for coming. Thank you all. Thanks for your warm welcome. I appreciate such a warm response. I appreciate such a huge crowd. It's great to be back here in St. Louis. I don't know if you know this or not, but my grandmother was raised right here in St. Louis. And I've got a lot of relatives here. By the way, if you're looking for a great uncle, model somebody after Bucky Bush.

This record-setting event really means we're laying the foundation for what is going to be a victory in the State of Missouri in November of 2004 and a nationwide victory in 2004. I want to thank all the event organizers. I want to thank those of you who are in the grassroots. I want to thank you for working hard. I want to thank you for what you're going to do.

The political season is going to come in its own time. I admit I'm loosening up—[*laughter*]—and I'm getting ready. But right now, I'm focused on the people's business. See, I have a lot on the agenda. I want you to remind your fellow citizens that I will continue to work hard to earn the confidence of all Americans by keeping this Nation secure and strong and prosperous and free.

My one regret tonight is that Laura isn't here. She is a fabulous lady. She's a great First Lady for our country. She is a wonderful wife, a great mother, and she's doing a heck of a job on behalf of the American people.

I appreciate so very much Senator Kit Bond's leadership in the United States Senate. I also appreciate a short introduction. [*Laughter*] I also want to thank my friend Senator Jim Talent as well for doing a great job for the people of Missouri. I'm pleased that Congresswoman Jo Ann Emerson is with us tonight as well as Kenny Hulshof, two fine Members of the United States Congress from Missouri.

I know the secretary of state is with us, Matt Blunt. Thank you for coming, Matt. I'm proud you're here. I appreciate the speaker coming, Catherine Hanaway, as well as Senate Majority Leader Peter Kinder. Thank you all for coming. I want to thank all the members of the statehouse

for being here and the local officials. I'm so honored you take time to come.

I particularly want to thank my friend Sam Fox, who is the State finance chairman for Bush-Cheney. I'm honored that Sam has taken on such a big role, and I appreciate the hard work of Sam and the team he has put together to make this such a strong and successful event. I call him Foxie. Foxie, thanks for your friendship.

I also appreciate Ann Wagner from the great State of Missouri. She's the cochairman of the Republican National Committee. I'm proud to have her friendship and proud to have her support here as the chairman of the party in Missouri.

I want to thank Ambassador Steve Brauer and his wife, Kimmy. By the way, they did a fabulous job representing our country overseas, and I want to thank them for their hard work at this event.

I know my friend former Senator Jack Danforth is here. I named him to a special mission, to be the envoy to the Sudan, and he has done incredibly good work in that war-ravaged country. I appreciate your service, Jack, and your friendship.

But most of all, I thank you all for coming. It lifts my spirits to see so many people here. It is—it gives me great confidence that we're on the path to victory, to know that I've got such broad support in this important State of Missouri.

In the last 3 years, our Nation has acted decisively to confront great challenges. I came to this office to solve problems instead of passing them on to future Presidents and future generations. I came to seize opportunities instead of letting them slip away. My administration is meeting the tests of our time.

Terrorists declared war on the United States of America, and war is what they got. We've captured or killed many of the key leaders of the Al Qaida network, and the rest of them know we're on their trail. In Afghanistan and in Iraq, we gave ultimatums to terror regimes. Those regimes chose defiance, and those regimes are no more. Fifty-million people in those two countries once lived under tyranny, and now they live in freedom.

Three years ago, our military was not receiving the resources it needed, and morale was beginning to suffer. So we increased the defense budgets to prepare for the threats of a new era. And today, no one in the world can question the skill and the strength and the spirit of the United States military.

Three years ago, the economy was in trouble and a recession was beginning. And then our country was attacked, and we had scandals in corporate America and the march to war, all of which affected the people's confidence. But we acted. We passed tough new laws to hold corporate criminals to account. And to get the economy going again, I have twice led the United States Congress to pass historic tax relief for the American people.

We understand that when Americans have more take-home pay to spend, to save, or invest, the whole economy grows and people are likely to find a job. We are returning more money to the people to help them raise their families. We're reducing taxes on dividends and capital gains to encourage investment. We've given small businesses incentives to expand and to hire new people. With all these actions, we are laying the foundation for greater prosperity and more jobs across America so every single person in this country has the chance to realize the American Dream.

Today, the American economy is strong, and it is getting stronger. The figures for the third quarter of 2003 show the economy grew at an annual rate of 8.2 percent, the fastest pace in nearly 20 years. Productivity is high. Business investment is rising. Housing construction is expanding. Manufacturing activity is increasing. And we've added 300,000 new jobs over the last 4 months. The tax relief we passed is working.

Three years ago, there was a lot of talk about education reform, but there wasn't

much action. So I called for and the Congress passed the No Child Left Behind Act. With a solid bipartisan majority, we delivered the most dramatic education reforms in a generation. We're bringing high standards and strong accountability measures to every public school in America. See, we believe every child—every child—can learn the basics of reading and math, and we expect every school to teach the basics of reading and math. This administration is challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations. The days of excusemaking are over. We expect results so that not one single child is left behind in America.

We reorganized the Government and created the Department of Homeland Security to better safeguard our borders and ports and to protect the American people. We passed trade promotion authority to open up new markets for Missouri's farmers and ranchers and entrepreneurs and manufacturers. We passed budget agreements that is helping to maintain much needed spending discipline in Washington, DC.

And last month, we completed the greatest advance in health care coverage for America's seniors since the founding of Medicare. The new Medicare law will give older Americans the option of a prescription drug benefit and more control over their health care so they receive the modern medical care they deserve.

On issue after issue, this administration has acted on principle, has kept its word, and has made progress for the American people. The United States Congress deserves a lot of credit. I enjoy my relationship with Speaker Denny Hastert and Leader Bill Frist. These are two strong, fine leaders.

I appreciate working with the Members, the Senators from the State of Missouri and the Members of the House of Representatives. We're working hard to change the tone in Washington, DC. There's too much needless politics and endless backbiting, and the best way to change the tone is to focus on results, to be results-oriented people, to deliver progress on behalf of all Americans. And those are the kind of people I've attracted to my administration.

I've put together the finest administration of any President in our Nation's history, good, honorable, decent, hard-working people who have come to Washington, DC, to serve a cause greater than their own self-interest. Our country has had no finer Vice President than Dick Cheney. Mother may have a second opinion. [*Laughter*]

In 3 years, we've come far. We have done a lot, but our work is only beginning. I've set great goals worthy of a great nation. First, America is committed to expanding the realm of freedom and peace for our own security and for the benefit of the world. And second, in our own country, we must work for a society that is prosperous and compassionate so that every citizen has a chance to work and to succeed and to realize the great promise of our country.

It is clear that the future of freedom and peace depend on the actions of America. This Nation is freedom's home and freedom's defender. We welcome this charge of history, and we are keeping it.

The war on terror continues. The enemies of freedom are not idle, and neither are we. This country will not rest; we will not tire; we will not stop until this danger to civilization is removed.

We are confronting that danger in Iraq, where all people can be certain they will never again have to fear the rule of Saddam Hussein. The Ba'athist holdouts, largely responsible for the current violence, now know there will be no return to the corrupt power and privilege they once held. All Iraqis who have taken the side of freedom have taken the winning side.

We still face terrorists who would rather go on killing the innocent than accept the rise of liberty in the Middle East. They know that the advance of freedom in Iraq would be a major defeat for the cause of terror. This collection of killers is trying

to shake the will of the United States, but America will never be intimidated by a bunch of assassins and thugs.

We are aggressively striking the terrorists in Iraq, defeating them there so we will never have to face them in our own country. We're calling on other nations to help build a free Iraq, because a free Iraq will make the whole world more secure. We're standing with the Iraqi people as they assume more of their own defense and move toward self-government. These aren't easy tasks, but they're essential tasks. We will finish what we have begun, and we will win this essential victory in the war on terror.

We're working hard to oppose proliferation around the world. Last month, after talks with the United States and Great Britain, Libya voluntarily committed to disclose and dismantle all its weapons of mass destruction programs. Leaders around the world now know weapons of mass destruction do not bring influence or prestige; they bring isolation and unwelcome consequences. And nations who abandon the pursuit of these weapons will find an open path to better relations with the United States of America.

Our greatest security comes from the advance of human liberty because free nations do not support terror, free nations do not attack their neighbors, free nations do not threaten the world with weapons of mass terror. Americans believe that freedom is the deepest need and hope of every human heart. I believe that freedom is the future of every nation. And we know that freedom is not America's gift to the world; freedom is God's gift to every man and woman who lives in this world.

America also understands that unprecedented influence brings tremendous responsibilities. We have duties in this world, and when we see disease and starvation and hopeless poverty, we will not turn away. On the continent of Africa, this great country is now committed to bringing the healing power of medicine to millions of men and women and children now suffering with AIDS. This great, compassionate land is leading the world in this incredibly important work of human rescue.

We face challenges here at home, and our actions will prove that we're equal to those challenges. My administration will stay focused on a progrowth agenda until everyone who wants to work can find a job.

And for the sake of our health care system, we need to cut down on the frivolous lawsuits which increase the cost of medicine. People who get harmed by a bad doc deserve their day in court. Yet the system should not reward lawyers who are simply fishing for a rich settlement. Because frivolous lawsuits drive up the cost of health care, they affect the Federal budget. Therefore, medical liability reform is a national issue that requires a national solution. The House of Representatives passed a good bill to reform the system. The bill is stuck in the United States Senate. I want to thank the two Missouri Senators for supporting this incredibly important piece of legislation. Other Members of the Senate must understand that no one has ever been healed by a frivolous lawsuit in America.

I have a responsibility as President to make sure the judicial system runs well, and I have met that duty. I have nominated superb men and women for the Federal courts, people who will interpret the law, not legislate from the bench. Some Members of the Senate are trying to keep my nominees off the bench by blocking up-or-down votes. Every judicial nominee deserves a fair hearing and an up-or-down vote on the Senate floor. It is time for some of the Members of the United States Senate to stop playing politics with American justice.

The Congress needs to complete work on a comprehensive energy bill and get it to my desk. This Nation must promote energy efficiency and conservation. We must work to develop cleaner technology to help us explore for energy in environmentally

sensitive ways. For the sake of economic security and for the sake of national security, we need to become less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

Our strong and prosperous Nation must also be a compassionate nation. I will continue to advance our agenda of compassionate conservatism, applying the best and most innovative ideas to the task of helping our fellow citizens in need.

There are still millions of men and women who want to end their dependence on the Government and become independent through hard work. We must continue to build on the successes of welfare reform to bring work and dignity into the lives of more of our fellow citizens.

Congress should complete the "Citizen Service Act" so more Americans can serve their communities and their country. Both houses should reach agreement on my Faith-Based Initiative, so we can better support the armies of compassion, people of all faiths who are willing to lead with their heart and help solve the problems that seem intractable in our society. We need to support those soldiers in the armies of compassion who are mentoring the children, caring for the homeless, and offering hope for the addicted. This Nation must not fear the influence of faith in our society. We must welcome the works of faith in our society.

A compassionate society must promote opportunity for every one of us, including the independence and dignity that come from ownership. My administration will constantly strive to promote an ownership society in America. We want more people owning their own home. We have a minority homeownership gap in America. I want to thank the Senate for passing the downpayment assistance plan to help more people afford a new home. We want people owning and managing their own retirement accounts and owning and managing their own health care accounts. We want more people to own their own small business. This administration understands that when a person owns something, he or she has a vital stake in the future of this country.

In a compassionate society, people respect one another, respect another person's religion and their point of view. And people take responsibility for the decisions they make. The culture of America is changing from one that has said, "If it feels good, do it," and, "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each of us understands we are responsible for the decisions we make in life.

If you're fortunate enough to be a mother or a dad, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart. If you're worried about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you're responsible for doing something about it. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you are responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And in the responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving a neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourselves.

We can see the culture of service and responsibility growing around us. I started what's called the USA Freedom Corps to encourage Americans to extend a compassionate hand to a neighbor in need, and the response has been incredibly strong. People are serving our Nation by helping somebody who hurts.

You know, the great fabric of America exists at the community level, where civic groups are formed to put—reach out a hand to someone in need. It's really one of the great strengths of our country. Policemen and firefighters and people who wear our Nation's uniform remind us on a daily basis what it means to sacrifice for something greater than ourselves. Once again, the children of America believe in heroes, because they see them every day.

In these challenging times, the world has seen the resolve and the courage of America, and I have been privileged to see the compassion and the character of the American people. All the tests of the last 3 years have come to the right nation. We're a

strong country, and we use our strength to defend the peace. We're an optimistic country, confident in ourselves and in ideals bigger than ourselves.

Abroad, we seek to lift up whole nations by spreading freedom. At home, we seek to lift up lives by spreading opportunity to every corner of America. This is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it, and we know that for our country, the best days lie ahead.

May God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:50 p.m. at America's Center. In his remarks, he referred to William H.T. "Bucky" Bush, Missouri State chairman, Bush-Cheney '04, Inc.; Missouri Secretary of State Matt Blunt; Catherine Hanaway, speaker, Missouri State House of Representatives; Peter Kinder, president pro tempore, Missouri State Senate; Stephen Brauer, former U.S. Ambassador to Belgium, and his wife, Camilla; former Senator John Danforth, Special Envoy for Peace in the Sudan; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Libya

January 5, 2004

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. Consistent with this provision, I have sent the enclosed notice, stating that the Libya emergency is to continue in effect beyond January 7, 2004, to the *Federal Register* for publication. The most recent notice continuing this emergency was published in the *Federal Register* on January 6, 2003 (68 *Fed. Reg.* 661).

On September 12, 2003, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 1506 (UNSCR 1506), ending the U.N. sanctions against Libya. These U.N. sanctions were imposed in 1992 and 1993 as a result of Libyan involvement in the terrorist bombings of Pan Am 103 and UTA 772, and included travel restrictions, an arms embargo, and financial sanctions. The UNSCR 1506 lifted these sanctions after Libya addressed the requirements of the relevant UNSC Resolutions, including making arrangements to compensate the families of the victims and accepting responsibility for the acts of its officials in the bombing of Pan Am 103. The United States abstained from voting on the lifting of the U.N. sanctions, and it made clear that it continued to have serious concerns about other Libyan policies and actions, including Libya's pursuit of weapons of mass destruction, Libya's role with regard to terrorism, and Libya's poor human rights record.

On December 19, 2003, Prime Minister Blair and I announced separately that Libya's leader, Colonel Muammar Qadhafi, had agreed to eliminate all elements of Libya's chemical and nuclear weapons program, declare all nuclear activities to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), accept international inspections to ensure Libya's complete adherence to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and sign the IAEA Additional Protocol, accede to the Chemical Weapons Convention, eliminate ballistic missiles beyond 300 kilometer range, and immediately and unconditionally allow inspectors from international organizations to enter Libya. Libya's agreement

marks the beginning of a process that can lead to Libya rejoining the international community, but its declaration of December 19, 2003, must be followed by verification of concrete steps.

Despite the positive developments, the crisis with respect to Libya has not been fully resolved, and I have therefore determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared with respect to Libya and maintain in force the comprehensive sanctions against Libya.

Sincerely,

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Richard B. Cheney, President of the Senate. The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks on Immigration Reform
January 7, 2004

Thanks for coming. Thanks for the warm welcome. Thanks for joining me as I make this important announcement, an announcement that I believe will make America a more compassionate and more humane and stronger country.

I appreciate members of my Cabinet who have joined me today, starting with our Secretary of State, Colin Powell. I'm honored that our Attorney General, John Ashcroft, has joined us; Secretary of Commerce Don Evans; Secretary Tom Ridge of the Department of Homeland Security, I'm honored you're here; *el embajador de Mexico*, Tony Garza. I thank all the other members of my administration who have joined us today.

I appreciate the Members of Congress who have taken time to come: Senator Larry Craig, Congressman Chris Cannon, and Congressman Jeff Flake. I'm honored you all have joined us. Thank you for coming.

I appreciate the members of citizen groups who have joined us today: chairman of the Hispanic Alliance for Progress, Manny Lujan; Gil Moreno, the president and CEO of the Association for the Advancement of Mexican Americans; Roberto de Posada, the president of the Latino Coalition; and Hector Flores, the president of LULAC. Thank you all for joining us.

Many of you here today are Americans by choice, and you have followed in the path of millions. And over the generations, we have received energetic, ambitious, optimistic people from every part of the world. By tradition and conviction, our country is a welcoming society. America is a stronger and better nation because of the hard work and the faith and the entrepreneurial spirit of immigrants.

Every generation of immigrants has reaffirmed the wisdom of remaining open to the talents and dreams of the world. And every generation of immigrants has reaffirmed our ability to assimilate newcomers, which is one of the defining strengths of America.

During one great period of immigration, between 1891 and 1920, our Nation received some 18 million men, women, and children from other nations. The hard work of these immigrants helped make our economy the largest in the world. The children of immigrants put on the uniform and helped to liberate the lands of their ancestors. One of the primary reasons America became a great power in the 20th century is because we welcomed the talent and the character and the patriotism of immigrant families.

The contributions of immigrants to America continue. About 14 percent of our

Nation's civilian workforce is foreign-born. Most begin their working lives in America by taking hard jobs and clocking long hours in important industries. Many immigrants also start businesses, taking the familiar path from hired labor to ownership.

As a Texan, I have known many immigrant families, mainly from Mexico, and I have seen what they add to our country. They bring to America the values of faith in God, love of family, hard work, and self-reliance, the values that made us a great nation to begin with. We've all seen those values in action, through the service and sacrifice of more than 35,000 foreign-born men and women currently on active duty in the United States military. One of them is Master Gunnery Sergeant Guadalupe Denogean, an immigrant from Mexico who has served in the Marine Corps for 25 years and counting. Last year, I was honored and proud to witness Sergeant Denogean take the oath of citizenship in a hospital where he was recovering from wounds he received in Iraq. I'm honored to be his Commander in Chief. I'm proud to call him fellow American.

As a nation that values immigration and depends on immigration, we should have immigration laws that work and make us proud. Yet today, we do not. Instead, we see many employers turning to the illegal labor market. We see millions of hard-working men and women condemned to fear and insecurity in a massive undocumented economy. Illegal entry across our borders makes more difficult the urgent task of securing the homeland. The system is not working. Our Nation needs an immigration system that serves the American economy and reflects the American Dream.

Reform must begin by confronting a basic fact of life and economics: Some of the jobs being generated in America's growing economy are jobs American citizens are not filling. Yet these jobs represent a tremendous opportunity for workers from abroad who want to work and fulfill their duties as a husband or a wife, a son or a daughter. Their search for a better life is one of the most basic desires of human beings.

Many undocumented workers have walked mile after mile through the heat of the day and the cold of the night. Some have risked their lives in dangerous desert border crossings or entrusted their lives to the brutal rings of heartless human smugglers. Workers who seek only to earn a living end up in the shadows of American life, fearful, often abused and exploited. When they are victimized by crime, they are afraid to call the police or seek recourse in the legal system. They are cut off from their families far away, fearing if they leave our country to visit relatives back home, they might never be able to return to their jobs.

The situation I described is wrong. It is not the American way. Out of common sense and fairness, our laws should allow willing workers to enter our country and fill jobs that Americans are not filling. We must make our immigration laws more rational and more humane. And I believe we can do so without jeopardizing the livelihoods of American citizens.

Our reforms should be guided by a few basic principles. First, America must control its borders. Following the attacks of September the 11th, 2001, this duty of the Federal Government has become even more urgent, and we're fulfilling that duty. For the first time in our history, we have consolidated all border agencies under one roof to make sure they share information and the work is more effective. We're matching all visa applicants against an expanded screening list to identify terrorists and criminals and immigration violators. This month, we have begun using advanced technology to better record and track aliens who enter our country and to make sure they leave as scheduled. We have deployed new gamma and x-ray systems to scan cargo and containers and shipments at ports of entry to America. We have significantly expanded the Border Patrol with more than

1,000 new agents on the borders and 40 percent greater funding over the last 2 years. We're working closely with the Canadian and Mexican Governments to increase border security. America is acting on a basic belief: Our borders should be open to legal travel and honest trade; our borders should be shut and barred tight to criminals, to drug traders—to drug traffickers and to criminals and to terrorists.

Second, new immigration laws should serve the economic needs of our country. If an American employer is offering a job that American citizens are not willing to take, we ought to welcome into our country a person who will fill that job.

Third, we should not give unfair rewards to illegal immigrants in the citizenship process or disadvantage those who came here lawfully or hope to do so.

Fourth, new laws should provide incentives for temporary foreign workers to return permanently to their home countries after their period of work in the United States has expired.

Today I ask the Congress to join me in passing new immigration laws that reflect these principles, that meet America's economic needs and live up to our highest ideals.

I propose a new temporary-worker program that will match willing foreign workers with willing American employers when no Americans can be found to fill the jobs. This program will offer legal status as temporary workers to the millions of undocumented men and women now employed in the United States and to those in foreign countries who seek to participate in the program and have been offered employment here. This new system should be clear and efficient so employers are able to find workers quickly and simply.

All who participate in the temporary-worker program must have a job or, if not living in the United States, a job offer. The legal status granted by this program will last 3 years and will be renewable, but it will have an end. Participants who do not remain employed, who do not follow the rules of the program, or who break the law will not be eligible for continued participation and will be required to return to their home.

Under my proposal, employers have key responsibilities. Employers who extend job offers must first make every reasonable effort to find an American worker for the job at hand. Our Government will develop a quick and simple system for employers to search for American workers. Employers must not hire undocumented aliens or temporary workers whose legal status has expired. They must report to the Government the temporary workers they hire and who leave their employ so that we can keep track of people in the program and better enforce our immigration laws. There must be strong workplace enforcement with tough penalties for anyone, for any employer, violating these laws.

Undocumented workers now here will be required to pay a one-time fee to register for the temporary-worker program. Those who seek to join the program from abroad and have complied with our immigration laws will not have to pay any fee. All participants will be issued a temporary-worker card that will allow them to travel back and forth between their home and the United States without fear of being denied reentry into our country.

This program expects temporary workers to return permanently to their home countries after their period of work in the United States has expired, and there should be financial incentives for them to do so. I will work with foreign governments on a plan to give temporary workers credit, when they enter their own nation's retirement system, for the time they have worked in America. I also support making it easier for temporary workers to contribute a portion of their earnings to tax-preferred savings accounts, money they can collect as they return to their native countries. After all, in many of those countries, a small nest egg is what is necessary to

start their own business or buy some land for their family.

Some temporary workers will make the decision to pursue American citizenship. Those who make this choice will be allowed to apply in the normal way. They will not be given unfair advantage over people who have followed legal procedures from the start.

I oppose amnesty, placing undocumented workers on the automatic path to citizenship. Granting amnesty encourages the violation of our laws and perpetuates illegal immigration. America is a welcoming country, but citizenship must not be the automatic reward for violating the laws of America.

The citizenship line, however, is too long, and our current limits on legal immigration are too low. My administration will work with the Congress to increase the annual number of green cards that can lead to citizenship. Those willing to take the difficult path of citizenship, the path of work and patience and assimilation, should be welcome in America like generations of immigrants before them.

In the process of immigration reform, we must also set high expectations for what new citizens should know. An understanding of what it means to be an American is not a formality in the naturalization process; it is essential to full participation in our democracy. My administration will examine the standard of knowledge in the current citizenship test. We must ensure that new citizens know not only the facts of our history but the ideals that have shaped our history. Every citizen of America has an obligation to learn the values that make us one Nation: liberty and civic responsibility, equality under God, tolerance for others.

This new temporary-worker program will bring more than economic benefits to America. Our homeland will be more secure when we can better account for those who enter our country, instead of the current situation in which millions of people are unknown, unknown to the law. Law enforcement will face fewer problems with undocumented workers and will be better able to focus on the true threats to our Nation from criminals and terrorists. And when temporary workers can travel legally and freely, there will be more efficient management of our borders and more effective enforcement against those who pose a true threat to our country.

This new system will be more compassionate. Decent, hard-working people will now be protected by labor laws, with the right to change jobs, earn fair wages, and enjoy the same working conditions that the law requires for American workers. Temporary workers will be able to establish their identities by obtaining the legal documents that we all take for granted. And they will be able to talk openly to authorities, to report crimes when they are harmed, without the fear of being deported.

The best way in the long run to reduce the pressures that create illegal immigration in the first place is to expand economic opportunity among the countries in our neighborhood. In a few days, I will go to Mexico for the special Summit of the Americas, where we will discuss ways to advance free trade and to fight corruption and encourage the reforms that lead to prosperity. Real growth and real hope in the nations of our hemisphere will lessen the flow of new immigrants to America when more citizens of other countries are able to achieve their dreams at their own home.

Yet our country has always benefited from the dreams that others have brought here. By working hard for a better life, immigrants contribute to the life of our Nation. The temporary-worker program I am proposing today represents the best tradition of our society, a society that honors the law and welcomes the newcomer. This plan will help return order and fairness to our immigration system. And in so doing, we will honor our values by showing our

respect for those who work hard and share in the ideals of America.

May God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:45 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Antonio O. Garza, U.S. Ambassador to Mexico. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks in a Discussion at West View Elementary School in Knoxville, Tennessee

January 8, 2004

The President. Thanks for coming. Melvenia, thanks. We are here because West View Elementary School is an example of what can happen when you have leadership that is willing to set high standards and to hold people to account and to realize every child can learn.

One of the things that I've learned as a Governor, now as the President, that successful schools not only require a teaching corps that cares a lot and parents involved in the school, but it requires a principal who is willing to challenge mediocrity. And so, Melvenia, you're right. We're here because you've been successful, and the results show it. This school had been measured during the measurement process, early measurement process, had been a school that wasn't performing the way you wanted it or any citizen of Knoxville, Tennessee, would want. In other words, it was below standards.

And now it's exemplary in math, above standards in reading. You're accomplishing that which we all want, and that is not one single child be left behind in the State of Tennessee and the city of Knoxville. You're doing a great job. Thank you for your hospitality.

I mentioned the No Child Left Behind Act. We're here to discuss that piece of bipartisan legislation. It is legislation which I would call historic, because for the first time, the Federal Government is spending more money and now asking for results. See, in the past it used to be we would send a check and hope something happened. And now the Federal Government is sending checks— at record amounts, I might add—for Title I students and teacher training and reading programs. But we're now saying, "Listen, we trust you. We trust the Melvenias of the world and the teachers to accomplish a mission. Why don't you just show us that you are."

And so we've worked with States and local governments to develop an accountability system all around the country, accountability systems which says that, first of all, we believe in the worth and the intelligence of every child, an accountability system that says let us know whether or not every child is learning, accountability system that tests curriculum to determine whether they're working, accountability systems that enable us to address problems early before they're too late.

The No Child Left Behind Act is a great piece of legislation which is making a difference around our country. We've got some people here from around America that are going to discuss what they're doing to accomplish the national objective in a positive way. The national objective is to challenge the soft bigotry of low expectations and to raise the standards for every single child.

You don't know unless you measure. Listen, I've heard every excuse in the book about measurement. You know, "You're

testing too much." "You're teaching the test." And, you know, "Don't test." If you don't test, you have a system that just shuffles the kids through, and that's unacceptable. It's unacceptable to quit on a kid early and just say, "Move through, and hope you learn." What you've got to do is measure to determine where they are, and then you can compare districts and compare States.

And as a result of strong accountability measures and good teachers and more funding, the results are positive. The fourth grade math test scores around the Nation are up 9 points since 2000. In other words, we're beginning to achieve—meet national objectives, which is a more literate group of students. The reading—eighth grade math scores are up 5 points. Fourth graders are now testing above—reading tests are increasing for fourth graders. We're making a difference.

And I say "we"; it's not the Federal Government that's making the difference. The Federal Government is a funding mechanism for Title I students and for some teacher training programs, but the truth of the matter is, the responsibility for educational excellence resides at the local level. Teachers must be free to teach. Principals must be free to lead. Superintendents of schools must be comfortable with making changes where change is needed. The best education policy is local control of schools, and that's exactly what's another part of the No Child Left Behind Act that's important for you all to understand.

We've got some people here in the audience I want to introduce, before we get to our panel, that know something about education. They're on the frontlines of education reform. But before I do so, speaking about a guy who is on the frontline of education reform, the United States Senator from the great State of Tennessee, Lamar Alexander, is with us. He was a former Governor. He was willing to challenge the soft bigotry of low expectations before it was cool to challenge the soft bigotry of low expectations. He did a excellent job as the Secretary of Education under old Number 41—[*laughter*]—and is now a fine United States Senator. Senator, I'm honored you're with us today. Thank you for coming.

Jimmy Duncan and Zach Wamp and Bill Jenkins and Marsha Blackburn are all Members of the United States Congress. Of course, this is Jimmy's district, as he was quick to point out at the airport. [*Laughter*] And he invited the three other Congresspeople with us today. But these are fine Members of the Congress. These are people that believe in the value and worth of every single child. They understand that public education is a top domestic priority of this administration. I thank them for being here, and I appreciate your good work on this issue. Thanks for coming.

Charles Lindsey is with us. He's the superintendent of the Knox County schools. Charles, I'm honored you're here. I appreciate you coming. Bill Haslam is the mayor, newly elected mayor. Where are you, Bill? Thanks for coming. I'm glad you're here. My only advice is to fill the potholes and collect the garbage. [*Laughter*] Mike Ragsdale, who is the mayor of Knox County, is with us. Michael, thank you for coming, Mr. Mayor. I appreciate you being here.

I met a fellow at the airport named Nat Foster. You probably haven't heard of Nat. Where are you, Nat? Oh, there you are. Thanks for coming. Nat is a—I told him at the airport, I said, "You're a drill sergeant in the army of compassion." You see, Nat is a—one of millions of our fellow citizens who has heard the call to love a neighbor just like you'd like to be loved yourself and is a mentor. He understands what I know, that the strength of the country is the heart and soul of our fellow citizens. The fact that people are willing to take time out of their busy life and to tutor a child, to serve as a role model for a child, and to teach a child how to read

is a defining part of the American civic scene.

And I appreciate Nat Foster being here. I appreciate his willingness to serve as an example for others. January happens to be National Mentoring Month. I hope others in the Knoxville area and all around Tennessee and the country, for that matter, follow the lead of a soldier in the army of compassion like Nat and serve your country and your State and your community by finding a child who needs adult guidance and mentor, to serve as an example. We can change America one heart and one soul and one conscience at a time.

I'm joined today by the Secretary of Education. He was the superintendent of schools in Houston, Texas, when I was the Governor. I saw firsthand his deep desire to defeat mediocrity, to insist upon excellence for every single child regardless of their background. He had a deep understanding that every child can learn, and the system must understand that.

I'm comfortable in asking the Congress for more money in the '05 budget, which I will do. We've increased the Title I disadvantaged students spending by 52 percent since fiscal year '01. The teachers and principal program is up by 39 percent. The reading programs are up by over 400 percent. The reason I'm comfortable is because I know that at the helm of the Department of Education, we have a man who knows that putting money into a bad system is not money well-spent. Putting money into a system that believes in the worth of every child and is focused on results is money well-spent. And that man is Rod Paige. Rod, thank you for joining us. I'd be glad to have some comments.

You've got something to say?

Secretary Roderick R. Paige. Well, Mr. President, I do.

The President. Because you better. [*Laughter*]

[*At this point, the discussion continued.*]

The President. Thank you, Rod. You see, what he's saying is, if you believe certain kids can't learn, guess what, they're not going to. If you believe certain children, based upon the color of their skin, can't learn, they won't. And the system will reflect that. Basically, at some school districts, I hate to say, the tendency is to say, "Let's just move them through. They can't learn, therefore, why measure, why determine, why don't we just get them out of the way?" That's unacceptable to America. It's unacceptable to our Secretary of Education. I appreciate the attitude of busting the status quo when the status quo is not meeting the great dreams of our country.

Public education, we've got to get it right. It's the gateway to hope. It is essential for this country to have a public education system that responds to the needs of every child so that we can meet great objectives for this country. It's trite. It's been said a lot, but it's true: The future of the country depends on our capacity to educate every child.

A person who understands that is Dr. Jim Pughsley from the Charlotte-Mecklenburg public school system. He's the superintendent of schools. And he and Rod have been superintendents before. The reason why he has been invited is because he brings an extraordinary record as the superintendent of schools. Seven years ago, African American fifth graders reading at grade level in the State of North Carolina were at 35 percent in his district. Today, they're at 78 percent. All fifth graders 7 years ago were at 59 percent. And now, they're at 86 percent.

So not only has it been improvement for all students, the minority knowledge gap has closed dramatically. I'll let Jim tell you why, but as a result of these great results and his leadership and the leadership, obviously—I'm sure he'll tell you—of principals and teachers who get it, who understand that every child matters, he was named the 2003 Superintendent of the Year by the

National Alliance of Black School Educators.

Welcome. I'm glad you're here, Jim. Thanks for coming.

[*The discussion continued.*]

The President. I'll drop a fancy word on you called "disaggregate." What he said, "We're disaggregating results. We're focusing not just on the whole. We're trying to understand whether or not a black child is learning or a Hispanic child is learning." In other words, we're unwilling to accept the past, where everybody was just kind of measured all together. What we want to know is, we want to know specifically who is succeeding and who is not. And the No Child Left Behind Act provides additional Federal money to stay focused on those children who need help early.

And that's an essential part. You see, these school districts measure. They see a child needs a little extra help in reading or an after-school program. There is money in the budget to focus on that child. And that's an essential change, an essential reform.

Kathy Cox, who is the State school superintendent from the great State of Georgia, has joined us. She was a classroom teacher for 15 years. She is now the executive director of the Department of Education. I'm honored you're here. Why don't you share with us your experiences in the great State of Georgia.

[*The discussion continued.*]

The President. I want to pick up on two points she made. One is truancy and parental involvement. There's nothing like test results being published to get the attention of a parent. A lot of parents believe in the best, of course, and they believe that the school their child goes to was meeting all kinds of standards and is an excellent school. After all, they've been told that. That may not be the case. And so when you begin to publish the test results, it does enhance parental involvement. It encourages the parent to become involved.

What the No Child Left Behind Act does, it not only provides extra help for a child that needs help early; it also gives parents more options in the process. A parent can take money and send that child to an after-school tutoring program—by the way, tutoring programs, the sponsor of which can be public-sector or private-sector programs. The child can send the—the parent can send the child to another public school. In other words, there is a consequence.

Because one of the principles in the No Child Left Behind Act is we're not going to leave children trapped in schools that will not teach or change. There's time for schools to change. There's time for schools to use the accountability system to determine whether or not they're using the right curriculum or not. But there has to be an end to mediocrity at some point in time, and that's what the—it's for the parents, as far as the parents are concerned, so the parents have got a lot of different options now available when a school district takes Title I money. And that's a very important reform.

But the most important part of the reform is that parents are now becoming more involved in their schools. After all, the child's first teacher is a mom or a dad. And it's essential, as the principal will tell you, that the more civic involvement you get with your schools, the more parental involvement you get with your schools, the more likely it is that school is going to be able to meet the objectives of the No Child Left Behind Act.

Speaking about people who understand the need to use a curriculum that works, Norm Mishelow is with us. He is a principal at the Barton Elementary School in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He has come south for some warm weather. [*Laughter*] Didn't work. [*Laughter*]

Norman Mishelow. I think it's the same temperature here as there.

The President. That's right. [*Laughter*] One of the things we've done is we've, at the Federal level, put a primary focus on reading. As I mentioned to you, the amount of reading money now available is an increase of 400 percent over the last 3 years. And what's important about reading programs is they actually work, not that they sound good, but they actually achieve the objective. And the way to determine whether or not reading programs work is to measure. If a child can read, it will show up on an accountability system.

And Norm, why don't you tell us about what we call research-based reading programs and tell us about your school and what you're doing.

[*The discussion continued.*]

The President. A couple of observations. First of all, we're learning what works when it comes to reading. It's not guesswork anymore. For a while it was a guesswork. You might remember the great debates—capsulized, whole language versus phonics. There was a lot of political capital expended over that, and all of a sudden the accountability system starts to clarify reality. And as Norm mentioned, they've chosen a program and a curriculum that is now working. Why do we know? Because they measure. They're able to tell because there is a measurement standard. The other thing that happens when Norm's school does well, other schools say, "Wait a minute. Old Norm doesn't seem to be all that good. How is he able to do what he's doing?" [*Laughter*]

Mr. Mishelow. Who are you talking to?

The President. Well—[*laughter*]—just guessing, Norm. [*Laughter*] But he serves as a go-by. See, when you have accountability and you lay the results out for everybody to see, all of a sudden people start saying, "What's Norm doing that I'm not doing?" Because as Norm mentioned to you, he's taken a school of children who, you know, that are the—as we say—used to say, tough to educate, and showing what can happen. I appreciate, Norm, your leadership. You said you've got a great staff. You do. It also—you're a educational entrepreneur, somebody who is willing to focus on what works. And thank you for what you're doing. I appreciate—I know the people of Milwaukee are thrilled that you are where you are.

With us as well is Margie Willis, Grace Christian Elementary, Hattiesburg, Mississippi. Grace Christian is a Title I school, receives Title I money. Title I, by the way, for those who aren't aware of the term, are Federal monies aimed at economically disadvantaged kids. It's an important part of the Federal funding—or the education funding program. It's a commitment that the Federal Government has made, will continue to make.

But Margie is a literacy coach. That's an interesting term, isn't it? She is—has met—the students have met expectations. Tell us about your school, Margie. Tell us what you're doing, and tell us how you've been so successful.

[*The discussion continued.*]

The President. Well, I appreciate you. Thank you so much. By the way, research-based reading means phonics, in essence. And it is—it works. It works, and we know it works, and you've heard personal testimony that it does work. And I would urge schools that aren't using research-based reading programs to take a look at them. If you're not meeting standards, listen to the personal testimony of people in the frontline of public education and listen to the joy in their voices about achieving fantastic results and watching all the kids from all walks of life, all economic backgrounds succeeding.

I'll never forget, one time we were in Houston, and Rod had a—he didn't call her a reading—a literacy coach. He called her a reading czar, but anyway—czarina in this case. And she stood up and said, "Reading is the new civil right." And we're getting it right in more and more schools. I want to thank both of you all for being

on the front edge of change. Thank you for your examples.

Jerry Hodges is with us today. He's the executive director of Project GRAD based right here in Knoxville, Tennessee. Project GRAD is a nonprofit trying to close the achievement gap by talking about and spreading curriculum that works. Thanks for coming.

[*The discussion continued.*]

The President. Well, I appreciate it. Thanks, good job. Thank you.

Nonprofits, corporate Tennessee, people who care about the future of your State need to follow the example of Project GRAD and become involved in your school districts. I appreciate the superintendent and the school board members for reaching out and understanding that educational excellence is a local responsibility. I mean, people really shouldn't hope that the Federal Government develops the blueprint for success. That's not our role. And you don't want a one-size-fits-all education approach. You want a—the best education reform comes when the local people decide to reform, when your principals reform, when the people running at the State level reform, when businesses and local community leaders say, "Wait a minute. We're not happy with the way things are. Let's change for the good of everybody."

And that's what's taking place here in Knox County schools. I want to thank you for that. Listen, I want to thank you all for coming. I'm honored our panel came from around the country to share with us the stories of success. And by the way, we're just beginning in America. See, one of these days, we won't have enough room on the stages as we bring people from all around the country to talk about what is happening, the tremendous success as a result of the No Child Left Behind Act. I'm honored you all came. I want to thank you again for believing in every child and raising that bar and believing in the worth of every individual.

May God bless your work, and may God continue to bless our country. Thank you for coming.

NOTE: The discussion began at 11:14 a.m. In his remarks, the President referred to Melvenia Smith, principal, West View Elementary School; and Mayor Bill Haslam of Knoxville, TN. The President also referred to Title I of the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 (Public Law No. 103–382), which amended Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (Public Law No. 89–10).

Remarks at a Bush-Cheney Luncheon in Knoxville
January 8, 2004

Thank you all. Thanks for coming. Thank you all very much. Thanks for the warm welcome. It's glad—I'm glad to be in the land of the orange and white. UT—kind of sounds like home. [*Laughter*] Really appreciate coming back to Knoxville. I'm so thrilled that so many came out to support the Bush-Cheney ticket. As you might recall, we had pretty good success here in the year 2000. Because of today, we're laying the foundation for what is going to be even better success in Tennessee in 2004. We're on our way to a national victory in November of 2004.

I'm loosening up—[*laughter*]—and I'm getting ready. But there will be plenty of time for politics, because I've got a job to do on behalf of every citizen of this country. I'm focused on the people's business in Washington, DC. My administration

will continue to work hard to earn the confidence of all Americans by keeping this Nation secure and strong and prosperous and free.

I'm honored you invited me here today. I know I wasn't your first choice. [*Laughter*] Laura was tied up. [*Laughter*] She's a fabulous First Lady. I'm a lucky man that she said yes when I said, "Will you marry me?" She really sends her best and her love. She's—I'm really proud of her.

I also want to thank my friend Lamar Alexander for doing such a fine job in the United States Senate on behalf of the great people of Tennessee. He brings such class and dignity to public office. You've known that when he was your Governor. He's now doing it again as the Senator, as is the other Senator from the great State of Tennessee, Senator Bill Frist, the majority leader of the United States Senate. You've done a great job of sending two fine people to the Senate.

I'm honored that members of the congressional delegation from Tennessee have joined us today, starting with your own homegrown Jimmy Duncan. I appreciate you, Jimmy. I got off Air Force One and the first thing he said was, "This is my district." [*Laughter*]

I want to thank Congressman Zach Wamp for joining us today. Thank you for being here, Zach. Congressman Bill Jenkins is with us today. Congressman, thank you for coming. I see you got a seat in the back. [*Laughter*] And Congresswoman Marsha Blackburn is with us today. Marsha, thank you for being here.

I'm honored that members of the statehouse have come. It's always a good sign when the State senators and State legislators are coming. After all, all good politics is local politics. I want to thank Ben Atchley, he's the Republican leader in the State senate, for joining us today.

Beth Harwell, who is the chairman of the Tennessee Republican Party, is with us. I want to thank you for coming too, Beth.

I'm so honored that many of you all took time to make this event a successful event. Jim Haslam is event cochairman. Big Jim, I thank you for your friendship, and I appreciate—I also appreciate Jimmy for being the event cochairman. And I appreciate the fact that the mayor is with us today as well.

I want to thank my friend Mercer Reynolds. He's from Cincinnati, Ohio. He's the national finance chairman of Bush-Cheney. He's working hard to make sure that this campaign is well-funded. When the campaign starts, we want to be ready to go. And thanks to the people in this room, and thanks to people around the country when the campaign gets started we are going to be ready to go.

I appreciate David Kustoff, who is the State chairman. His job is to rally the grassroots. And so, for those of you who are involved in grassroots politics here in Tennessee, I want to thank you for what you're going to do. I want to thank you for the signs you're going to put up. I want to thank you for the phone calls you're going to make. I'm want to thank you for joining us as we turn out the vote to make sure this good State turns out in significant numbers.

And as you're turning out that vote, I want you to remind them, in the last 3 years our Nation has acted decisively to confront great challenges. I came to this office to solve problems, not to pass them on to future Presidents and future generations. I came to seize opportunities instead of letting them slip away. My administration is meeting the tests of our time.

Terrorists declared war on the United States of America, and war is what they got. We've captured or killed many of the key leaders of the Al Qaida network, and the rest of them know we're on their trail. In Afghanistan and in Iraq, we gave ultimatums to terror regimes. Those regimes chose defiance, and those regimes are no more. Fifty million people in those two

countries once lived under tyranny, and now they live in freedom.

Three years ago, our military was not receiving the resources it needed, and morale was beginning to suffer. So we increased the defense budgets to prepare for the threats of a new era. And today, no one in the world can question the skill and the strength and the spirit of the United States military.

Three years ago, the economy was in trouble and a recession was beginning. And then we had attacks on our country and corporate scandals and war, which all affected the people's confidence. But this administration acted. We passed tough new laws to hold corporate criminals to account. And to get the economy going again, I have twice led the United States Congress to pass historic tax relief for the American people.

We understand that when Americans have more take-home pay to spend, to save, or invest, the whole economy grows and people are more likely to find a job. So we're returning more money—money to people to help them raise their families. We're reducing taxes on dividends and capital gains to encourage investment. We've given small businesses incentives to expand and to hire new people. With all these actions, we are laying the foundation for greater prosperity and more jobs across America so that every single person in this country has a chance to realize the American Dream.

Today, the American economy is strong, and it is getting stronger. The figures for the third quarter of 2003 show that the economy grew at an annual rate of 8.2 percent, the fastest pace in nearly 20 years. Productivity is high. Business investment is rising. Housing construction is increasing. We've added over 300,000 new jobs in the last 4 months. The tax relief we passed is working.

Three years ago, there was a lot of talk about education reform, but there wasn't much action. So I acted. I called for and the Congress passed the No Child Left Behind Act. With a solid bipartisan majority, we delivered the most dramatic education reforms in a generation. We're spending more money at the Federal level, but we're finally asking the question, "Are you teaching the children how to read and write and add and subtract?" This administration is challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations because we believe that every child can learn and we expect every school to teach. The days of excusemaking are over. No child should be left behind in America.

We reorganized the Government and created the Department of Homeland Security to better safeguard the borders and ports of our country and to better protect the American people. We passed trade promotion authority to open up new markets for Tennessee's farmers and ranchers and entrepreneurs and manufacturers. We passed budget agreements that is helping to maintain much-needed spending discipline in Washington, DC.

And last month, we completed the greatest advance in health care coverage for America's seniors since the founding of Medicare. The new Medicare law, that I pushed for and signed, will give older Americans the option of a prescription drug benefit and more control over their health care, so that they can receive the modern health care that they deserve.

On issue after issue, this administration has acted on principle, has kept its word, and has made great progress for the American people. A lot of credit belongs to the Members of the United States Senate and the United States Congress. I enjoy working with Majority Leader Bill Frist. You know as well as I do he's plenty capable, plenty competent, and a very decent man. I enjoy working with Speaker Denny Hastert, who shares the same characteristics as Bill Frist, an honorable, decent man.

We're working hard to change the tone in Washington, DC. There's too much backbiting, endless politics, name-calling. The best way to change the tone is to focus

on the people's business and to focus on results. And that's what we're doing with the Congress. Our record has been a good record. And those are the kind of people I've asked to join my administration. I put together a fantastic team of people, people from all walks of life to serve our country, people who have come to the Nation's Capital not to represent their own special interests but to represent the greatest country on the face of the Earth. There's been no finer Vice President than Dick Cheney. Mother may have a second opinion. [*Laughter*]

In 3 years, we've done a lot. We have come far, but our work is only beginning. I've set great goals worthy of this great Nation. First, America is committed to expanding the realm of freedom and peace for our own security and for the benefit of the world. And second, in our own country, we will work for a society that is prosperous and compassionate so every citizen has a chance to work and to succeed and to realize the great promise of our country. It is clear that the future of freedom and peace depend on the actions of America. This Nation is freedom's home and freedom's defender. We welcome this charge of history, and we are keeping it.

The war on terror continues. The enemies of freedom are not idle, and neither are we. This country will not rest; we will not tire; we will not stop until this danger to civilization is removed. We are confronting that danger in Iraq, where all people can be certain that they will never again have to fear the rule of Saddam Hussein. He started last year in a palace. He ended this year in a prison. The Ba'athist holdouts largely responsible for the current violence now know there will be no return to the corrupt power and privilege they once held. All Iraqis who have taken the side of freedom have taken the winning side.

We still face terrorists who would rather go on killing the innocent than accept the rise of liberty in the Middle East. And there is a reason why. They know that the advance of freedom in Iraq will be a major defeat for the cause of terror. This collection of killers is trying to shake the will of America. America will never be intimidated by a bunch of thugs and assassins.

We're aggressively after them in Iraq, defeating them there so we will never have to face them in our own country. Other nations are helping, because they understand a free Iraq will make the world more secure. We're standing with the Iraqi people as they assume more of their own defense and move toward self-government. These are not easy tasks, but they are essential tasks. We will finish what we have begun. We will win this essential victory in the war on terror.

We're working to oppose proliferation of weapons around the world. Last month, after talks with the United States and Great Britain, Libya voluntarily committed to disclose and dismantle all its weapons of mass destruction programs. Leaders around the world now know weapons of mass destruction do not bring influence or prestige; they bring isolation and unwelcomed consequences. And nations who abandon the pursuit of these weapons will find an open path to better relations with the United States of America.

Yet our greatest security comes from the advance of freedom, from the advance of human liberty, because free nations do not support terror, free nations do not attack their neighbors, free nations do not threaten the world with weapons of mass terror. Americans believe that freedom is the deepest need and hope of every human heart. I believe that freedom is the future of every nation. And we understand that freedom is not America's gift to the world; freedom is the Almighty God's gift to every man and woman in this world.

America also understands that unprecedented influence brings tremendous responsibilities. We have duties in the world. When we see disease and starvation and hopeless poverty, we will not turn away. On the continent of Africa, America is now

committed to bringing the healing power of medicine to millions of men and women and children now suffering with AIDS. This powerful, strong, and compassionate land is leading the entire world on this incredibly important work of human rescue.

We face challenges here at home as well. We'll be equal to those challenges. This administration will continue to push a progrowth, pro-entrepreneur economic agenda so that people who want to work and can't find a job today will be able to find that job.

And for the sake of our health care system, we need to cut down on the frivolous lawsuits which increase the cost of medicine. People who have been harmed by a bad doc deserve their day in court. Yet the system should not reward lawyers who are simply fishing for a rich settlement. Frivolous lawsuits drive up the cost of health care, and they therefore affect the Federal budget.

Medical liability reform is a national issue that requires a national solution. I sent a bill over to the House, and the House of Representatives passed a good bill to reform the system. The bill is stuck in the Senate. I look forward to working with Senator Frist and Senator Alexander to convince reluctant Senators to act on behalf of all the people in America and get a good medical liability bill to my desk. Some Members of the Senate must understand that no one in America has ever been healed by a frivolous lawsuit.

I have a responsibility as your President to make sure the judicial system runs well, and I have met that duty. I have nominated superb men and women to the Federal courts, people who will interpret the law, not legislate from the bench. Some of the Members of the Senate are trying to keep my nominees off the bench by blocking up-or-down votes. Every judicial nominee deserves a fair hearing and an up-or-down vote on the Senate floor. It is time for some Members of the United States Senate to stop playing politics with American justice.

The Congress needs to get an energy bill to my desk. This Nation must be more energy-efficient. We must conserve our resources. We must do a better job of protecting the quality of the air in places like Knoxville, Tennessee. But for the sake of economic security and for the sake of national security, we must become less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

A strong and prosperous nation must also be a compassionate nation. I will continue to advance our agenda of compassionate conservatism, which means we'll apply the best and most innovative ideas to the task of helping our fellow citizens in need. There's still millions of men and women who want to end their dependence on the Government and become independent through hard work. We must build on the success of welfare reform to bring more work and, therefore, dignity into the lives of our fellow citizens who are still dependent upon the Government.

With the help of Congress, we're working to ensure that more Americans can serve their communities and their country through citizen service programs. I urge both Houses of the United States Congress to pass my Faith-Based Initiative, which will help empower the armies of compassion that are mentoring our children and caring for the homeless and offering hope to the addicted.

One of the great strengths of our country is that we're a nation of many faiths, Christian, Jewish, and Muslim faiths. Out of that faith comes the deep desire for many of our citizens to heed the universal call to help a neighbor who hurts. The Federal Government should never fear the influence of faith-based programs. We ought to welcome faith-based programs into helping solve some of the intractable problems of our society.

A compassionate society is one, also, that must promote opportunity for all, including the independence and dignity that come

from ownership. This administration understands the power of owning something in our society. We'll constantly strive to promote an ownership society. Listen, we have a minority homeownership gap in America. I proposed plans to the Congress to help close that gap. We want more people owning their own home. We want people owning and managing their own health care accounts and their own retirement accounts. We want more people owning their own small businesses. And that's why developing the entrepreneurial spirit and keeping it strong is so important. You see, we understand that when a person owns something, he or she has a vital stake in the future of our country.

In a compassionate society, people respect one another. They respect each other's religious beliefs, political opinions. People take responsibility for the decisions they make in life. See, the culture of America is changing from one that has said, "If it feels good, do it," and, "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each of us understands that we're responsible for the decisions we make in life. If you're fortunate enough to be a mother or a father, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart. If you're worried about the quality of the education in Knoxville, Tennessee, you're responsible for doing something about it. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you are responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees.

And in the new responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourself. We can see that culture—the culture of service is strong in America. You know, I started the USA Freedom Corps right after September the 11th to encourage our fellow citizens to extend a compassionate hand to a neighbor in need. And the response has been fantastic. People from all walks of life are serving our Nation by helping people who hurt. Our neighborhood healers are vibrant and strong. Faith-based and charitable organizations thrive in our country. Policemen and firefighters and people who wear our Nation's uniform remind us what it means to sacrifice for something greater than ourself. Once again, the children of America believe in heroes because they see them every day.

In these challenging times, the world has seen the resolve and the courage of America, and I have been privileged to see the compassion and the character of the American people. All the tests of the last 3 years have come to the right nation. We're a strong country, and we use that strength to defend the peace. We're an optimistic country, confident in ourselves and in ideals bigger than ourselves. Abroad, we seek to lift whole nations by spreading freedom. At home, we seek to lift up lives by spreading opportunity to every corner of America. This is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it and know that for our country, the best days lie ahead.

May God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:55 p.m. at the Knoxville Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Bill Haslam of Knoxville, TN; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Remarks at a Bush-Cheney Reception in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida
January 8, 2004

Thank you all. Thanks for coming. It's great to be back in the great State of Florida. We carried it once, and we're going to carry it again.

And I want to thank you all for your help. I appreciate you showing up today. I appreciate your contributions. I appreciate your friendship, appreciate your prayers. I appreciate you laying the foundation for what is going to be a great national victory in November of '04.

And I'm getting ready. [*Laughter*] I'm loosening up. [*Laughter*] But there's plenty of time for politics. See, I've got a job to do. I'm focused on the people's business in Washington, DC. I want you to remind your friends and neighbors that I will continue to work hard to earn the confidence of every American by keeping this Nation secure and strong and prosperous and free.

I love my brother Jeb. He is a great Governor. He is a great Governor, first and foremost, because he has a large heart. He cares deeply about the people. He and I share some things in common. We share the same last name. [*Laughter*] We share the same political consultant—[*laughter*]—Mother. [*Laughter*] And we both married extremely well.

I'm honored to be onstage with a fabulous first lady for the State of Florida, Ms. Columba. And a great First Lady for America sends her love. I'm sorry Laura is not here. I know she was Jeb's first choice to be the speaker today. [*Laughter*] She's in Washington. But I'm a lucky man to have married Laura Bush. She is a great wife, a fabulous mother, and a wonderful First Lady for America.

I know my friend and former colleague in the Cabinet Mel Martinez is with us. Mel, thank you for being here today. I know Congressman Mark Foley is with us. Mr. Congressman, I'm glad you're here. I'm sorry Congressman Clay Shaw is not here. This is his district, I understand, but he is traveling with Speaker Denny Hastert. He made a good choice. When the Speaker calls, it's probably a pretty good thing to travel with him. I know the Lieutenant Governor, Toni Jennings, is here. The attorney general, Charlie Crist, is here. Tom Gallagher is here. Where's Gallagher? I appreciate you coming.

A lot of members of the statehouse are here. It's a good sign when State senators and State reps show up. After all, you win campaigns by energizing the grassroots. I appreciate the members of the statehouse being here. I'm looking forward to working with you to carry Florida. I want to thank all the grassroots activists who are here. I want to thank you for what you're going to do, which is to put up the signs, to man the phone booths, to put out the mailers, and to turn out the vote.

I want to thank the mayors and local officials who are here. I want to thank all those who worked hard to make this event such a successful event. We've had three event cochairmen, the Guzzettas, the Gaineses, and Elizabeth Fago. I want to thank you for your hard work. I appreciate your good work.

My friend Mercer Reynolds is here. He's the national finance chairman. He's from Cincinnati, Ohio. He's taken a lot of time out of his private life to help make sure we get well funded in what's going to be a tough campaign. I want to thank my friend Al Hoffman from the great State of Florida, who is doing such a fantastic job as the—raising money. And of course, there's Tom Petway and Zach Zachariah, two good buddies as well who have been working hard to make this campaign go well.

In the last 3 years, our Nation has acted decisively to confront great challenges. I came to this office to solve problems instead of passing them on to future Presidents and future generations. I came to seize opportunities instead of letting them slip away. My administration is meeting the tests of our time.

Terrorists declared war on the United States of America, and war is what they got. We've captured or killed many of the key leaders of the Al Qaida network, and the rest of them know we're on their trail.

In Afghanistan and in Iraq, we gave ultimatums to terror regimes. Those regimes chose defiance, and those regimes are no more. The world is better off, and so are the 50 million people in those two countries who once lived under tyranny, and today, they live in freedom.

Three years ago, our military was not receiving the resources it needed and morale was beginning to suffer, so we increased the defense budgets to meet the threats of a new era. And today, no one in the world can question the skill and the strength and the spirit of the United States military.

Three years ago, the economy was in trouble and a recession was beginning. And I want you to remember what we have come through. Not only was a recession beginning, but our country was attacked. And then there were corporate scandals and war, all of which affected the people's confidence. But this administration acted. We passed tough new laws to hold corporate criminals to account. And to get the economy going again, I have twice led the United States Congress to pass historic tax relief for the American people.

This administration understands that when Americans have more take-home pay to spend, to save, or invest, the whole economy grows, and people are more likely to find a job. So we're returning more money to the people to help them raise their families. We've reduced taxes on dividends and capital gains to encourage investment. We've given small businesses incentives to expand and to hire new people. With all these actions, we have laid the foundation for greater prosperity and more jobs across America, so every single citizen has a chance to realize the American Dream.

Today, the American economy is strong, and it is getting stronger. The figures for the third quarter of the year 2003 show the economy grew at an annual rate of 8.2 percent, the fastest pace in nearly 20 years. Productivity is high. Business investment is rising. Housing construction is expanding. Manufacturing activity is increasing, and we've added over 300,000 new jobs in the last 4 months. The tax relief we passed is working.

Three years ago, there was a lot of talk about education reform, but there wasn't much action. So I acted. I called for and the Congress passed the No Child Left Behind Act. With a solid bipartisan majority, we delivered the most dramatic education reforms in a generation. We've increased spending out of the Federal Government, particularly for Title I students, for the poorest of students. But now, because we believe every child can learn to read and write and add and subtract, we're insisting that States measure. We want to know.

The State of Florida, led by this great Governor, is on the leading edge of education reform because he holds people to account. And the reason he does is because he and I both know every child can learn. We are challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations. We've raised the bar. We've raised the standards. We expect results so that not one single child in America is left behind.

We've reorganized our Government during the past 3 years and created the Department of Homeland Security to better guard Florida's ports, better guard our borders, to better protect the American people. We passed trade promotion authority to open up new markets for Florida's ranchers and farmers and entrepreneurs and manufacturers. We passed budget agreements, much-needed budget agreements, to help bring spending discipline to Washington, DC.

And last month, we completed the greatest advance in health care coverage for America's senior citizens since the creation of Medicare. The new Medicare law that I fought for and signed—the bill that I campaigned for, worked for, and signed will give older Americans the option of a prescription drug benefit and more control over their own health care, so they can

receive the modern medical care they deserve.

On issue after issue, this administration has acted on principle, has kept its word, and has made progress for the American people. The Congress gets a lot of credit. I enjoy working with Majority Leader Bill Frist, Speaker Denny Hastert, Congressman Mark Foley. We're working hard in Washington, DC, to change the tone of the Nation's Capital. There's too much politics, endless backbiting, zero-sum attitudes. And the best way to do that is to stay focused on the people's business and on results. And we have delivered results over the last 3 years.

A major reason this administration has been successful is because I have surrounded myself with really good, decent, capable, honorable people, people from all walks of life, people who have come to the Nation's Capital to serve the United States of America, not a special or self interest. This Nation has had no finer Vice President than Vice President Dick Cheney. Mother may have a second opinion. [*Laughter*]

In 3 years, we have come far. We've done a lot, but our work is only beginning. I have set great goals worthy of a great nation. First, America is committed to expanding the realm of freedom and peace for our own security and for the benefit of the world. And second, in our own country, we must work for a society that is prosperous and compassionate so that every citizen—every citizen—regardless of their background, has a chance to work and to succeed and realize the great promise of this country.

It is clear that the future of freedom and peace depend on the actions of America. This Nation is freedom's home and freedom's defender. We welcome this charge of history, and we are keeping it. The war on terror goes on. The enemies of freedom are not idle, and neither are we. This country will not rest; we will not tire; we will not stop until this danger to civilization is removed.

We are confronting that danger in Iraq, where all the people of that country can now be certain they will never again have to fear the rule of Saddam Hussein. The Ba'athist holdouts largely responsible for current violence now know there will be no return to the corrupt power and privilege they once held. All Iraqis who have taken the side of freedom have chosen the winning side.

We still face terrorists who would rather go on killing the innocent than accept the rise of liberty in the Middle East. You see, they know that the advance of freedom in Iraq would be a major defeat for the cause of terror. This collection of killers is trying to shake the will of the United States. The United States will never be intimidated by a bunch of thugs and assassins.

We are on the offensive in Iraq. We're aggressively striking the terrorists in Iraq. We will defeat them there, so we do not have to face them in America. And a lot of nations are helping to build a free Iraq, because they understand a free Iraq is in their interest. A free Iraq will make the world more peaceful. And we're standing with the Iraqi people as they assume more of their own defense and more of their own self-government. These are not easy tasks, but they are essential tasks. And America will finish what we have begun. We will win this essential victory in the war on terror.

We're working to oppose proliferation of weapons around the world. Last month, after talks with the United States and Great Britain, Libya volunteered to disclose and dismantle all its weapons of mass destruction programs. Leaders around the world now know weapons of mass destruction do not bring influence or prestige. They bring isolation and other unwelcome consequences. And nations who abandon the pursuit of these weapons will find an open path to better relations with the United States of America.

Our greatest security comes from the advance of human liberty, because free nations do not support terror, free nations do not attack their neighbors, free nations do not threaten the world with weapons of mass terror. Americans believe that freedom is the deepest need and hope of every human heart. I believe that freedom is the future of every nation. And I know that freedom is not America's gift to the world; freedom is the Almighty God's gift to each man and woman in this world.

America understands that unprecedented influence brings tremendous responsibilities. We have duties in this world, and when we see disease and starvation and hopeless poverty, we will not turn away. On the continent of Africa, America is now committed to bringing the healing power of medicine to millions of men and women and children suffering with AIDS.

We face challenges here at home as well, and we will prove that we're equal to the challenges. This administration will continue to promote a progrowth, pro-small-business, pro-entrepreneur economic agenda until everybody who wants a job can find one.

And for the sake of our health care system, we need to cut down on the frivolous lawsuits which increase the cost of medicine. I appreciate Jeb's leadership on this issue. He and I understand that people who have been harmed by a bad doc deserve their day in court. Yet, the system should not reward lawyers who are simply fishing for a rich settlement. Frivolous lawsuits drive up the cost of health care, and they therefore affect the Federal budget.

Medical liability reform is a national issue that requires a national solution. I put forth a good plan. The House of Representatives passed it. However, the bill is stuck in the Senate. And I know two United States Senators who keep it stuck in the United States Senate, and they might happen to be from your State. The Senate must act on behalf of the American people and pass medical liability reform, and the Senators must understand no one has ever been healed by a frivolous lawsuit.

I have a responsibility as the President to make sure the judicial system runs well, and I have met that duty. I have nominated superb men and women for the Federal courts, people who will interpret the law, not legislate from the bench. Some Members from the United States Senate, two of them from this State—[*laughter*]—are trying to keep my nominees off the bench by blocking up-or-down votes. Every judicial nominee deserves a fair hearing and an up-or-down vote on the Senate floor. It is time for some of those Members of the United States Senate to stop playing politics with American justice.

This country needs an energy plan, and the Congress needs to get an energy plan to my desk. I've been calling for one for several years now, an energy plan that encourages energy efficiency and conservation, that uses technology in wise ways to find additional supplies of energy. For the sake of economic security and for the sake of national security, this country must become less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

A strong and prosperous nation must also be a compassionate nation. I will continue to advance our agenda of what I call compassionate conservatism, which means we'll apply the best and most innovative ideas to the task of helping fellow citizens who are in need. There are still a lot of people, millions of men and women, who want to end their dependence on government, become independent through hard work. We must continue to build on the success of welfare reform to bring work and dignity into the lives of more of our fellow citizens.

With the help of Congress, we're working to ensure more Americans serve their communities and through their country—through the citizen service programs. Both Houses should come together and pass my Faith-Based Initiative. Our Government should not fear the influence of faith in the lives of our fellow citizens. As a matter

of fact, the great strength of the country is the fact that we're a nation of many faiths. And faith-based community programs are those that are often able to change people's hearts. And when you change a person's heart, you help save a person's life.

We need to rally the armies of compassion, those who mentor our children, those who care for the homeless, those who offer hope to the addicted. A compassionate society is a society that promotes opportunity for every citizen, including the independence and dignity that come from ownership. This administration will constantly strive to promote an ownership society in America. We want more people owning their own home. We have a minority homeownership gap in America, and I have put forth a plan to close that gap. We want people owning and managing their own health care plans and their own retirement accounts. We want more people owning their own small business, because we understand that when a person owns something, he or she has a vital stake in the future of America.

In a compassionate society, people respect one another. They respect their religious beliefs. They respect their opinions. And they take responsibility for the decisions they make in life. The culture of this country is changing from one that has said, "If it feels good, just go ahead and do it," and, "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each of us understands that we're responsible for the decisions we make in life.

If you're fortunate enough to be a mother or a father, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart. If you're worried about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you're responsible for doing something about it. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you're responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees.

In a responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourselves. And we see the culture of service and responsibility growing around us. You know I started—right after September the 11th, I started what's called the USA Freedom Corps. It's a chance for people to find out ways to extend a compassionate hand to a neighbor in need, and the response has been strong, really strong.

A lot of Americans—and I'm sure many are here—understand that patriotism can mean helping somebody who hurts. Charitable organizations in America are vibrant. Neighborhood healing groups are really good. Faith-based programs are strong. Police and our firefighters and people who wear the Nation's uniform remind us on a daily basis what it means to serve something greater than yourself. Once again, the children of America believe in heroes, because they see them every day.

In these challenging times, the world has seen the resolve and the courage of America. And I've been privileged to see the compassion and the character of the American people. All the tests of the last 3 years have come to the right nation. We're a strong country, and we use that strength to defend the peace. We're an optimistic country, confident in ourselves and in ideals bigger than ourselves. Abroad, we seek to lift up whole nations by spreading freedom. At home, we seek to lift up lives by spreading opportunity to every corner of America. This is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it and know that for our country, the best days lie ahead.

May God bless you. Thank you for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:10 p.m. at the PGA National Resort. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida and his wife, Columba; former Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Mel R. Martinez; Lt. Gov. Toni Jennings of Florida; Florida State Attorney General Charlie Crist; Tom Gallagher, chief financial officer, Florida Department of Financial Services; Al Hoffman,

finance chairman, Republican National Committee; Mercer Reynolds, national finance chairman, and Tom Petway III and Zach Zachariah, Florida State finance co-chairmen, Bush-Cheney '04, Inc.; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; and Senators Bob Graham and Bill Nelson of Florida.

The President also referred to Title I of the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 (Public Law No. 103–382), which amended Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (Public Law No. 89–10).

Remarks in a Discussion With Women Small-Business Owners
January 9, 2004

The President. Thank you all. Thank you, Mr. Secretary. You wrote that—you read that just like I wrote it. [*Laughter*] It's good to be here at the Commerce Department. After all, that's what we're here to discuss, is commerce and jobs and how to keep the entrepreneurial spirit strong in America.

Let me start off by saying, first of all, thank you all for coming. We're going to have an interesting discussion about what it means to own your own business and risk capital and employ people, what it takes to be a businessowner. And we've got five really smart, capable women who are running their own businesses. Before we get to this discussion, though, I want to say I'm really optimistic about the future of our Nation's economy. This economy is strong, and it is getting stronger.

I'm optimistic for one reason, because I just spent a little bit of time with five people who are on the frontline of hiring. Their optimism was really evident, as I think you'll soon hear. Secondly, I'm optimistic because I see things happening. Unemployment dropped today to 5.7 percent. That's not good enough. We want more people still working. But nevertheless, it is a positive sign that the economy is getting better.

I see the manufacturing orders are up dramatically. I know the productivity is high in America. Home construction is strong. All the signs in our economy is—are very strong. And that's positive for somebody who might be wondering about whether he or she is going to find a job.

Secondly, I know what we have overcome in this country. I mean, this economy has got to be pretty darn strong to have come through what this Nation has come through. Just very quickly, in the beginning of 2001, the country was entering into a recession. I'm sure that affected you all. Recession, by the way, is when there is negative growth for three quarters, when things aren't going well for three consecutive quarters. That's a long period of time if you own your own business. It's a long period of time if you're looking for a job, by the way.

Then, all of a sudden, as the economy was getting better, the enemy hit us. And make no mistake about it, the attack of September the 11th affected not only our national psyche; it affected the economy. It hurt. It hurt people who were thinking about risking capital. It made it hard for people to find a job.

As well we had a problem that fall when it turned out some of our corporate citizens failed to live up to the responsibilities of leadership. They didn't tell the truth to their shareholders and their employees. That affected the psyche of the American investor. You know, capitalism is only as strong as the integrity of the people involved in the process. And these leaders will tell you that you've got to be open

with your employees. Otherwise, they're not going to work for you very hard. In this case, these corporate criminals had a negative effect on the country.

And then, of course, I made some tough decisions about how to secure America and keep the peace by spreading freedom, and we marched to war. It is not conducive to economic growth to see on your TV screens, "America is marching to war." It's not a very positive, optimistic message to hear if you're thinking about risking capital. Who wants to take risk when we're marching to war?

Now we're marching to peace, and people feel more comfortable about making a risky investment. We've overcome a lot. And I'm optimistic because not only do I talk to people who are optimistic all the time; I'm optimistic because I recognized what this country has been through. It really speaks to the entrepreneurial spirit and ingenuity of the American people, is what I'm talking about. This is a fabulous country.

The system says if you work hard, you get rewarded. You can own your own business, hopefully without a lot of Government interference. Speaking about Government interference, we made a conscious decision to make Government less intrusive into the pocketbooks of the American people in order to effect economic growth. You might remember we went to the Congress, not only once but three different times, to effect real, substantial tax relief, tax relief which left more money in the pockets of the working people, tax relief which encouraged spending and saving and investment.

You see, we cut the taxes on everybody. We didn't try to pick and choose who got the tax relief. Our attitude was, if you pay taxes, you ought to get relief. It ought to be fair and simple to understand. And by the way, the tax relief had a significant impact on the entrepreneurial spirit of America because a lot of people who own their own small business pay taxes at the individual income-tax rate. They're what you'll hear as a Subchapter S corp or a sole proprietorship. And so when you cut the taxes on the individuals, you're really cutting the taxes on business, small businesses. And after all, that's important, because most small businesses—or small businesses create the most new jobs. Seventy percent of new jobs are created by small-business owners and entrepreneurs. The tax relief was important.

We had incentives in there for people trying to raise a family by raising the child credit. We reduced the marriage penalty. Heck, we want a Tax Code that encourages marriage, not discourages marriage. It doesn't make any sense to say, "If you're married, you get to pay more tax."

We gave small-business owners incentives to invest by raising the deductibility limits. And I think you'll hear some discussion of that today. We reduced taxes on dividends and capital gains, which was particularly important for retired citizens who rely upon dividend income to—in their latter years.

So we did a lot. We've done a lot. And I'm telling you, the tax relief came at the right time and made a big difference for economic growth.

There's more to do. First of all, every one of these business leaders and owners will tell you that if there's uncertainty in the Tax Code, it will make it difficult for them to plan for the future. Businessowners like certainty. They want to know what the rules are. Much of the tax relief I described goes away soon. Congress passed the tax relief, but they didn't make it permanent. Job creation is vital. Permanency in the Tax Code will mean more job creation. Congress must make every part of the tax package permanent.

These business leaders will tell you, health care costs are rising and are difficult to manage. We need association health care plans to allow small businesses to pool the risk across jurisdictional boundaries. Congress must act. We need medical liability

reform. Frivolous lawsuits drive up the costs of health care. They affect the budgets of these small businesses. They also affect the Federal budget. I mean, if you think about what frivolous lawsuits do to the cost of Medicare and Medicaid and veterans' health benefits, you understand what I'm talking about. I mean, it's an enormous cost to the Federal budget. We got a good bill out of the House. The medical liability bill is stuck in the Senate. We need tort reform there; we need class action reform; we need asbestos reform if we expect this economy to continue to grow.

We need an energy policy. Congress needs to give me an energy bill. I mean, it's hard for businesses to plan, particularly in the manufacturing sector, if you're wondering where you're going to get your next watt of energy. And so we need an energy bill. Congress needs to act. Congress needs to join this administration in listening to the voices of these entrepreneurs to figure out how to keep a progrowth agenda on the forefront. So long as anybody is looking for a job in America, this administration is going to be promoting a pro-growth, pro-entrepreneurial agenda.

And I'm honored to be joined by entrepreneurs, strong, strong women who have taken the lead in their businesses and are providing a great service to our country. They're not only providing a wonderful example for people who are wondering whether or not I can own my own company but whether—but providing the service of hiring people and keeping them at work and caring about their employees.

I'm going to start off by Nancy Connolly. She is the president and CEO of Lasertone Corporation, Littleton, Massachusetts. Welcome.

[*At this point, Nancy Connolly made brief remarks.*]

The President. Yes, see, Nancy hires 20—there's a lot of companies the size of Nancy's around the country that have got this sense of optimism. I mean it's—I don't think we would have had Nancy sitting here 2 years ago saying, "Gosh, I look forward to hiring 20." I suspect she might have been saying, "I hope to keep the 70." A lot of small businesses were just hanging on to what they had during tough economic times. And now this leader and this entrepreneur are saying, "20 minimum," it sounded like to me. And that's how this economy works. It's very important for people to understand it's the cumulative effect of many, many hirings that take place on a daily basis, particularly in the small-business sector, that affect economic growth and vitality.

Thank you for doing what you're doing.

Catherine, tell us about yourself and your business, Knowledge Information Solutions.

[*Catherine Giordano, president and chief executive officer, Knowledge Information Solutions, Inc., Virginia Beach, VA, made brief remarks.*]

The President. I'm glad you're here, Catherine, thanks. One of the things I think is very interesting for people to understand that Catherine just said—she said the tax breaks that we focused for small-business owners caused her to buy new equipment and new software. Well, somebody has to make that equipment, and somebody has to design that software and sell it. So my point is, is that it's important for our American citizens to understand the ripple effect of good tax policy. Good tax policy encourages an owner to make a decision. That decision then makes it more likely somebody else is going to find a job who will provide—in the company that provides the product—in Catherine's case, equipment and hardware.

It's very important that this incentive stay in place because it is—you just heard one example of the decisionmaking process that takes place as a result of good tax policy. If the tax policy—if Congress lets this lapse, the ability to deduct to $100,000 of capital equipment, it would then cause her to make different decisions in the out-years.

And so the Congress needs to be mindful of what tax policy does to the decision-makers, the job creators, people like Catherine who made a rational decision based upon good policy.

It's my honor to welcome right now—why don't we go with Sharon Evans. Sharon is the CEO of CFJ Manufacturing, Fort Worth, Texas.

[*Sharon Evans made brief remarks, concluding by saying that she anticipated 25-percent growth next year, which she believed was due to tax benefits.*]

The President. I disagree. I think it's related to vision and hard work and the Texas spirit. The tax relief helped, but none of these women should discount their courage and their vision and their willingness to take risk and to make wise decisions.

Ms. Evans. I do have to commend you too, as well as—we utilize and we are a certified women-owned business, and your support of women in business has increased my customer base, which has, in fact, grown my business as well.

The President. Yes, I think it's very important—what she's talking about is contracting. For example, at the Federal Government, we ought to bust these contracts down to smaller sizes. The role of contracting at the Federal level—the proper role of contracting obviously is to get good service for the Government but at the same time have the added dividend of enhancing the entrepreneurial spirit, is encouraging small-business ownership, is to really achieve what we want to achieve, and that is to expand the ownership society in America.

And by the way, the role of Government is not to create wealth but the environment in which the entrepreneur can flourish. Make no mistake about it, the role of Government is to create the architecture in which people are willing to take risk and make choice. But that doesn't happen unless somebody's got a good idea, works hard, dreams big, treats their employees with respect, and is capable. So thank you for giving Government the credit, but we don't deserve it.

Let me call upon Maria Coakley David. She is the CFO of C.J. Coakley, Inc., right here in Falls Church, Virginia. Thanks for coming, Maria. And thank you for the hat.

[*Maria Coakley David made brief remarks.*]

The President. Well, let me talk about job hiring, particularly in the construction field. It's very important for these companies to understand who they're hiring. I'm excited about the fact that you're expanding your job base. I just want to make sure that you stay legal in your hiring practice. And we've got a problem here——

Ms. Coakley David. It's a big concern as well for us, and I appreciate you bringing that up.

The President. It's got to be a big concern. Well, I'm talking about this immigration issue that I brought up. My attitude is, any time an employer can't find an American worker to do the job, that—in this case, she ought to be able to hire a willing foreign worker, so long as that foreign worker has got a—we're going to issue a new card, a temporary-worker card.

I don't like the idea of having an undocumented economy in the greatest country on the face of the Earth, where people walk miles across deserts at the hands of sometimes these "coyote" border smugglers who treat these people inhumanely. They get into our society. They're doing work, but they're doing work in an undocumented way, not aboveboard but below the surface. They can get exploited and have no recourse. And it's just flat wrong in America. And we ought to recognize the system hasn't worked.

And so I proposed a plan that is a worker plan. It is not an automatic path to citizenship, what they call amnesty. It is a plan that recognizes reality in a commonsense way, so that when Maria's company starts expanding and she can't find somebody to lay tar on a hot August day and somebody

else wants to because they've got a family to feed, she can find this person, and the person will show up to work. And by the way, that person ought to be able to go back to his or her family without being harassed, to be able to take money home, which is what they're trying to do.

So this is a commonsense plan. It makes eminent sense. It recognizes the reality of today's workplace. We want our employers to be aggressive at hiring people, but we don't want them breaking the law. And we've got to recognize, in this society, there are just simply some jobs that are not being filled by American citizens.

Ms. Coakley David. You're correct, and it is definitely a big concern for our company. We probably have 70 percent Hispanic workforce. We've recently hired a bilingual receptionist to help us communicate effectively. We have a lot of our newsletters translated in Spanish. And we do have to face the facts, and we would greatly benefit from your plan.

The President. Yes, this is important. The other thing what she's faced with—first of all, the fact that you've got a Hispanic workforce means you're doing well. These are fine people, we know well in Texas. They're great people—great people.

But there's a lot of false documentation. What kind of society is it where the system allows for false documentation, falsifying these different papers so Maria is not sure whether or not she's dealing with somebody she ought to be dealing with? We need to make this aboveboard. And by the way, it is humane to treat people with respect, citizen or not citizen. We want to treat people with the utmost respect in this country. This is America. It's the greatest country on the face of the Earth. We're not giving special privilege. They don't get to butt in line where somebody who wants to go through the process in a legal way. We're just recognizing reality in a commonsensical way. It's the right thing to do.

[*Ms. Coakley David made additional remarks.*]

The President. You know, one of the most meaningful things that's happened to me since I've been the Governor—the President—Governor—President. [*Laughter*] Oops—[*laughter*]—ex-Governor. I went to Bethesda Naval Hospital to give a fellow a Purple Heart, and at the same moment watched him—get a Purple Heart for action in Iraq—and at that same—right after I gave him the Purple Heart, he was sworn in as a citizen of the United States, a Mexican citizen now a United States citizen.

It's a pretty special country, isn't it, where people are willing to come not only to work to provide for their families but to wear this Nation's uniform and to go into harm's way for our peace and security. And Americans have got to recognize how special America is and how lucky we are to be Americans in this country and how a lot of really decent people would like to join us. We've just got to make sure the system is orderly and fair and meets national objectives.

Lurita—Lurita Doan is with us. She is the president and CEO of New Technology Management in Reston, Virginia. Welcome.

[*Lurita Doan made brief remarks.*]

The President. I'm here to thank you all. I think the—I hope you come away with the same sense of optimism I do about the future of this country when you hear these five women speak. I mean, this is a country which speaks to five entrepreneurs here on the stage and says, "Dream big and go for it. Live your dream." Can you imagine a country where a woman like Lurita walks in to Kinko's and says, "I think I'll start a business by printing my first business card," and here she is, 13 years later, speaking to the Nation about a business which is thriving and is going to hire 75 new people.

It's a fabulous country, where people can dream big dreams and people can risk—take risk and achieve their dreams through

hard work, clear vision, and a good idea. It's hard to be a small-business owner, particularly in hard times. It's easier when the whole economy is growing, but it's even hard then. It's hard to make the right decisions. But obviously, I'm surrounded by success, people who have been able to realize their dreams and accomplish what is not easy to accomplish.

Government can help, but we can't make these women smart; we can't make them dream; we can't make them compassionate. These are choices they've made. And our job is to stand with them and to serve as a wind at their back as they provide not only valuable goods and services but, more importantly for me right now and for the country, is to provide a chance for somebody to find work—find work so they can fulfill their obligations as a mom or a dad.

I want to thank you all for joining us. Thank you for being great Americans. I appreciate you helping me to explain how our economy works and why we should be optimistic about our future. May God bless your endeavors and God bless you all. May God continue to bless our great country. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The discussion began at 10:45 a.m. at the Department of Commerce. In his remarks, the President referred to Secretary of Commerce Donald L. Evans, who introduced the President.

Remarks to the National Catholic Educational Association
January 9, 2004

Welcome, please. Thanks for coming. Please be seated. Thanks for coming. [*Laughter*] Welcome to the people's house. We're glad you're here.

The last 100 years, the leadership of the National Catholic Education Association has been vital in advancing the work of Catholic schools around the Nation and, therefore, has been vital to the hopeful future of America. I'm honored to join you for celebrating your 100th anniversary. And this is a fitting place to celebrate the anniversary.

Catholic schools carry out a great mission, to serve God by building knowledge and character of our young people. It's a noble calling. It's an important part of the fabric of America. By teaching the Word of God, you prepare your students to follow a path of virtue and compassion and sacrifice for the rest of their lives. And by insisting on high standards for academic achievement, Catholic schools are a model for all schools around our country.

I was hoping to run into a fellow Texan today. [*Laughter*] His Excellency Gregory Aymond is the bishop from Austin, Texas. [*Laughter*] He is—I'm glad there's only a handful of Texans here. [*Laughter*] The bishop is the board chair of the National Catholic Education Association, and I want to thank you for joining us.

I appreciate Michael Guerra. Michael Guerra is the president of the National Catholic Education Association. Michael, thank you, and thank you for all the board members who graciously had a picture taken in the Blue Room with me. I appreciate you doing that.

His Excellency John Cummins, who is the bishop emeritus of Oakland, California, is with us. His Excellency, thank you for being here, sir.

I appreciate Carl Anderson, the Supreme Knight of the Knights of Columbus, and Dorian for joining us today.

I'm sorry my neighbor His Eminence Theodore Cardinal McCarrick is not with

us, a decent man. [*Laughter*] I really, really am proud to call him friend. He's a really good guy, as we say in Texas.

I appreciate you all coming. I really do. Thanks for being here.

Catholic educators share the basic conviction that every child can learn and every child can learn to lead a life of service. That's a pretty good mission statement, isn't it? Let us teach every child to read and write and add and subtract, and as we do so, let us teach every child to serve a cause greater than self. The whole Nation benefits because of the good scholars and good citizens who graduate from Catholic schools. That is a fact.

Through your faith in every child—and I emphasize "every child"—Catholic schools have overcome challenges and experienced remarkable results. It is well known that Catholic schools operate on small budgets. [*Laughter*] The per-pupil cost in a Catholic school classroom is substantially below the per-pupil costs of many other schools, public or private.

And yet, the results are astonishing: 2.6 million students who attend Catholic schools will graduate—that's 99 percent—and almost all go to college. Even though the per-pupil expenditure per classroom is low, the results are extremely high. And it says something is going right, starting with the fact that Catholic schools have high expectations. You challenge what I call the soft bigotry of low expectations. You believe in the worth of every person and every child. You believe that inherent in every child is the capacity to learn. And you refuse to quit on any child.

The Catholic schools understand that love and discipline go hand in hand. The Catholic schools are willing to change curriculum if it doesn't work. The Catholic schools sometimes meet longer hours than some would expect is the norm. Take La-Salle Academy, a Catholic school in Philadelphia. Students attend classes from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., and the school year is several weeks longer than average. Whatever it takes to make sure no child is left behind, the Catholic schools do.

In addition to learning to read and write, students take courses in computers and music and art. At David McDonough, the principal of the school said this, "We bombard them"—that would be his students—[*laughter*]—"We bombard them with love, attention, and work, and they thrive."

An important part of the Catholic education is the commitment to serving what our society calls the disadvantaged student, regardless of religious affiliation. I appreciate that a lot. These are the students who sometimes in the public school system are deemed to be uneducable and, therefore, are just moved through the system. The Catholic schools have done our country a great service by a special outreach to minority children, who make up 26 percent of the enrollment of our Catholic schools. This is a great service to those children and their parents and our country.

Catholic schools have a proven record of bringing out the best in every child, regardless of their background. And every school in America should live up to that standard. We want our public schools to live up to the standard you have set in Catholic schools.

I signed what's called the No Child Left Behind Act. It is the most historic education reform in a generation. It actually passed with bipartisan support, which is unusual for Washington these days. [*Laughter*] Let me tell you a little bit about the philosophy behind the law, and I think you'll find it to be reminiscent.

First, the law assumes that every child can learn and, therefore, expects every child to learn. We've increased Federal spending and now, for the first—at the Federal level, primarily for Title I students, many of whom would be—go to your schools, if they went to the public—would be eligible for this program—if they went to public schools, many of your students would be eligible for this program. But in

return, we now expect results. See, we believe every child can learn, and therefore, we're saying to States, "You must measure to show us whether a child has learned to read and write and add and subtract. And if not, let's solve the problem early, before it's too late."

In other words, we've introduced accountability into the system for the first time, insisted upon accountability, and then said, "Let's have enough money available to correct problems." And so now the States must test regularly, every year. And if the curriculum isn't working, you change it. And if it is working, there will be plenty of praise. If the math programs aren't working, change them, because we now expect results. Because like the Catholic schools, we believe in the worth of every child. We're challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations by raising the standard and refusing to accept the status quo when our children are not learning.

We've also done something different as well. We've insisted that these schools post results. It's an interesting phenomena to see a parent react when the expectation isn't met for a public school. In other words, everything may be fine, and all of a sudden the test scores are revealed and, oops, my school is not doing like I thought it was doing and, therefore, I, a parent, should become more involved in my child's school when I see failure.

But even beyond that, we've begun introducing to the system for the first time at the Federal level the capacity to take Federal money and spend that money in the private sector to get special tutorials. In other words, if a child is trapped in a school which is failing and won't change, after a reasonable period of time, there is some money that follows the child and the child can take that money—the parent can take that money and get his or her child additional tutoring at a public facility, private charity, or at a Catholic school.

And so all of a sudden the No Child Left Behind Act not only demands accountability, but we've also started to empower parents to make additional choices for their child when the child is trapped into a school that won't change. And that includes, by the way, not only private tutoring but also a additional public school, a different—in other words, what we're trying to do is introduce parental involvement through accountability standards.

Parents, I believe—and I believe we ought to expand this opportunity further, which we're trying to do here in Washington, DC. And I want to describe to you right quick what this administration has done, where you can help a little bit in perhaps influencing the process, to begin what I think is a major reform.

As you know, the Government is responsible for much of the education in Washington, DC. And so working with people in Congress, we decided to expand on the spirit of the No Child Left Behind Act and introduce school choice here in Washington. Under this program, the Federal Government would provide what's called scholarships to low-income families with children in under-performing schools—these families whose children clearly need better choices; if you're going to an under-performing school, you need a better choice—would receive a scholarship of up to $7,500, Federal money, to help meet the cost of tuition at any school of the parents' choice, a private school or a Catholic school, for that matter.

I suspect that this program would have a lot of takers when we can get it funded, because I think some parents, any parent, regardless of his or her income status, wants the best for their child. And when they begin to feel like the school isn't meeting the child's needs, it's just natural that they be looking for an alternative. The Catholic school system here in DC provides a really good alternative. And the Federal Government is now willing to help fund that alternative.

The good news is education is a priority in DC. The Mayor, a good fellow and a

strong leader, recognizes the advantages of having a school choice program. Mayor Tony Williams is a strong supporter of the initiative we put forth on Capitol Hill. The House passed a bill that provides $14 million for this $7,500 per child scholarship program. It is a part of the Senate omnibus bill—that's what we call it, an omnibus bill—that has yet to be passed. The omnibus bill contains a lot of other parts of the appropriations process. The Senate is getting ready to come back into town. For the sake of educational excellence and for the sake of trusting parents to make the right decision for their children, for the sake, really, of helping to begin a change in education around the country, for the sake of helping the Catholic schools in the DC area fulfill their mission, meet their obligation, and to continue doing the excellent work they're doing, the Senate needs to pass this bill and make school choice in Washington, DC, a reality.

I want to build on this vital reform. I'm going to ask Congress to provide 50 million new dollars in this year's budget for what we call a national choice incentive fund. The program would award Federal grants to communities and organizations that help students, especially those from low-income families and those trapped in under-performing schools, to find a better education, become seed money for additional programs like the DC choice program I just described to you.

The initiative has a simple goal, yet it's a profound goal, to help more parents send their children to the school that is best for them, no matter what kind of school it is. When parents have more control over their children's education, children have a better chance to learn, schools have a better incentive to improve.

Much of what is behind the No Child Left Behind Act, the spirit and the philosophy of the No Child Left Behind Act, came from the examples set by the Catholic schools. It's a sense of what is possible. It is a sense that everybody has worth, that each soul matters. And therefore, we will not accept systems that just shuffle people through.

Everyone involved in the National Catholic Education Association can look back with pride over 100 years of excellence. And that's what we're here to celebrate today, 100 years of excellence. You are serving God by serving our children. You are making America a stronger and more compassionate country, one child at a time. Congratulations and thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:10 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Bishop Gregory J. Aymond of Austin, TX; Dorian Anderson, wife of Carl Anderson, Supreme Knight of the Knights of Columbus; and Theodore Cardinal McCarrick, Archbishop of Washington, DC. He also referred to Title I of the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 (Public Law No. 103–382), which amended Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (Public Law No. 89–10).

Memorandum on the Safety, Health, and Return-to-Employment (SHARE) Initiative
January 9, 2004

Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies

Subject: The Safety, Health, and Return-to-Employment (SHARE) Initiative

The cost of Federal workplace injuries, when measured by workers' compensation losses, is more than $2 billion and 2 million lost production days annually. In fiscal year 2003, the Federal workforce of almost 2.7 million filed more than 168,000 injury claims. Behind these numbers lie pain and suffering by workers and their families. Clearly, Government agencies should strive to do more to improve workplace safety and health and reduce the costs of injury to workers and taxpayers. Many workplace injuries are preventable.

Therefore, I am establishing SHARE: Safety, Health, and Return-to-Employment Initiative, a safe workplace initiative for fiscal years 2004–2006. The initiative's four goals cover the most important elements of a strong safety and health management program: lower workplace injury and illness case rates, lower lost-time injury and illness case rates, timely reporting of injuries and illnesses, and fewer lost days resulting from work injuries and illnesses. The Secretary of Labor will lead the SHARE Initiative and will measure the performance of each department and agency against the goals. I direct all executive branch departments and agencies to participate in SHARE for this 3-year period.

Each department and agency will collaborate with the Department of Labor to establish challenging annual goals based on its current performance in the four areas. The Department of Labor will measure and track agency performance, and will report to me annually on each agency's progress towards meeting its goals. The Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration and Office of Workers' Compensation Programs will also work with Federal departments and agencies to develop new workplace strategies to improve safety and health at high injury rate sites, assist them in improving the timeliness of reporting claims through electronic and other means, and guide them in providing suitable work and tools for injured and disabled employees.

Federal supervisors and managers must focus management tools and resources on eliminating unsafe and unhealthy working conditions. Federal employees should be encouraged to perform their jobs safely, effectively, and alertly to remain injury-free. Dedication to ensuring our Government workforce family is safe and healthy preserves the resources of Government and helps promote the delivery of Government services to the American people.

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this memorandum.

The President's Radio Address
January 10, 2004

Good morning. As the year 2004 begins, America's economy is strong and getting stronger. More Americans than ever own their own homes. More businesses are

investing. More manufacturers are seeing increased activity than at any time in the last 20 years. Stock market wealth has increased by more than $3 trillion over the past year. And over the past 5 months, more than a quarter-million Americans started work at new jobs. In December, the unemployment rate fell to 5.7 percent, from a high of 6.3 percent last June.

This latest report underscores a choice about the future of our economy and the future of those who are looking for work. We can continue on the path to prosperity and new jobs, a path marked by a progrowth agenda that has cut taxes on paychecks for 109 million American taxpayers, or we can reverse the course by raising taxes on hard-working Americans. The choice is clear. Tax relief has got this economy going again, and tax relief will keep it moving forward.

In my budget for the upcoming fiscal year, I will call on Congress to make permanent all the tax relief we have delivered to the American people and our Nation's small businesses. If Congress fails to act, this tax relief will disappear, and millions of American families and small businesses would see tax hikes starting in 2005. For the sake of our economic expansion and for the sake of millions of Americans who depend on small businesses for their jobs, we need Congress to act and to make tax relief permanent.

Every American who pays income taxes got a tax cut. They should keep that tax cut in the future. American families saw the child credit double to $1,000 per child. They should keep that higher credit. American investors, including millions of seniors, saw taxes fall on dividend income and investment gains. They should keep that tax relief. American small businesses received new tax incentives to invest in equipment and software. They should keep those incentives. Every American family, including every farmer, rancher, and small-business owner, will see the death tax disappear in 2010 then reappear in 2011. But the death tax should stay buried.

Now is not the time to turn our backs on America's families and workers and entrepreneurs by letting much-needed tax relief expire. Making tax relief permanent is a simple step that would keep our economy growing so that every American who wants to work can find a job.

We must continue to take other steps to promote growth and job creation throughout our economy. We must promote free and fair trade, reform our class action system, and help businesses and their employees address the problem of rising health care costs.

To serve the economic needs of our country, we must also reform our immigration laws. Reform must begin by confronting a basic fact of life and economics: Some of the jobs being generated in America's growing economy are jobs American citizens are not filling. This past week, I proposed a new temporary-worker program that would match willing foreign workers with willing American employers when no Americans can be found to fill the jobs. If an American employer is offering a job that American citizens are not willing to take, we ought to welcome into our country a person who will fill that job.

This temporary-worker program represents the best tradition of our society. It will help strengthen our economy, return order to our immigration system, and secure our homeland.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 9:54 a.m. on January 9 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on January 10. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 9 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

The President's News Conference With President Vicente Fox of Mexico in Monterrey, Mexico
January 12, 2004

President Fox. Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. President Bush, welcome to Mexico, and welcome to Monterrey. We receive you with great enthusiasm, the way we are receiving the leaders of the countries of America. We have great expectations in order to work in this extraordinary Summit of the Americas.

In order to know each other better—all of us leaders that have responsibilities in America—it's best to analyze extraordinary matters that have been brought about in the last few years, since the last meeting of the Americas. While checking and making a revision on these matters, we can give broad solutions to the problems—economic and poverty problems in a great part of the continent; perhaps solutions to the problems of human capital, social capital in our respective countries; and likewise deal, as we have been doing in every single meeting, the safety and security matters, going deep inside the problems of corruption, making sure that in our countries, democracy should be there and the state of law should be there. So this meeting will enable us to give steps forward in all these multilateral topics.

Likewise, we have had a bilateral meeting—and I will mention this later on, a couple of matters, important matters in reference to this bilateral conversation. First of all, relating to the migration topic, President Bush has given us in full detail and has told us once again the proposal made in the United States for the migration matters and the policy that should be checked upon that—that topic. It's a sovereign matter of the United States.

Consequently, this migration proposal is analyzed according to the different conversations that President Bush and President Fox, myself, even when he was a Governor in the State of Texas and I was a Governor in the State of Guanajuato. Since that time, we have been touching upon this subject, and we did that in the first meeting in Rancho San Cristobal in the State of Guanajuato. We did it once again, and we spoke about migration. We have been doing this in each one of the different meetings.

So I would like to give full acknowledgement that part of the conversations, a great part of the conversations have been collected and analyzed. But this is a proposal made by the President of the United States. We totally agree and are aware that the proposal should be discussed, broadly discussed, analyzed, particularly in the Congress of the United States. Consequently, we should give full time so that the idea—well, the idea should mature, and it should definitely be approved.

So for us in Mexico, this is a very important step forward on what has to do with the relationship between the two countries, on what has to do with the migration flow. It is a topic with a great priority for our countries, for both countries. This proposal opens an opportunity to have a certain movement, a certain situation, important for many millions of Mexicans. It is a priority. It is a valuable proposal, and by all means, it will have to do with the improvement of the situation of these migrants, but it will have to do as well with the strengthening of our respective economies—that on the one hand.

On the other, the topic that we have been dealing with is the initiative of North America, by means of which both Governments want to work with very specific objectives so as to create a greater economic growth, increase productivity and competitiveness within the region through the reduction of costs, and facilitating trade flows, promoting development of common markets in different specific sectors. And it has

as an objective to establish a security regional framework protecting Mexico, the United States, and Canada from terrorism.

Several tables, working tables, analyze the normalization of different standards within the market in automobiles, food, agriculture products, construction materials, and consumption goods. Likewise, there's a table that has to do with trade and services. Another one is working on energy; another one in scientific and technological cooperation; another one, regional cooperation on trade and investment. Consequently, it is a great effort so as to achieve the objectives that I just mentioned.

President Bush, once again, thank you for visiting us. Thank you for being here. This summit, this meeting, will allow us to be near the different Presidents, the different leaders of Latin America, the Caribbean area, Central America, and by all means North America. And it will be for the good of this continent in the future. Thank you.

President Bush. Thank you, Mr. President. Laura and I are—really appreciate your hospitality. We want to thank you and Marta for being our friends. I remember well our visit to your ranch. And to this end, we would like to extend an invitation to both you and the First Lady of Mexico to visit our ranch on March the 5th and 6th. I hope you can find—I hope it's a convenient date for you on your calendar because we'd love to have you there.

The bonds of friendship and shared values between our two nations are strong. We have worked together to overcome many mutual challenges, and that work is yielding results. Today, Mexico is America's second largest trading partner, and we are Mexico's largest. Every day, thousands of Americans and Mexicans cross the border in both directions for reason of commerce and tourism. And many Americans settle—many Mexicans settle in America, bringing with them optimism and a strong desire to succeed. They come to fulfill their dreams, and in the process they enrich our Nation.

Last week, I proposed a new temporary-worker program that will help further the cause of safe, legal, and orderly migration. This temporary-worker program will match willing foreign workers with willing American employers when no Americans can be found to fill the jobs. Under this program, undocumented workers currently in the United States will be able to come out of the shadows and establish legal identities. All participants in the program will be issued a temporary-worker card that will allow them to travel back and forth between their home and the United States without fear of being denied reentry into our country.

This plan is not amnesty, placing undocumented workers on the automatic path of citizenship. I oppose amnesty because it encourages the violation of our laws and perpetuates illegal immigration. My proposal expects that most temporary workers will eventually return permanently to their home countries when the period of work that I will be negotiating with the Congress has expired. And I think it's important to give financial incentives to those workers in order for them to make the decision to return home permanently.

I'll work with President Fox and other leaders on a plan to give temporary workers credit in their home countries' retirement systems for the time they worked in the United States. I support making it easier for temporary workers to contribute a portion of their earnings to tax-preferred savings accounts, money they can collect as they return to their native countries.

Under this program, the United States will benefit from the honest labor of foreign workers. Our neighbors will benefit as productive citizens return home with money to invest and to spend in their own nation's economy. This program will be more humane, humane to workers, and will live up to the highest ideals of our nations.

While my Nation benefits from the dreams that newcomers bring to America, I believe that people should be better able to achieve their dreams at their own home. The best way in the long term to reduce the pressures that create illegal immigration is to expand economic opportunity in countries at both ends of an immigrant's journey. This is why President Fox and I are committed to free and fair trade. We've seen it lift both our nations and our economies. Since 1994, trade between our two countries has grown from $100 billion to $232 billion. We will continue to work together and with Canada to enhance North American prosperity and security.

We're also working to reduce the cost of sending money home to families and local communities. These remittances exceed $10 billion per year. But the cost of such transfers reduces the amount of money that hardworking people can return to their families. Our two countries have made it a priority to keep hard-earned money in the hands of those who need it most. In recent years, our efforts under our U.S.-Mexico Partnership for Prosperity Initiative have reduced the cost of remittances by almost 60 percent.

Two years ago, in this city, world leaders agreed on a vision to expand opportunity and spread prosperity throughout the hemisphere. With this year's Special Summit, we continue to put that vision into action. Through the Inter-American Development Bank, we are expanding access to credit for small-business entrepreneurs, the key engines of growth and job creation for any nation's economy. We're helping nations improve their legal systems to protect property rights so that owners can use their property as collateral to finance the purchase of a home or to start a business. We're investing in the health and education of our peoples, and we're intensifying our common fight against corruption.

President Fox and I will also continue our efforts to support democracy in the region. We will work with the Organization of American States to ensure the integrity of the Presidential recall and referendum process underway in Venezuela. And as part of our effort to protect the institutions of democracy in Bolivia, we will cochair the initial meeting of the Bolivia Support Group in Washington this coming Friday.

Our bilateral relationship is strong. This summit's agenda is full. The United States will continue to work with our friends in the neighborhood in a spirit of common purpose and mutual respect.

Thank you, Mr. President.

Temporary-Worker Program/Airport Security

Q. Question for both of you. President Fox, once more on migrating matters, what else did the Mexican Government propose? What else can we expect for the Mexican workers? Can we aspire the same treatment of the Canadian ones without any approaches? What are the purposes in reference to migrants? Does this have election purposes? And will the United States avoid violating the human rights in our airports? What is the question, and the question is addressed for both Presidents. Thank you.

President Fox. First of all, I would like to say, what else can we wish? What we want is the plan presented by President Bush. We hope that the plan has a happy ending, through the political process that should be followed within the United States so that it can be approved in the Congress of the United States.

I would say that this is what we want. The plan, as it was mentioned before, is a very important step forward for many Mexican workers in the United States. Those that have the direct benefit of this will recognize and acknowledge this proposal that has a great importance for them. Not only because they can see that their labor rights and their human rights are completely respected there but there is a human face on this proposal, a human face that has to do with the families of these workers. Consequently, for us it is a plan

that meets the demands and its measures. And our will should be to support the plan to be achieved and go on.

In reference to safety matters on the airports and the flights, that is a sovereign decision in Mexico to implement these safety and security programs within the airports and within the Mexican airlines. So we are not violating any human right of any sort of citizen. What we're doing is paying special attention so as to avoid terrorist acts, violent acts within the Mexican territory or within the Mexican airlines.

And in this same approach, we mention that there's no direct intervention of no official personnel, policemen, agents—direct intervention, direct participation in operations that have to do with the assurance of this task within the Mexican airports or within the Mexican airlines. What we do have is a participation and an exchange with the personnel, the liaison personnel, the link personnel for security. We exchange information so as to do our work much better.

We reject any other sort of information, different information that has been brought about that in these activities—well, we can state that only Mexican personnel participates, agents of the airlines or agents of security here in Mexico. Thus, there is no intervention in the direct operation of any other official agent from abroad. It is the liaison officers, the link offices; we exchange information the way we agreed upon with President Bush since the beginning of our conversations in Rancho San Cristobal.

And we have a mutual trust—that's the way we started—so that the security and safety institutions would trust each other, they could have an exchange of information, and they could be very, very efficient in their work. Never, never before had we reached efficiency level fighting organized crime, guaranteeing the security and safety of the different passengers, stopping, let's say, loads of drug, drug trafficking the way we have been achieving this in the last few years, based upon mutual trust and based on this coordinated work between the two parts.

President Bush. Mr. President, I appreciate your wonderful cooperation that we've achieved between our two countries. You've just articulated that level of cooperation in a way that I don't think I ever could. So that's my answer to the second question you asked.

My answer to the first question you asked is that I proposed this change in immigration law because I think it is the right thing to do. It recognizes the reality of our country. The President and I talked about whether or not—the ramifications of this initiative to Mexico. But the migration policy applies to all foreign workers. But the truth of the matter is, the vast majority of foreign workers in America are from Mexico. We know that in Texas very well. And I repeat to you that this is—these workers are a benefit to my country. These are hard-working, decent, honorable people that are in our country because—to fill jobs that others won't take, on the one hand, and also to make a living, to put money—to get money and to send money back to their families. There is a deep human desire for a mother or a father to provide for his or her family. And that's how I view the motivations of good, decent Mexican citizens working in our country.

And it seems like to me, it makes sense to have laws that treat people with respect. We are a country of law. Rule of law is important in America. And therefore, we ought to not have a system that is based upon a undocumented underclass but a system that is based upon law.

And so I—you said something about politics—yes, there's politics involved. But the reason I made—and there will be politics probably involved in whether or not it passes Congress. But the reason I proposed the initiative is because it is the right thing for America to do.

Iraq

Q. Thank you, Mr. President, President Fox. My question is about Iraq. The death toll in Iraq, the American death toll, is approaching 500. I wonder whether you have any reservations now about whether that toll is worth it to achieve your objectives in Iraq and the Middle East.

President Fox, you had a disagreement with the President going into the war. I wonder whether you aired that out during your meeting just now, whether you now see eye-to-eye on postwar Iraq. Thank you.

President Bush. A democratic, free Iraq is in the national interests of our country. A free country in the midst of the Middle East will make America more secure and, matter of fact, make any country more secure. And the decision I made was a tough decision.

We've had discussions prior to the decision and after the decision. Vicente Fox is a good enough friend for him to be able to express his opinion to me without the loss of friendship, and he didn't agree with the decision I made. But the decision I made was the right one for America, and history will prove it's the right one for the world. And we will stay the course until the job is done.

And the job is getting done. Iraq is more free every day. The citizens are beginning—the lives of the citizens are improving every day. And one thing is for certain, there won't be any more mass graves and torture rooms and rape rooms. The tyrant will no longer come back to threaten the Iraqi people. These people will be able to live in—these Iraqi citizens will not only be able to live in a free society; they'll be able to live in a society that is free from one of the most brutal dictators in the world's history.

President Fox. As a democratic nation, to meet the challenge of terrorism, to make sure that terrorism is eradicated from the face of this world—that's our challenge today, and that's what we work on. It is why we congratulate the U.S. Government that they withheld Saddam Hussein, and he will be taken to trial, to judgment. We fully support that, and we congratulate President Bush and the United States for that very important accomplishment, which is for the better of all nations, all families, all people in the world that would want to live in peace without terrorism.

Free Trade Agreements

Q. Good afternoon. My question is addressed for both Presidents, if you can really talk about a free trade agreement—[*inaudible*]—North America, between Mexico, United States, and Canada, in the midst of all the problems of commercial exchange such as transportation, food, agricultural sector. Second question: Can you achieve a free trade agreement of the Americas with the opposition of many countries such as Brazil and Venezuela?

President Fox. Well, in the case of a free trade agreement of North America, we have clearly pointed out many a time that it has been successful for Mexico. We are very much satisfied with what has been achieved in the last 10 years. Mexico is the ninth economy in the world. It has enabled Mexico to have the size of the seventh power for exports in the world and a per capita income going beyond, let's say, $6,000, the highest in Latin America. These are things that have been brought about because of this relation that has been established. And we have worked upon that for 10 years.

I read a report of the ILO about Latin America and unemployment and wages and salaries of the different workers. And Mexico has the best, let's say, rate on unemployment in Latin America, improving the situation, improving the actual wages of the workers in Latin America—the only one in Latin America. And by all means, this is coming from the free trade agreements. Consequently, we are satisfied with the free trade agreement, and it should continue operating and working with success.

On a parallel basis, we have thought about the Initiative of North America to thrust and develop our economies much more, achieving competitiveness and productivity, generating jobs and quality of life in our respective countries. It is a parallel, an additional pathway.

And as President Bush already mentioned in reference to the Association for Prosperity—the document known as Partnership For Prosperity, that's the name of the document—it has many—[*inaudible*]—we work day by day so as to thrust and improve the document. So we're giving steps forward in this direction—that on the one hand.

On the other, as a consequence of this, Mexico is a passionate promoter of the free trade agreements in the Americas. We are totally in favor of the free trade agreement for the American Continent, by all means. And we're working in favor and working actively so that it will be achieved as soon as possible. We received with great satisfaction the results of the last meeting in Miami, Florida, where the agreement is to continue building this free trade agreement so as to have it ready on the foreseen dates that we thought about. So we are working enthusiastically in this field.

By all means, we do not only want a free trade agreement but we want a very good free trade agreement, an agreement with quality and that has to do with trade that would take development to the less developed countries, the poorest countries in our continent, that could take development to the different regions where there's greater poverty in our continent. And that is the fundamental purpose of this agreement.

Trade promotes development, undoubtedly. Trade undoubtedly promotes the reduction of poverty. And trade and relations amongst countries promote human capital. So we are absolutely in favor of trusting and supporting this agreement.

President Bush. It's helped America; it's helped Mexico; it's helped Canada. I think we need to move the process forward—the President and I discussed that earlier today—with the North American Initiative.

The President is absolutely right. The best way to eradicate poverty is to encourage trade between nations. Trade gives people hope and provides opportunity. Obviously, that must be coupled with anticorruption measures, like the President has done here in Mexico. It must be coupled with good education measures. At this meeting, we're going to talk about ways to get capital into the hands of the entrepreneurial classes of respective countries. But without trade, there's going to be—it's going to be hard for some people to find opportunity.

And so I hope those who have expressed some opposition about the free trade agreement of the Americas look at the facts. And the fact is that NAFTA has lifted lives and ended poverty in some parts of our—in our neighborhood. And to this end, the United States will not only push for the free trade agreement of the Americas; we will continue trade agreements with countries like Chile—we just concluded one with Chile—but with the Central American countries, Andean countries. We believe in trade. We believe it's in the interest of the neighborhood that we trade freely.

Paul O'Neill

Q. Thank you, President Fox. President Bush, is it true, as your former Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill says, that you started planning for the invasion of Iraq within days of your inauguration? Do you feel betrayed? And should he have released those documents?

President Bush. First, let me say I appreciate former Secretary O'Neill's service to our country. We worked together during some difficult times. We worked together when the country was in recession, and now we're coming out of recession, which is positive news. We worked together when America was attacked on September the 11th, which changed how I viewed the

world. September the 11th made me realize that America was no longer protected by oceans and we had to take threats very seriously, no matter where they may be materializing.

And no, the stated policy of my administration towards Saddam Hussein was very clear. Like the previous administration, we were for regime change. And in the initial stages of the administration, as you might remember, we were dealing with Desert Badger or fly-overs and fly-betweens and looks, and so we were fashioning policy along those lines. And then, all of a sudden, September the 11th hit. And as the President of the United States, my most solemn obligation is to protect the security of the American people. That's my—to me that's the most solemn thing an American President or any President must do. And I took that duty very seriously.

And as you know, not only did we deal with the Taliban, we gave—working through the United Nations and working through the international community, we made it clear that Saddam Hussein should disarm. And like he had done with a lot of previous resolutions, he ignored the world's demands. And now he's no longer in power, and the world is better for it. The Iraqi people are better for it; America is better for it; Mexico is better for it. The world is more peaceful as a result of Saddam Hussein not being in power.

And the task at hand, Mr. President—and he and I—he knows this fully well—is to make sure that the aspirations of the Iraqi people are allowed to flourish. And we'll get there. It's a tough task right now. It's hard work, but we've done hard work in the past. And a free Iraq is going to be in the world's interest.

Thank you very much.

President Fox. Thank you, Mr. President. Good afternoon.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 2:12 p.m. at the Quinta Real Hotel. In his remarks, President Bush referred to Marta Sahagun de Fox, wife of President Fox; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. President Fox and some reporters spoke in Spanish, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks Prior to Discussions With President Ricardo Lagos of Chile in Monterrey

January 12, 2004

President Bush. Listen, I'm honored to be here with *el Presidente de Chile,* Ricardo Lagos. Mr. President, thank you for your leadership and friendship. We have had a very close working relationship. And the people of the world should take notice of the fact that Chile and America negotiated and finalized a free trade agreement, a free trade agreement which is in the interests of the people of America and the people of Chile. It's an example of the bilateral trade relationships that my Government thinks is important.

But beyond that, we've got a relationship based upon shared values. The President is a strong leader who believes in human dignity and human rights and in freedom. And for that, Mr. President, I'm grateful for your strong voice here in our neighborhood. It's good to see you again, sir. Thank you. You're looking good these days.

[*At this point, President Lagos spoke in Spanish, and no translation was provided. He then continued in English.*]

President Lagos. Your Spanish is improving. [*Laughter*]

President Bush. Thank you. I appreciate that.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:23 p.m. at the Presidente InterContinental Hotel. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Statement on the Next Steps in a Strategic Partnership With India
January 12, 2004

In November 2001, Prime Minister Vajpayee and I committed our countries to a strategic partnership. Since then, our two countries have strengthened bilateral cooperation significantly in several areas. Today we announce the next steps in implementing our shared vision.

The United States and India agree to expand cooperation in three specific areas: civilian nuclear activities, civilian space programs, and high-technology trade. In addition, we agree to expand our dialog on missile defense. Cooperation in these areas will deepen the ties of commerce and friendship between our two nations and will increase stability in Asia and beyond.

The proposed cooperation will progress through a series of reciprocal steps that will build on each other. It will include expanded engagement on nuclear regulatory and safety issues and missile defense, ways to enhance cooperation in peaceful uses of space technology, and steps to create the appropriate environment for successful high-technology commerce. In order to combat the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, relevant laws, regulations, and procedures will be strengthened, and measures to increase bilateral and international cooperation in this area will be employed. These cooperative efforts will be undertaken in accordance with our respective national laws and international obligations.

The expanded cooperation launched today is an important milestone in transforming the relationship between the United States and India. That relationship is based increasingly on common values and common interests. We are working together to promote global peace and prosperity. We are partners in the war on terrorism, and we are partners in controlling the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the means to deliver them.

The vision of U.S.-India strategic partnership that Prime Minister Vajpayee and I share is now becoming a reality.

Remarks at the Inauguration Ceremony of the Special Summit of the Americas in Monterrey
January 12, 2004

Mr. President, I thank you for your wonderful hospitality. First Lady, thank you as well. Please thank the people of this gracious city for hosting such a distinguished group of leaders, spouses, citizens of the world.

Two years ago in this city, world leaders formed the Monterrey Consensus. We pledged to work for government that is responsive to the basic needs of every human being and for policies that promote opportunity for all. At this year's summit, we

are embracing the challenge of implementing that consensus to bring all the hemisphere's people into an expanding circle of development.

To advance these goals, my Nation revolutionized the way we provide aid, and we substantially increased our aid to developing countries. Under our new Compact for Development, U.S. assistance is linked to good governments, investment in people, and economic freedom. Development assistance should light a path to reform and economic growth rather than perpetuate the need for further aid.

The nations of this hemisphere must identify concrete steps to implement the noble ideas of the Monterrey Consensus. We must work to provide quality education and quality health care for all our citizens, especially for those suffering from HIV/AIDS. We must also chart a clear course toward a vibrant free market that will help lift people out of poverty and create a healthy middle class. We must increase the credit available to small businesses that generate the majority of jobs in all our economies and reduce the time that it takes to start a business. We must strengthen property rights so that land can be leveraged as a source of capital to start businesses or hire new workers. And we must lower the cost of sending money home to the families of hard-working men and women who are earning a living abroad.

Over the long term, trade is the most certain path to lasting prosperity. The openness of our market is the key driver of growth in the region and a testament to the United States' belief in the mutual benefits of trade. Last year, about 83 percent of Latin America's exports to the United States, roughly $176 billion worth of goods, entered my country duty-free. My country is committed to free and fair trade for this hemisphere through the Free Trade Area of the Americas and through the growing number of bilateral free trade agreements we have completed and are negotiating. Our NAFTA partners have been vital free trade allies for 10 years now.

Our free trade agreement with Chile entered into force on the first of this year. We're completing a free trade agreement with our Central American partners. This week we'll launch negotiations with the Dominican Republic, and soon we'll begin negotiations with Panama and some of our Andean friends. Once completed, these free trade agreements will cover more than two-thirds of the GDP of America's neighbors.

The essential foundations of prosperity and progress remain democracy and the rule of law. All nations must prevail in the fight against corruption. We must deny safe haven to corrupt officials and create a culture of transparency in the Americas. Today I signed a proclamation denying corrupt officials entry into my country. I urge other countries to take similar actions.

At past summits, we resolved that democracy is the only legitimate form of government in this hemisphere and that the peoples of the Americas have an obligation to promote it and defend it. Those governments in our hemisphere that have responded by supporting democracy can be proud. Our unity and support of democratic institutions, constitutional processes, and basic liberties gives hope and strength to those struggling to preserve their God-given rights, whether in Venezuela or Haiti or Bolivia.

And through our democratic example, we must continue to stand with the brave people of Cuba, who for nearly half a century have endured the tyrannies and repression. Dictatorship has no place in the Americas. We must all work for a rapid, peaceful transition to democracy in Cuba. Together we will succeed, because the spirit of liberty still thrives, even in the darkest corners of Castro's prisons.

We have great opportunities to work together to improve the quality of life for all the people of this hemisphere. To realize our common vision, we must set goals

that are specific and measurable. In doing so, we will affirm our determination to succeed and to give hope to millions.

Together we will implement the Monterrey Consensus, lift all our nations, and show the world that free societies and free markets can deliver real benefits to our citizens.

May God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:12 p.m. at the Parque Fundidora. In his remarks, he referred to President Vicente Fox of Mexico and his wife, Marta Sahagun de Fox; and President Fidel Castro of Cuba.

Remarks Following Discussions With Prime Minister Paul Martin of Canada and an Exchange With Reporters in Monterrey

January 13, 2004

President Bush. The Prime Minister and I just had a very constructive meeting. He's a straightforward fellow. He's easy to talk to. We talked about a lot of issues. We reaffirmed the important relationship between Canada and the United States. It's a vital relationship. It is a relationship that is important for a lot of reasons. The most important reason is that we share the same values of family and human dignity and treating people decently, and I really look forward to working with Prime Minister Martin.

Prime Minister Martin. Well, I can certainly say the same thing. We share a continent, and we share values, and we share a perspective on what's the best thing for our people. And essentially, working together is really the way we are going to do the best thing for our people.

We discussed a number of individual issues, and I think that we made a lot of progress. And so I feel very good about the meeting, and I feel very good about the relationship.

President Bush. We'll answer a couple, two questions a side. We'll start with Lindlaw [Scott Lindlaw, Associated Press].

Iraqi Reconstruction Contracts/Canada-U.S. Relations

Q. Mr. President, thank you. Dr. Rice hinted last week that Canada might be considered in a new round of contracting for Iraq reconstruction. Where exactly does that stand?

And Mr. Prime Minister, you supported your predecessor's decision to abstain from the Iraq war. Is there any reason to think this relationship is going to thaw out now?

President Bush. That assumes there was a freeze. And I didn't feel there was. I understood why people disagreed with the decision I took.

Secondly, yes, when I talked to Prime Minister Martin on our first phone call, I told him that Canada would be given serious consideration for contracting. Here's the—what's going to happen is that, first of all, they've been very strong supporters of the Madrid Conference. They want Iraq to succeed. They want Iraq to be free. They understand the stakes with having a free country in the midst of the Middle East. And Canada right now is eligible for subcontracting bids in the first round of construction projects. In the second round, the second tranche of bidding, Canada will be eligible to bid.

Prime Minister Martin. Yes, essentially, I think that—and I think this really shows how it can work—we had a very good telephone conversation before Christmas, and that subsequently, our officials went to work, and that Canada will be eligible to bid on all of the construction contracts in

the next tranche. And we will—at the same time, there are a whole bunch of non-construction contracts, service contracts that are coming out immediately in which we will be entitled to bid. And so I think that it actually does show that working together, you can arrive at a reasonable solution.

If you'll forgive me for a second, Mr. President, we have two languages in Canada.

[*At this point, the Prime Minister repeated his remarks in French.*]

President Bush. Do you want to call on a Canadian reporter?

Prime Minister Martin. Sure.

Mad Cow Disease

Q. Mr. President, could you tell us, given the mad cow crisis that's currently affecting both of our countries, how will you work with our Prime Minister to help resolve the issue?

President Bush. This is an issue that's going to require close coordination between our two countries. We've got a lot of beef going across our border. We've got beef on the hoof and beef in the box. And the cattle industries are very important for our respective provinces and States. And the best way to make sure that we're able to satisfy the consumers in both our countries as well as around the world is, there ought to be very close coordination on regulation, on information, and on the science.

And I'm confident that we'll be able to assure those who buy Canadian and/or U.S. beef that the products they buy are safe. It's just going to require a very close coordination between our Secretaries of Agriculture, which we are committed to doing. As a matter of fact, they'll be meeting, I believe, sometime this week.

Prime Minister Martin. This is a North American industry, and the solutions are science-based. And those science-based solutions are going to be arrived at between the two of us, and that's where the coordination comes in.

President Bush. You know, I personally haven't stopped eating beef. I like to eat beef and will continue eating beef, because I believe the food supply is safe. But we fully understand that we will work together to make sure that we address as many concerns as possible in a scientifically based way.

Steve [Steve Holland, Reuters].

Space Program

Q. Mr. President, thank you. Can America afford a major shift in the space program, to go back to the moon and then on to Mars?

President Bush. Yes, I'll be saying that tomorrow. Thank you for—have you read the speech yet, Steve?

Q. No.

President Bush. Because you know I——

Q. I was hoping to get some excerpts.

President Bush. ——speech at the White House. Yes, I'll lay out the program—I'm going to give a speech tomorrow at our NASA Headquarters about America's approach to space exploration. I really don't want to give you the details because I want you to pay attention to what I have to say. But I will tell you that the spirit is going to be one of continued exploration, is to find—seeking new horizons and investing in a program that is—that meets that objective. And I'll lay it out tomorrow.

Thank you.

Prime Minister Martin. Let me just say, I'm glad to see that we're not the only Government that's afraid of a leak. [*Laughter*]

President Bush. That's right.

Passport Agreement/Deportation

Q. Mr. President, on the passport agreement, does that signal a special status for Canada in terms of U.S. matters of national security? And can you assure Canada that beyond notifying the potential for deporting a Canadian citizen, that it would not deport a Canadian citizen to a third country that might torture them?

President Bush. What I can assure Canada is that we will do everything we can—will do to protect our country from attack. That's one thing I will assure, which should make Canadians very happy to hear, because we've got a lot of Canadians living in the United States, and we've got a lot of Canadians with relatives in the United States.

Secondly, I will assure Canadians that we will work very closely with the Martin Government on issues—passport issues. And one of the things that I promised him is that there will be prior notification prior to any consideration of deportation. We owe it to the Government to be forthcoming and forthright.

Listen, Canada and America have got a special status already. You said "special status"—we've got special status by virtue of the fact that there is significant interchange on an hourly basis between our two countries. I mean, it's a vibrant border; it's an active economic relationship. It is special because we share values. It is special because we share a long border. And the key thing on this issue is to communicate clearly with the authorities, the Canadian authorities, and for me to communicate clearly with my counterpart, the Prime Minister.

Prime Minister Martin. Look, I think that, again, under international law, countries have the right to deport to a third country. And what's really happened here is that there has been a—agreement that consular services will be provided and prior notification. And that is very, very important, and that is—that's pretty unique.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9 a.m. at the Presidente InterContinental Hotel. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration
January 14, 2004

Thanks for the warm welcome. I'm honored to be with the men and women of NASA. I thank those of you who have come in person. I welcome those who are listening by video. This agency and the dedicated professionals who serve it have always reflected the finest values of our country, daring, discipline, ingenuity, and unity in the pursuit of great goals.

America is proud of our space program. The risktakers and visionaries of this agency have expanded human knowledge, have revolutionized our understanding of the universe, and produced technological advances that have benefited all of humanity.

Inspired by all that has come before and guided by clear objectives, today we set a new course for America's space program. We will give NASA a new focus and vision for future exploration. We will build new ships to carry man forward into the universe, to gain a new foothold on the moon, and to prepare for new journeys to worlds beyond our own.

I am comfortable in delegating these new goals to NASA, under the leadership of Sean O'Keefe. He's doing an excellent job. I appreciate Commander Mike Foale's introduction. I'm sorry I couldn't shake his hand. [*Laughter*] Perhaps, Commissioner, you'll bring him by—Administrator, you'll bring him by to the Oval Office when he returns, so I can thank him in person.

I also know he is in space with his colleague, Alexander Kaleri, who happens to be a Russian cosmonaut. I appreciate the joint efforts of the Russians with our country to explore. I want to thank the astronauts who are with us, the courageous

spacial entrepreneurs who set such a wonderful example for the young of our country.

And we've got some veterans with us today. I appreciate the astronauts of yesterday who are with us as well, who inspired the astronauts of today to serve our country.

I appreciate so very much the Members of Congress being here. Tom DeLay is here, leading a House delegation. Senator Nelson is here from the Senate. I am honored that you all have come. I appreciate you're interested in the subject. [*Laughter*] It is a subject that's important to this administration. It's a subject that's mighty important to the country and to the world.

Two centuries ago, Meriwether Lewis and William Clark left St. Louis to explore the new lands acquired in the Louisiana Purchase. They made that journey in the spirit of discovery, to learn the potential of vast new territory and to chart a way for others to follow. America has ventured forth into space for the same reasons. We have undertaken space travel because the desire to explore and understand is part of our character.

And that quest has brought tangible benefits that improve our lives in countless ways. The exploration of space has led to advances in weather forecasting, in communications, in computing, search and rescue technology, robotics, and electronics. Our investment in space exploration helped to create our satellite telecommunications network and the Global Positioning System. Medical technologies that help prolong life, such as the imaging processing used in CAT scanners and MRI machines, trace their origins to technology engineered for the use in space.

Our current programs and vehicles for exploring space have brought us far, and they have served us well. The space shuttle has flown more than a hundred missions. It has been used to conduct important research and to increase the sum of human knowledge. Shuttle crews and the scientists and engineers who support them have helped build the International Space Station.

Telescopes, including those in space, have revealed more than 100 planets in the last decade alone. Probes have shown us stunning images of the rings of Saturn and the outer planets of our solar system. Robotic explorers have found evidence of water, a key ingredient for life, on Mars and on the moons of Jupiter. At this very hour, the Mars Exploration Rover Spirit is searching for evidence of life beyond the Earth.

Yet for all these successes, much remains for us to explore and to learn. In the past 30 years, no human being has set foot on another world or ventured farther upward into space than 386 miles, roughly the distance from Washington, DC, to Boston, Massachusetts. America has not developed a new vehicle to advance human exploration in space in nearly a quarter-century. It is time for America to take the next steps.

Today I announce a new plan to explore space and extend a human presence across our solar system. We will begin the effort quickly, using existing programs and personnel. We'll make steady progress, one mission, one voyage, one landing at a time.

Our first goal is to complete the International Space Station by 2010. We will finish what we have started. We will meet our obligations to our 15 international partners on this project. We will focus our future research aboard the station on the long-term effects of space travel on human biology. The environment of space is hostile to human beings. Radiation and weightlessness pose dangers to human health, and we have much to learn about their long-term effects before human crews can venture through the vast voids of space for months at a time. Research onboard the station and here on Earth will help us better understand and overcome the obstacles that limit exploration. Through these

efforts, we will develop the skills and techniques necessary to sustain further space exploration.

To meet this goal, we will return the space shuttle to flight as soon as possible, consistent with safety concerns and the recommendations of the Columbia Accident Investigation Board. The shuttle's chief purpose over the next several years will be to help finish assembly of the International Space Station. In 2010, the space shuttle, after nearly 30 years of duty, will be retired from service.

Our second goal is to develop and test a new spacecraft, the crew exploration vehicle, by 2008 and to conduct the first manned mission no later than 2014. The crew exploration vehicle will be capable of ferrying astronauts and scientists to the space station after the shuttle is retired. But the main purpose of this spacecraft will be to carry astronauts beyond our orbit to other worlds. This will be the first spacecraft of its kind since the Apollo Command Module.

Our third goal is to return to the moon by 2020, as the launching point for missions beyond. Beginning no later than 2008, we will send a series of robotic missions to the lunar surface to research and prepare for future human exploration. Using the crew exploration vehicle, we will undertake extended human missions to the moon as early as 2015, with the goal of living and working there for increasingly extended periods of time. Eugene Cernan, who is with us today, the last man to set foot on the lunar surface, said this as he left, "We leave as we came, and God willing as we shall return, with peace and hope for all mankind." America will make those words come true.

Returning to the moon is an important step for our space program. Establishing an extended human presence on the moon could vastly reduce the costs of further space exploration, making possible ever more ambitious missions. Lifting heavy spacecraft and fuel out of the Earth's gravity is expensive. Spacecraft assembled and provisioned on the moon could escape its far lower gravity using far less energy and thus far less cost. Also, the moon is home to abundant resources. Its soil contains raw materials that might be harvested and processed into rocket fuel or breathable air. We can use our time on the moon to develop and test new approaches and technologies and systems that will allow us to function in other, more challenging environments. The moon is a logical step toward further progress and achievement.

With the experience and knowledge gained on the moon, we will then be ready to take the next steps of space exploration, human missions to Mars and to worlds beyond. Robotic missions will serve as trailblazers, the advanced guard to the unknown. Probes, landers, and other vehicles of this kind continue to prove their worth, sending spectacular images and vast amounts of data back to Earth. Yet the human thirst for knowledge ultimately cannot be satisfied by even the most vivid pictures or the most detailed measurements. We need to see and examine and touch for ourselves. And only human beings are capable of adapting to the inevitable uncertainties posed by space travel.

As our knowledge improves, we'll develop new power generation propulsion, life support, and other systems that can support more distant travels. We do not know where this journey will end, yet we know this: Human beings are headed into the cosmos.

And along this journey, we'll make many technological breakthroughs. We don't know yet what those breakthroughs will be, but we can be certain they'll come and that our efforts will be repaid many times over. We may discover resources on the moon or Mars that will boggle the imagination, that will test our limits to dream. And the fascination generated by further exploration will inspire our young people to study math and science and engineering

and create a new generation of innovators and pioneers.

This will be a great and unifying mission for NASA, and we know that you'll achieve it. I have directed Administrator O'Keefe to review all of NASA's current spaceflight and exploration activities and direct them toward the goals I have outlined. I will also form a commission of private and public sector experts to advise on implementing the vision that I've outlined today. This commission will report to me within 4 months of its first meeting. I'm today naming former Secretary of the Air Force Pete Aldridge to be the chair of the commission. Thank you for being here today, Pete. He has tremendous experience in the Department of Defense and the aerospace industry. He is going to begin this important work right away.

We'll invite other nations to share the challenges and opportunities of this new era of discovery. The vision I outline today is a journey, not a race, and I call on other nations to join us on this journey in a spirit of cooperation and friendship.

Achieving these goals requires a long-term commitment. NASA's current 5-year budget is $86 billion. Most of the funding we need for the new endeavors will come from reallocating $11 billion within that budget. We need some new resources, however. I will call upon Congress to increase NASA's budget by roughly a billion dollars, spread out over the next 5 years. This increase, along with refocusing of our space agency, is a solid beginning to meet the challenges and the goals that we set today. It's only a beginning. Future funding decisions will be guided by the progress we make in achieving these goals.

We begin this venture knowing that space travel brings great risks. The loss of the Space Shuttle *Columbia* was less than one year ago. Since the beginning of our space program, America has lost 23 astronauts and one astronaut from an allied nation, men and women who believed in their mission and accepted the dangers. As one family member said, "The legacy of *Columbia* must carry on—for the benefit of our children and yours." *Columbia's* crew did not turn away from the challenge, and neither will we.

Mankind is drawn to the heavens for the same reason we were once drawn into unknown lands and across the open sea. We choose to explore space because doing so improves our lives and lifts our national spirit. So let us continue the journey.

May God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:25 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to C. Michael Foale, commander, and Alexander Kaleri, flight engineer, Expedition 8, International Space Station; and Senator Bill Nelson of Florida.

Remarks Prior to Discussions With President Jose Maria Aznar of Spain
January 14, 2004

President Bush. Bienvenidos a mi amigo, a friend of mine, a friend of our country, a person who I admire a lot. This is a happy moment and a sad moment. It's happy to be with President Aznar. It is sad to realize this will be the last time he'll come to the Oval Office as the leader of Spain.

I say "sad" because our time together has been very productive for the people of America and, I believe, the people of Spain and the people of the world. We have worked together to spread freedom, and the world is more peaceful today because of the decisions we jointly made.

However, this is not the last time I will see the President. I am confident that the friendship we have made will last beyond our—my time in office and his time in office. I look back—I look forward to welcoming him back to America as a non-President. We'll be members of the ex-Presidents club.

And so, Mr. President, I'm really glad you're here. I look forward to having dinner with you tonight and your great wife. And again, in front of these cameras, I want to thank you for your steadfast leadership, for your courage, for your wisdom, and your advice.

[*At this point, President Aznar spoke in Spanish, and no translation was provided.*]

President Bush. Thank you all.

Q. Translation?

President Bush. He doesn't need to translate for me. I understood every word. [*Laughter*]

[*The interpreter then translated President Aznar's remarks as follows.*]

President Aznar. Good evening, everyone. I want to thank President Bush once again for this very warm welcome, for the invitation, for his hospitality. For me, it is a satisfaction and an honor to be here with him again. I consider him a very good friend. He has been my friend during my time as President of the Government of Spain, and I will continue to consider him my friend afterwards.

And a friend—I am a friend of the United States now, and I will continue to be a friend of the United States in the future. I consider that, at present, the relationship between Spain and the United States is closer and tighter than it has ever been.

I will continue to work to do everything to strengthen the relationship, the Atlantic link. I will work for freedom, for human rights, for democracy, for stability, prosperity around the world. And I know that President Bush will be able to count upon me to continue working in that direction. So I will continue to work for the world and for the relationship between the United States and Spain.

President Bush. Adios.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:28 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Ana Botella de Aznar, wife of President Aznar. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks to Faith-Based and Community Leaders in New Orleans, Louisiana

January 15, 2004

Thank you all very much for your warm welcome. Reverend Brown, thank you for your hospitality, your gracious hospitality. It's not easy to host a President. [*Laughter*] It seems as if the entourages are quite large. So I want to thank you for accommodating me and this cast of characters that travels with me. [*Laughter*] I'm here to talk about something vital to the future of the country, and I appreciate you giving me a chance to share with you my dreams and aspirations for all our citizens.

I'm really not worthy to stand here, when I think about the fact that not only Reverend Brown preaches here on a regular basis, but this is the very place where Martin Luther King stood as well some 42 years ago. It's from this pulpit that he preached. Today would have been his 75th birthday. It's important for our country to honor his life and what he stood for.

Dr. King understood that faith is power greater than all others. That's what he knew. It's an important lesson for us to remember here in America, that God's word can humble the mighty, can lift up the meek, and can bring comfort and strength to all who yearn for justice and freedom. Those of us who are involved with public policy must not fear that philosophy as we all work together to save lives.

I'm at this church to talk about the importance of what we call a Faith-Based Initiative. Really what I'm here to say is that in the land of plenty, we must recognize there are still people who hurt. In the land of plenty, there are people who search for the light, who simply want a chance to succeed and realize their God-given talents. And those of us who have been blessed with the opportunity to help must play to the strength of our country in order to help save lives. The strength of America is found in the hearts and souls of our fellow citizens. This country must not fear the influence of faith in the future of this country. We must welcome faith in order to make America a better place.

So Reverend Brown, thank you, and thank your wife, Mary, and your son, Benjie, for your hospitality. I appreciate so very much the Governor being here. The Governor not only was kind enough to meet me at the airport, but she was kind enough to ride from the airport to this church. We had a good discussion about the needs of Louisiana. She's not a shrinking violet when it comes to describing what she would like to see in terms of responsiveness. I appreciate that. I'm glad you brought Coach. [*Laughter*]

I'm honored that Congressman David Vitter has traveled today with me. Thank you, Congressman, for coming. The mayor was at our roundtable discussion, which, by the way, happened to be at a square table, but—[*laughter*]—I appreciate working with the mayor.

Traveling with me today from Washington, DC, is a longtime friend. He is the Acting Secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development. When the Senate gets together, he's going to be the Secretary of the Housing—of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, Alphonso Jackson. Thanks for coming, Alphonso. I appreciate you being here.

Archbishop Alfred Hughes is with us today. Archbishop, thanks for coming. I'm honored you are here.

I know this will embarrass him, but I've got to mention him. One of the people that influenced me a lot when I was the Governor of Texas, influenced me in terms of what faith-based programs can mean in people's lives, was Kirbyjon Caldwell. Kirbyjon is from Houston. He's the senior pastor of the Windsor Village United Methodist Church. He is a true social entrepreneur. He has used his position as a pastor to change lives and communities in significant ways, ways that government couldn't possibly do. Kirbyjon, thanks for coming. I appreciate you being here.

I mentioned a roundtable discussion. We just had a lot of people from the community, people who have been helped, people who are helping, neighborhood healers here to share their stories. I want to thank all of them for coming to talk about the influence of faith and their capacity to help change lives. I appreciate the choir being here.

Not only was I met by local dignitaries and elected officials when I landed at the airport, I was also met by Tenisha Stevens. Where is Tenisha? Tenisha, there you are. If you're wondering why I would mention Tenisha, she is a soldier in the army of compassion. She's a soul who is interested in listening to a universal call and is a tutor. She's taking time out of her life to work in the after-school programs right here in this church, Pastor. She is a mentor. She's willing to help save a life.

That's the spirit of America, isn't it, when citizens who are willing to sacrifice time on behalf of saving a life. We need more mentors in our society. If you're a citizen

in this community or any community around the country who want to know what you can do to help America, mentor a child; teach a child to read; love a child.

Tenisha, I want to thank you for serving. You're such a good example for other people around the country. Thank you for being a soldier in the great army of compassion here in America.

Many of the problems that are facing our society are problems of the heart. Addiction is the problem of a heart—of the heart. I know I've told this story before. I was a drinker. I quit drinking because I changed my heart. I guess I was a one-man faith-based program. [*Laughter*]

Problems that face our society are oftentimes problems that require something greater than just a government program or a government counselor to solve. Intractable problems, problems that seem impossible to solve, can be solved. There is the miracle of salvation in our—that is real, that is tangible, that is available for all to see. Miracles are possible in our society, one person at a time.

But it requires a willingness to understand the origin of miracle. Miracles happen as a result of the love of the Almighty, professed, by the way, taught, by the way, by religions from all walks of life, whether it be Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu—people who have heard that universal call to love a neighbor just like you'd like to be loved yourself and then surround someone who hurts with love. Love is powerful. Love is soul-changing. Love doesn't happen because of government. Love happens because of the inspiration of something greater than government. That's what we're here to talk about, programs based upon faith.

Right here in this church, there are faith-based programs. Any program emanating out of a church or a synagogue or a mosque is a faith-based program. So when you hear some people talk about faith-based programs, those are programs that start as a result of a group of folks of faith deciding to do something about a problem. And the fundamental question in our society is, how does the Federal Government relate to programs of faith? "The mighty check writer"—how does it relate when it writes checks to meet social needs with people who are solving our problems in spite of government? My attitude is, the Government should not fear faith-based programs. We ought to welcome faith-based programs, and we ought to fund faith-based programs.

This church receives Federal funding for childcare. It must be comforting for a mom or a dad to drop off his or her child to a childcare center run by a church. It's a safe place, to begin with, but it's also a place where there's values. The handbook of this particular childcare is a universal handbook. It's been around for a long time. It doesn't need to be invented. Let me see your handbook there. [*Laughter*] This handbook is a good book; it's a good go-by.

And yet our governments have, frankly, discriminated against faith-based programs. It's the truth. How does it happen that way? Well, oftentimes a faith-based program that applies for Federal Government says, "I want to help." And they say, "Fine, you can help, but take the cross down from the wall. Take off the Star of David. Take down the crescent." And my answer to that is, how can you be a faith-based program if you can't practice your faith? It seems to be a contradiction in terms.

Government policy said, "On the one hand, perhaps you can help. On the other hand, you can't practice your faith." Faith-based programs are only effective because they do practice faith. It's important for our Government to understand that. Government oftentimes will say, "Yes, you can participate, but you've got to change your board of directors to meet our qualifications. You've got to conform to our rules." The problem is, faith-based programs only conform to one set of rules, and it's bigger than Government rules. The inspiration is

not from bureaucracy, and that's what's important for Government policymakers to understand.

I have asked Congress to not fear faith. See, the debate in Washington oftentimes is, well, the church will become the state, or the state will become the church. To me, that's never going to happen, and we won't let it happen. As a matter of fact, the separation of church and state is a vital part of our country. The freedom of religion is a vital part of our country.

But on the other hand, when people are able to deliver results, people should not say—people shouldn't say, "Well, the results are coming from the wrong source of programming." We ought to say, "We want results. We welcome results, and we're willing to fund programs that are capable of delivering results. We want to fund programs that save Americans, one soul at a time."

In order to get beyond the debate of process, we must say—we must ask the question in Washington, "Does the program work? Does the program to help the addicted work? Is the homeless program working?" That's the question that must be asked.

So I called on Congress to join me in passing laws that would allow the—open up the Federal Treasury to faith-based programs, and they balked. They got caught up in the process. So I signed an Executive order, an Executive order that instructed all Federal agencies not to discriminate against religious groups. Cabinet Secretary—soon-to-be Cabinet Secretary Jackson now knows the call. One reason he's the Cabinet Secretary is because he already heard it, however, and that is that we're not going to discriminate against faith-based groups when it comes to housing initiatives.

We're spending a lot of time traveling the country. I've got a fellow that works in my office in the White House named Jim Towey. Towey is an interesting character. He is a—well, I shouldn't call him a character; he's a fine citizen. [*Laughter*] Believe it or not, Towey—you're not going to believe this, but it's true—he was Mother Teresa's lawyer. It's an interesting society where Mother Teresa needs a lawyer. [*Laughter*] But Towey's job is to educate people to what is possible, educate the social entrepreneurs, those who are on the frontline of saving lives, about what is possible, and to assure people who try to access Federal funds that you won't have to change your mission.

In other words, we're changing a culture, and it takes a lot of work. And I appreciate you all giving me a chance to come and be a part of explaining what is taking place in Washington, DC. Cultures change because others will then go out and say, "It's okay to try to access money to meet our need. The Government now is not going to thwart you." It's going to take a while to make sure that these faith-based offices which we've created in every Cabinet Department—or most of the Cabinet Departments in Washington—are able to get out the word.

But we want you to help spread the word. We want those of you on the frontline of saving lives to feel comfortable now of accessing the billions of dollars which are available at the Federal Government level. What we said is, "The playing field is now level." You've got a chance to bid, right along with other types of organizations, to be a part of the grantmaking process without fear of discrimination. It's a significant change. I'm comfortable in pushing the change because I know the nature of the work that is taking place.

Let me give you one example. Three months after HUD opened its doors to faith-based groups, 600 such groups have received $168 million to provide shelter for the homeless. In other words, we're beginning to change. I love the idea of religious organizations providing help for the homeless. What a comforting place for someone who is lost and looking for help to be able to provide that help.

It is a—it's just the beginning, Mr. Secretary-to-be. And it's just the beginning of a lot of change. Health and Human Services Department, HHS, is now opening up its grantmaking process for faith-based programs. It's billions of dollars now available. And that's good for the society. And it's good for our country.

Let me give you an example of some progress being made. Donna Blackburn—raise your hand, Donna. Donna's a—she's a good soul. She started a shelter for battered women and their children in Baton Rouge. First of all, thank you for starting a shelter. It's a noble calling. It's important for people like Donna to know there's a problem and respond to it. Donna didn't wait for a law to be passed, by the way. She didn't get permission from the President. She didn't say to the Governor, "Can I do this?" She just did it. That's what happens in America. People see a problem, and they move.

And then the fundamental question is, when you find that spirit moving, what is the role of Government? She wanted to make the shelter, of course, a safe haven. But she also wanted to make a place where God's grace shines. She wanted the presence of the Almighty there to help her and her staff deal with the problems, the difficult problems that a battered woman and her children face. The problem was—and she applied for Federal money, housing money to take this donated warehouse and convert it into a house of love. The local government said, "Yes, you can probably have some money, but you can't have prayer. You can't express faith."

Donna understands that the use of Federal money is not to proselytize. All comers are welcome. If a person of another faith walks in as a battered woman, she will be received. But Donna also understands that in order to make her program work, that they've got to be able to exercise their faith.

We moved at the Federal level to say, "No discrimination against faith-based programs." Last night, she reported to us that the Baton Rouge city council approved her faith-based grant, no strings attached, and now she's got $60,000 to help convert her shelter.

Somebody said, "Well, thank you for the Federal Government." Now, see, you've got it wrong. You don't need to be thanking the Federal Government. We're talking about the people's money, anyway. It's the Federal Government's job—the Federal Government's job is to thank the Donnas of the world, the social people—the social entrepreneurs, the people who are literally changing America, one heart at a time. That's who we're here to thank, and that's where our society must recognize and welcome.

Nicole Hilliard is here. Where are you, Nicole? There you go, okay. I embarrassed her. Nicole is a single mom. By the way, that's the toughest job in America, being a single mom. She's got a 15-year-old son. She was hurting. I shouldn't be giving her testimony for her, but I will paraphrase. She hurt, and she was worried, just like a mom would worry. She didn't have any housing. She was broke, stone broke, and she was worried as a mom, "How do I take care of my child?"

So she went to the First Evangelist Housing—went to the First Evangelist Church. This says, went to the First Evangelist Housing CDC. That's a little too technical. She went to the church, is where she went. She said, "I hope to be able to get some help at this church." Her pastor is here; Pastor Taylor is with us as well. She said, "I want some help." She was trying to escape not only an abusive relationship, she was trying to escape desperation and hopelessness. There's nothing better, by the way, than a faith-based program to provide hope. Again, I don't care what religion it is. Nothing more hopeful than the Word. She and her son moved into a one-bedroom apartment managed by First Evangelist. That apartment was supported by Federal money. Alphonso shouldn't worry about where that money goes. He

just ought to be worried about whether or not that money is saving lives and providing a chance for people to find shelter.

By the way, as a result of interfacing with this faith-based group, she went back to school. She found a job. She lives in a neighborhood, by the way, which has been transformed by the faith-based institution itself. She's talked about what it means to walk from the bus stop without fear of life.

It's amazing what can happen when faith-based programs begin to influence entire neighborhoods. People change; the attitude of the people in the neighborhood change. Nicole's story is one that shows that individual lives are rescued on a daily basis. Our job is to help the rescuers find those who need to be saved and helped.

Tonja Myles is here. I got to know Tonja because in my State of the Union last year, I introduced her to the country. And she's still talking to me, fortunately. [*Laughter*] She's from Baton Rouge. She directs what's called Set Free Indeed. It's an interesting name, isn't it? Set Free talks about the inspiration of the program. She receives money, Federal money to help save lives.

Addiction, addicts need to be treated. They need to be helped. A small number of people consume most of the drugs. We need to find them and help save their lives. Sometimes a government counselor can work. It can make a difference. A lot of times, it requires a faith-based program to help break that terrible habit.

And Tonja understood that. She started this program. She said she heard a call from God to start the program. It wasn't a Government bureaucracy that she talked to. It was a call from a higher being. And as a result, that program is inculcated with that spirit, and she's saving lives, one at a time.

Interestingly enough, by heralding her program, a lot of other people came. I want you to herald programs. When you find something that's working in your local community, make sure that the citizenry knows what's happening. This is not me. This is not the Governor. It's just not the mayor. It's local community leaders willing to hold up examples of great success, of great healing. People need to know what's available. People need to know that there's love and the capacity to help save lives in their very neighborhood. You're here because you're interested. You're leaders, yourselves. Please make your programs and what is available known.

The Government can help. I mean, we're calling for special initiatives: $100 million for drug treatment; 48 million for the Compassion Capital Fund, which is really to help startup faith-based programs. Like Kirbyjon—I told Kirbyjon, I said, "Kirbyjon, you're successful. Help another church learn how to be successful. Reach out. Use your entrepreneurial skills and find another church to help that pastor understand what is available." That's what the Compassion Capital Fund does.

We've got $50 million, by the way, in the budget that supports mentors for children whose moms or dad might be in prison or are in prison. See, this—the money is—it's important, and we're funding out of Washington and funding out of the State level. But more important is, where does the money go? And that's what we're here to talk about. Congress must not fear faith-based programs that interface and save lives. They must welcome such programs. So that's what I'm here to talk about, Pastor, good public policy based upon the willingness of our citizenry to love a neighbor just like you'd like to be loved yourself.

One of my favorite pulpit stories came when a preacher was preaching. A guy, right where Congressman is sitting, he stood up and said, "Use me, Lord. Use me." The man was about halfway through the sermon. He kind of ignored him. Maybe that's happened to you before, and you kind of ignore whoever is standing up yelling. Next Sunday, halfway through the sermon, same fellow pops up and says, "Use me, Lord. Use me." Third Sunday,

the same thing happens. So the pastor comes down, he says, "Fine, you said, 'Use me, Lord. Use me.'" He said, "I'll be glad to use you. Why don't you paint and scrape all the pews." [*Laughter*] Next Sunday, the guy stands up and says, "Use me, Lord, use me, but only in an advisory capacity." [*Laughter*]

No, no, the people here are not advisers. They're doers. People in faith-based programs all around the country just don't sit around and say, "Here's some advice." They say, "What can I do to answer a call? How can I help change my community and thereby change my country?" And that's what you're doing.

Our Government must understand America is a hopeful and optimistic place, particularly when we apply the great strength of our country, which is the love of our citizens, to changing America, one heart, one soul, one conscience at a time.

May God bless your work, and may God continue to bless America. Thank you for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:57 a.m. at the Union Bethel AME Church. In his remarks, he referred to Rev. Thomas B. Brown, pastor, Union Bethel AME Church; Gov. Kathleen Blanco of Louisiana and her husband, Raymond "Coach" Blanco; Mayor C. Ray Nagin of New Orleans, LA; Archbishop Alfred C. Hughes, archdiocese of New Orleans; and Rev. Warren Taylor, pastor, First Evangelist Missionary Baptist Church.

Remarks at a Bush-Cheney Luncheon in New Orleans
January 15, 2004

Thank you all. Thank you all very much for coming. Thanks for the warm welcome. It's great to be back in the Big Easy. I've got a lot of good memories from this part of the world. [*Laughter*] Some I can share with you—[*laughter*]—and some I can't. [*Laughter*]

We love New Orleans, fabulous city. Thanks for coming. I appreciate your support. It's great to be in the State of Louisiana, the home of those Bayou Bengals, the mighty LSU Tigers. That's pretty—that was—that's awesome. [*Laughter*] It was exciting for Louisiana. I'm proud for you. I'm also glad that you didn't play the University of Texas this year. [*Laughter*] Wait a minute. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank you for what you did for Vice President Cheney and me last—that last time we were ran, in 2000. We carried Louisiana. I'll tell you what we're doing today: We're laying the foundation for what is going to be another victory in the great State of Louisiana, and we're laying the foundation for what is going to be a great national victory in November of 2004.

And I appreciate your help. I want to thank you for coming today. I want to thank you for your support. I want to thank you for your prayers. I want to thank you for what you're going to do, which is turn out that vote, find those voters and turn them to the polls.

I'm getting ready, and I'm loosening up. [*Laughter*] But politics is going to come in its own time. See, I've got a job to do. There's a lot on my agenda, on behalf of all the people of this country. As this campaign gets cranked up, you tell the people that I'm working on their behalf and I'm going to continue to work hard to earn their confidence by keeping America secure and strong and prosperous and free.

I am sorry Laura is not here. She is a fabulous First Lady. She's doing a great job. She is—she really, really, makes me proud and thankful she said yes when I

said, "Will you?" [*Laughter*] She sends her love to all our friends here in New Orleans and some of our friends who might have snuck in from Texas.

I appreciate Boysie. I've known him for a long time. I want to thank you for your leadership, Boysie. You and Canizaro are doing a fine job. I want to thank all of you who worked hard to make this event such a successful event.

You've sent some good people from Louisiana to the Congress. I want to thank Jim McCrery for joining us today, and the next United States Senator, David Vitter.

Mr. Mayor, I know you're here. I want to thank you for coming. I appreciate the mayor of this great city. I appreciate his leadership. I appreciate his vision. I look forward to working with him to make sure New Orleans realizes its full potential and everybody in this city has a chance to succeed.

Joey Durel is here, the city-parish president from Lafayette. I want to thank you for coming, Joey. I want to thank all the State and local officials who are here. I want to thank my friend Pat Brister, who is the chairman of the Louisiana Republican Party, for being here today.

I particularly want to say thanks to all the grassroots activists—[*applause*]—yes, there you are. The phone callers, the sign-putter-uppers, the envelope addressers—get ready. [*Laughter*] We're counting on you. We're counting on you to work those precincts. We're counting on you to work those phones. We're counting on you to go to the community centers. We're counting on you to turn out the vote.

I want you to remind the people that over the last 3 years, our Nation has acted decisively to confront great challenges. I came to this office to solve problems, not to pass them on to future Presidents and future generations. I came to seize opportunities instead of letting them slip away. My administration is meeting the tests of our time.

Terrorists declared war on the United States of America, and war is what they got. We've captured or killed many of the key leaders of the Al Qaida network, and the rest of them know we're on their trail. In Afghanistan and in Iraq, we gave ultimatums to terror regimes. Those regimes chose defiance, and those regimes are no more. Fifty million people in those two countries once lived under tyranny, and today, they live in freedom.

Three years ago, our military was not receiving the resources it needed, and morale was beginning to suffer. So we increased the defense budgets to prepare for the threats of a new era. And today, no one in the world can question the skill and the strength and the spirit of the United States military.

Three years ago, the economy was in trouble and a recession was beginning, and then there was attacks on our country and scandals in corporate America and war, all of which affected the people's confidence. But this administration acted. We passed tough new laws to hold corporate criminals to account. And to get the economy going again, I have twice led the United States Congress to pass historic tax relief for the American people.

When Americans have more take-home pay to spend, to save, or invest, the whole economy grows, and people are more likely to find a job. And so we're returning more money to the people to help them raise their families. We're reducing taxes on dividends and capital gains to encourage investment. We're giving small businesses incentives to expand and to hire new people. With all these actions, this administration has laid the foundation for greater prosperity and more jobs across America so every single citizen has a chance to realize the American Dream.

And today, the economy is strong, and it is getting stronger. The figures for the third quarter of 2003 show that the economy grew at an annual rate of 8.2 percent,

the fastest pace in nearly 20 years. Productivity is high. Business investment is rising. Housing construction is expanding. Manufacturing activity is increasing. We've added over a quarter-million new jobs in the last 5 months. The tax relief we passed is working.

Three years ago, there was a lot of talk about education reform in our Nation's Capital, and frankly, there wasn't much action. So I acted. I called for and the Congress passed the No Child Left Behind Act. With a solid bipartisan majority, we delivered the most dramatic education reforms in a generation. We've increased funding, particularly for the poor. But in return for access funding, we're finally asking the question of school districts all across America, "Are you teaching our children how to read and write and add and subtract?" This administration is challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations. We believe every child can learn, and we expect every child—every school to teach so that not one single child is left behind in America.

We reorganized our Government and created the Department of Homeland Security to better safeguard ports like New Orleans' port, better safeguard our borders, and to better protect the American people. We passed trade promotion authority to open up new markets for Louisiana's farmers and ranchers and manufacturers and entrepreneurs. We passed budget agreements that have helped to maintain spending discipline in Washington, DC. And we recently completed the greatest advance in health care coverage for America's seniors since the founding of Medicare. The new Medicare bill will give older Americans the option of a prescription drug benefit and more control over their health care so that they receive the modern medical care that they deserve. On issue after issue, this administration has acted on principle, has kept its word, and has made progress for the American people.

The Congress gets a lot of credit. I enjoy working with Speaker Hastert; I enjoy working with Leader Frist—two good, honorable people who are working hard to deliver results to the American people. I enjoy working with the two Congressmen who are here today. We're working hard to change the tone in Washington. There's too much needless politics in the Nation's Capital, too much zero-sum attitude, too much backbiting. The best way to change that tone is to focus on the people's business, is to deliver results, and that's exactly what we're doing.

Those are the kind of people I've attracted to my administration, results-oriented people, good, honorable, honest people from all walks of life. I put together a fantastic administration. Our country has had no finer Vice President than Vice President Dick Cheney. My mother may have a second opinion. [*Laughter*]

In 3 years, we have done a lot. We have come far. But the work is only beginning. I have set great goals worthy of a great nation. First, America is committed to expanding the realm of freedom and peace for our own security and for the benefit of the world. And second, in our own country, we will work for a society that is prosperous and compassionate so that every citizen—every citizen—has a chance to work and to succeed and realize the great promise of this country. It is clear that the future of freedom and peace depend on the actions of America. This Nation is freedom's home and freedom's defender. We welcome this charge of history, and we are keeping it.

The war on terror continues. The enemies of freedom are not idle, and neither are we. This country will not rest; we will not tire; we will not stop until this danger to civilization is removed.

We are confronting that danger in Iraq, where all people can be certain they will never again have to fear the rule of Saddam Hussein. The Ba'athist holdouts, largely responsible for the current violence, now know there will be no return to corrupt power and privilege they once held. All

Iraqis who have taken the side of freedom have taken the winning side.

We will still face terrorists who would rather go on killing the innocent than accept the rise of liberty in the Middle East. You see, they know that the advance of freedom in Iraq will be a major defeat in the cause of terror. This collection of killers is trying to shake the will of the United States of America. America will never be intimidated by a bunch of thugs and assassins.

We are aggressively striking the terrorists in Iraq, defeating them there so we do not have to face them in our own country. And other nations are helping—a lot of other nations are helping—because they understand a free Iraq, a peaceful Iraq, a free Iraq in the heart of the Middle East will make the world more secure. We're standing with the Iraqi people as they assume more of their own defense and move toward self government.

These are not easy tasks, but they are essential tasks. The United States of America will finish what we have begun, and we will win this essential victory in the war against terror.

In order to make the world more secure and peaceful, we're working to oppose proliferation all around the world. Last month, after talks with the United States and Great Britain, Libya voluntarily committed to disclose and dismantle all weapons of mass destruction programs. Leaders around the world now know weapons of mass destruction do not bring influence or prestige; they bring isolation and other unwelcome consequences. Nations who abandon the pursuit of these weapons will find an open path to better relations with the United States of America.

Our greatest security comes from the advance of human liberty because free nations do not support terror, free nations do not attack their neighbors, free nations do not threaten the world with weapons of mass terror. Americans believe that freedom is the deepest need and hope of every human heart. I believe that freedom is the future of every nation. And I know that freedom is not America's gift to the world; freedom is the Almighty God's gift to every man and woman in this world.

America also understands that unprecedented influence brings tremendous responsibilities. We have duties in this world. And when we see disease and starvation and hopeless poverty, we will not turn away. On the continent of Africa, this great Nation, this strong and compassionate land, is bringing the healing power of medicine to millions of men and women and children now suffering with AIDS. America is leading the world in this incredibly important work of human rescue.

We face challenges at home as well, and we'll be equal to those challenges. This administration will continue to promote a pro-growth, pro-entrepreneur economic agenda until anybody who wants to find a job is able to do so.

And for the sake of our health care system, we need to cut down on the frivolous lawsuits which increase the cost of medicine. People who've been harmed by a bad doc deserve their day in court, no question about it. Yet the system should not reward lawyers who are simply fishing for a rich settlement. Because frivolous lawsuits drive up the cost of health care—and they do—they affect the Federal budget. Medical liability reform is a national issue which requires a national solution. I sent up a good bill to the House, and the House passed it. The bill is stuck in the Senate. I call upon the Senate to act on behalf of the American people. Perhaps you know a Senator or two you need to contact here in Louisiana. No one—no one—and the Senate must understand this—no one has ever been healed by a frivolous lawsuit in America. We need medical liability reform—now.

I have a responsibility as the President to make sure the judicial system runs well. And I've met that duty. I've nominated superb men and women for the Federal courts, people who will interpret the law,

not legislate from the bench, people like Miguel Estrada. You might have heard of Miguel Estrada here in the State of Louisiana. Some Members of the United States Senate are trying to keep my nominees off the bench by blocking up-or-down votes. Every judicial nominee deserves a fair hearing and an up-or-down vote on the Senate floor. It is time for some of the Members of the United States Senate to stop playing politics with American justice.

Congress needs to get me an energy bill. This country needs a plan. We need a plan to promote energy efficiency and more conservation, a plan to develop cleaner technology, to help us explore for energy in environmentally friendly ways. But one thing is for certain: We need an energy plan to make sure that this country does not have to rely upon foreign sources of energy.

Our strong and prosperous Nation must also be a compassionate nation. I will continue to advance our agenda of what I call compassionate conservatism, which means we'll apply the best and most innovative ideas to the tasks of helping our fellow citizens in need. There are still millions of men and women who want to end their dependence on government, become independent through work. We must build on the success of welfare reform to encourage job training programs that actually work so we can bring work and dignity into the lives of more of our fellow citizens. With the help of Congress, we're working to ensure that more Americans can serve their communities and their country through the Citizen Service Program.

Both Houses need to reach agreement on my Faith-Based Initiative, an initiative that will help support the armies of compassion—people from all faiths, Christian or Jewish or Muslim faiths, who have heard the universal call and are loving a neighbor just like they'd like to be loved themselves, people who are helping change America by caring for the homeless, mentoring children, and offering hope to the addicted. Congress must not fear the influence of faith. Congress must welcome faith-based programs to help solve the intractable problems of society.

A compassionate society must promote opportunity for all of us, including the independence and dignity that come from ownership. This administration will constantly strive to promote an ownership society in America. See, we want more people owning their own home. We have a minority homeownership gap in America. I proposed a plan to the Congress, starting with helping with the poorest of poor make a downpayment for a home, to close that gap. It's in the national interest that more people own their own home. We want people owning and managing their own healthcare accounts and their own retirement accounts. We want more people owning their own small business. This is an administration that understands, when someone owns something, he or she has a vital stake in the future of our country.

In a compassionate society, people respect one another. They respect their religions. They respect their point of view. And they take responsibility for the decisions they make. The culture of America is changing from one that has said, "If it feels good, do it," and, "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each of us understands that we're responsible for the decisions we make in life.

If you are fortunate enough to be a mother or father, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart. If you're concerned about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you're responsible for doing something about it. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you're responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And in this new responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourself.

I see the culture of service and responsibility growing around us. I just met with some of the great social entrepreneurs of the State of Louisiana today, neighborhood healers, helpers, people who are actively involved in saving America, one heart and one soul and one conscience at a time. I started what's called the USA Freedom Corps. It's a chance to get people—it's an opportunity for people to extend a hand to a neighbor in need, and the response has been fantastic. Civil society in America is strong and vibrant. Our charities are strong. Churches and synagogues and mosques are strong. Policemen and firefighters and people who wear our Nation's uniform remind us what it means to sacrifice for something greater than yourself. Once again, the children of America believe in heroes, because they see them every day.

In these challenging times, the world has seen the resolve and the courage of America. I've been privileged to see the compassion and the character of the American people. All the tests of the last 3 years have come to the right nation. We're a strong country, and we use that strength to defend the peace. We're an optimistic country, confident in ourselves and in ideals bigger than ourselves. Abroad, we seek to lift whole nations by spreading freedom. At home, we seek to lift up lives by spreading opportunity to every corner of America. This is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it and know for our country, the best days lie ahead.

May God bless you all. Thank you all. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:06 p.m. at the National D-Day Museum. In his remarks, he referred to Donald "Boysie" Bollinger and Joe Canizaro, Louisiana State finance cochairmen, Bush-Cheney '04, Inc.; Mayor C. Ray Nagin of New Orleans, LA; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; and Miguel A. Estrada, whose nomination to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the District of Columbia Circuit was withdrawn on September 4, 2003.

Letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives Requesting Emergency Funding for the Department of the Interior's National Park Service

January 15, 2004

Dear Mr. Speaker:

In accordance with provisions of the "1997 Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act for Recovery from Natural Disasters, and for Overseas Peacekeeping Efforts, Including those in Bosnia" (Public Law 105–18), I hereby request and make available $22.5 million in emergency funding for the Department of the Interior's National Park Service.

These funds would allow for the repair and replacement of concession facilities at Yosemite National Park that were damaged in a 1997 flood.

The Congress required that certain prerequisites be met before these funds could be released. These requirements have been met and I designate the funds made available today as an emergency requirement consistent with the requirements of Public Law 105–18.

The details of this action are set forth in the attached letter from the Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

Sincerely,

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this letter.

Remarks at a Bush-Cheney Reception in Atlanta, Georgia
January 15, 2004

Thank you very much. Thanks for coming. And thanks for your support. I'm honored—first, let me tell you how honored I am to be introduced by a bestselling author—[*laughter*]—and a great American. I am privileged to call Zell Miller my friend. The people of Georgia are privileged to call him United States Senator. He is a decent, honorable citizen of this country.

I'm also proud to be on the stage with your Governor, Sonny. Sonny said, "I want you to meet some of my friends from the legislature." He said, "What's unusual about this bunch is they don't call themselves Republican." [*Laughter*] There's a handful of Democrat legislators here from the great State of Georgia. I know there's a handful of Republican legislators as well. I'm kind of taking you for granted tonight. [*Laughter*] But I do want to say thanks, Sonny—to Sonny and the Democrat legislators who've come. I'm proud to have you on my team. You're welcome on my team.

And I'm proud you all are here. We put together a good team in Georgia in the year 2000. We're going to do better in the year 2004. We're laying the foundation for what is going to be a great national victory in November of 2004. And you're helping, and I appreciate your help.

I'm loosening up. [*Laughter*] I'm getting ready. But I got a job to do for everybody who lives in this country. When you're going to your coffee shops and your community centers, they say, "What is George W. up to," you tell them this, that I'm doing the people's business in Washington, DC, that I'm working hard to earn the confidence of every single American by keeping this Nation secure and strong and prosperous and free.

I know that Zell's wife, Shirley, is with us today as well. Shirley, I'm proud you're here. Zell and I both married above ourselves. [*Laughter*] I regret that Laura hasn't joined us. She is a fabulous First Lady for this country. I'm really proud of her.

And I'm proud as well of the junior Senator from the great State of Georgia, a close ally, good friend, good, honorable man, Saxby Chambliss.

I better make sure I mention Mary Perdue as well, the first lady of the great State of Georgia. Governor, I appreciate what you're doing at the statehouse here.

I'm proud of my friend Jamie Reynolds. I appreciate the team he has put together to help make this an incredibly successful fundraiser. Don't go overboard on Jamie. He's not bad for a country boy. [*Laughter*]

I appreciate the members of the congressional delegation who are here: Mac Collins and Nathan Deal, Charlie Norwood, Phil Gingrey, and Max Burns. These are good ones, good, honorable citizens who are doing what they think is right for the country. I appreciate you all coming.

I know my friend Nancy Coverdell is here. She is just a great personal friend of our family's. Nancy, thank you for taking time out of your schedule to be here.

I'm honored that my friend Mercer Reynolds—happens to be related to Jamie—he's the national finance chairman for Bush-Cheney—is here. It's important to make sure that you've got plenty of cash on hand when you're running for President.

You want to be well-financed. We're becoming well-financed. We've got a great national effort, a great Georgia effort. And again, I want to thank you all you all for participating in this.

Ralph Reed is with us. He's the Southeast regional chairman and he's the Georgia chairman for my campaign, for the campaign of Vice President Cheney. Alec Poitevint is with us as well, who's the party chairman.

And for the grassroots activists who are here, I want to thank you for what you're going to do. Thank you for the work that you're going to do as we're coming down the stretch. That's the work that's putting up the signs and talking the talk, getting on the phone, and addressing the envelopes. I appreciate what you're going to do. You cannot win a campaign unless hard-working grassroots people get out there and pound the pavement on behalf of this ticket. And I can assure you, we'll be right with you.

And when you're out there, I want you to remind everybody that for the last 3 years, our Nation has acted decisively to confront great challenges. I came to this office to solve problems, not to pass them on to future Presidents and future generations. I came to seize opportunities instead of letting them slip away. My administration is meeting the tests of our time.

Terrorists declared war on the United States of America, and war is what they got. We have captured or killed many of the key leaders of the Al Qaida network, and the rest of them know that we are on their trail. In Afghanistan and in Iraq, we gave ultimatums to terror regimes. Those regimes chose defiance, and those regimes are no more. Fifty million people in those two countries once lived under tyranny, and today, they live in freedom.

Three years ago, our military was not receiving the resources it needed, and morale was beginning to suffer. So we increased the defense budgets to prepare for the threats of a new era. And today, no one in the world can question the skill and the strength and the spirit of the United States military.

Three years ago, the economy was in trouble and the recession was just beginning. And then there was attacks on our country and scandals in corporate America and war, which all affected the people's confidence. But this administration acted. We passed tough new laws to hold corporate criminals to account. And to get the economy going again, I have twice led the United States Congress to pass historic tax relief for the American people.

We understand that when Americans have more take-home pay to spend, to save, or to invest, the whole economy grows, and people are more likely to find a job. So we're returning more money to the people to help them raise their families, reducing taxes on dividends and capital gains to encourage investment. We've given small businesses incentives to expand and to hire new people. With all these actions, we are laying the foundation for greater prosperity and more jobs so every single citizen in this country has a chance to realize the American Dream.

Today, the American economy is strong, and it is getting stronger. The figures for the third quarter of 2003 show the economy grew at an annual rate of 8.2 percent, the fastest pace in nearly 20 years. Productivity is high. Business investment is rising. Housing construction is expanding. Manufacturing activity is increasing, and we've added over a quarter-million new jobs over the past 5 months. The tax relief we passed is working.

Three years ago, there was a lot of talk about education reform in Washington, but there just wasn't much action. So I acted. I called for and the Congress passed the No Child Left Behind Act. With a solid bipartisan majority, we delivered the most dramatic education reforms in a generation. We've increased spending at the Federal level, particularly for Title I students, for poor students. But for the first time, the

Federal Government is saying, "Why don't you show us whether or not the children can read and write and add and subtract." The reason why we're saying that is because we believe every child, regardless of their background, can learn to read and write and add and subtract. We expect every school to teach every child to read and write and add and subtract. This administration is challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations. We expect results so that not one single child is left behind in America.

We reorganized our Government and created the Department of Homeland Security to better safeguard our borders and ports and to protect the American people. We passed trade promotion authority to open up new markets for Georgia's farmers and ranchers and entrepreneurs and manufacturers. We passed much-needed budget agreements to help maintain spending discipline in Washington, DC. And last month, we completed the greatest advance in health care coverage for America's seniors since the founding of Medicare. The new Medicare bill that I signed will give older Americans the option of a prescription drug benefit and more control over their health care. America's seniors deserve a modern health care system, and this administration delivered.

On issue after issue—on issue after issue—this administration has acted on principle, has kept its word, and has made progress for the American people. And the Congress deserves a lot of credit. I enjoy working with Speaker Denny Hastert, Majority Leader Bill Frist. I enjoy working with Senator Miller and Chambliss and working with this Georgia congressional delegation. We're working hard to change the tone in Washington, DC. There's too much needless politics up there. There's too much backbiting and backstabbing. The best way to fight through that noise is to focus on results, to do what I call the people's business, and get some things done. And we're getting a lot done.

We're also getting a lot done because I've surrounded myself with plenty capable people, good, honorable, decent people from all walks of life who have come to serve in my administration with one thing in mind, to represent the greatest country on the face of the Earth. Our country has had no finer Vice President than Dick Cheney. Mother may have a second opinion. [*Laughter*]

In 3 years, we've done a lot. We have come far, but our work is only beginning. I have set great goals worthy of a great nation. First, America is committed to expanding the realm of freedom and peace for our own security and for the benefit of the world. And second, in our own country, we must work for a society that is prosperous and compassionate so every citizen has a chance to work and to succeed and to realize the great promise of America.

It is clear that the future of freedom and peace depend on the actions of America. We are freedom's home and freedom's defender. We welcome this charge of history, and we are keeping it. The war on terror continues. The enemies of freedom are not idle, and neither are we. This country will not rest; we will not tire; we will not stop until this danger to civilization is removed.

We are confronting that danger in Iraq, where all people can be certain they will never again have to fear the rule of Saddam Hussein. The Ba'athist holdouts largely responsible for the current violence now know there will be no return to corrupt power and the privilege they once held. All Iraqis who have taken the side of freedom have taken the winning side.

We still face terrorists who would rather go on killing the innocent than accept the rise of liberty in the Middle East. You see, they know that the advance of freedom in Iraq would be a major defeat for the cause of terror. This collection of killers is trying to shake the will of the United States of America. America will never be intimidated by a bunch of thugs and assassins.

We are aggressively striking the terrorists in Iraq, defeating them there so we do not have to face them in our own country. Other nations are helping to build a free Iraq because they understand a free and peaceful Iraq in the heart of the Middle East will make us all more secure. We're standing with the Iraqi people as they assume more of their own defense and move toward self-government. These are not easy tasks, but they're essential tasks. We will finish what we have begun, and we will win this essential victory in the war on terror.

And part of winning the war on terror is to oppose proliferation around the world. Last month, after talks with the United States and Great Britain, Libya voluntarily committed to disclose and dismantle all its weapons of mass destruction programs. Leaders around the world now know this: Weapons of mass destruction do not bring influence or prestige; they bring isolation and other unwelcome consequences. [*Laughter*] And nations who abandon the pursuit of these weapons will find an open path to better relations with the United States of America.

Our greatest security comes from the advance of human liberty, because free nations do not support terror, free nations do not attack their neighbors, free nations do not threaten the world with weapons of mass destruction. Americans believe that freedom is the deepest need and hope of every human heart. I believe that freedom is the future of every nation. And we know that freedom is not America's gift to the world; freedom is the Almighty God's gift to every man and woman in this world.

America also understands that unprecedented influence brings tremendous responsibilities. We have duties in this world, and when we see disease, starvation, and hopeless poverty, we will not turn away. On the continent of Africa, this great, mighty land is committed to bringing the healing power of medicine to millions of men and women and children now suffering with AIDS. This great country of ours is leading the world in this incredibly important work of human rescue.

We face challenges here at home as well, and our actions will prove that we're equal to these challenges. This administration will continue to promote a pro-growth, pro-small business, pro-entrepreneur economic agenda until everyone who wants to work can find a job.

And for the sake of our health care system, we need to cut down on the frivolous lawsuits which are driving up the cost of medicine. People who have been harmed by a bad doc deserve their day in court. Yet the system should not reward lawyers who are simply fishing for a rich settlement. Frivolous lawsuits drive up the cost of health care, and they therefore affect the Federal budget. Medical liability reform is a national issue that requires a national solution.

The House of Representatives passed a good bill. The bill is stuck in the United States Senate. Senators Miller and Chambliss are working to get it unstuck. The Senate must act on behalf of the American people. Some of those Senators must understand that no one has ever been healed by a frivolous lawsuit in America.

I have a responsibility as your President to make sure the judicial system runs well, and I met that duty. I have nominated superb men and women for the Federal courts, people who will interpret the law, not legislate from the bench. Yet some Members of the Senate, are trying to keep my nominees off the bench by blocking up-or-down votes. Every judicial nominee deserves a fair hearing and an up-or-down vote on the Senate floor. I appreciate Senator Miller and Senator Chambliss' strong support for the nominees I've nominated. It's time for some of the Members of the United States Senate to stop playing politics with American justice.

This country needs an energy plan, and Congress needs to complete the work on that bill and get it to my desk. We must

promote energy efficiency and conservation and to develop cleaner technologies to help us explore in environmentally friendly ways. But for the sake of economic security and for the sake of national security, we must become less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

A strong and prosperous nation must also be a compassionate nation. I will continue to advance our agenda of compassionate conservatism, which means we'll apply the best and most innovative ideas to the task of helping fellow citizens in need. We need—there are millions of men and women in this country who want to end their dependence on government and become independent through hard work. We must build on the success of welfare reform, put good job-training programs in place that help people find work that actually exists, so that more people can have work and dignity in their lives.

With the help of Congress, we're working to ensure that more Americans can serve their communities and their country through what's called the Citizen Service Program. Both Houses of the United States Congress must pass my Faith-Based Initiative. It is essential that our Government not fear the influence of faith in our society but welcome people of faith into serving the difficult problems of heart, the difficult problems of the homeless, the addiction, mentoring of children. Faith is one of the great strengths of America, and our Government must welcome faith-based programs.

A compassionate society must promote opportunity for every single citizen, including the independence and dignity that come from ownership. This administration will constantly strive to promote an ownership society in America. We want more people owning their own home. In our country today, we have a minority homeownership gap, and that's not good for America. I have put forth plans, have worked with Senator Miller and Senator Chambliss to close this gap. We're working hard to encourage more people in America to own their own home. We want more people owning their own health care plans and managing their health care plans. We want people owning and managing their own retirement accounts. We want more people owning their own small business, because we understand that when a person owns something, he or she has a vital stake in the future of America.

A compassionate society is one in which people respect one another, respect their religious views, respect their backgrounds, and take responsibility for the decisions they make in life. The culture of this country is changing from one that has said, "If it feels good, do it," and, "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each of us understands that we are responsible for the decisions we make in life. If you are fortunate enough to be a mother or a father, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart. If you're worried about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you are responsible for doing something about it. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you're responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And in this new responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourself.

We can see that culture of service and responsibility growing around us. I went to a church in downtown New Orleans today that was full of neighborhood healers, people who have heard the universal call, people from all walks of life, different religions, all aimed at serving our Nation by helping somebody who hurts.

I started what's called the USA Freedom Corps to encourage Americans to extend a compassionate hand to a neighbor in need, and the response has been fantastic. The strength of this country lies in the hearts and souls of our citizens. Policemen and firefighters and people who wear our Nation's uniform remind us what it means

to sacrifice for something greater than ourselves in life. Once again, the children of this country believe in heroes, because they see them every day.

In these challenging times, the world has seen the resolve and the courage of America. And I've been privileged to see the compassion and the character of the American people. All the tests of the last 3 years have come to the right nation. We're a strong country, and we use that strength to defend the peace. We're an optimistic country, confident in ourselves and in ideals bigger than ourselves. Abroad, we seek to lift whole nations by spreading freedom. At home, we seek to lift up lives by spreading opportunity to every corner of America. This is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it and know that for our country, the best days lie ahead.

May God bless you all. Thanks for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:12 p.m. at the Georgia World Congress Center. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Sonny Perdue of Georgia; Alec Poitevint, chairman, Georgia Republican Party; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. He also referred to Title I of the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 (Public Law No. 103–382), which amended Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (Public Law No. 89–10).

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Termination of Emergency With Respect to Sierra Leone and Liberia
January 15, 2004

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Consistent with section 202(a) of the National Emergencies Act, 50 U.S.C. 1622, I hereby report that I have issued an Executive Order on January 15, 2004, that terminates the national emergency described and declared with respect to Sierra Leone in Executive Order 13194 of January 18, 2001, and expanded in scope with respect to Liberia by Executive Order 13213 of May 22, 2001.

I am enclosing a copy of the Executive Order. This order becomes effective at 12:01 a.m. eastern standard time on January 16, 2004.

Sincerely,

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Richard B. Cheney, President of the Senate. This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 16. The Executive order is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Statement on the Recess Appointment of Charles W. Pickering as a United States Court of Appeals Circuit Judge
January 16, 2004

Today I was proud to exercise my constitutional authority to appoint Judge Charles W. Pickering to serve on the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit. Judge Pickering has served with distinction as a United States District

Judge since he was unanimously confirmed by the Senate in 1990. He is highly qualified to serve on the Court of Appeals and has widespread bipartisan support from those who know him best.

For the past 2½ years, Judge Pickering has been waiting for an up-or-down vote in the Senate. A bipartisan majority of Senators supports his confirmation, and if he were given a vote, he would be confirmed. But a minority of Democratic Senators has been using unprecedented obstructionist tactics to prevent him and other qualified individuals from receiving up-or-down votes. Their tactics are inconsistent with the Senate's constitutional responsibility and are hurting our judicial system.

As a result of today's recess appointment, Judge Pickering will fill a seat on the Fifth Circuit that has been designated a judicial emergency. He will perform a valuable service on a court that needs more judges to do its work with the efficiency the American people deserve and expect. Again I call on the Senate to stop playing politics with the American judicial system and to give my nominees the up-or-down votes they deserve.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Terrorists Who Threaten To Disrupt the Middle East Peace Process

January 16, 2004

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent the enclosed notice, stating that the emergency declared with respect to foreign terrorists who threaten to disrupt the Middle East peace process is to continue in effect beyond January 23, 2004, to the *Federal Register* for publication. The most recent notice continuing this emergency was published in the *Federal Register* on January 22, 2003 (68 *FR* 3161).

The crisis with respect to the grave acts of violence committed by foreign terrorists that disrupt the Middle East peace process that led to the declaration of a national emergency on January 23, 1995, as expanded on August 20, 1998, has not been resolved. Terrorist groups continue to engage in activities that have the purpose or effect of threatening the Middle East peace process and that are hostile to United States interests in the region. Such actions constitute an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States. For these reasons, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared with respect to foreign terrorists who threaten to disrupt the Middle East peace process and to maintain in force the economic sanctions against them to respond to this threat.

Sincerely,

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Richard B. Cheney, President of the Senate. The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Review of Title III of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (LIBERTAD) Act of 1996
January 16, 2004

Dear _____ *:*

Consistent with section 306(c)(2) of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (LIBERTAD) Act of 1996 (Public Law 104–114), (the "Act"), I hereby determine and report to the Congress that suspension for 6 months beyond February 1, 2004, of the right to bring an action under title III of the Act is necessary to the national interests of the United States and will expedite a transition to democracy in Cuba.

Sincerely,

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Richard G. Lugar, chairman, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., ranking member, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations; Ted Stevens, chairman, and Robert C. Byrd, ranking member, Senate Committee on Appropriations; Henry J. Hyde, chairman, and Tom Lantos, ranking member, House Committee on International Relations; and C.W. Bill Young, chairman, and David R. Obey, ranking member, House Committee on Appropriations.

The President's Radio Address
January 17, 2004

Good morning. This coming week, I will report to the Congress and the American people on the state of our Union. Over the past few years, America has been confronted with great challenges, and the American people have responded with strength and compassion and confidence. This Nation is meeting its priorities, both at home and abroad.

America continues to wage a relentless campaign against terrorists who threaten our country. We're fighting this war on the offensive, denying terrorists refuge, identifying and seizing their secret finances, and holding terrorists and their sponsors to account. These terrorists are still dangerous, and we will stay on the hunt until they are destroyed.

Across the greater Middle East, America is confronting dangers and promoting democracy and hope as the alternative to terror and violence. Afghanistan, once ruled by the brutal Taliban regime, has adopted a new constitution and is following the path of democracy, including providing fundamental rights to women.

The leader of Libya has now pledged to disclose and dismantle all of his weapons of mass destruction programs. And in Iraq, the enemies of freedom are being systematically routed from their holes and rounded up. Iraqis are assuming greater responsibility for their own security and future Government. American troops in that country are performing their duty with skill and courage, and we're proud of them all.

Here at home, we continue to build prosperity and economic security for our people. Tax relief has helped turn our economy around. We've doubled the child tax credit, cut taxes for everyone who pays income taxes, and increased incentives for small businesses to invest in new equipment and create jobs.

The results are clear. Our economy grew at its fastest pace in two decades in the third quarter of 2003. Manufacturers are seeing a rebound in new orders in factory

activity, and more than a quarter-million new jobs have been created since August.

Our Government has also acted to strengthen our Medicare system. To keep our commitment to America's senior citizens, we're adding better preventative care and a prescription drug benefit to the Medicare program. Many thought these reforms were impossible, yet members of both parties put old debates behind them and fulfilled our promise to America's seniors.

On Tuesday night, I will outline the steps we must take to meet the goals of this Nation. We will work to expand opportunities for all Americans to own their own business. We'll press forward on an agenda of economic growth so that everyone who wants to work can find a job. We'll take steps to help families and small businesses deal with the rising cost of health care. We will continue to help schools and students meet the high standards we've set so no child in America is left behind. We will encourage the good work of faith-based groups that bring hope to those in need. For the sake of our own freedom and security, we will continue to fight the war on terror.

With all these actions, we will continue to confront the challenges of our time, and we will continue to make America a more secure, more prosperous, and more hopeful place.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 9:20 a.m. on January 16 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on January 17. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 16 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. In his address, the President referred to Col. Muammar Abu Minyar al-Qadhafi, leader of Libya. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks at a Luncheon With Spouses of African-American Clergy
January 19, 2004

Thank you all. Please be seated. I have dropped by—[*laughter*]—because Laura told me to. [*Laughter*]

First of all, I want to welcome you all to the people's house, and I am so glad you've come to celebrate this important national holiday with Laura. My job is to introduce her so she can give some remarks. But before I do so, first of all, I want to say thanks from the bottom of my heart for what you and your husbands and your communities do to help, really, America realize the dream of Martin Luther King, which is to elevate the dignity of each person, the worth of each person, the freedom of each person to realize his or her dreams.

In my judgment, many times the most effective programs to realize that national ambition is through our faith community, because people of faith have heard a universal call. I remember when my friend Tony Evans from Dallas one time talked about broken foundations, cracks on the wall. And the painter kept trying to repaint the wall of the house, and they could never get it right until, finally, somebody stepped up to them and said, "First you need to fix the foundation." It's that spirit of fixing foundations and helping people realize their true worth, through love and compassion and a—the truth of the matter is—reliance on a being far greater than Government, the Almighty, that enables you all to do the works of mercy and kindness and neighborhood healing that goes on. The true strength of America truly is found in

the hearts and souls of our citizens. And in my judgment, a way to honor the great Martin Luther King is to call upon Americans to unleash that compassion.

And so I want to welcome you here. You're generals in the armies of compassion who are changing America one heart and one soul and one conscience at a time, and for that, our Nation is grateful.

And I am grateful that Laura said yes when I asked her to marry me. [*Laughter*] Our First Lady.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:22 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Anthony T. Evans, senior pastor, Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship, Dallas, TX. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Statement on Senate Inaction on Appropriations Legislation
January 20, 2004

Today a minority in the Senate denied a vote on a spending bill that is 4 months overdue and that fulfills important commitments: commitments to veterans who need health care; to Africans suffering from AIDS; to FBI agents fighting terror; to children learning to read in our Nation's public schools. This bill stays within the spending limits I proposed. And the Senate needs to pass it.

Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union
January 20, 2004

Mr. Speaker, Vice President Cheney, Members of Congress, distinguished guests, and fellow citizens: America this evening is a nation called to great responsibilities, and we are rising to meet them.

As we gather tonight, hundreds of thousands of American service men and women are deployed across the world in the war on terror. By bringing hope to the oppressed and delivering justice to the violent, they are making America more secure.

Each day, law enforcement personnel and intelligence officers are tracking terrorist threats; analysts are examining airline passenger lists; the men and women of our new Homeland Security Department are patrolling our coasts and borders. And their vigilance is protecting America.

Americans are proving once again to be the hardest working people in the world. The American economy is growing stronger. The tax relief you passed is working.

Tonight Members of Congress can take pride in the great works of compassion and reform that skeptics had thought impossible. You're raising the standards for our public schools, and you are giving our senior citizens prescription drug coverage under Medicare.

We have faced serious challenges together, and now we face a choice: We can go forward with confidence and resolve, or we can turn back to the dangerous illusion that terrorists are not plotting and outlaw regimes are no threat to us. We can press on with economic growth and reforms in

education and Medicare, or we can turn back to old policies and old divisions.

We've not come all this way, through tragedy and trial and war, only to falter and leave our work unfinished. Americans are rising to the tasks of history, and they expect the same from us. In their efforts, their enterprise, and their character, the American people are showing that the state of our Union is confident and strong.

Our greatest responsibility is the active defense of the American people. Twenty-eight months have passed since September the 11th, 2001—over 2 years without an attack on American soil. And it is tempting to believe that the danger is behind us. That hope is understandable, comforting—and false. The killing has continued in Bali, Jakarta, Casablanca, Riyadh, Mombasa, Jerusalem, Istanbul, and Baghdad. The terrorists continue to plot against America and the civilized world. And by our will and courage, this danger will be defeated.

Inside the United States, where the war began, we must continue to give our homeland security and law enforcement personnel every tool they need to defend us. And one of those essential tools is the PATRIOT Act, which allows Federal law enforcement to better share information to track terrorists, to disrupt their cells, and to seize their assets. For years, we have used similar provisions to catch embezzlers and drug traffickers. If these methods are good for hunting criminals, they are even more important for hunting terrorists.

Key provisions of the PATRIOT Act are set to expire next year. The terrorist threat will not expire on that schedule. Our law enforcement needs this vital legislation to protect our citizens. You need to renew the PATRIOT Act.

America is on the offensive against the terrorists who started this war. Last March, Khalid Sheik Mohammed, a mastermind of September the 11th, awoke to find himself in the custody of U.S. and Pakistani authorities. Last August the 11th brought the capture of the terrorist Hambali, who was a key player in the attack in Indonesia that killed over 200 people. We're tracking Al Qaida around the world, and nearly two-thirds of their known leaders have now been captured or killed. Thousands of very skilled and determined military personnel are on the manhunt, going after the remaining killers who hide in cities and caves, and one by one, we will bring these terrorists to justice.

As part of the offensive against terror, we are also confronting the regimes that harbor and support terrorists and could supply them with nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons. The United States and our allies are determined: We refuse to live in the shadow of this ultimate danger.

The first to see our determination were the Taliban, who made Afghanistan the primary training base of Al Qaida killers. As of this month, that country has a new constitution guaranteeing free elections and full participation by women. Businesses are opening. Health care centers are being established, and the boys and girls of Afghanistan are back in school. With the help from the new Afghan army, our coalition is leading aggressive raids against the surviving members of the Taliban and Al Qaida. The men and women of Afghanistan are building a nation that is free and proud and fighting terror, and America is honored to be their friend.

Since we last met in this Chamber, combat forces of the United States, Great Britain, Australia, Poland, and other countries enforced the demands of the United Nations, ended the rule of Saddam Hussein. And the people of Iraq are free.

Having broken the Ba'athist regime, we face a remnant of violent Saddam supporters. Men who ran away from our troops in battle are now dispersed and attack from the shadows. These killers, joined by foreign terrorists, are a serious, continuing danger. Yet we're making progress against them. The once all-powerful ruler of Iraq was found in a hole and now sits in a prison cell. Of the top 55 officials of the

former regime, we have captured or killed 45. Our forces are on the offensive, leading over 1,600 patrols a day and conducting an average of 180 raids a week. We are dealing with these thugs in Iraq just as surely as we dealt with Saddam Hussein's evil regime.

The work of building a new Iraq is hard, and it is right. And America has always been willing to do what it takes for what is right. Last January, Iraq's only law was the whim of one brutal man. Today, our coalition is working with the Iraqi Governing Council to draft a basic law with a bill of rights. We're working with Iraqis and the United Nations to prepare for a transition to full Iraqi sovereignty by the end of June.

As democracy takes hold in Iraq, the enemies of freedom will do all in their power to spread violence and fear. They are trying to shake the will of our country and our friends, but the United States of America will never be intimidated by thugs and assassins. The killers will fail, and the Iraqi people will live in freedom.

Month by month, Iraqis are assuming more responsibility for their own security and their own future. And tonight we are honored to welcome one of Iraq's most respected leaders, the current President of the Iraqi Governing Council, Adnan Pachachi. Sir, America stands with you and the Iraqi people as you build a free and peaceful nation.

Because of American leadership and resolve, the world is changing for the better. Last month, the leader of Libya voluntarily pledged to disclose and dismantle all of his regime's weapons of mass destruction programs, including a uranium enrichment project for nuclear weapons. Colonel Qadhafi correctly judged that his country would be better off and far more secure without weapons of mass murder.

Nine months of intense negotiations involving the United States and Great Britain succeeded with Libya, while 12 years of diplomacy with Iraq did not. And one reason is clear: For diplomacy to be effective, words must be credible, and no one can now doubt the word of America.

Different threats require different strategies. Along with nations in the region, we're insisting that North Korea eliminate its nuclear program. America and the international community are demanding that Iran meet its commitments and not develop nuclear weapons. America is committed to keeping the world's most dangerous weapons out of the hands of the most dangerous regimes.

When I came to this rostrum on September the 20th, 2001, I brought the police shield of a fallen officer, my reminder of lives that ended and a task that does not end. I gave to you and to all Americans my complete commitment to securing our country and defeating our enemies. And this pledge, given by one, has been kept by many.

You in the Congress have provided the resources for our defense and cast the difficult votes of war and peace. Our closest allies have been unwavering. America's intelligence personnel and diplomats have been skilled and tireless. And the men and women of the American military—they have taken the hardest duty. We've seen their skill and their courage in armored charges and midnight raids and lonely hours on faithful watch. We have seen the joy when they return and felt the sorrow when one is lost. I've had the honor of meeting our service men and women at many posts, from the deck of a carrier in the Pacific to a mess hall in Baghdad.

Many of our troops are listening tonight, and I want you and your families to know: America is proud of you, and my administration and this Congress will give you the resources you need to fight and win the war on terror.

I know that some people question if America is really in a war at all. They view terrorism more as a crime, a problem to be solved mainly with law enforcement and indictments. After the World Trade Center

was first attacked in 1993, some of the guilty were indicted and tried and convicted and sent to prison. But the matter was not settled. The terrorists were still training and plotting in other nations and drawing up more ambitious plans. After the chaos and carnage of September the 11th, it is not enough to serve our enemies with legal papers. The terrorists and their supporters declared war on the United States, and war is what they got.

Some in this Chamber and in our country did not support the liberation of Iraq. Objections to war often come from principled motives, but let us be candid about the consequences of leaving Saddam Hussein in power. We're seeking all the facts. Already, the Kay Report identified dozens of weapons-of-mass-destruction-related program activities and significant amounts of equipment that Iraq concealed from the United Nations. Had we failed to act, the dictator's weapons of mass destruction programs would continue to this day. Had we failed to act, Security Council resolutions on Iraq would have been revealed as empty threats, weakening the United Nations and encouraging defiance by dictators around the world. Iraq's torture chambers would still be filled with victims, terrified and innocent. The killing fields of Iraq, where hundreds of thousands of men and women and children vanished into the sands, would still be known only to the killers. For all who love freedom and peace, the world without Saddam Hussein's regime is a better and safer place.

Some critics have said our duties in Iraq must be internationalized. This particular criticism is hard to explain to our partners in Britain, Australia, Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, Thailand, Italy, Spain, Poland, Denmark, Hungary, Bulgaria, Ukraine, Romania, the Netherlands, Norway, El Salvador, and the 17 other countries that have committed troops to Iraq. As we debate at home, we must never ignore the vital contributions of our international partners or dismiss their sacrifices.

From the beginning, America has sought international support for our operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, and we have gained much support. There is a difference, however, between leading a coalition of many nations and submitting to the objections of a few. America will never seek a permission slip to defend the security of our country.

We also hear doubts that democracy is a realistic goal for the greater Middle East, where freedom is rare. Yet it is mistaken and condescending to assume that whole cultures and great religions are incompatible with liberty and self-government. I believe that God has planted in every human heart the desire to live in freedom, and even when that desire is crushed by tyranny for decades, it will rise again.

As long as the Middle East remains a place of tyranny and despair and anger, it will continue to produce men and movements that threaten the safety of America and our friends. So America is pursuing a forward strategy of freedom in the greater Middle East. We will challenge the enemies of reform, confront the allies of terror, and expect a higher standard from our friend. To cut through the barriers of hateful propaganda, the Voice of America and other broadcast services are expanding their programming in Arabic and Persian, and soon a new television service will begin providing reliable news and information across the region. I will send you a proposal to double the budget of the National Endowment for Democracy and to focus its new work on the development of free elections and free markets, free press, and free labor unions in the Middle East. And above all, we will finish the historic work of democracy in Afghanistan and Iraq so those nations can light the way for others and help transform a troubled part of the world.

America is a nation with a mission, and that mission comes from our most basic beliefs. We have no desire to dominate, no ambitions of empire. Our aim is a democratic peace, a peace founded upon the dignity and rights of every man and

woman. America acts in this cause with friends and allies at our side, yet we understand our special calling: This great Republic will lead the cause of freedom.

In the last 3 years, adversity has also revealed the fundamental strengths of the American economy. We have come through recession and terrorist attack and corporate scandals and the uncertainties of war. And because you acted to stimulate our economy with tax relief, this economy is strong and growing stronger.

You have doubled the child tax credit from 500 to $1,000, reduced the marriage penalty, begun to phase out the death tax, reduced taxes on capital gains and stock dividends, cut taxes on small businesses, and you have lowered taxes for every American who pays income taxes.

Americans took those dollars and put them to work, driving this economy forward. The pace of economic growth in the third quarter of 2003 was the fastest in nearly 20 years; new home construction, the highest in almost 20 years; homeownership rates, the highest ever. Manufacturing activity is increasing. Inflation is low. Interest rates are low. Exports are growing. Productivity is high, and jobs are on the rise. These numbers confirm that the American people are using their money far better than Government would have, and you were right to return it.

America's growing economy is also a changing economy. As technology transforms the way almost every job is done, America becomes more productive and workers need new skills. Much of our job growth will be found in high-skilled fields like health care and biotechnology. So we must respond by helping more Americans gain the skills to find good jobs in our new economy.

All skills begin with the basics of reading and math, which are supposed to be learned in the early grades of our schools. Yet for too long, for too many children, those skills were never mastered. By passing the No Child Left Behind Act, you have made the expectation of literacy the law of our country. We're providing more funding for our schools, a 36-percent increase since 2001. We're requiring higher standards. We are regularly testing every child on the fundamentals. We are reporting results to parents and making sure they have better options when schools are not performing. We are making progress toward excellence for every child in America.

But the status quo always has defenders. Some want to undermine the No Child Left Behind Act by weakening standards and accountability. Yet the results we require are really a matter of common sense: We expect third graders to read and do math at the third grade level, and that's not asking too much. Testing is the only way to identify and help students who are falling behind. This Nation will not go back to the days of simply shuffling children along from grade to grade without them learning the basics. I refuse to give up on any child, and the No Child Left Behind Act is opening the door of opportunity to all of America's children.

At the same time, we must ensure that older students and adults can gain the skills they need to find work now. Many of the fastest growing occupations require strong math and science preparation and training beyond the high school level. So tonight, I propose a series of measures called Jobs for the 21st Century. This program will provide extra help to middle and high school students who fall behind in reading and math, expand advanced placement programs in low-income schools, invite math and science professionals from the private sector to teach part-time in our high schools. I propose larger Pell grants for students who prepare for college with demanding courses in high school. I propose increasing our support for America's fine community colleges, so they can—I do so, so they can train workers for industries that are creating the most new jobs. By all these actions, we'll help more and more Americans to join in the growing prosperity of

our country. Job training is important, and so is job creation. We must continue to pursue an aggressive, progrowth economic agenda.

Congress has some unfinished business on the issue of taxes. The tax reductions you passed are set to expire. Unless you act, the unfair tax on marriage will go back up. Unless you act, millions of families will be charged $300 more in Federal taxes for every child. Unless you act, small businesses will pay higher taxes. Unless you act, the death tax will eventually come back to life. Unless you act, Americans face a tax increase. What Congress has given, the Congress should not take away. For the sake of job growth, the tax cuts you passed should be permanent.

Our agenda for jobs and growth must help small-business owners and employees with relief from needless Federal regulation and protect them from junk and frivolous lawsuits.

Consumers and businesses need reliable supplies of energy to make our economy run, so I urge you to pass legislation to modernize our electricity system, promote conservation, and make America less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

My administration is promoting free and fair trade to open up new markets for America's entrepreneurs and manufacturers and farmers, to create jobs for American workers. Younger workers should have the opportunity to build a nest egg by saving part of their Social Security taxes in a personal retirement account. We should make the Social Security system a source of ownership for the American people. And we should limit the burden of Government on this economy by acting as good stewards of taxpayers' dollars.

In 2 weeks, I will send you a budget that funds the war, protects the homeland, and meets important domestic needs while limiting the growth in discretionary spending to less than 4 percent. This will require that Congress focus on priorities, cut wasteful spending, and be wise with the people's money. By doing so, we can cut the deficit in half over the next 5 years.

Tonight I also ask you to reform our immigration laws so they reflect our values and benefit our economy. I propose a new temporary-worker program to match willing foreign workers with willing employers when no Americans can be found to fill the job. This reform will be good for our economy because employers will find needed workers in an honest and orderly system. A temporary-worker program will help protect our homeland, allowing Border Patrol and law enforcement to focus on true threats to our national security.

I oppose amnesty, because it would encourage further illegal immigration and unfairly reward those who break our laws. My temporary-worker program will preserve the citizenship path for those who respect the law while bringing millions of hard-working men and women out from the shadows of American life.

Our Nation's health care system, like our economy, is also in a time of change. Amazing medical technologies are improving and saving lives. This dramatic progress has brought its own challenge, in the rising costs of medical care and health insurance. Members of Congress, we must work together to help control those costs and extend the benefits of modern medicine throughout our country.

Meeting these goals requires bipartisan effort, and 2 months ago, you showed the way. By strengthening Medicare and adding a prescription drug benefit, you kept a basic commitment to our seniors. You are giving them the modern medicine they deserve.

Starting this year, under the law you passed, seniors can choose to receive a drug discount card, saving them 10 to 25 percent off the retail price of most prescription drugs, and millions of low-income seniors can get an additional $600 to buy medicine. Beginning next year, seniors will have new coverage for preventive screenings against diabetes and heart disease, and seniors just

entering Medicare can receive wellness exams.

In January of 2006, seniors can get prescription drug coverage under Medicare. For a monthly premium of about $35, most seniors who do not have that coverage today can expect to see their drug bills cut roughly in half. Under this reform, senior citizens will be able to keep their Medicare just as it is, or they can choose a Medicare plan that fits them best, just as you, as Members of Congress, can choose an insurance plan that meets your needs. And starting this year, millions of Americans will be able to save money tax-free for their medical expenses in a health savings account.

I signed this measure proudly, and any attempt to limit the choices of our seniors or to take away their prescription drug coverage under Medicare will meet my veto.

On the critical issue of health care, our goal is to ensure that Americans can choose and afford private health care coverage that best fits their individual needs. To make insurance more affordable, Congress must act to address rapidly rising health care costs. Small businesses should be able to band together and negotiate for lower insurance rates, so they can cover more workers with health insurance. I urge you to pass association health plans. I ask you to give lower income Americans a refundable tax credit that would allow millions to buy their own basic health insurance.

By computerizing health records, we can avoid dangerous medical mistakes, reduce costs, and improve care. To protect the doctor-patient relationship and keep good doctors doing good work, we must eliminate wasteful and frivolous medical lawsuits. And tonight I propose that individuals who buy catastrophic health care coverage as part of our new health savings accounts be allowed to deduct 100 percent of the premiums from their taxes.

A Government-run health care system is the wrong prescription. By keeping costs under control, expanding access, and helping more Americans afford coverage, we will preserve the system of private medicine that makes America's health care the best in the world.

We are living in a time of great change in our world, in our economy, in science and medicine. Yet some things endure: courage and compassion, reverence and integrity, respect for differences of faith and race. The values we try to live by never change, and they are instilled in us by fundamental institutions such as families and schools and religious congregations. These institutions, these unseen pillars of civilization, must remain strong in America, and we will defend them. We must stand with our families to help them raise healthy, responsible children. When it comes to helping children make right choices, there is work for all of us to do.

One of the worst decisions our children can make is to gamble their lives and futures on drugs. Our Government is helping parents confront this problem with aggressive education, treatment, and law enforcement. Drug use in high school has declined by 11 percent over the last 2 years. Four hundred thousand fewer young people are using illegal drugs than in the year 2001. In my budget, I propose new funding to continue our aggressive, community-based strategy to reduce demand for illegal drugs. Drug testing in our schools has proven to be an effective part of this effort. So tonight I propose an additional 23 million for schools that want to use drug testing as a tool to save children's lives. The aim here is not to punish children but to send them this message: We love you, and we do not want to lose you.

To help children make right choices, they need good examples. Athletics play such an important role in our society, but unfortunately, some in professional sports are not setting much of an example. The use of performance-enhancing drugs like steroids in baseball, football, and other sports is dangerous, and it sends the wrong message, that there are shortcuts to accomplishment

and that performance is more important than character. So tonight I call on team owners, union representatives, coaches, and players to take the lead, to send the right signal, to get tough, and to get rid of steroids now.

To encourage right choices, we must be willing to confront the dangers young people face, even when they're difficult to talk about. Each year, about 3 million teenagers contract sexually transmitted diseases that can harm them or kill them or prevent them from ever becoming parents. In my budget, I propose a grassroots campaign to help inform families about these medical risks. We will double Federal funding for abstinence programs, so schools can teach this fact of life: Abstinence for young people is the only certain way to avoid sexually transmitted diseases.

Decisions children now make can affect their health and character for the rest of their lives. All of us, parents and schools and government, must work together to counter the negative influence of the culture and to send the right messages to our children.

A strong America must also value the institution of marriage. I believe we should respect individuals as we take a principled stand for one of the most fundamental, enduring institutions of our civilization. Congress has already taken a stand on this issue by passing the Defense of Marriage Act, signed in 1996 by President Clinton. That statute protects marriage under Federal law as a union of a man and a woman and declares that one State may not redefine marriage for other States.

Activist judges, however, have begun redefining marriage by court order, without regard for the will of the people and their elected representatives. On an issue of such great consequence, the people's voice must be heard. If judges insist on forcing their arbitrary will upon the people, the only alternative left to the people would be the constitutional process. Our Nation must defend the sanctity of marriage.

The outcome of this debate is important, and so is the way we conduct it. The same moral tradition that defines marriage also teaches that each individual has dignity and value in God's sight.

It's also important to strengthen our communities by unleashing the compassion of America's religious institutions. Religious charities of every creed are doing some of the most vital work in our country: mentoring children, feeding the hungry, taking the hand of the lonely. Yet Government has often denied social service grants and contracts to these groups, just because they have a cross or a Star of David or a crescent on the wall. By Executive order, I have opened billions of dollars in grant money to competition that includes faith-based charities. Tonight I ask you to codify this into law, so people of faith can know that the law will never discriminate against them again.

In the past, we've worked together to bring mentors to children of prisoners and provide treatment for the addicted and help for the homeless. Tonight I ask you to consider another group of Americans in need of help. This year, some 600,000 inmates will be released from prison back into society. We know from long experience that if they can't find work or a home or help, they are much more likely to commit crime and return to prison. So tonight I propose a 4-year, $300 million prisoner reentry initiative to expand job training and placement services, to provide transitional housing, and to help newly released prisoners get mentoring, including from faith-based groups. America is the land of second chance, and when the gates of the prison open, the path ahead should lead to a better life.

For all Americans, the last 3 years have brought tests we did not ask for and achievements shared by all. By our actions, we have shown what kind of nation we are. In grief, we have found the grace to go on. In challenge, we rediscovered the courage and daring of a free people. In

victory, we have shown the noble aims and good heart of America. And having come this far, we sense that we live in a time set apart.

I've been witness to the character of the people of America, who have shown calm in times of danger, compassion for one another, and toughness for the long haul. All of us have been partners in a great enterprise. And even some of the youngest understand that we are living in historic times. Last month a girl in Lincoln, Rhode Island, sent me a letter. It began, "Dear George W. Bush. If there's anything you know I, Ashley Pearson, age 10, can do to help anyone, please send me a letter and tell me what I can do to save our country." She added this P.S.: "If you can send a letter to the troops, please put, 'Ashley Pearson believes in you.' "

Tonight, Ashley, your message to our troops has just been conveyed. And yes, you have some duties yourself: Study hard in school; listen to your mom or dad; help someone in need; and when you and your friends see a man or woman in uniform, say, "Thank you." And Ashley, while you do your part, all of us here in this great Chamber will do our best to keep you and the rest of America safe and free.

My fellow citizens, we now move forward with confidence and faith. Our Nation is strong and steadfast. The cause we serve is right, because it is the cause of all mankind. The momentum of freedom in our world is unmistakable, and it is not carried forward by our power alone. We can trust in that greater power who guides the unfolding of the years. And in all that is to come, we can know that His purposes are just and true.

May God continue to bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:12 p.m. in the House Chamber of the Capitol. In his remarks, he referred to Khalid Sheik Mohammed, senior Al Qaida leader responsible for planning the September 11 attack, who was captured in Pakistan on March 1, 2003; Nurjaman Riduan Isamuddin (known as Hambali), Al Qaida's chief operational planner in Southeast Asia; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; and Col. Muammar Abu Minyar al-Qadhafi, leader of Libya. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks in a Discussion at Owens Community College in Perrysburg Township, Ohio

January 21, 2004

The President. Thank you, Dr. Adams. Well done. [*Laughter*] You read it just like I wrote it. [*Laughter*] I appreciate your invitation. Thank you for your leadership. I want to thank you all for coming. I particularly want to thank the panelists who are here. We're about to have a discussion about how a community college can change people's lives in a positive way, how we can use our community college system to help people who want to work gain the skills necessary to find jobs in what is a changing economy.

Before we get there, I do want to say a few comments, now that you're stuck here. [*Laughter*] First, it's great to be in Toledo, the home of the Mud Hens. I've always been intrigued by the nickname, the "Mud Hens." [*Laughter*]

I'm glad to be in the presence of two Members of the United States Senate who actually hitched a ride on Air Force One. They endured a rather long speech last night, then got on the airplane and endured another speech. [*Laughter*] And that would be Senator George Voinovich and Senator

Mike DeWine. I want to thank you for coming. There they are, yes.

I was telling—talking to George about what we were going to do here today. He said, "You know, when I was a Governor, I recognized the role of community colleges in job training." And I want to give George credit where credit is due. He was a pioneer in making sure that the curriculum of the community college system in Ohio was relevant to the needs of employers and potential employees. What we're really here to talk about is something that George Voinovich started, and I'm grateful.

That tradition is being carried on by your current Governor, Governor Bob Taft. I'm honored you're here, Governor. Thank you for coming. I appreciate Paul Gillmor; Congressman Gillmor is with us today. Congressman, thank you for coming. He was quick to point out that Owens is in his district. [*Laughter*] I'm quick to point out, you better take care of Owens. It's doing a fine job, Congressman. I appreciate you. And you are—and you are.

We've got a lot of local officials here, mayors, and—I appreciate you coming. We've got members of the school board who are here, trustees of this important college, and I want to thank you all for being here.

Last night I had the opportunity to address the Nation. I talked about a lot of subjects that were on my mind. One of them, of course, is that we still fight the war on terror. I just want to assure you that I understand, my most important obligation as your President is to keep this country secure and strong. And there are a lot of really good people working on your behalf, whether it be people in the Homeland Security Department—and thank you for training people for the Homeland Security Department—local police, local firefighters, or the brave men and women who wear our uniform, all of whom understand the solemn obligation to protect the people. We will never forget the lessons of September the 11th. We will stay on the offensive. We will win the war on terror and make sure that America is secure and free.

I see local officers here. It is very important that we provide law enforcement with the tools necessary to fight and win this war. I called for the renewal of the Patriot Act. I want to tell you why. It is important that we be able to share information at the Federal level. It's important we have the authority to be able to seize assets. These tools in the Patriot Act, most of the tools, we have been using for years against embezzlers or criminals. We're at war. It seems like to me it is logical that we apply tools that we've used to catch embezzlers to be able to catch terrorists. The Congress needs to renew the PATRIOT Act so we can win the war on terror and secure the homeland.

I also reminded the people that we've been through a lot in this country, particularly when it comes to the economy. Just a brief recap: We've been through a recession. That means three quarters of negative growth, which means people get laid off their jobs. We had a terrorist attack which affected the psychology of the country. It really did. It changed foreign policy, by the way. When you see a gathering threat, we can no longer ignore it and hope it goes away. It also said to America that we are—we can be hurt by an enemy that hates us. And it affected us. It really did.

We had corporate scandals. I oftentimes talk about the need to usher in a period of personal responsibility. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you're responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And we passed laws to make that abundantly clear.

And then, we marched to war. We took gathering threats seriously, and we dealt with them. The world is better off without Saddam Hussein and the Taliban. But all that—the march to war affected our psychology and confidence. It is hard to be optimistic about the future when you turn on your TV screens and say, "America is marching to war." War is not positive. War

is—it sends the signal that there will be uncertainty. We're now marching to peace. But we overcome a lot, and it's important for our citizens to remember that.

We overcame it, in my judgment, because we properly stimulated the economy by letting people keep their money. And now we're growing. Nationwide, this economy is strong: Housing up; inflation's low; interest rates are low. We had good exports the last quarter. New jobs are being created—I mean, last month on the exports. Things are happening.

I fully recognize, in Ohio there are still troubled times. The manufacturing here is sluggish at best, and therefore, people are looking for work. People who could rely upon a steady job in the manufacturing sector are hoping to be able to realize their hopes by finding work elsewhere.

There are some things we can do to make sure the Ohio manufacturing sector is strong. One is to make sure our trading partners understand, we expect there to be free, but level—the playing field needs to be level, that we expect countries like China to understand that trade imbalances doesn't mean—that says that the trade is not balanced and fair, that they've got to deal with their currency.

We also need an energy policy, by the way. If you rely upon manufacturing to have a vibrant job base, you've got to have an energy policy. Manufacturers need to have a reliable source of energy. We're too dependent on foreign sources of energy. We got public policy that is—that makes it difficult for Ohio's manufacturers to say, "We got a reliable source of energy." We've run up the demand for natural gas. We haven't had a corresponding increase in natural gas. It's hard to keep people working when your energy bills are going out of sight. We need an energy policy. I called on Congress to pass one, and they need to get one to my desk.

One other issue that makes it hard for people to stay working in certain industries is that we got a problem with medical liability. There are junk and frivolous lawsuits which are running good docs out of business. Now, look, any doctor who is a bad doc deserves to be held to task. But you can't have a system where people just file lawsuit after lawsuit after lawsuit, fishing for a rich settlement, because what that's going to do is, it's going to run up the cost of health care and drive good docs out of business. And that affects the ability for employers to keep people working. Congress needs to pass medical liability reform now.

These are some of the ways to make sure the manufacturing activity of this State remains strong. But the truth of the matter is, there is job growth in other sectors, and therefore, we'd better have a system which is able to be flexible enough to help people who want to work find a job, to match willing worker with willing employer. And that's what we're here to talk about.

Very quickly, the first stage to make sure workers are trained is to make sure our public education system does its job. The No Child Left Behind Act is challenging what I call the soft bigotry of low expectations. We're raising standards. We're trusting local people to make the right decisions. But we expect every child—every child—not just a few but every child to learn the basics of reading and math. Like I said last night, I'm going to repeat here, the days of just quitting on kids early and shuffling them through our public schools is over.

The ability for these community colleges to do their job means we better have people coming out of high school who can read and write and add and subtract. The best place to start is early, and we're starting early now in America. We're testing to make sure we figure out who needs extra help. And the Federal Government is increasing Federal spending, particularly on Title I students, in dramatic fashion. I also think we need to spend additional money for kids in high school. See, there's a learning gap where the accountability systems

are late in arriving in certain places, and therefore, some kids have been shuffled through.

Last night I didn't specify what I meant, but I'll tell you right now what I meant. I think we need to spend an additional $100 million for high school and intermediate reading programs. We want these kids at least reading when they're coming out of high school. And you've got to be honest about it, and these presidents of these community colleges will tell you, sometimes they're getting kids out of high school that can't read. And that's a shame, and that's not right. And we can focus extra resources there.

We need people who are more steeped in math and sciences. And therefore, it's important for us to encourage scientists and mathematicians to teach part-time and to make sure our teachers are properly trained in the math and sciences so they can impart knowledge that is necessary for kids to have a bright future. We got extra teacher training money, about $120 million a year.

I think we need to have more advanced placement programs in low-income schools to encourage rigorous curriculum for all students. See, if you're challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations, you believe every child can learn. And therefore, we ought to be raising that bar for all students. And so we've got money in the budget, $28 million to encourage advanced placement programs to go into neighborhoods that have not had the benefit of an advanced placement program. And then, to coincide that, I think we ought to have increased Pell grants for students who qualify and take rigorous curriculum, and that would be Pell grants of up to $1,000 additional money.

I'm telling you—what I'm telling you is we're focusing on people who can achieve the great promise of our country. We're not going to quit on anybody, and we're going to make sure the community college system does its job. As you know full well, particularly if you're a trustee of the community college, that most of the money is local money, but the Federal Government can help, particularly when it comes to job training.

The president talked about the job training initiative I talked about last night. It's $250 million of direct money to help on these programs which match workers with employers. There's no better place to do that than the community college system. The community college system is flexible. The community college system is local. The community college system accepts input.

And that's what we're here to talk about. It's very important for people who are listening to this conversation that if you're running a community college, I want you to pay attention to what Owens has done. And as importantly, if you're somebody out there who doesn't see a bright tomorrow, listen to the two students. They may look old to be students—[*laughter*]—but nobody's too old to be a student.

Let me—why don't we—you heard from Dr. Adams. I don't know if you want to elaborate beyond this, Dr. Adams. I thought your explanation about what your community college is doing was great. It should be clear to people when you hear the number of students being trained for work—18,000, I think you said—is the reason I'm here. You've got 18,000 people coming through here who are better skilled to meet the jobs being generated in this part of the world. And if you want to elaborate on that, you can. She also told me a lot about nursing, by the way. We've got a nursing—[*applause*]—yes, there you are. It's a nursing shortage?

Participant. Yes.

The President. Forty thousand students? Well, anyway.

[*At this point, the discussion continued.*]

The President. Yes, I appreciate the guy who is responsible for making sure the curriculum actually adjusts and doesn't stay stuck. What you've got to worry about, if you're in the local community, you've got

to ask this question to a provost, "Are you flexible?" [*Laughter*] In other words, if somebody shows up and says, "We've got a demand for jobs," will the community college adjust?

It used to be, in the old days when they held Governors to account as to whether or not we were meeting workforce requirements, it didn't matter what job you trained somebody for. All that mattered is, you train them. So—I'm sure this didn't happen with Voinovich; it might have happened with me—you go out and train 1,000 hairdressers for 50 jobs. But everybody said, "You're doing a fine job. You're training a lot of people."

The key is to train people for the work which actually exists. No better place to do that than in a community college; that's why we're spending $250 million to encourage that.

Paul Unger is with us. He's the provost—fancy word for the guy responsible for making sure it works. [*Laughter*] And he is.

[*Paul Unger, provost, Owens Community College, made brief remarks.*]

The President. Yes, see, I hope everybody listened to what he just said. He said, "We take input." Sometimes institutions of higher education don't take input and miss opportunity. Owens takes input because they're willing to listen to the people on the frontlines of hiring, making the hiring decisions, for which I'm grateful.

Jim Gilmore is the coordinator here of the Skilled Trades Technology and Integrated Systems Technology Programs. Why don't you tell us what that means, what a coordinator does, and—just tell me what you do.

Jim Gilmore. Coordinator is a fancy word for the guy who does a lot and——

The President. And gets no credit.

Mr. Gilmore. And gets no credit. [*Laughter*]

[*The discussion continued.*]

Mr. Gilmore. The other part of my position is to work with local area business and industry and find out what those needs are, what are they looking for, and if they have an opening, to put those students with those companies and match them up.

The President. How do you do that? In other words, if some person out there says, "I need to hire five new people," how does that person get in touch with you? How does——

Mr. Gilmore. What are you looking for, Mr. President? [*Laughter*]

The President. I'm trying to think of a cute answer. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Gilmore. The quiet ones are dangerous. [*Laughter*]

The President. That's right. I don't need a new wife, fortunately. [*Laughter*] I married really well. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Gilmore. In my position, companies will usually seek us out and ask us specifically, "We are looking for people with these skills." For example, a company might say, "We're looking for maintenance people, and we need our maintenance people to have skills in hydraulics, pneumatics, electronics, PLCs." And they might come to me and say, "Do you have somebody in mind or can you put me in touch with a placement service, with anybody that would have an idea of what Owens and Owens students have to offer?" And most typically, we'll put them in touch with our placement service, the Wood County's placement service, or Lucas County or whatever county that that company happens to reside in. And we match those people up to find them the right job. So it's a two-way street.

The President. Good job. Here's the thing, that—he talks about one-stop; let me tell you what that means. That means there's one place at the local level where a—somebody who is looking for work can go to try to find a job. That's what that means. And there's a lot of opportunities around the country at one-stops. It's one

of the interesting innovations which Government put in place in the past decade to make sure that people are able to find a job. They can find help there. They can find counseling services.

Better to explain the one-stop than me is Ruth Larabee. She is the director of the Wood County Department of Jobs and Family Services. Would you please tell everybody what a one-stop does, what your day is like, what—here in the community, are people looking for workers? What do you see, and what do you hear?

[*Ruth Larabee made brief remarks.*]

The President. Thanks, I appreciate you sharing that with us. You heard me talk about statistics, and they're good. There's no doubt things are getting better, and that's positive. There's no doubt the economy is changing because of technology, and that's interesting. It makes for great, interesting opportunities.

But one of the things we've got to recognize in our society, as technology races through the economy, some people could conceivably be—are being left behind because of the skill sets, and that we welcome innovation, productivity increases. These are all positive for labor stability, higher wages, better opportunity. But this country of ours must also recognize that the workforce needs to be constantly trained to stay up with the technological advances.

And two people to best talk about that are with us today—students, people who are not satisfied with falling behind, people who have found that there's opportunity and are willing to seize it.

I was teasing Becky, publicly, of course, here. [*Laughter*] But I did so with pride in my voice, I want you to know, because she is—has struggled. And here she sits with a bright future. And so I want you to share your story with us, Becky. She's a good soul who has got—and I told Becky coming in here today, I said, "There's people just like you, Becky, who are probably watching, or may be watching, who just got to know that because of what you have done here at Owens, they've got a shot too. They've got an opportunity to improve themselves." So let her go.

[*Rebecca Albritton, student, Owens Community College, made brief remarks.*]

The President. This good soul says, "I've got a skill set; I need to upgrade it," that "The world is changing; I need to change with it." Community colleges need to change, but people also have got to make the conscious decision to seize opportunity, to see a brighter future. That's what I love about Becky's story. She could have just said, "Well, I quit." But she didn't. She found opportunity.

Some of the people may be out there wondering whether or not this is affordable, whether or not there is any help. And why don't you tell us, Becky, what you found.

Ms. Albritton. I found, when I went out to the one-stop, that tuition was available, and they pay for your tuition; they pay for your books. The only thing they don't pay for is your time. That's honest.

The President. That's good. [*Laughter*] Let me ask you this question. Is it worth it?

Ms. Albritton. Very much so, very much so.

The President. There you go.

The other living example of what is possible when people make up their mind to improve themselves and seek opportunity, and the local community provides those opportunities, is Mike. Mike Potter is with us. He's the pretty one down there on the end. [*Laughter*] I asked Mike to share his story with you because I think you'll find it interesting. I think anybody who wonders whether or not they can learn a new skill should listen to what Mike has to say. Mike, why don't you let her go.

[*Mike Potter, maintenance technician, Oracle Packaging, made brief remarks.*]

The President. How long did it take? I mean, you're laid off; you come here. How

long did it take you to get prepared, to get—to be ready for the new kind of job, the higher paying job? Because, frankly, he was more productive as a worker. He had the skills necessary to fit into the changing economy. How long were you here for?

Mr. Potter. The program—actually it's a self-based program. It's an excellent program for anybody that doesn't have much trouble with—well, that has trouble with bookwork, I'm sorry. It's hands-on, self paced, and that's what was a great part. It actually took me about, probably about maybe 3 or 4 months to finish the program.

The President. So it's not a lifetime?

Mr. Potter. No, no, not at all.

The President. You're able to come in, move quickly, get some skills, and all of a sudden, somebody says, "I love his attitude. He's a hard worker, and he's got the skill sets necessary to fit into this new workforce." That's what people need to know.

Mr. Potter. Everything is changing. People don't just want to see a person with just one skill anymore. They want several skills, and that's what the IST program offers.

The President. That's good. Thanks for sharing. You did a great job.

Our two students here are serving as mentors, in a way, aren't they? They're saying what is possible. And I want to thank you all for sharing your story. I'm sure it was a nerve-wracking experience—[*laughter*]—thinking about coming here. [*Laughter*] Look at all those cameras.

We've got another mentor with us today. Bruce Vanisacker is with us. He came out to the airport to meet me. It's an interesting idea he's doing. He has started what's called First Robotics, that teaches and inspires young people to be interested in the sciences, and that's important. Science and engineering and mathematics are all essential as we head into the 21st century.

I appreciate Bruce coming because it gives me a chance to remind people here and in Toledo and around the State of Ohio and the country that the true strength of the country lies in the hearts and souls of our fellow citizens, that we're a mighty military country—we'll stay that way, in order to keep the peace—that we've got wealth, compared to other countries, and that's good. But the true strength can be found in neighborhoods where people have decided to mentor a child, to teach a person to read or write, to love the homeless, to help feed the hungry.

Bruce is with us. Bruce, thank you for coming. You might stand up right quick. He happens to be interested in science and robotics, but really what he's doing, when you think about it, is mentoring a child.

This country is prosperous. We're going to be more prosperous, but we don't want anybody left behind. No child should be left behind in the education system, no worker left behind because we haven't created a flexible system in order to get skills, nobody who needs love left behind. Government can't make people love one another, but we darn sure can encourage people who love to reach out to a neighbor in need. America can change for the better one heart, one soul, one conscience at a time, and I call upon you to be a part of the army of compassion, to help make this community and this State and our country one of hope for every single citizen who lives here.

It's such an honor to be here today. I thank our panelists for what I have found to be an interesting discussion. I hope you have as well, and thank you all for coming.

May God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:24 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. The President also referred to Title I of the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 (Public Law No. 103–382), which amended Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (Public Law No. 89–10).

Remarks in a Discussion at Mesa Community College in Phoenix, Arizona
January 21, 2004

The President. Well, I appreciate you having me here. You've got an interesting accent—[*laughter*]—thought for a minute you were from Texas. [*Laughter*] Then he told me he was from Australia. And we really appreciate our friends from Australia.

First, I want to thank you for letting me come by. This is going to be an interesting dialog to talk about how to make sure our community college systems—not only here in Arizona but around the country—meet the needs of the modern workforce. Let me put it another way—make sure that people get the skills necessary to find work. And that's what we're really here to talk about.

The reason why we're here at Mesa is because you're doing a great job. I'm sure we'll hear some of that soon. Before we do, though, I want to recognize Members of the United States Congress who are here. I appreciate so very much them coming. That would be J.D. Hayworth and Trent Franks and Jeff Flake. I don't know if you guys were there last night—this is the ultimate loyalty, when they hear a long speech last night, then they come and get to hear another speech, back to back. But thank you all for being here. I appreciate your service to our country and your State.

I know there's elected officials here. I know there are members of the community college board of trustees. I met the chairman, by the way, who did a fine job of lobbying on behalf of the funding for the community college system—[*laughter*]—in this vital part of our country.

Let me—just a couple of comments, and then we'll start the dialog. First, we're still at war. And we're going to win the war, because there's a lot of really brave, capable, courageous Americans who are willing to sacrifice for liberty and freedom.

I was so touched, when I went to Baghdad or when I met our troops around our country, to realize there are people in our country who are serving something greater than themself. I think that's such a wonderful part of our Nation and our culture. And you just got to know, our Government will do everything we can to keep us safe—keep us safe by staying on the offensive, by changing parts of the world that had embraced tyranny. We believe strongly in America that freedom is the Almighty God's gift to every person who lives in the world, every man and woman. And America will continue to have a forward strategy of freedom to make the world more peaceful.

And it's hard work. I know it is. But in my judgment, it's essential work. It's essential work so that our children can grow up in a peaceful and free society. It's essential work so others' children can grow up in a peaceful and free world as well.

At home, we got a lot of good people working in homeland security. I met the Governor at the airport today. It rained. [*Laughter*] I said, "Do you want to take credit for the rain, or do you want me to take credit for the rain?" [*Laughter*] But she's working hard, and the coordination between the Federal and State and local authorities is good. We're doing everything we can to protect us.

The other thing that's happening is, is that our economy is beginning to grow. And that's important. There's no need to talk about job training if we're not creating new jobs. And that's what we're here to discuss.

I just want to remind everybody right quick what we have been through, just to show you how strong America is and how great the American people are. We've been through a recession. We went—we were attacked, and make no mistake about it, the attack hurt. The attack hurt because it made it abundantly clear that this Nation

is no longer protected by oceans and that we've got to get on the offensive if we're interested in keeping us peace and safe. We had some corporate scandals. That hurt us. It hurt us when citizens who should know better didn't tell the truth to their employees and their shareholders. They're now being held to account, by the way, because of good laws we passed. Then we marched to war. When you're marching to war to make our country more secure and the world more free, it is not conducive to capital investment. That's a negative thought. When you turn on your TV screens for a lot of last year, it said "March To War." And that didn't instill a lot of confidence in the people, because there's a lot of uncertainty when "a march to war." We're now marching to peace, and we're changing the world in a better way.

And the economy is growing, and jobs are getting better. There will be honest disagreement about what I'm about to tell you, but I strongly believe that the tax relief we passed is helping this economy grow and that people have more money in their pocket. So there are jobs.

Now, I'm going to talk about—we'll talk about the new jobs of the 21st century. There are some old jobs, however, that are being filled by people from other countries. Let's be very frank about what I'm about to tell you. There are some jobs that employers are having trouble filling because Americans don't want to do them. And therefore, there are people from foreign countries coming to do the jobs.

There's a spirit of parenthood in everybody's heart, if you happen to be a mom or a dad. There's a deep desire for people to put food on the table to fulfill their obligations. And that's what's happening a lot when people come from countries like Mexico to work. They're coming to make a living, and they're filling jobs that, frankly, others won't do. It seems like to me that we ought to have a policy that's open and honest about this phenomena. It's a policy that, in my judgment, should say, where there's a willing worker and a willing employer, those two ought to be matched up together in a legal way, so long as the employer can't find an American to do the job.

What I'm talking about is a temporary-worker program that recognizes the reality of our economy. It's a temporary-worker program that also says clearly, we're a land of rule of law, that having people in the shadows of our economy is not really the American way, is it? So what I want to do is to say, let's have it all legal, in this sense: You can come to our country for a period of time so long as there's a job available for you.

Now, that doesn't mean there's automatic citizenship, quite the contrary. I strongly oppose what they call "amnesty" because all amnesty would do is invite more illegal immigration. All amnesty would do would say to those who are waiting in line in a legal way to become a citizen that legality—being legal doesn't matter in America. It does matter. So what I wanted Congress to consider for certain kinds of jobs is to put out a temporary-worker card; to get rid of all this business about people forging documents that put employers at risk; that say, for the period of time you're here, you can go home and take money back without fear of being arrested. It's a humane way to approach citizens of the world. Imagine being a worker here, and you get abused, and you don't dare call the abuser to account because you might get sent home and you can't do your job of making money for your family. So that's what I call on Congress to do.

It also is going to help our Border Patrol. It's essential for the security of this country that we have a legal system so we don't have this terrible problem of "coyotes" smuggling these people across the hot Arizona or Texas deserts, making money off the system that has now developed in America. I think we ought to let the sunshine in, have a legal system, recognize realities.

At the same time in our country we have a debate over those kind of jobs, we've always got to remember to make sure that Americans can find work too, of course. One of the interesting phenomena is the technological changes that are charging through our economy. And this Government—[*inaudible*]—for us to understand that as technologies change, oftentimes people can be left behind. And we've got to address it straight on.

And one of the greatest places to address that phenomena is at the community college system. And the reason why it's the community college system, it's flexible in its curriculum. The old days of workforce training are now changing. It used to be they said, "Look, just go train people," so States would go out and train 1,000 beauticians for 50 jobs. And there would be 950 beauticians without work. But they'd say, "Oh, we punched our ticket. We actually trained people."

Now we've got a new attitude in America. We're going to train people for the jobs that actually exist, and therefore requires a system that is flexible, a system willing to take input from the employers, a system that is willing to change curriculum, if need be, to meet the demands of local—of the local workplace.

So last night in my speech, I talked about spending additional money to focus directly on these programs, these collaborative programs at the community college level, that takes the input from business, takes the desire of workers, matches them so people can find good work. And so Congress needs to pass $250-million job training money to go specifically to community colleges to fund the kind of programs we're going to talk about here today.

I've been talking too much over the last 24 hours, so I want Martin to tell us how this collaborative effort got going. Now, one of the things that's interesting, I told our panelists, is that not only are you speaking to the folks here, but there's a lot of people listening. I hope community college systems pay attention to what they're about to hear, pay attention to what they're—what's taking place here in Arizona. It's a interesting idea. And it's one, I might add, that the Department of Labor has helped fund to get started.

So Martin, why don't you educate the people?

[*At this point, Martin Bean, chief operating officer, New Horizons Computer Learning Centers, and chair, CompTIA Policy Committee, made brief remarks.*]

The President. Obviously, the IT industry is strong here in Arizona.

Mr. Bean. Absolutely.

The President. Well—and tell us how this got started.

Mr. Bean. How we got started?

The President. Yes. Did you call everybody in the room and said, "All right, let's get after it?" Somebody needs workers, obviously. And so you came up with an interesting idea.

Mr. Bean. It really got started because educators got frustrated that they had to reinvent the wheel in every community college, and employers got frustrated that there was no clear way for them to be able to mentor and coach employees. And as the industry's association, CompTIA said, "Fine, we'll work with the Department of Labor, and instead of building programs for where there aren't any jobs, we'll build a set of standards for people to educate to employers' needs to get work."

The President. A strategy.

Mr. Bean. There we go. And now we're executing.

The President. Now you're implementing.

Mr. Bean. Exactly.

The President. Well, why don't we hear—let's talk to some of the implementers. Larry is the president of Mesa Community College, Larry Christiansen. Thank you for your hospitality.

Larry K. Christiansen. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. I appreciate your staff for putting up with this giant entourage of mine. [*Laughter*]

Dr. Christiansen. It's been a fun few days.

The President. I bet it has, yes. [*Laughter*]

[*Dr. Christiansen made brief remarks.*]

The President. Good. How many people come to this particular campus?

Dr. Christiansen. Just at our little place here, at Mesa Community College, we have 27,000 students.

The President. Right.

Dr. Christiansen. We have about 3,000 that participate in our Business and Industry Center.

The President. And the Business and Industry Center's sole purpose is to train people for jobs?

Dr. Christiansen. That's correct.

The President. And you've got 3,000 now?

Dr. Christiansen. Right. That is in addition to, as all of our colleges, we have other occupational programs that focus on job training as well. But much of what our Business and Industry Center does is partnering with industry.

The President. Right. Here we're talking about IT. I went to a community college in North Carolina. There we talked about health care. And the only reason I bring that up is that there are several fields where there's really fast-growing opportunities. It just requires a certain skill. You just can't walk into the job unless you're able to be educated into the ways of that particular industry. And in our country, it's—a changing economy provides interesting opportunities. And Mary is responsible for making sure it all works, aren't you?

Mary I. Vanis. We hope so.

The President. Yes. Tell us your job.

[*Dr. Vanis, director, Center for Workforce Development, Maricopa Community Colleges, made brief remarks.*]

The President. It's the ultimate community outreach.

Dr. Vanis. It's a great community outreach.

The President. It works because it's administered at the State and local level. It's really good public policy.

Dr. Vanis. It's a great policy.

The President. I presume some of our students—it's interesting to call you a student, isn't it? [*Laughter*] You never thought you would be a student, did you, at this stage of your life, which sets a classic example for others to understand that if times get tough and if you've got the desire, somebody will want to help you. And in Arizona, you get help right here. Good job.

You want to start? Stacey is with us, Stacey Leedom. She is a student. Stacey, why don't you tell us your story? I told Stacey and Bill and Bob that you just don't know, somebody might be watching our discussion here, wondering whether or not he or she can have a bright future. And to the extent that you can help shed light on where you've been and where you're going, it would awfully helpful.

[*Stacey Leedom made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

Ms. Leedom. I was lucky enough to get hired on by a company called Cable One, contracting first through a temporary service. But they are actually owned by the Washington Post. [*Laughter*]

The President. Can you change the editorial page? [*Laughter*]

Ms. Leedom. I'll ask. [*Laughter*]

The President. Good luck. I hope you rise quickly in the ranks. [*Laughter*]

Ms. Leedom. Sorry about that.

The President. Yes.

Ms. Leedom. Again, it helps me with a daughter. I want her to go to college. I don't want her to make mistakes I made of not going at a young age and having a full future and a full retirement plan and everything. I now have insurance for her. I have insurance for myself. It's a future.

And I'm right now, at an entry level, where I was after 15 years of being a graphic artist, on income. And that is—in the end, who has to pay the bills? Mom has to pay the bills.

The President. That's a really—first of all, being a single mom is the toughest job in America. Being a single mom who needs more education and has the desire to do so is doubly tough. And yours is a wonderful story. It is a story that others need to listen to. If you're worried about your skill set, you're never too old to learn. As a matter of fact, we all learn in different ways, don't we? You've been able to take your desire to do your duty as a responsible citizen and convert it to a employable skill.

What's really interesting about what she said—I want people to hear this—when you hear about productivity increases and the changing economy, she just said by taking time to develop new skills, she makes more in her new job, in the new world, than she did after 15 years in her old job.

The changing economy can leave people behind if we're not wise. But the changing economy also is good news. It creates higher paying, higher quality jobs. And that's what's happening here in America. And that's why it's essential that these kind of programs that we're talking about provide willing souls with the skills necessary to take advantage of it. Fifteen years of work, her pay now is higher in one year—how long have you been at Capital One?

Ms. Leedom. I've actually not been there a year; I've been there about 6 months.

The President. I rest my case. I appreciate that. Good job.

Ms. Leedom. Thank you, sir.

The President. Bob Chapman.

[*Bob Chapman, a Mesa Community College student, made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

Mr. Chapman. And at the moment now, I plan on getting my degree this spring, and so I'm right now out looking for a job. I was able to use some of the resources at the——

The President. Yes, one-stop center.

Mr. Chapman. One-stop center. [*Laughter*] That's the easiest way. I was trying to say the formal name for it—at the one-stop center.

The President. It happens to me all the time. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Chapman. Then I'm in good company. [*Laughter*]

The President. Well, thank you.

[*The discussion continued.*]

The President. I think it's important for people who wonder whether or not they can afford to go back to community college, there's pots of money that will help—Pell grants in this case, trade adjustment money in your case. And I assume the financial burden has been eased quite significantly.

[*The discussion continued.*]

The President. You mentioned a word that I want to spring off here for a second—mentoring. I just want everybody to know that the true strength of the country is not our military power or the fact that we're the wealthiest nation in the world. The true strength of the country is the fact that we've got people with really good hearts. That's the strength of America; it's the decency and honor of our people. Obviously, what you just said is part of what I'm talking about, mentoring to help people.

Hilary Juel is with us today. Hilary, I'm sorry to embarrass you. You shouldn't have come out to see me at Air Force One if you didn't want me to introduce you. [*Laughter*] She is a—she's with Make a Difference service group here in Phoenix. Their job is to match loving hearts with broken hearts, is the best way to describe it; is to help people who heard the call to love a neighbor to just do that; is to help save this community and ultimately our country, one soul at a time.

I want to thank you for being a soldier in the army of compassion. I want to urge people in this community to gather up the spirit of the Hilarys or what you've heard here today, to make a difference in somebody's lives. And it doesn't take much to do so, by the way. If you teach a child to read, you're helping America. If you go to a shut-in's house and just tell him you love him on a regular basis, you're making a difference. No, the strength of this country is the fact that we've got citizens willing to serve something greater than themself.

I think the community college system of America is one of our great strengths. I hope that people who have listened here can see that in the living proof of three citizens who, because of their own will and their own desire, took advantage of the opportunity and are now working or soon-to-be working. [*Laughter*] Well, two working and one filling out a resume. [*Laughter*]

But I appreciate you all sharing your stories with us. It's important to know that—for people to know that as this economy changes, there's opportunity. You've just got to seize it, just like you three have done. I want to thank you for your—for the example you've set. I want to thank the folks here for providing a great service to our Nation.

And may God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:06 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Janet Napolitano of Arizona; and Bill Moses, student, Mesa Community College.

Message to the Senate Transmitting the Additional Protocol to the Bulgaria-U.S. Investment Treaty
January 21, 2004

To the Senate of the United States:

With a view to receiving the advice and consent of the Senate to ratification, I transmit herewith the Additional Protocol Between the United States of America and the Republic of Bulgaria amending the Treaty Between the United States of America and the Republic of Bulgaria Concerning the Encouragement and Reciprocal Protection of Investment of September 23, 1992, signed at Brussels on September 22, 2003. I transmit also, for the information of the Senate, the report of the Department of State with respect to this Additional Protocol.

My Administration has already forwarded to the Senate a similar Additional Protocol for Romania and expects to forward to the Senate shortly Additional Protocols for the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and the Slovak Republic. Each of these Additional Protocols is the result of an understanding the United States reached with the European Commission and six countries that will join the European Union (EU) on May 1, 2004 (the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and the Slovak Republic), as well as with Bulgaria and Romania, which are expected to join the EU in 2007.

The understanding is designed to preserve U.S. bilateral investment treaties (BITs) with each of these countries after their accession to the EU by establishing a framework acceptable to the European Commission for avoiding or remedying present and possible future incompatibilities between their BIT obligations and their future obligations of EU membership. It expresses the U.S. intent to amend the U.S. BITs, including the BIT with Bulgaria, in order to eliminate incompatibilities between certain BIT obligations and EU law. It also establishes a framework

for addressing any future incompatibilities that may arise as European Union authority in the area of investment expands in the future, and endorses the principle of protecting existing U.S. investments from any future EU measures that may restrict foreign investment in the EU.

The United States has long championed the benefits of an open investment climate, both at home and abroad. It is the policy of the United States to welcome market-driven foreign investment and to permit capital to flow freely to seek its highest return. This Additional Protocol preserves the U.S. BIT with Bulgaria, with which the United States has an expanding relationship, and the protections it affords U.S. investors even after Bulgaria joins the EU. Without it, the European Commission would likely require Bulgaria to terminate its U.S. BIT upon accession because of existing and possible future incompatibilities between our current BIT and EU law.

I recommend that the Senate consider this Additional Protocol as soon as possible, and give its advice and consent to ratification at an early date.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
January 21, 2004.

Telephone Remarks to the March for Life
January 22, 2004

The President. Well, thank you very much, Nellie. I appreciate your kind introduction, and thank you for including me in this celebration of life. I'm calling you today from Roswell, New Mexico. And it sounds like you've got some people who know where Roswell is here in the audience.

I know that good folks have gathered there on The Mall from every corner of America to take part in the 31st March for Life. And I want you to pass on my best to each one of them in person, please, and tell them how much I appreciate their devotion to such a noble cause.

You believe, as I do, that every person, however frail or vulnerable, is a blessing. Each of us has a special dignity, a place and purpose in this world. And in the Declaration of Independence, our Founders stated this self-evident truth: The right to life does not come from government; it comes from the Creator of life.

During the past 3 years, we've made real progress toward building a culture of life in America. As President, I've signed the Born-Alive Infants Protection Act. I have signed legislation supporting maternity group homes. Working with the Congress, we have refused to spend taxpayers' money on international programs that promote abortion overseas. We're opposed to the destruction of embryos for stem cell research. And last November, it was my honor to sign into law a ban on the brutal procedure of partial-birth abortion.

Nellie, I want you to know that our administration is vigorously defending this law against those who would seek to overturn it in the courts. I also want you to know, without your hard work and dedication to the cause of life, these achievements would not have been possible.

But we all know there is still more to do. Earlier this week, I proposed that we double Federal funding for abstinence education programs. We will continue to support crisis pregnancy centers, adoption, parental notification laws, and the vital work of faith-based groups.

I strongly support the Unborn Victims of Violence Act, which the House Judiciary

Committee approved yesterday. And now the entire Congress should act on this bill so I can sign it into law.

We'll also work with Congress to pass without delay a comprehensive and effective ban on human cloning. We can push the limits of medical science while maintaining the highest of ethical standards. Human life is a creation, not a commodity, and should not be used as research material for reckless experiments.

Above all, we must continue, with civility and respect, to remind our fellow citizens that all life is sacred and worthy of protection. I know, as you return to your communities, you will redouble your efforts to change hearts and minds one person at a time. And this is the way we will build a lasting culture of life, a compassionate society in which every child is born into a loving family and protected by law.

Nellie Gray. We pledge that to you, Mr. President.

The President. Thank you, Nellie. I appreciate so very much the opportunity to speak to you and the assembled crowd. May God bless you all, and may He continue to bless America. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:08 a.m. from Roswell, NM, to march participants on the National Mall in Washington, DC. In his remarks, he referred to Nellie J. Gray, president, March for Life Education and Defense Fund.

Remarks in Roswell, New Mexico
January 22, 2004

The President. Thank you all. Thanks for coming.

Audience member. We love you, President Bush!

The President. Thank you. It's nice to be back in New Mexico. I understand you had reports this morning of an unfamiliar aircraft. [*Laughter*] No worry, it was just me. [*Laughter*] It's good to be back here. The last time I came to Roswell, I wasn't on Air Force One. I was headed to Ruidoso from Midland. [*Laughter*] Roswell was what we call a watering stop. [*Laughter*] You've got great people in this part of the State. I'm proud to be in this wonderful town. Thank you for inviting me.

I appreciate you showing up to hear me talk. If you listened to the State of the Union, I appreciate that. And I can assure you, it's not—I can assure you, I'm not going to be quite as windy. But I do have some things I want to share with you today. This Nation is called to great responsibilities, and we're meeting them all. The state of this Union is strong, and it is confident.

I'm proud to be here with the Corps of the New Mexico Military Institute, the West Point of the West. I appreciate the values instilled at this fine institution, of discipline and service and honor. I know many folks who have come to this fine place, some of them from Midland, Texas. I happen to have hired one, an alumnus of this school, for my Cabinet, Mr. Tony Principi, who is representing America's veterans so capably as the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

I want to thank the law enforcement and first-responders who are here with us. Thank you for wearing the uniform that says clearly you're willing to dedicate your lives to make your community a safer place. Thank you for being on the frontline of securing our homeland. I appreciate your service.

I appreciate Lt. Gen. Robert Beckel for his greeting me here today. He was from

the first graduating class of NMMI in 1959. He doesn't look that old. [*Laughter*] But he's had a distinguished service for our country. General, I appreciate what you're doing. Thank you for leading this fine institution.

I'm so proud to be up here with Pete Domenici. What a class act he is. He's an honorable man, an honorable man who cares deeply about New Mexico and all its citizens. He cares deeply about our country. He's a strong leader. He sets the pace in the United States Senate. He's taken the lead on a vital piece of legislation, the energy bill. This country needs an energy bill. We need an energy bill that makes sure our electricity system works well. We need an energy bill that encourages technologies that advance conservation. We need an energy bill that makes this country less dependent on foreign sources of energy. The Senator worked hard on this piece of legislation. I thought we had it at the end of last year, and then it got stuck. We're going to unstick it for the good of the country.

Pete, I appreciate your friendship. Just one piece of advice: Just remember, it's the birds that's supposed to suffer, not the hunter. [*Laughter*]

I'm honored to be traveling today with your Congressman, Steve Pearce. He's what they call a freshman—that's first-year—but as a freshman, he's making a huge difference. Let me tell you something: You sent somebody up there from this part of the world who's effective and strong, who's not going to back down one inch from what he believes. And he's plenty capable, and he's making a difference. He worked hard on bills that matter to this part of the State, like the healthy forests bill—commonsense legislation. He worked to help on the defense appropriations bill for an amendment that says, "We can defend our country and, at the same time, conserve our resources in a wise way." No, he's an effective Member of the United States Congress, and I'm proud to call him friend.

I'm proud to be traveling with Congresswoman Heather Wilson as well. She's over there, from Albuquerque. She's plenty capable. She's a distinguished Member of the United States Congress. She's a graduate of the U.S. Air Force Academy and reminded me coming in that General Beckel was one of her instructors. General, you did a heck of a job in preparing this good woman for public service. I'm proud to be working with my friend Heather Wilson. Thank you for coming.

I'm honored that the mayor came to see me. Mayor Owen, I appreciate you coming. My only advice is, fill the potholes. [*Laughter*]

I appreciate the business and community leaders who have come. I'm honored you all are here. You'll hear me talk about the strengths of our country. One of the strengths is that we're prosperous and getting more prosperous. That's a strength. One of the strengths is we've got a military that is second to none, and we aim to keep it that way. That's a strength as well. But that's not the strongest part of our country. The strongest part of the country is the people, because of the hearts of the people of America. The compassion of America really defines the strength of America.

Today, when I landed at the airport, I met Amy Coppin. She is a senior at NMMI. She came to say hello because she is a mentor. She teaches children. She's taking time out of her busy life as a senior in college to make a difference in somebody's life. She's serving something greater than herself by loving a neighbor just like she would like to be loved herself. She is a soldier in the army of compassion.

When you hear me talk about the strength of America being the heart and soul of the people, what I'm talking about are the Amy Coppins of the world, and people in this crowd who are serving your community and your country by helping somebody who hurts.

One of the most profound initiatives I put out, I think, in order to help change

America is for the Federal Government to welcome faith-based programs in delivery of essential services. I believe strongly that our Government should not discriminate against religious institutions. Quite the contrary: I believe we ought to welcome religious institutions into providing much-needed social services, because many of the problems of our society are problems of the heart. Many of the problems of society require a power greater than Government to help people realize the great potential of their lives.

Where's Amy? Amy didn't get a very good seat. Well—[*laughter*]—trust me; she's here. And I hope the cadets here follow her example, and as you go on to life, remember part of service to your country is to help somebody in need. And for those of you in this community who are a part of the army of compassion, thank you from the bottom of my heart. And for those of you who want to figure out how to contribute to our society, do so. Do so, and reach out a hand to somebody who might be hungry or homeless or lonely or hurt. The power of love in America is a power that will change our society, one soul at a time.

I hope you could tell last night and so far today that I'm incredibly optimistic about our Nation's future. And I've got reason to be. Not only do I know the character of the people, I'm beginning to see some results in some important areas that say optimism defines the future of this country.

Let me talk about the economy, for starters. This economy is strong, and it is getting stronger. I tell you I'm optimistic not only because of the numbers; I'm optimistic because I remember where we have come from. In March of 2000, the stock market, which is an indicator of—sometimes an indicator of economic times to come, started to decline. And then we had a recession. In '01, the first quarter of '01 was recession, and that's negative growth. And when the economy is not growing, it's hard for people to find a job. And then we kind of got going, got things going. The Congress passed the stimulus package—I want to thank the Senator and the Members of Congress for working on that—and things started getting better.

And then we got hit by the enemy. And make no mistake about it, the enemy attack affected America. It affected the way I think about foreign policy because we can no longer take gathering threats for granted. If we see a threat gathering overseas, the lesson of September the 11th says we must pay attention to it. We just can't—and if it gets so bad, we've got to do something about it. We cannot assume that oceans protect us anymore. It affected our psychology in America. It also affected the economy. And things were beginning to get okay, and all of a sudden, the attack came, and it hurt us. It hurt us bad. But we recovered because America's strong. We recovered because the American people are strong.

And just as we were beginning to get our feet on the ground again, we had a problem with some of our fellow citizens telling the truth. We had corporate scandals. We had CEOs that did not understand what it meant to be a responsible citizen. If you've got responsibilities, you've got obligations. In a society that tries to promote responsibilities, there are certain obligations. If you're a mom or a dad, you have the obligation to love your child with all your heart. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you have the responsibility to tell the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And if you don't, there has to be a consequence. We passed tough laws, and now people are beginning to—you begin to read what it means to have consequences for not telling the truth. And that's the way it should be.

And then we marched to war. I made the tough decision of war, and I want to thank the Members of Congress who made the tough vote on war. It's not easy, but we acted because of the lessons of September the 11th. We acted based upon the

facts. We acted to make the country more secure and the world more free. But when you're marching to war, it's tough on the economy. For this reason, the message, march to war, is not conducive for optimistic investment. Marching to war is negative, not positive. It's hard to be optimistic about the future when you look on your TV screen and it says, "America is marching to war." Now we're marching to peace and freedom.

So I've seen firsthand, and you've seen firsthand, what this Nation and our economy has been through. Those are plenty high hurdles to cross, but we're crossing them. One reason we're crossing them is because the Congress and this administration acted boldly. We weren't afraid to act. We knew what to do. And we passed economic stimulus packages, which is a fancy word for giving people their money back. We acted on this principle. It was a principled decision. It was based upon this principle, that when you have more money in your pocket, you'll spend, save, or invest. And when you do so, it drives the whole economy forward. The American people are driving the economy forward.

But I want to warn you, the stimulus package we passed is set to expire. Congress, in order to get the bill out, had to expire certain of the provisions, one of which was the child credit, which went up from—went up to $1,000, will decline to $700. If Congress doesn't act, you get a tax increase if you have a child.

The marriage penalty, we wanted the code to say: We want marriage to work. If we believe in marriage, we ought to say so in the Tax Code. And so we began to phase back the marriage penalty. If Congress doesn't act, the marriage penalty goes back up.

See, we understand that if you're interested in job creation, you've got to stimulate small business. Most new jobs are created by small-business owners in America. If you're a small-business owner, you know what I'm talking about. We stimulated small-business investment and, therefore, growth. If Congress doesn't act, small businesses will pay taxes.

We decreased the—well, we got rid of the death tax or put it on its way to extinction. We listened to New Mexico's farmers and ranchers and small-business owners that understand if you work all your life to build up an asset, you shouldn't be taxed twice. You shouldn't be taxed once as you're building up your asset and twice after you go on.

And then, in order to stimulate our economy, everybody got tax relief. You see, we didn't try to pick and choose who won and who lost. We said, "If there's going to be tax relief, let's be fair about it. If you pay taxes, you ought to get relief." If the Congress doesn't act, those taxes will go up. If the Congress doesn't act, the economy will suffer and people will make more taxes. Congress must make the tax relief they gave the people permanent.

Now, things are looking pretty good. Third-quarter growth last year was the highest in 20 years. And home construction is high. And homeownership levels are high, and that's really important. We want people owning things in America, don't we? We want people owning their own home. There's nothing like owning your own home or your own business to have a vital stake in the future of this country. Productivity is high. We've got the best workforce in the world. Manufacturing activity is strong. Exports are on the rise. Jobs are increasing. We're doing well—we're doing well.

But we've got a new economy we're dealing with. And one of the things I addressed yesterday in Arizona was how do you make sure that as technology changes, people's skills change with it so they can find work. See, my attitude is, if somebody is looking for a job and can't find one, that says, no matter what the numbers look like, we still have got an issue in America. We want people working. We want people to be able to put food on the table.

Before I talk about how to make sure American workers are trained, I do want to bring up a subject that I had addressed in the State of the Union and before, that I think it's important for me to continue to clarify for the American people. We've got people doing jobs in America that Americans won't do, and that's helpful to our economy. It's helpful that there are some people that are willing to do the work that others won't do. And I think we need to be honest about what's taking place in America. After all, we're a country of the rule of law, and we've got people breaking law. And the question is how best to bring what's happening to light in an honest and legal way.

My attitude is this—my attitude is: So long as there is a willing worker and an employer looking to hire somebody, we ought to have a system that allows for temporary work in America, in an honest, open way, in a way that talks to the values of our country. I oppose amnesty, loud and clear, because amnesty will encourage further illegal immigration. Amnesty rewards somebody for breaking the law. On the other hand, I do want to change a system that has ignored reality and allow willing employer to be matched with willing employee in an honest, open way.

We should not say to somebody who's working on a temporary-worker basis, "You get added—you get a special break when it comes to citizenship." You don't. You don't get a special break. But think about a system that has people working in the shadows of America. That's not the American way. That's not the way we do business in this country.

People are working who are trying to put food on the table for a family in Mexico. You've got to understand why they're here. They're motivated out of the deep love of their children and their wife. They're working just as hard as any other mom or dad do, for the same reason: They have an obligation and a responsibility. Those people need to be treated with respect. They need to be honored for their commitment to their families.

A temporary-worker plan that's honest and open will be good for this economy. It will also be good for the security of the country. We've got a lot of Border Patrol agents working hard to stop the flow of illegal immigration. I believe if we make the system open and honest, it will help stop the flow of illegal immigration. It will cut down on those "coyotes" that are putting people in the back of these trailers and driving them across incredibly hot desert. It will stop—it will make sure that those who are working to secure our borders will focus on the true threats to America, the illegal drugs or the contraband or the potential terrorists that could be coming across our borders.

No, this plan makes sense. I call upon the Congress to do what is good for our economy, what is good for our security, and what is compassionate, and pass the temporary-worker plan.

I also want to talk about how to make sure American workers don't get left behind. By the way, that starts with making sure our public schools work. It starts by making sure our public schools teach the basics.

I went up to Washington, and thanks to Pete's help and to Heather's help and to Steve's, now, help, we passed—[*laughter*]—we passed the No Child Left Behind Act. Let me just tell you the principles behind that as plainly as I possibly can. Every one of us needs to challenge the soft bigotry of low expectations. We need to raise that bar. If you believe every child has got the capacity to learn, you need to raise the bar. I don't care what the color of skin of that child may be; everybody can learn. And that's the principle of No Child Left Behind. We raise the standards. We expect everybody to learn.

We've increased Federal education spending, particularly for poor students, dramatically. But now, for the first time, we're asking the question, "Are we meeting

expectations?" In return for increased Federal spending, the Federal Government is saying to local districts, "Show us whether or not the children are learning to read and write and add and subtract." I don't think that's too much. I don't think it's too much to increase budgets and in return say, "What are the results?" If you believe every child can learn to read and write and add and subtract, then you're not afraid to ask the question: Are they learning to read and write and add and subtract?

This administration trusts local people. We know you can chart the path to excellence. Your decision is on how to get there. All we want to know is, are you doing what we expect you to do? Are you just meeting those obligations? In the bill we passed, there's extra help for students who fall behind. Listen, when you find out a third grader is not reading at grade level, get him or her extra help. We provide money to do that. We don't want any child in America left behind. The bill we passed is a great piece of legislation for America's children.

There's more we need to do. I talked about making sure that some of the high school students who are falling behind in reading and math get a little extra help. We've got to make sure there's—literacy is the law of the land. I talked about making sure that we expand advance placement programs in certain low-income schools in order to keep raising that bar, Pell grants for students that take rigorous curriculum, in order to encourage excellence. We want to make sure our community college system is flexible and viable to help people find jobs that exist.

Yesterday I was in Arizona, and I reminded people that in the old days of workforce training, they said, "Just go train people." So we'd go out and train 1,000 hairdressers, and there might be 50 slots. But you'd have 950 well-trained hairdressers with nothing to do. Now the workforce program says, "Let's match up employers with the community college system to train people for jobs that actually exist, for jobs that work." So we've got $250 million in the budget to go directly to community colleges, to invigorate the business communities and the community college, invigorate a joint strategy to help people find work.

Yesterday I sat with some folks on the stage. They were not student age, let's put it that way. They had worked for years. One woman worked for 15 years as a graphic designer. She's a single mom, by the way, and that's the toughest job in America. She was struggling to get ahead. She went back to the community college. She gained new skills, and in her first year in her new job, she's making more than she did after 15 years as a graphic designer.

Education—what I'm telling you is as the economy changes, there's tremendous opportunities for workers. We've just got to make sure the education system matches people with the skills necessary for the 21st century. And that's what this administration is going to do.

No, I'm optimistic about this country, because I understand the character of the people. And I'm optimistic because I know we're doing the right things when it comes to educating our children and workers. I'm optimistic about the economy. I'm also optimistic because we're going to win the war on terror. The greatest responsibility of the Federal Government, and my first responsibility as your President, is to defend and protect America.

I remember talking to the country after September the 11th and reminding people that this would be a different kind of war we faced. Sometimes you'd see action, and sometimes you wouldn't; that we'd be on a manhunt to find the terrorists who destroyed us. It would require a different kind of attitude about chasing these people down. I also knew that time would pass and people would take the comfortable position of saying the dangers had passed as well. That's just not reality. I wish it was reality, but it's not reality. My job as your

President is to be realistic, be open-eyed, to understand the lessons of September the 11th, 2001, to understand there's terrorists who still plot against us. By our will, by our steadfast determination, by our courage, we will prevail in the war—first war of the 21st century.

In the United States, where the war begun, we will continue our vital work to protecting American people, by protecting our ports and borders and safeguarding infrastructure, preparing for the worst. I mentioned the first-responders. I can't tell you how pleased I am with the coordination now between the Federal Government, the State government, and local governments for preparing our homeland. I'm going to submit a budget to Congress next month which will include spending of $30 billion for homeland security. That's—more than 30 billion—almost 3 times the amount that we were spending prior to September the 11th, 2001.

We understand our obligation in Washington. Our obligation is never to forget what happened on September the 11th. And our obligation is to support the homeland security people, those on the frontlines, to prepare for a potential threat.

I think it's very important for the country to understand the PATRIOT Act. See, that's an important part of fighting the war on terror. It's essential that the FBI and the CIA be able to share information if you want to whip the terrorists. See, it's a different kind of war. We're in a different era. We need to view law differently. We'll always protect our Constitution and safeguard individual rights, but our law enforcement, those who collect information and share information and expected to act on information, must be able to talk together.

Many of the tools in the PATRIOT Act have been used by law enforcement to chase down embezzlers and criminals. It is essential that those same tools be used in fighting against terrorists. We're in a different era. The PATRIOT Act is going to expire. The Congress needs to renew it for the sake of fighting the war on terror.

We'll protect the homeland. The best way to protect America, however, is to go on the offensive, stay on the offensive, and bring the terrorists to justice. I said in the speech the other night, two-thirds of known Al Qaida leaders have been captured or killed. We're making progress against them. The rest of them are hiding. They think they are, but they cannot escape the justice of America. We've got thousands of troops, thousands of brave soldiers. We're chasing them, one by one. We're on an international manhunt for those who would do harm to America or for anybody else who loves freedom. One by one, we'll bring them to justice. There is no hole deep enough to hide from America.

Not only are we after Al Qaida, we will continue to confront regimes that harbor or support terrorists, regimes that could supply them with weapons of mass destruction. The United States and our allies refuse to live under the shadow of this ultimate danger, refuse to be in a position where—to find ourselves in a position where terrorists could show up with weapons of mass murder. Our obligation is, defend our country. Our obligation is to be clear-eyed about the threats, and our obligation is to deal with them.

I laid down a doctrine early on that said, "If you harbor a terrorist, if you feed a terrorist, if you hide a terrorist, you're just as guilty as the terrorist." One of the lessons that people can pick up in this part of the world is, when you say something, you better mean it. That's particularly true in diplomacy. If you say something, you better mean it. I meant it, and the Taliban found out what we meant.

Afghanistan was the primary training base for Al Qaida. That's where the killers were learning the skills necessary to destroy innocent life. And we gave the Taliban a chance, and then they, of course, rejected—rejected the ultimatum I laid out. And so they no longer exist, thanks to the

United States military and our friends and allies.

This barbaric regime is no more, and the people of Afghanistan are better off for it. You see, America loves freedom, but we understand that freedom is not America's gift to the world. It's the Almighty God's gift to each man and woman in this world. We love the fact that people in Afghanistan are now free. Remember, prior to our arrival, the Taliban wouldn't even let young girls go to school, and today, they do. They have written a constitution; the people of Afghanistan have written a constitution which is—guarantees free elections, freedom, full participation in government by women. Things are changing. Freedom is powerful. The people of Afghanistan are opening up health care centers and new businesses. Times are changing, because they have been liberated. America is safer because the Taliban doesn't exist. America is safer because Afghanistan is now free, and we stand strongly with the freedom-lovers in Afghanistan.

I made a tough decision, with the Congress' support, to remove Saddam Hussein from power, and we did. And the world is safer; America is more secure; and the world is more free because we got rid of Saddam Hussein. This brutal dictator attacked his neighbors, used weapons of mass destruction against his own people, plotted, was devious. He tortured Iraqis. We discovered mass graves of thousands of men and women and children. He had torture rooms for somebody who spoke out against him.

Saddam Hussein was found in a hole, hiding. Saddam Hussein, the once all-powerful tyrant who used his brutal dictatorship to intimidate and destroy lives, will no longer be able to do so in Iraq. He sits in a prison cell, and the Iraqi people are free.

Fifty-five of the top officials, former officials in that regime—of the 55, 45 have been captured or killed. The other 10 have got to be nervous. [*Laughter*] They're out there. They're out there trying to shake our will. See, these people are murderers. They'll take innocent life to try to convince others that freedom isn't worth it. They will kill indiscriminately—they don't care who—to try to shake our confidence, to try to get in the heads of the American people. They don't understand America. America will never be intimated by thugs and assassins.

We're making progress. It's important for you to know that we're on the offensive in Iraq. As I said the other night, we're leading over 1,600 patrols a day, 180 raids every week. I mean, we're chasing them down. We're bringing them and foreign terrorists to justice there so we don't have to face them in America. We're bringing them there because we understand freedom is vital for our future, freedom in Iraq is vital for our future.

I'm pleased with the progress we're making with the Iraqi citizens who are interested in running their own country. I met with the Acting President of the Governing Council, Adnan Pachachi. He sat next to Laura during the State of the Union. By the way—let me digress—I'm really glad I married a west Texas woman. She is a fabulous, fabulous—she's great. She's doing well, and she sends her love. [*Applause*] You Texans, calm down. [*Laughter*] You know the reputation you have here in eastern New Mexico. [*Laughter*]

Anyway, she was sitting next to Acting President Pachachi——

Audience member. We can't hear you.

The President. I can hear you. [*Laughter*]

And I met with him prior—in the Oval Office prior to the State of the Union. I was pleased with his vision, his understanding of freedom. The Oval Office is an interesting place to meet, particularly, people who are beginning to struggle with democracy and freedom because it's a reminder that the institutions, at least in this country, are always bigger than the people. Sometime we've got an all-right President; sometimes he's not all right. But the Presidency itself exists. It's a reminder of the

power of institutions in a free society, that institutions in a free society are always bigger than the people, and he understood that.

And they're working hard. The Iraqi people are taking the brunt of most of these killings that are taking place. They also understand it's their responsibility to secure the country, so we've increased in large number the number of police and people who are willing to help secure the country. More Iraqis are now coming forward. They realize the killings that are taking place—sometimes maybe by foreign terrorists, obviously sometimes by former Ba'athist officials—will stop the march to freedom. They want to be free. You've got to understand, these people, like you and I, love freedom. It's in everybody's heart, and Pachachi understands that, and so does the Governing Council.

Freedom is happening in Iraq. And you've got to understand why it's important. Freedom in the heart of the Middle East, freedom and democracy in the place that has breeded resentment and terror, is in our national interests. A free Iraq will help change the world. A free Iraq will help change a neighborhood that needs to be changed. A free Iraq will make it easier for our children to grow up in a peaceful society.

People say, "What are you doing in the long term? We know what you're doing in the short term. We can hear you and see you; you're sending troops after the killers. What about the long-term plan against terrorists?" Free societies do not breed terrorism. Free societies are peaceful nations. What we're doing for the long term, we're promoting freedom.

The world is changing for the better. The world is getting more free and peaceful and less dangerous. Recently, Muammar Qadhafi made a wise decision to show and get rid of his weapons of mass destruction programs. The British Government and the American Government worked for 9 months to convince in negotiations with Qadhafi about what to do with his programs. You want to remember, I want to contrast that with the 12 years of diplomacy that took place at the United Nations when nothing happened. I mean, we had resolution after resolution after resolution just totally ignored by Saddam Hussein—sometimes not ignored but played with, is a better way to describe it. Nine months of intense discussions with Qadhafi worked because the word of the country—word of this country matters. When you say something, you better believe it. People now trust the word of America. People now understand.

And we're not doing this work alone. I just told you that Great Britain was very much involved with the intense discussions with Colonel Qadhafi. And I appreciate my friend Prime Minister Blair and the people he assigned to—people he assigned to the task. We're working together with people. And that's positive. We're working together with people who love freedom and understand the stakes of the war against terror, people who clearly see a future that's peaceful and positive but understand sometimes you have to make the tough choice to get there. You have to do the hard things to achieve a positive vision of peace and freedom.

There are 34 nations that have joined us in Iraq. That's too long to list. The Senator might fall out on me if I start trying to read them all. [*Laughter*] Thirty-four—[*laughter*]—34 nations stand with us in that country. Thirty-seven nations in NATO are contributing to joint efforts in Afghanistan. I've worked hard to bring people along. I meet with foreign leaders all the time to explain the intentions of America, to talk about what we see in the future.

There is a difference, however, between leading a coalition of nations and shutting down efforts because a few object. It's a big difference. It's the difference between being willing to gather a group of like-minded nations and lead the world towards freedom and peace or allowing some to

object and, therefore, nothing happens. That's not the way this administration functions. As I said the other night, we will never seek a permission slip to defend the American people.

This war, this new war of the 21st century, has fallen hardest on our military. And I want to thank those of you who have got relatives in the United States military. And if you do, please tell them the Commander in Chief is really proud of their service.

We mourn for the fallen. We send our prayers to their loved ones, and we thank them for their service. I also want to thank the Guard and Reserve members from around the country—but particularly, now that I'm in New Mexico, from New Mexico—who have served our country so ably and so well.

We've also got thousands of service men and women who are based in this State, at Kirtland and Cannon and Holloman Air Force Bases. The people in the military from this State have done and continue to do vital work on the war against terror. And like everyone who serves in uniform today, you are making this Nation grateful and proud.

And I appreciate their families. I appreciate the moms and dads, husbands and wives who are staying at home as their loved one goes off to defend America and to spread freedom. Their loved ones sacrifice, and so do the families. America's military families are steadfast and strong. Not only should we show them the gratitude, but we need to make them this promise: Your loved one will have the resources you need to fight and win the war on terror.

It's an honor to be here in Roswell. I'm optimistic about the future. I'm optimistic about the future for a lot of reasons, but the main reason is, I'm optimistic about the future because I understand the country. I know the values of America. I know the decency of our people. I know the willingness of the American citizen to serve a cause greater than themself.

It's the great strength of America. It's an unbelievably great country we have, because the people are so strong, so resilient, so compassionate, and so decent. We believe values in our heart that we just won't change. We believe everybody has dignity, everybody has worth. We believe in freedom. We believe people yearn for freedom. We have an obligation to unleash freedom in the world, and we're not afraid to lead. This country stands strongly on the values that make us great, and we're not the least bit afraid of sharing those values in a world that needs peace and freedom.

I'm proud to be here. I'm proud to lead the greatest nation on the face of the Earth. I'm proud to be in front of some of the great citizens of America. May God bless you all, and may God continue to bless our great country.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:24 a.m. at the Roswell Convention and Civic Center. In his remarks, he referred to Lt. Gen. Robert D. Beckel, USAF (Ret.), superintendent, New Mexico Military Institute; Mayor Bill B. Owen of Roswell, NM; Col. Muammar Abu Minyar al-Qadhafi, leader of Libya; and Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Exchange With Reporters in Roswell
January 22, 2004

President's Visit to Roswell

The President. I need some ribs.

Q. Mr. President, how are you?

The President. I'm hungry, and I'm going to order some ribs.

Q. What would you like?

The President. Whatever you think I'd like.

Homeland Security

Q. Sir, on homeland security, critics would say you simply haven't spent enough to keep the country secure.

The President. My job is to secure the homeland, and that's exactly what we're going to do. But I'm here to take somebody's order. That would be you, Stretch [Richard Keil, Bloomberg News]—what would you like? Put some of your high-priced money right here to try to help the local economy. You get paid a lot of money; you ought to be buying some food here. It's part of how the economy grows. You've got plenty of money in your pocket, and when you spend it, it drives the economy forward. So what would you like to eat?

Q. Right behind you, whatever you order.

Nuthin' Fancy Cafe

The President. I'm ordering ribs. David [David Gregory, NBC News], do you need a rib?

Q. But Mr. President——

The President. Stretch, thank you, this is not a press conference. This is my chance to help this lady put some money in her pocket. Let me explain how the economy works. When you spend money to buy food, it helps this lady's business. It makes it more likely somebody is going to find work. So instead of asking questions, answer mine: Are you going to buy some food?

Q. Yes.

The President. Okay, good. What would you like?

Q. Ribs.

The President. Ribs? Good. Let's order up some ribs.

Q. What do you think of the Democratic field, sir?

The President. See, his job is to ask questions; he thinks my job is to answer every question he asks. I'm here to help this restaurant by buying some food. Terry [Terry Moran, ABC News], would you like something?

Q. An answer.

Q. Can we buy some questions?

The President. Obviously these people—they make a lot of money, and they're not going to spend much. I'm not saying they're overpaid; they're just not spending any money.

Q. Do you think it's all going to come down to national security, sir, this election?

The President. One of the things David does, he asks a lot of questions, and they're good, generally.

NOTE: The exchange began at 11:25 a.m. at the Nuthin' Fancy Cafe. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Statement on Senate Passage of Appropriations Legislation
January 22, 2004

I am pleased that the Senate has passed the omnibus budget bill, which fulfills important commitments like AIDS relief, education and DC school choice, veterans health care, law enforcement, and other priorities.

This bill stays within the spending limits I proposed, which is necessary as we work to cut the deficit in half over the next 5 years. I will continue to work with the Congress to focus on priorities, cut wasteful spending, and be wise with the people's money. I look forward to signing this bill into law.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Reporting on Continued Operations of United States Forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina
January 22, 2004

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

In my report to the Congress of July 22, 2003, I provided information on the deployment of combat-equipped U.S. Armed Forces to Bosnia and Herzegovina and other states in the region in order to participate in and support the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)-led Stabilization Force (SFOR). The SFOR began its mission and assumed authority from the NATO-led Implementation Force on December 20, 1996. I am providing this supplemental report, prepared by my Administration and consistent with the War Powers Resolution (Public Law 93–148), to help ensure that the Congress is kept fully informed on continued U.S. contributions in support of peacekeeping efforts in the former Yugoslavia.

The U.N. Security Council authorized Member States to continue SFOR for a period of 12 months in U.N. Security Council Resolution 1491 of July 11, 2003. The mission of SFOR is to provide a focused military presence in order to deter hostilities, stabilize and consolidate the peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, contribute to a secure environment, and provide, within its means and capabilities, selective support to key tasks and key civil implementation organizations.

The U.S. force contribution to SFOR in Bosnia and Herzegovina is approximately 1,800 personnel. United States personnel comprise approximately 15 percent of the total SFOR force of approximately 12,000 personnel. During the second half of 2003, 14 NATO nations and 11 others provided military personnel or other support to SFOR. Most U.S. forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina are assigned to Multinational Brigade, North, headquartered near the city of Tuzla. The U.S. forces continue to support SFOR efforts to apprehend persons indicted for war crimes and to conduct counterterrorism operations. In the last 6 months, U.S. forces have not sustained any combat-related fatalities.

I have directed the participation of U.S. Armed Forces in these operations pursuant to my constitutional authority to conduct U.S. foreign relations and as Commander in Chief and Chief Executive.

I am providing this report as part of my efforts to keep the Congress fully informed about developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina. I will continue to consult

closely with the Congress regarding our efforts to foster peace and stability in the former Yugoslavia.

Sincerely,

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Ted Stevens, President pro tempore of the Senate.

Remarks to the United States Conference of Mayors
January 23, 2004

Thanks for your kind words, Big Jim. [*Laughter*] I've known him for quite a while, and he's an honorable man who's doing a fine job for the mayors. And I appreciate you all giving me a chance to come by and visit. I've got some thoughts I'd like to share with you about how we can work together to make this country hopeful and safe and secure.

I want to, first, thank you for serving your communities. It's not easy to be a mayor. Probably a lot harder than being a President. After all, I don't have to fill potholes—[*laughter*]—or empty the trash. [*Laughter*] But I do really want to thank you. This country is a fabulous country because we've got good, honorable people who are willing to serve at all levels of government. And one of the key levels of government, of course, is running the city hall, and you're doing a fine job. And I look forward to working with you, and so does my administration.

I do want to thank you all for the invitation. I want to thank Mayor Plusquellic, who's going to be chairman next year. Is that done? Yes—okay, good. I didn't want to jump the gun. [*Laughter*] I look forward to working with you. Mayor O'Neill, thank you very much for having me.

Mayor Riley, it's good to see you, sir. You reminded me, my mother went to high school in the town he runs in South Carolina, and I reminded him that she graduated—[*laughter*]—like her son, barely.

Speaking about sons, there's nothing wrong with a guy following in his father's footsteps. In this case, this guy is doing it really well. Mayor Daley, I appreciate you. Great mayor.

I appreciate my temporary Mayor, Mayor Williams. He's a really good guy. He's the Mayor of Washington, DC. I notice you were over lobbying Laura the other day to handle a project. [*Laughter*] He knows where the power is in the White House. [*Laughter*] I appreciate you, Tony. He's a good fellow. We worked hard on an interesting education initiative. He took a bold leadership position on education, and we worked with the Congress to get some scholarship money to poor students in Washington, DC, who are going to schools that are failing, that will help liberate them and their parents to be able to choose new schools. And this is a landmark piece of legislation that's going to change people's lives for the better. And the Mayor showed strong leadership. He got out on front on a tough issue, and as a result, the children of this city are going to benefit. And I appreciate you, Mayor, a lot for taking that on.

I want to thank the mayors who are here from Texas. Yes. Behave yourselves. [*Laughter*] Go to bed early. [*Laughter*] Don't whoop and holler. [*Laughter*] But I'm glad you're here. I miss my home State. I love Texas. I love the people who represent our State, and thanks for coming today.

I also want to thank Pat McCrory for meeting me. You might remember he is the mayor of Charlotte, North Carolina. We

worked together on brownfield legislation, which, Tommy, I want to thank you and the organization for working on that important piece of legislation. It will change America for the better. It's a collaborative effort between the administration and the mayors to do some good environmental policy that will make communities a better place.

McCrory—I wanted to talk about brownfields—of course, he wanted to talk about football. [*Laughter*] And I bet Mayor Menino does too. [*Laughter*] So perhaps I can arrange a little bit of a friendly wager between you two, if it hasn't happened yet. It has happened? Well, that's good. Be careful what you bet. [*Laughter*]

I wish I could report to you that the war on terror is over with and America is safe and secure, but I cannot. I can't tell you that in good conscience because I don't believe in it. The truth is that there's an enemy that still lurks out there. And we must continue to work together to protect our country. It is the most solemn duty of government, is to protect American people.

It's important for all of us in positions of responsibility never to forget the lessons of September the 11th, 2001. It is natural that we would, as distance passes, that we would kind of try to think for the best and hope for the best and think that time has maybe solved the problem of the first war of the 21st century. It's just not the case. It's not the case, and so we will continue to work with you on homeland security.

My '05 budget has got $30 billion in there for homeland security. That's 3 times the amount spent prior to September the 11th. It's important that the money be spent wisely and focused on the protection of the American people.

Mayor Jim just told me, on the way in he said, "You know, one of the problems we face, we mayors face, is that the money is allocated and gets stuck." And I appreciated that recognition of the problem, and so we'll work with the mayors to make sure it gets unstuck. I understand sometimes it gets stuck not in Washington; it gets stuck at the State level, as I understand. Look I don't—hold on, I'm an ex-Governor, so I'm—[*laughter*]—and we're hosting the Governors pretty soon. [*Laughter*] But it will provide an opportunity to work this out so that it works better.

Listen, I'm not interested in pointing fingers. I'm interested in making the system work better. Our most solemn duty is to work together to protect our people. That is the most important responsibility we have. And I want to thank you for the coordination that is taking place between the Federal Government, the State government, and the local governments.

I've asked Tom Ridge often, how well are we doing communicating with each other, how good is the city response mechanism? And the report is very good. And the mayors get the credit. The mayors get the credit for energizing Joint Terrorism Task Forces. The mayors get the credit for good communication. The mayors get credit for good response.

Recently, over the Christmas holidays, Los Angeles and Las Vegas and Washington, DC, and New York were put on especially high alert, and I'm telling you, the mayors and their offices did a fabulous job of coordinating information and activity. And I don't know if they're out there, but mayor, you deserve a lot of credit for doing the right thing and for responding.

I know there's some talk in your communities about the PATRIOT Act. Let me tell you about the PATRIOT Act right quick. We're in a new war, a different kind of war. We need to be able to share information across jurisdictional boundaries at the Federal level. Do you realize, prior to September the 11th, 2001, the CIA could not pass information to the FBI or vice versa? By law, they were prohibited from sharing information. How can you fight a war against terrorists who hide in dark corners of the world and maybe slide into our

country if you can't share information? We need the CIA and the FBI to be able to talk to each other.

As I said in the State of the Union, many of the provisions in the law have been used to catch embezzlers or criminals. We need to make sure those provisions stay in the law. We're at war. We're trying to hunt terrorists. It's a different kind of war.

In the old days, you know, you could measure progress based upon tanks destroyed or airplanes brought down to Earth, you know, by missiles or air-to-air combat. It's no longer the way it is in the 21st century. We're on an international manhunt. We have to find these people before they come and get us. And in order to do so, we need the best intelligence and the capacity to share that intelligence across jurisdictional boundaries. The PATRIOT Act is vital for our security, and Congress needs to renew it.

We want to work with you on defending America. The best way to defend America, however, is to stay on the offensive and to find these killers, one by one, and bring them to justice. That's precisely what our Government is doing and will continue to do. There are thousands of military personnel, with aid from intelligence personnel, on an international manhunt. Slowly but surely, we are dismantling the Al Qaida network that caused such great harm to America and still continues to plot, by the way.

I said in the speech the other night that two-thirds of known leaders have been captured or killed. That's a significant number when you think about where we were prior to September the 11th. We're, slowly but surely, demolishing them. If you—if Al Qaida was a corporation in America, you'd have the board of directors somewhat intact, but the operators, the middle management, retired, no longer useful, no longer a part of the problem.

And we're going to stay on the hunt, which requires good intelligence, good cooperation, good participation with friends and allies around the world. As the world saw, there is no hole deep enough from the long arm of American justice.

We're making progress. It's important for America to speak clearly and, when America says something, to mean it. And so when I said right after September the 11th, "If you harbor a terrorist, you're just as guilty as the terrorist," I meant it. I meant it as clearly as I could say it. And the Taliban found out what we meant. Thanks to a coalition, a large coalition of freedom-loving nations, we removed the Taliban from power. And America is more secure for it, because remember, Afghanistan was a haven for training bases. This is where many of the Al Qaida fighters learned how to fight and kill.

And as importantly, the people of Afghanistan are free. They're free from the clutches of one of the most barbaric regimes in history. It is hard for the Western mind to fathom such a regime, a regime that refuses to allow young girls to go to school, but that's the way it was. And today, thanks to our coalition and our deep love for freedom and our intense desire to protect ourselves, young girls go to school in Afghanistan, and the world is better off for it.

And as you know, I made a tough decision to take out Saddam Hussein, and I did so for this reason: September the 11th made it clear that America can no longer ignore gathering threats. Oceans no longer protected us from harm. We just couldn't say, "Okay, well, there's a gathering threat. Let's just hope it goes away." I'm never going to forget the lessons of September the 11th, 2001.

And so, when we saw a threat—we saw a threat; we dealt with it. We dealt in this way: I went to the United Nations, and I said, "You've given this man warning after warning after warning, and he's totally ignored you. You've got to have credibility." We want international institutions to work, but he ignored them. And the more he

ignored them, the weaker the United Nations became. So I said, "Let's pass a resolution," which was passed unanimously. "Now let's enact, enact the resolution. Let's be a credible body. Let's be people, when you say something, people believe it for the sake of peace and freedom."

And we moved. We moved against a man who had used weapons of mass destruction against his own people, attacked his neighbors, a man who we found out subsequently had murdered thousands of men, women, and children and buried them in mass graves, a person who when he found dissenters, tortured them, a person who ruled with utmost fear.

No, we acted in our own—for our own security. No one can say the world is not more safe with Saddam Hussein sitting in a jailhouse. It is more safe, and so is America.

Our most important duty is to protect America. But I also want you to know that something else drives me. And it's that my belief that freedom is not America's gift to the world, but freedom is the Almighty God's gift to each man and woman in this world. And it's the spread of freedom that will bring peace. Free societies are peaceful societies.

And yet, we're running against a pretty strong current, because some in the world say that certain people, evidently, can't be self-governing and can't be free. That's not what Americans believe. We believe that people—all people from all walks of life—have got freedom indelibly etched in their heart. And I believe this Nation has an obligation to lead the world to be more free and more peaceful.

I know many of you—you hear from families whose sons and daughters are in our military. I try the best I can to thank them for their service. I hope you do as well. I know you do. I know you're just as proud of them as I am. But I want to assure you as leaders in your community, these troops will have the resources they need to be successful in the war against terror.

We're making good progress—we really are—in parts of the world. Afghanistan has now got a constitution which talks about freedom of religion and talks about women's rights. I don't think anybody would have dreamed that would have been possible prior to September the 11th, and now it's a reality. Democracy is flourishing. The world is better off because of that.

I met with some of the city council leaders in Baghdad when I snuck in over Thanksgiving. I hope someday that you're able to welcome them to your own cities. And these are people that are—you can imagine what their vision might be like. First of all, they're overwhelmed with the thought of being free. That makes sense, because they had been locked in this cell of a country by a brutal tyrant. And they're learning what it means to be a free country, and they're learning what it means to be able to get along with their neighbor that may have a different view of how to worship the Almighty. But it's happening.

Adnan Pachachi was with us the other day. He sat next to Laura at the State of the Union. He came to the Oval Office. He's a distinguished gentleman who believes in the possibilities of the Iraqi people. He sees a clear vision of a free country, and we're moving that way, moving toward a basic law that honors minority rights, a basic law that—based upon the principles of human dignity.

I hope to have the sovereignty passed over, and I think we will, by June the 30th. But there's still work to do—you read about it in your newspapers—because people are trying to shake our will. That's what you've got to understand is happening. They're willing to kill innocent life to shake our will, but thugs and assassins will not intimidate America. We will stay the course until the job is done, because a free Iraq in the heart of the Middle East will make the world more peaceful. These are historic times. This is an historic opportunity to

change the world, and America will continue to lead.

At home, I'm optimistic as well. I'm optimistic because I see the economy is growing. That's important for the health of our cities. And it's getting better, and statistics say it's getting better. One aspect about the growing economy that I believe speaks to why it's growing is the tax cuts we passed. We'll have a philosophical argument about that here in Washington, DC, of course. I look forward to it. But I will tell you that one of the things in the tax relief plan that I hope you find inspirational for your cities is it is aimed at the entrepreneur. Much of the tax relief is aimed at the small-business owner. And the truth of the matter is the vibrancy of the inner cities of our country depend upon ownership.

When more people own a small business, when people are starting their own business, when people are creating small businesses, they're creating jobs. They're not only creating a more vibrant and hopeful community; more jobs are being created. And the tax relief we passed was, in part, aimed at small businesses for this reason: Most small businesses are sole proprietorships or Subchapter S corporations, and they, therefore, pay tax at the individual income-tax rate. And so therefore, when you reduce individual income taxes, you're injecting capital into the small-business sectors of America's cities.

The entrepreneurial spirit is strong in America. You know it as well as I do. The desire for some to own their business is strong, and the tax relief we passed helped invigorate that spirit.

So this economy is growing, and we've got to make sure people are prepared to meet the jobs of the 21st century. It starts with making sure there's a literate America, which—make sure that the schools work well. No Child Left Behind Act—let me tell you my view of that important piece of legislation, since I was the person that asked Congress to pass it. I said, first of all, "We'll increase the budgets," which we have done by 49 percent since 2001. But I've also said, "In return for additional money, primarily aimed at Title I students, we should expect results." You see, some people aren't interested—well, I'm sure they're interested in results. They just don't want to measure results, and I think that's a shame. If you believe that every child can learn, then you want to know whether or not that's happening. It seems like to me that if the expectation is for excellence, we ought to measure.

We ought to measure in a way that is open, measure in a way that puts the results out for everybody to see, including the mayors. So you know for a fact whether or not the obligations of our society are being met to the youngest of our children. In the bill, in the No Child Left Behind Act, not only do we insist upon local control of schools, an accountability system designed at the State or local level, we also say that when you see failure early, there's additional money to make sure children aren't left behind. This is an important piece of legislation, and I will resist any attempt to undermine it.

I laid out the other night a Jobs for the 21st Century program. A part of that is to make sure there's additional money to help junior high and high school students who have been just simply shuffled through the system. And that's what's happened, as you know. If you want to be blunt about what has taken place, sometimes when you don't measure, you just shuffle kids through. Then you wake up at the high school level and find out that the literacy level of our children are appalling. I expect you, as mayors, to challenge the soft bigotry of low expectations. I challenge you to keep raising that bar and standards.

And we want to help here. We've got money for that. We've got money for additional grants, for Pell grants for low-income kids who are taking a good, strong curriculum. I told you what the Mayor did.

He's challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations. It might not have been the most politically popular thing in certain editorial pages or around the city, but he's taken the lead. He's not afraid to lead, and that's what we expect from people at the local level when it comes to insisting that every child learn and no child be left behind in America.

I also hope you work with your community colleges. The community college system provides a great opportunity to make sure you match willing workers with the skills necessary to occupy the jobs of the 21st century. Some of you who have been around long enough may remember the old days when they had workforce training requirements that said, "Just go train people." So they'd go out and train 1,000 hairdressers for 50 jobs. You'd have 950 well-trained hairdressers, but they weren't working.

We've got to make sure the workforce training programs focus on the needs of the employers. And I know many of you are doing that in your communities and many of you are working with your local chambers. I went to Phoenix, and if the mayor is here, thank you, Mr. Mayor, for your hospitality. But there is a really interesting collaboration between the high-tech community and the community college system, all aimed at providing people with the skills so that when the job base expands, and as it is in many communities, they've got the skills necessary to fill the work.

There is a health care shortage of workers in America. You need to work with your community colleges to make sure that those colleges are able to provide the skills in the health care industry so that people who want to work can do so. And that's what we're talking about when you hear about this community college initiative of $250 million. I certainly hope the Congress listens as well, because it makes sense to use the community college system wisely.

Speaking about workers, I want to talk about illegal immigrants who are working in your cities. I believe strongly that this Nation is a nation of rule of law, and therefore, we must be open about what's taking place. And as you know, there's a lot of people here on false papers who have been smuggled in by "coyotes," who have risked their lives to come and do what many of us—many of our citizens do, which is to work hard to put food on the table for their families. And they're here, and they're working, and they're making a contribution to the economy. And yet we don't have a system to deal with them, do we? We have a system that's underground, that's in the shadows of society. And in my judgment, that's not right.

So what I think we need to do is have what I call a temporary-worker program, to issue a card, a temporary-worker card that's legitimate and real, that says, if you're a willing American employer, you can hire a willing foreign employee that has a temporary-worker card, so long as there's not an American worker available. In other words, people are doing jobs Americans aren't doing. And they're coming to our country, and they're taking great risk. And we've got a lot of Border Patrol agents trying to chase the good, hard-working people down. If we make the system work right, if we make it legitimate, then our Border Patrol will be able to chase down true threats to our national security. They'll be able to focus on the threats. We won't be putting our employers in a position where they're hoping the documentation that's presented to them is real.

Now, this isn't an amnesty program. Let me be clear about this. This is a temporary-worker program to be registered and aboveboard. I oppose amnesty because amnesty—amnesty would encourage further illegal immigration. And I oppose amnesty because amnesty would reward those who have broken the laws of the United States. We've had people in line trying to become a citizen of our country. They've been waiting in line for a long period of time, and this program will not allow people to jump

ahead in the line of those who have been here legally.

I think this is a realistic approach to make sure the employer-employee relationship is honest in this country. And I also think it's necessary. I think it's necessary because I don't like the thought of hard-working citizens, no matter where they may be from, not willing to report abuse, for example, because they'd then get shipped home and wouldn't be able to do their job as a mom or a dad. This is a humane country, and we need to treat people humanely, with good, reasonable, common-sense law. I look forward to Congress to getting it passed. I thank you for giving me a chance to explain that piece of policy.

I'm winding down. I'm sure Daley is wondering when he's going to quit. [*Laughter*] Being from the Windy City he's—[*laughter*]—he sees the President is a little windy, himself. [*Laughter*]

Let me talk about housing right quick. I know housing is important for the mayors. We want people owning their own home in America. This administration has been consistent about promoting what I call an ownership society. You heard me talk about creating environments for the entrepreneur to flourish. I want people owning their own home. Homeownership is high in America. I think it's the highest ever, which is really positive. It's positive for our country. We understand, when somebody owns something, he or she has a vital stake in the future of this country.

But we've got more work to do. There's still a minority homeownership gap in America. I think here at the mayors', I laid out some initiatives that, in the past, one of which just recently passed the Congress, which is the downpayment assistance program. I'm asking Congress for $200 million to help people with their downpayment. As you know better than me, many citizens have the desire to own a home, but they don't have the dough to make the downpayment. And therefore, they balk at making the decision. So we want to help families with downpayments, and we've now got a plan to do so. Congress needs to fund it. It's authorized. It now needs to be funded.

The print on these contracts is a little too fine for first-time homebuyers. And frankly, it's a little too fine for multiple-time home buyers. It's hard to understand the contracts. And I know HUD is working to simplify the contracts and to make it easier and less expensive for people to enter the process of buying a home, by simplifying the forms.

I don't know if you felt it yet. We're expanding counseling services around the country, many times run by faith-based groups, by the way, to help people understand what it means to buy a home. First-time homebuyers are sometimes confused by not only the regulations but the obligations. And we've got counseling services being expanded out of HUD. And if you haven't had one in your neighborhood, call HUD. Get them to show up. It's a useful service. It's a helpful service to close the homeownership gap.

I'm going to talk to the Congress about allowing the Federal home administration to permit zero-percent downpayment loans to low-income Americans. That needs to happen in order to encourage more homeownership. And Congress also, by the way—and they need to pass the single family housing credit to help people who are building these homes, these affordable homes inside America's cities.

And we're making progress, by the way. The gap is narrowing. There's more work to do. I look forward to working with the mayors to close the minority homeownership gap in America, for the good of the country—for the good of your cities, but for the good of the country as well.

Let me conclude by talking about a really important domestic initiative, at least as far as I'm concerned, and that's the Faith-Based Initiative—see if I can explain it properly to you. First of all, we strongly believe in the separation of church and

state here in Washington, DC, and that's the way it's going to be. Secondly, I love the fact that people are able to worship freely in our country, and if you choose not to worship, you're just as patriotic as your neighbor. Freedom of religion means freedom to practice any religion you choose or the freedom not to practice.

Thirdly, there has been discrimination against faith-based programs in Washington, DC. Sure, you can receive a Federal grant, but you have to take the cross off the wall in order to do so or the Star of David down or the crescent. Well, how can you be a faith-based program if you can't practice your faith? All of a sudden, you become just another program.

Fourthly, I want you to know that out of frustration with Congress, I've asked them to pass a Faith-Based Initiative. I just decided through Executive order to open up as much Federal money as we possibly could, the grantmaking process, to faith-based programs, to let them apply. We want people of faith involved in solving people's lives.

I know that you have opened an office to expedite Federal monies or the process or the grantmaking progress—process for your faith-based programs in your communities. I urge you to take advantage of it. I urge you to take advantage of it. You know as well as I do that many of the problems your citizens face are problems of the heart—addiction—and programs sometimes work. Government programs sometimes work, but sometimes they don't work. And sometimes it requires a higher power than a government program to help change a person's life. You've got armies of compassion in your communities that I'm confident, by working together, we can unleash, for the betterment of the people we serve.

You know, I was down in New Orleans. Ray Nagin is the fine mayor of that city. And we had a Faith-Based Initiative there, and he has got a faith-based coordinating group to not only work in the city but with the State of Louisiana. I also urge you—kind of like the grant problem we got in other areas, sometimes the money goes to the States, and if the State is not anxious to be involved with the faith programs, it gets stuck and doesn't make it to you. And so I urge you to work with your Governors to make sure that their faith-based offices are up and running and that they help cut through the inherent prejudice toward faith programs, the inherent prejudice in government.

And I'm talking about all faiths, by the way. There's fantastic Jewish charities in America that are helping change this country, one soul at a time. You ought to look at those and welcome them and encourage them. Same with the Muslim charities and, of course, the Christian charities that are strong. This Government is—will continue to work hard to make sure this vision becomes reality.

Jim Towey—raise your hand, Towey; right over there—he runs the faith-based office in the White House. We've got faith-based offices throughout bureaucracies. I see that the Deputy Secretary of HUD designee is with us. We've got a faith office at HUD that can be used by mayors and community groups to access Federal money. Billions of dollars are now available. I encourage you—I encourage you to use this source of fund and empower one of the greatest strengths we have in our country, the faith community.

There are other initiatives. I laid out the prison initiative, $300 million to help on the prison reentry program. This will make a big difference in your communities. It will make a big difference in people's lives. Call upon your faith-based programs to help with these souls that are looking for help. You know, the clinical probation program sometimes works. But oftentimes, it's helpful to have somebody with their arms out there saying, "I love you, brother," or "I love you, sister. What can I do to help you reenter our society?"

That's not exactly the traditional approach, I readily concede, to prison—to rehabilitation programs. I know that. But sometimes traditional rehabilitation programs have fallen short of the mark. Sometimes, it's that extra ingredient called love that will make a fundamental difference in somebody's future. And our houses of worship are houses of love. That's what they exist for. The universal call, love your neighbor just like you'd like to be loved yourself, is a important part of the soul of your community. Use it. And the Federal Government want to help you.

Towey's job is to make sure that we cut through the strings, to make sure your faith groups are able to access the money without losing their faith. You're going to hear people say, "Why do I want to interface with the Government? They're going to call me to have to do something I don't want to do." Towey's job—and by the way, just to show you what kind of society we have, before he came, he was Mother Teresa's lawyer. [*Laughter*] I'm not going to get into lawsuit abuse—[*laughter*]—but he's doing a good job. And his job is to make sure that the armies of compassion are unleashed.

So those are the things that are on my mind. I thank you for giving me a chance to come by and share them with you. I'll tell you what else is on my mind. I understand '04 is going to be a difficult year for some. But I want you to know this—[*laughter*]—I want you to know this. I don't want—I don't want politics to get in the way of me doing my job and you doing your job for the people. I want you to know, I assure you—I understand it, and so do you. But let us not let the elections get in the way of our solemn responsibility. I don't care what your party is. I don't care who you're for, for President. I have a job to do, and so do you. And by working together, by working together on key initiatives in a way that respects our differences, honors our values, we can do our job for America.

And that's what I expect of you, and I know that's what you expect of me. And together, we're going to make this country continue to be great. Thanks for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:25 a.m. at the Capital Hilton Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor James A. Garner of Hempstead, NY, president, U.S. Conference of Mayors, who introduced the President; Mayor Donald L. Plusquellic of Akron, OH, vice president, U.S. Conference of Mayors; Mayor Beverly O'Neill of Long Beach, CA, advisory board chair, U.S. Conference of Mayors; Mayor Joseph P. Riley, Jr., of Charleston, SC; Mayor Richard M. Daley of Chicago, IL; Mayor Anthony A. Williams of Washington, DC; Mayor Thomas M. Menino of Boston, MA; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; Adnan Pachachi, Acting President, Iraqi Governing Council; Mayor Phil Gordon of Phoenix, AZ; and Roy A. Bernardi, Assistant Secretary for Community Planning and Development, Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Remarks Honoring the 2003 World Series Champion Florida Marlins
January 23, 2004

The President. Thank you for coming. Please be seated. *Bienvenidos a la Casa Blanca.* [*Laughter*] Thanks for coming to the White House. I'm honored to be here to welcome the world champs, the Florida Marlins. Maybe this will cause one of your biggest fans to stop bragging, the Governor of Florida—[*laughter*]—my brother. I appreciate you being here, Jeb. Thanks for coming. It's good to see you. [*Laughter*]

I don't know if you know this or not, but I've had the fortune of being a part of baseball, and I've never been so impressed by a club that came together and played together as the Marlins. It speaks a lot to the ownership and the manager and the support personnel and the players, that they were willing to play together to win. And they won when a lot of people said they weren't supposed to win, which is the way we kind of like it here in Washington, DC. [*Laughter*]

I remember when my friend Pudge Rodriguez stood up to the world and said, "2003 is going to be the year of the Marlin." And a lot of people said, "I'm not so sure he knows what he's talking about." Turns out he did know what he's talking about, and I want to congratulate Pudge. I've known him—I'll never forget when he first came up. I think it's true that he got married on the same day that he got a hit—is that right, Isabel? The same day he got his first big league hit?

Maribel Rodriguez. Yes.

The President. Yes, that's right; yes. [*Laughter*] The same day he got his first big-league hit—I think it was against the Chicago White Sox——

Audience member. It was.

The President. ——he got married. And here he sits as a member of the great world champs. Pudge, congratulations for being a good friend and a great player.

You're so good about predicting victories, you got any suggestions for, like, '04? [*Laughter*]

Audience member. [*Inaudible*]

The President. I hope so.

I do want to thank Porter Goss and Tom Feeney, Congressmen from the great State of Florida, great supporters of the Marlins, for coming. I appreciate you boys being here. They left—they let an interloper in here, Howard Coble, he's the Congressman from North Carolina. You're wondering why a guy from North Carolina is here. It's because he and the manager are members of the Old Geezers Club—[*laughter*]—and they're friends. Howard is a good one, isn't he?

Jack McKeon. That was nice, and for that compliment, here you go. [*Laughter*]

[*At this point, Mr. McKeon, Florida Marlins manager, presented the President with a cigar.*]

The President. Thank you, sir. But Howard is a good one. Howard is a good one. Appreciate you coming.

Mayor, I'm glad you're here. Manny—Mayor Diaz is here. Congratulations for being the mayor of a great city. Jeffrey Loria and Sivia have been friends of mine for a long time. And one of the most joyous phone calls I have made since I was the President was to call Jeffrey and congratulate him on being the owner of the world champs. And gosh, the joy in his voice was just worth the phone call.

See, what you don't know is when I was fortunate enough to be with the Rangers, he was the owner of the AAA Oklahoma City club, our AAA affiliate. So we got to know each other, and every time we'd call up a good player, he'd call and get madder than heck about it, and say, "You're running me out of talent." And I'd say, "Well, that's what happens when you're in the minor leagues." And here he is in the major leagues, the world championship, and I never even came close. [*Laughter*] But I want to congratulate you, Jeff, for being a solid owner.

David Samson came through one of these endless receiving lines that politicians stand in. And he said, "I'm David Samson." I said, "I know who you are." He said—I said, "How's the club look?" He said, "We're going to win it all this year." And I kind of dismissed him like another crank and moved him on. [*Laughter*]

Team member. Just like everybody else. [*Laughter*]

The President. Yes. And lo and behold, he was right. David, congratulations. And I appreciate you bringing Cindi.

Larry Beinfest is the general manager. It's hard to be the general manager of any ball club. It's hard to figure the right ingredients and to put it all together, but he has. And Larry, I want to congratulate you—and congratulate you and Jeff for figuring—David for figuring out that Jack McKeon was the right catalyst to serve as the manager of the club. He's what I call the Donald Rumsfeld of baseball—[*laughter*]—kind of crusty but knows what he's doing, you know? [*Laughter*] And I want to congratulate you.

You've started a trend, recycling old guys to bring championships. [*Laughter*] But you know what you're doing. You're a great baseball man, which is a high compliment. And you're standing up here as a world champ, and it must be a thrill.

I appreciate Ozzie Guillen being here. First, I want to congratulate Ozzie for going over to the White Sox to be a—to be the manager. I remember when Ozzie was a shortstop for the White Sox and he always had such a wonderful smile on his face. It was a joy to watch a guy participate in obviously an activity he loves so much. And Ozzie, I want to congratulate you for not only being a world champ but for now being in a position where you can bring a world championship perhaps to the Chicago—the south side of Chicago.

The Hawk, Dawson is with us, Andre Dawson as well. He's another great champ. One reason why this organization obviously did well is it found excellence and incorporated excellence throughout the organization. Tony Perez as well, a hall-of-famer. I mean, Jack and Jeffrey were not afraid to find the very best people they could and say, "Help us fashion a team," and you did. And I welcome you all here.

I do have to take some credit for the success. [*Laughter*] You know how politicians are. You got Doug Davis, former Ranger—[*laughter*]—a guy we used to call Rosie, Wayne Rosenthal is the pitching coach, former Ranger, Perry Hill, former Ranger. [*Laughter*] Somehow, the Rangers deserve a little bit of credit, you know? We never—[*laughter*].

I want to congratulate the three folks I just named. I got to know them there in Arlington. Really fine people as well. I know it's a thrill for them to be here as well. I do want to help the team a lot.

You know, champs are people that play hard, play smart, and play as a team, and that's exactly what the Marlins did. The kind of a lineup that was pesky at the top, tough in the middle, and reliable at the bottom. And you could field your positions, and it was a true team effort to win.

I'll never forget watching the classic Series game against the Yankees in Australia. The time thing was a little awkward, so we taped it. But it was a dramatic victory, and it spoke to the character of the team. And this team does have character, and it's character not only on the field but off the field.

And the other night in the State of the Union, I said something I think is vital, that professional sports has got an obligation to send the right message to our children. And there's ways you do that. One is you play hard and play fair, and when you win, you're good sports. Another way to do it is you keep your bodies clean. And I hope the Florida Marlins and the players and players all around America join me in getting rid of steroids out of sports right now, so as to send the right signal to our kids and help parents raise healthy children. Character matters. And these performance-enhancing drugs say, "What matters more is achievement over character," and that's just not the way we think. And championship teams are teams made of character.

I also appreciate so very much the fact that the players and the organization understands that when you've got the spotlight, you have an obligation to serve your community. And I'm very aware that the Marlins management contributes to Florida's Adopt-a-Classroom program. I appreciate that, Jeffrey, and I appreciate you using

your position to not only provide entertainment for the people of South Florida but to help lives, improve lives one person at a time.

I appreciate the fact that Josh Beckett—a big, old Texan I might add—[*laughter*]—is involved with youth baseball. I hope that youth baseball reaches into places where a lot of kids may have lost hope. There's nothing more hopeful than for a person to be able to play on a team and realize their God-given talents on the athletic field. It's essential that baseball brings us joy, to not only suburbia but inner-city America as well. And Josh, I appreciate you understanding the vitality of youth baseball in America.

I appreciate A.J. Burnett working with the Florida division of the Center of Missing and Exploited Children, being willing to be involved, to use his position as somebody who South Florida looks up to, to help children. And what I found interesting is that more than 30 children featured in his "Play It Safe" days at Marlins games have been rescued. You know, winning baseball games is one thing; rescuing children has got to be a fantastic accomplishment. And A.J., I appreciate so very much your heart.

And then there's Juan Pierre. Every team in baseball wants him leading off, feisty little guy that he is and a great ballplayer. [*Laughter*] Yes, don't worry about putting weight on, you did all right. [*Laughter*] Whatever you did last year, do it again this year. [*Laughter*] And keep doing what you're doing—it's called "Pierre's Pack." It brings underprivileged kids to the ballpark. See, he makes a good living, and he's willing to share those hard-earned dollars with the underprivileged kids.

To me, this is what being leaders are all about and champs are about. It's one thing to win on the field, and that's what we're here to herald, and it's a fantastic—fantastic moment for the ballplayers and the fans and everybody involved with the organization. But winners also do things off the field too. Winners understand they have obligations. They've got obligations to be a good mom or a dad. They've got obligations to give something back to the community and to the country that has made this opportunity for them possible. And the Marlins are fulfilling it all. They won on the field, and they're winning off the field. And I'm grateful.

Congratulations to the world champs.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:50 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida; Mayor Manuel Diaz of Miami, FL; Ivan "Pudge" Rodriguez, catcher, Florida Marlins, and his wife, Maribel; Jeffrey H. Loria, chairman, chief executive officer, and managing general partner, Florida Marlins, and his wife, Sivia; David Samson, president, Florida Marlins, and his wife, Cindi; Larry Beinfest, senior vice president/general manager, Ozzie Guillen, former third base coach, Andre Dawson and Tony Perez, special assistants to the president, Doug Davis, bench coach, Wayne Rosenthal, pitching coach, Perry Hill, first base/infield coach, Josh Beckett and A.J. Burnett, pitchers, and Juan Pierre, outfielder, Florida Marlins.

Statement on Signing the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2004
January 23, 2004

Today, I have signed into law H.R. 2673, the "Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2004" (CAA). The CAA consolidates into a single appropriations Act several appropriations bills that the Congress normally passes each year as separate bills to

fund the operations of the Federal Government.

Many provisions of the CAA are inconsistent with the constitutional authority of the President to conduct foreign affairs, command the Armed Forces, protect sensitive information, supervise the unitary executive branch, make appointments, and make recommendations to the Congress. Many other provisions unconstitutionally condition execution of the laws by the executive branch upon approval by congressional committees.

The executive branch shall construe as advisory the provisions of the Act that purport to: (1) direct or burden the Executive's conduct of foreign relations, including sections 514, 531, 548, 557, 570, 571, 589, 610, and 618(b) of, and language relating to an agreement under the heading "Other Bilateral Economic Assistance, Economic Support Fund" in, the Foreign Operations Appropriations Act; and sections 404, 612, and 635 of the Commerce, Justice, State Appropriations Act and language in that Act relating to World Trade Organization negotiations and United Nations Security Council voting; (2) limit the President's authority as Commander in Chief, such as language under the heading "Andean Counterdrug Initiative" in the Foreign Operations Appropriations Act and section 610 of the Commerce, Justice, State Appropriations Act; (3) limit the President's authority to supervise the unitary executive branch, such as section 610(3) of the Commerce, Justice, State Appropriations Act, and sections 618 and 628 of the Transportation, Treasury Appropriations Act and the language in that Act relating to Office of Management and Budget (OMB) review of executive branch orders, activities, regulations, transcripts, and testimony; or (4) restrict the President's constitutional authority to make appointments, such as section 604(c)(3)(B) of the Foreign Operations Appropriations Act and subsections 112(a) and (d) of the Commerce, Justice, State Appropriations Act.

In addition, the executive branch shall construe provisions in the CAA that mandate submission of information to the Congress, other entities outside the executive branch, or the public, such as section 637(e)(2) of the Commerce, Justice, State Appropriations Act, in a manner consistent with the President's constitutional authority to withhold information that could impair foreign relations, national security, the deliberative processes of the Executive, or the performance of the Executive's constitutional duties. Also, to the extent that provisions of the CAA, such as section 404 of the Transportation, Treasury Appropriations Act and section 721 of the Agriculture Appropriations Act, purport to require or regulate submission by executive branch officials of legislative recommendations to the Congress, the executive branch shall construe such provisions in a manner consistent with the President's constitutional authority to submit for congressional consideration such measures as the President judges necessary and expedient. In particular, the executive branch shall construe sections 121 and 223 of the Veterans Affairs, Housing and Urban Development Appropriations Act in a manner consistent with the President's authority under the Recommendations Clause to submit budget requests to the Congress in any form he determines appropriate.

The executive branch shall construe the phrase "developed by the Kimberley Process" in section 584 of the Foreign Operations Appropriations Act as requiring the enforcement only of those standards that are in existence as of enactment of the CAA, for the reasons I stated upon signing the Clean Diamond Trade Act on April 25, 2003.

The executive branch shall construe as calling solely for notification the provisions of the CAA that are inconsistent with the requirements of bicameral passage and presentment set forth by the Constitution, as construed by the Supreme Court of the United States in 1983 in *INS* v. *Chadha.*

Such provisions include: sections 704, 718, 732, and 786 in the Agriculture Appropriations Act and language relating to Food and Drug Administration fund transfers in that Act; section 436(5) of the District of Columbia Appropriations Act; section 207 of the Labor, Health and Human Services Appropriations Act and language under the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation Fund heading in that Act; sections 201, 211, 212, 217, 403, 526, 533, 614, 623, and 643 in the Transportation, Treasury Appropriations Act and language in that Act under the headings "Department of Transportation, Office of the Secretary, Salaries and Expenses," "Department of Transportation, Working Capital Fund," "Federal Transit Administration, Administrative Expenses," "Treasury Building Annex Repair and Restoration," "Internal Revenue Service, Business Systems Modernization," "Federal Drug Control Programs, High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas Program," "General Services Administration, Real Property Activities, Federal Buildings Fund, Limitations on Availability of Revenue," and "Human Capital Performance Fund;" and section 111 of the Veterans Affairs, Housing and Urban Development Appropriations Act and language in that Act relating to additional amounts for Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services Activities.

Section 409 of the Commerce, Justice, State Appropriations Act purports to compel the Secretary of State to furnish all Department of State cables, on any topic and of whatever classification, to any member of the House or Senate appropriations committees who requests them. The executive branch shall construe this provision consistent with the President's constitutional authority to withhold information the disclosure of which could impair foreign relations, national security, the deliberative process of the Executive, or the performance of the Executive's constitutional duties.

The executive branch shall construe section 646 of the Transportation, Treasury Appropriations Act, relating to assignment of executive branch employees to perform functions in the legislative branch, in a manner consistent with the President's constitutional authority to supervise the unitary executive branch and as Commander in Chief, and recognizing that the President cannot be compelled to give up the authority of his office as a condition of receiving the funds necessary to carrying out the duties of his office.

Several provisions of the CAA relate to race, ethnicity, or gender. The executive branch shall construe such provisions in a manner consistent with the requirement to afford equal protection of the laws under the Due Process Clause of the Fifth Amendment to the Constitution.

Sections 153 and 154 of Division H of the CAA purport to establish interparliamentary groups of U.S. Senators to meet with members of the national legislatures of certain foreign countries for a discussion of common problems in the interest of relations between the United States and those countries. Consistent with the President's constitutional authority to conduct the Nation's foreign relations and as Commander in Chief, the executive branch shall construe sections 153 and 154 as authorizing neither representation of the United States nor disclosure of national security information protected by law or executive order.

The executive branch shall construe section 161 of Division H of the CAA as applicable only with respect to statutory functions assigned to the Director of OMB and not to the Director's role of assisting the President in the President's exercise of his constitutional powers of obtaining the opinions of the heads of departments, recommending for the consideration of the Congress such measures as the President judges necessary and expedient, and supervising the unitary executive branch. The executive branch shall not construe section 161 to

affect the power of the President to modify or amend the executive order to which the provision refers.

Several provisions in the CAA make specified changes in statements of managers of the House-Senate conference committees that accompanied various bills reported from conference that ultimately became laws. As with other committee materials, statements of managers accompanying a conference report do not have the force of law. Accordingly, although changes to these statements are directed by the terms of the statute, the statements themselves are not legally binding.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
January 23, 2004.

NOTE: H.R. 2673, approved January 23, was assigned Public Law No. 108–199. An original was not available for verification of the content of this statement.

The President's Radio Address
January 24, 2004

Good morning. In my State of the Union Address, I spoke of a great priority for our Nation, to confront the rising cost of health care and make sure that more of our citizens can afford the health care they need. Health care costs are rising too fast for many families and businesses. It is time to address this problem directly, with five clear steps that Congress can take this year.

First, we can help control rising health care costs by cutting down on frivolous lawsuits against doctors and hospitals. When health care providers are responsible for injuries, they should be accountable. Yet no one was ever healed by a junk or frivolous lawsuit.

This week, I will travel to Little Rock, Arkansas, to visit Baptist Health Medical Center. For Baptist and other hospitals across the Nation, frivolous lawsuits have dramatically increased the cost of medical liability premiums. These costs are passed on to patients in higher bills. These costs are driving doctors from important work, such as delivering babies. And these costs are driving some doctors out of medicine entirely.

In order to protect the doctor-patient relationship, Congress should pass medical liability reform that removes the threat of frivolous lawsuits and the needless costs they impose on our health care system.

Second, we should help more small businesses afford health insurance for their workers by allowing these firms to band together and negotiate for lower insurance rates. These association health plans give small employers the same bargaining power as big companies, making it easier for them to provide employee health coverage. The House has passed a bill supporting these health plans, and the Senate needs to act.

Third, Congress should give lower income Americans refundable tax credits to help them purchase health insurance. These tax credits would total up to $1,000 for individuals and $3,000 for families. For many Americans lacking health insurance, these credits would make the difference between affording insurance and going without.

Fourth, we should help Americans with their health care costs by encouraging the use of health savings accounts. Congress passed these accounts last year in the Medicare bill, allowing people to save money for future medical expenses tax-free.

People who make use of health savings accounts also will buy high-deductible insurance policies to protect them against catastrophic medical costs like hospitalization or major surgery. This year, I am urging Congress to make those premiums 100-percent tax deductible. This new deduction would strengthen health savings accounts and make health insurance more affordable for millions of Americans not covered through their workplace.

And fifth, we can control health care costs and improve care by moving American medicine into the information age. My budget for the coming year proposes doubling to $100 million the money we spend on projects that use promising health information technology. This would encourage the replacement of handwritten charts and scattered medical files with a unified system of computerized records. By taking this action, we would improve care and help prevent dangerous medical errors, saving both lives and money.

In all these measures, we are upholding the basic principle that private health care and the sanctity of the doctor-patient relationship make America's health care the best in the world. And with the help of Congress, this year we will strengthen our private system of care by addressing the rising cost of health care and helping more Americans afford health coverage.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 9:20 a.m. on January 23 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on January 24. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 23 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks in Little Rock, Arkansas
January 26, 2004

The President. Thank you. Thanks for coming. Thanks for having me. Thanks for the warm welcome. I appreciate the fact that a Texan is being treated so well here in Arkansas. [*Laughter*] It's nice to be in this part of the world again. Arkansas is full of really good people, decent, caring people, and so is this hospital. I'm honored that you would have allowed me and my rather significant entourage—[*laughter*]—to come to Baptist Health Medical Center.

I'm here to talk about health issues. I'm here to talk about one of the reasons why health care costs are going up. And that's the fact that we've got too many darn lawsuits, too many frivolous and junk lawsuits that are affecting people. I'm here to make sure that we talk in a way that says to the people of Arkansas and America that we need medical liability reform to make sure that medicine is affordable and available.

But I'm here, first and foremost, to thank the people of this medical center, those here in person and those listening via cable. I want to thank you for what you do. I want to thank you for your heart. I want to thank you for caring about your fellow citizens. I appreciate very much your being on the frontline of healing, healing lives in such a compassionate way. Our health care system is the best in the world, and we need to keep it that way.

I appreciate Russ. Thank you for your introduction. Thanks for being the CEO of Baptist Health System. Thank you for joining us in—we just had what they call a roundtable. The table was square. [*Laughter*] But nevertheless, we had a great discussion, and Russ was there. He

talked about this hospital, its outreach, its not only desire to serve people in the city of Little Rock but also its desire to serve people in rural Arkansas.

I want to thank Doug Weeks, the senior vice president and administrator, our host. I want to thank my friend the Governor for coming. Governor Huckabee is a—[*applause*]. Part of good health care depends on how you treat your own body. [*Laughter*] No, I'm serious. I'm absolutely serious. The best way to—one of the best ways to prevent disease is to make right choices. One of the right choices is to watch what you eat. The Governor has clearly done that. [*Laughter*] He's setting a good example.

Another right choice is to exercise frequently. Some of us like to run—or used to like to run before we broke down. [*Laughter*] I try to exercise 6 days a week. The Governor exercises. And I hope people in Arkansas and around the country understand that the exercise is a good way to avoid disease in the first place. Making right choices is important. And Governor, I appreciate the example you've set for this great State.

I want to thank the Lieutenant Governor, Win Rockefeller, for joining us. Win, glad to see you. He exercises too. [*Laughter*] I appreciate the mayor, Mayor Dailey from Little Rock, for being here. Mr. Mayor, thank you for coming. Mayor Hays of North Little Rock is here as well. Thank you for coming, appreciate you. You've got a tough job. I like to remind the mayors, just go ahead and fill the potholes, and everything will be fine. [*Laughter*]

I know we've got leaders from the statehouse here, Senator Baker and Representative Parks and others. Thank you all for coming out and giving me a chance to share some thoughts with you.

Before I get into the issue of health, I do want to remind you that our country still faces big challenges. And we're rising to meet the challenges. The most important job of my administration is to protect the American people, is to chase down those who would do us harm and bring them to justice, is to never forget the lessons of September the 11th, is to stay on the offensive, and that's what we're doing.

We're spreading freedom, and as we do so, the world becomes more peaceful. Freedom is not America's gift to the world; freedom is the Almighty's gift to each man and woman in the world.

I appreciate so very much the contribution of the Arkansas Guard. Over 4,000 troops are part of our effort to not only make America more secure but to make the world more free. I know that the Governor informed me that these troops are ready to go. They understand the mission. They're proud to serve our country. I'm proud to call them—I'm proud to be their Commander in Chief. And I want their families to know how much we are grateful for their sacrifice as well. Arkansas ought to be proud of the men and women who wear the uniform, and they're going to make this Nation proud and more secure in their sacrifices.

I told everybody the other night at the State of the Union that we're going to stay on the offensive against Al Qaida, and we're making good progress. We're on an international manhunt. We're in a different kind of war. It used to be in the old days, you could measure progress based upon the number of airplanes that the enemy had or the number of ships in a flotilla. And the big battles of the past were clashes of equipment that were visible for people to see. And this is the kind of war where sometimes you see action, and sometimes you don't. Sometimes progress is being made, and it's hard to tell it, because in order to dismantle the Al Qaida terrorists network, we've got to be on a manhunt, and we've got a lot of people on the manhunt.

Just yesterday—not yesterday—just last week, we made further progress in making America more secure when a fellow named Hassan Ghul was captured in Iraq. Hassan

Ghul was a—reported directly to Khalid Sheik Mohammed, who was the mastermind of the September the 11th attacks. He was a killer. He was moving money and messages around South Asia and the Middle East to other Al Qaida leaders. He was a part of this network of haters that we're dismantling. Our intelligence officers did a good job. He was captured in Iraq, where he was helping Al Qaida to put pressure on our troops. There is one less enemy we have to worry about with the capture of Hassan Ghul. Our people are doing great work.

This country's economy is getting better, and that's positive news for the people of Arkansas and the people of America. The tax relief we passed is working. See, I believe that when people have more money in their pocket, they will then spend or save or invest, and that causes the whole economy to grow, which then helps people find a job. Much of the tax relief we passed is set to expire, and it's set to expire right about the time the economy gets going. It makes no sense to have a tax increase on the American people at this stage or any stage as far as I'm concerned. And therefore, we need to make the tax relief permanent.

In order to make this tax relief permanent, let people keep more of their own money to keep driving this economy forward. Small businesses need to keep more money. You see, most new jobs in America are created by small-business owners. If you're worried about job creation, we need to continue to stimulate the small-business sector of our economy. Congress needs to act. They need to make these tax relief packages we passed for small business permanent so people can find work here in America.

We also need to have an energy policy. The people of Arkansas understand energy. We need a policy. We need a policy that encourages conservation. We need a policy that helps modernize our electricity systems, and we need a policy that makes us less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

We need to open up markets for Arkansas' farmers and ranchers. When you're good at something, we ought to encourage the sale of those products elsewhere, outside of our markets. And we're good at things in America. We're good at growing crops, and we're good at raising cows, and we're good at being on the cutting edge of innovation. We need markets for those products. We need less regulation for businesses and small businesses.

And we've got to deal with rising health care costs. Rising health care costs are making it difficult for some entities to hire people. Rising health care costs affect all Americans. We want our families to feel more secure. Rising health care costs create insecurity in our Nation.

And so we need to continue the focus on costs. We're making some good progress, by the way, about helping people with health care. We've got what we call community health centers in America. I'm committed to the expansion and the building of new community health centers. These are places where people who don't have insurance or live in areas without enough doctors can find health care. Community health centers make sense. It takes the pressure off the emergency rooms of hospitals such as this. We've opened or expanded 600 community health centers since 2001. The budget I proposed calls for another 218 to be opened or expanded. This is a good way to make sure that health care is available for those who don't have insurance yet. And so I call upon Congress to look at that part of my budget and continue working with the administration to expand these vital centers around Arkansas and around America.

And then we worked on Medicare. You might remember what it was like before this year when people talked about Medicare. The political issue was really called "Medi-scare." [*Laughter*] If somebody would talk about it, somebody else would

say, "Wait a minute. They're going to try to take away Medicare from the seniors." But I felt strongly that Medicare needed to be modernized. I felt like we needed to deal with the issue now and not pass it on like other Congresses and administrations had done. It's time to address the issue before it became so acute that the system didn't work. And it was time to fulfill a promise to our seniors, and so we acted. I was proud to sign that bill, and as I told the Congress, "If you try to change it and it hurts our seniors, I'll veto the bill."

It's going to take a while to implement the Medicare bill. It's a complex piece of legislation. After all, it's the first modernization since Lyndon Johnson signed Medicare in the mid-sixties.

This year, seniors are going to get a drug discount card, which will save them 10 to 25 percent off the retail price of most prescription drugs. And the lowest income seniors will get a $600 credit. That will help seniors with drug costs.

Secondly, next year we'll begin preventive screenings against diabetes and heart disease for seniors just entering Medicare, plus they'll get a wellness exam. That's important. It's the first time that Medicare has actually been into the business of preventive screenings. Any good doc will tell you, you need to figure out what the issue is in order to deal with people. And a preventive screening will help the medical profession better treat our seniors.

Finally, in year 2006, seniors will receive the prescription drug coverage they've been promised. For about $35 a month, most seniors will see their drug bills cut in half. That's a good deal for America's seniors.

And finally, in the bill is an interesting innovation, one that isn't the first time it's been tried, but it's now been expanded—they're called health savings accounts, which will allow Americans to save for future medical expenses, tax-free. And that's an important innovation, an important reform.

Another way to help, by the way—or a way to help deal with rising costs is to understand the impact rising costs have on small businesses. A lot of big businesses are able to absorb the costs because they've got the capacity to negotiate better. When you've got a large universe of people that you're trying to cover, you can have more strength in negotiations. It gives you a better hand.

The problem we have with small businesses is they don't have the capacity to pool together, to negotiate on behalf of a lot of people. And that's why I'm a strong supporter of what's called association health plans that will allow small businesses to pool risk and have a better negotiation policy with those who offer insurance. Congress needs to pass this piece of legislation. It is good for the entrepreneurs of Arkansas.

Lower income Americans should be helped with health care by refundable tax credits. It's been a part of my budget. It's an important reform. It will help with the issue of the uninsured. People with health savings accounts, when they buy high deductible insurance policies to protect them against catastrophic medical costs or hospitalization or major surgery, should be allowed to deduct those premiums. See, that will help with the rising costs of health care as well. Those are some practical suggestions for Congress to look at, ways to strengthen the private delivery of medicine as opposed to strengthening the Government involvement in medicine.

There's something else we can do at the Federal level, and that is to promote promising health information technology. The truth of the matter is, medicine is on the leading edge of change. And some of the new drugs are fantastic about—to help save lives. Some of the new machinery is fantastic. The information systems of the health care system are a little antiquated. I mean, you're still moving files by hand, aren't you? Kind of writing it out by hand.

Well, what we need to do is to have standards and computerized records so that we can improve care and prevent errors, which will save money in the system. There's tremendous savings to be had by bringing technology into the medical field, and the Federal Government can help there as well.

These are good steps. Yet one of the main cost-drivers, that has nothing to do with what happens in an operating room or a waiting room, happen in the courtroom. One of the reasons people are finding their premiums are up and it's hard to find a doc these days is because frivolous and junk lawsuits are threatening medicine across the country. And there's a lot of them, people just filing these suits. I call them junk suits because they don't have any merit. The problem is they cost money to fight.

Every one of these junk suits that people put out there requires the expenditure of money, which affects consumers. That's you. It affects hospitals. That's you as well. In order to avoid protracted litigation, those who provide insurance oftentimes just settle the case. You've got these giant judgments looming out there, people say, "Well, I better just go ahead and settle this, rather than risk a bad jury verdict." That drives up costs too. People just filing these lawsuits right and left, and it's running up the costs. Doctors' premiums, the cost of doing business, they're rising. That makes it hard on the docs. It makes it hard on docs to do what they're called to do, which is to heal lives.

Medical liability premiums for Arkansas doctors rose more than 150 percent last year. That makes it awfully hard for doctors to do business. And what is their business? Their business is seeing patients. Their business is helping to make somebody's life better. Yet these lawsuits are making it hard for docs to practice their business in the State of Arkansas and other States as well.

You see, the costs get passed on. They get passed on to patients or their employers. One of the major cost-drivers in the delivery of health care are these junk and frivolous lawsuits. The risk of frivolous litigation drives doctors—and hear me out on this—they drive doctors to prescribe drugs and procedures that may not be necessary, just to avoid lawsuits. That's called the defensive practice of medicine. According to a survey of the Arkansas Medical Society, 90 percent of Arkansas doctors say the fear of lawsuits have caused them to do unnecessary procedures.

See, lawsuits not only drive up premiums, which drives up the cost to the patient or the employer of the patient, but lawsuits cause docs to practice medicine in an expensive way in order to protect themselves in the courthouse.

The defensive practice of medicine affects the Federal budget. The direct cost of liability insurance and the indirect cost from unnecessary medical procedures raise the Federal Government's health care costs by at least $28 billion a year. Remember, we provide—at the Federal level, we provide health care through Medicare and Medicaid and veteran's health and Government employee costs. The defensive—the cost of defensive medicine raises your bill as a taxpayer. Not only does it make it harder to go see a doc, it also costs you more as a taxpayer. Medical liability reform is a national issue because medical liability lawsuits raise the Federal budget. It's a national issue that requires a national solution.

You need to get your Governor—I know he's strongly, and the Lieutenant Governor is strongly in favor of liability reform—you need to work it here in Arkansas, by the way. Just don't rely upon the Federal Government, but get you good medical liability. It's tough, because some of these lawyer groups are some of the politically strongest groups in the State and the country. I understand how tough it is. But we're doing the right thing by insisting upon medical liability reform. We're doing the right thing

by telling people the truth, and that is the health care system looks like a giant lottery. That's what it looks like these days because of these lawsuits. And somehow, the trial lawyers always hold the winning ticket. Lawyers walk away with up to 40 percent—40 percent—of every settlement and verdict, which adds up to billions of costs, billions of unnecessary costs.

Lawsuits don't heal patients. That's a fact. And they're driving a wedge between the docs and their patients. One of the most vital links of good medicine is the doctor-patient relationship. Yet many doctors fear what they tell a patient will be used against them in a court of law. We've got a culture of lawsuit here in America, a culture of lawsuits, a litigation culture, which is driving a wedge between the doctors and patients, and that's not right. When docs treat their patients, the only thing they should worry about is the health of their patients, not some trial lawyer breathing down their neck.

Seventy-one percent of the doctors in Arkansas say they are considering early retirement. Let me tell you what's happening here in Arkansas, and it's happening in other States too. You're not alone. These frivolous and junk lawsuits are not only driving up the costs, but a lot of docs are thinking about quitting the practice of medicine. Remember, I talked about to make sure medicine is affordable and available. Lawsuits drive up the affordability. Lawsuits are driving docs out of the practice, which means there's less availability. You've got to have doctors in your communities. In order to be a vibrant, successful community, you need a viable health care industry with good docs. And yet, 71 percent of the doctors in this State say they're considering early retirement; 50 percent of the physicians say they're having difficulty recruiting new doctors to practice in Arkansas.

This litigation culture puts a sign up there saying, "If you come to our State, you're likely to get sued." Who wants to do that? People want to practice medicine. They don't want to spend their time defending themselves in the courthouse because of the frivolous and junk lawsuits that are too prevalent today in America. More than a third of the docs are considering moving out of State. See, that says to me you got a problem here in Arkansas. And by the way, again I repeat, you're not alone. Trust me, you're not alone. There's a lot of States that can't get good medical liability reform through.

Today I met with some decent docs and health administrators. Let me tell you their stories so that we get a better feel for why we need medical liability reform at the State and Federal level.

Sara McBee is here. There's Sara. She's from Fayetteville, Arkansas. She practices family medicine. She was delivering between 80 and 100 babies a year. Now, there's a soul—a good soul who loves life to the point where she's willing to take her talents and deliver babies. It must be an unbelievably satisfying profession to bring life to be.

And yet, in July of 2002, her insurance premiums more than doubled. See, the litigation culture made it nearly impossible for her to practice her love. I say nearly impossible, because she wouldn't break her commitments to expecting patients and hung in there for a year. But her premiums continued to rise, and Dr. McBee has stopped delivering babies, as a direct result of too many junk lawsuits, and that's not right. That's not right.

Let me give you another story. Dr. John Wilson is with us. Dr. Wilson is a good soul. He's an orthopedist from Little Rock, Arkansas. He's been practicing medicine for—I think he said 35 years, 30 of which he wasn't hassled by lawsuits. In other words, what we're talking about is a new phenomenon here in society—in this society. He is a—he believes that doctors are called to serve. Besides just healing people, they're called to serve people. And I bet

you when you talk to most docs, that's the way they feel as well.

So he traveled every week to the Arkansas Delta. And for people who aren't familiar with Arkansas, that is a poor, rural area that, frankly, does not have enough doctors. And he heard a calling. So he would go there to help—to love, really, if you think about it—to practice his talent and skills and to love people by helping them, and then he got sued. And the lawsuits were dropped, but he was unable to find insurance because he was told if he kept going over there, the cost of his business, the cost of being a doctor, would rise dramatically. And so he quit going. He quit going.

By the way, I went to Mississippi a while ago and talked to a doc who was there in the Mississippi Delta. He came down from another State to practice medicine. He understood there's a lot of poor people there; he wanted to help them. He got sued—for helping poor people, because he's a doctor. And guess what? He left. The Wilson story and the story I just mentioned to you, it's just all too common. And people get affected. These junk lawsuits not only are running up the cost of medicine; they're making the quality of life of some of our citizens—diminishing the quality of life.

Sully and Mary Ligon are with us. They're from Helena—or Henrietta?

Mrs. Ligon. It's Helena.

The President. Helena, yes, Helena. How quickly we forget. [*Laughter*] Anyway, see, the Ligons got help from Dr. Wilson. She was telling me she got injured during one Christmas and tore a rotator cuff, and Dr. Wilson being the good doc he is, fixed it. Her fastball is back up to about 85 miles an hour now. [*Laughter*] But Dr. Wilson no longer goes there. And Sully got knocked over by a cow. He said a wild cow, not a mad cow. [*Laughter*] He got hurt, see. And Dr. Wilson was their doc because he used to go there. He no longer goes there. So guess what? The Ligons now have to drive here. And as they were quick to point out, they can afford to do so, which is good. It's inconvenient as heck, but they can afford to do so. There's a lot of people there that can't, and they're missing out on a good doc. And the reason Dr. Wilson is not there is because lawsuits are running up the cost of medicine, make it hard for him to practice. His heart's right. Trust me. I heard him. But he just can't go there.

There's just too many junk and frivolous lawsuits. We need to do something about it for the sake of a lot of people. I met with Frank Wise. He's from Fulton County Hospital. It's a rural hospital. These junk lawsuits have raised the cost of delivering babies such that they no longer do so in his hospital. And he tells the story about people desperately looking for a place to—for a bed, and babies being delivered on a bridge.

Listen, I'm going to tell you something. We can have balance in our society when it comes to having a good legal system and a good medical system. It's not that way today. The pendulum has swung way, way too far.

D'Borai Lynn Cook—you might have heard of her if you work here. She's the emergency room case manager. She sees firsthand what it means to practice medicine defensively. She says they over-prescribe to cover themselves to make sure that, as they do their job, they're thinking about what would happen if they end up in a court of law. She says that—she said then there's the negative aspect of defensive medicine with people saying, "I'm not going to handle that case."

See, too many lawsuits affect the lives of a lot of good people, and we need to do something about it. And so I proposed to the Congress to act. My job as the President, if I see problems, is to address them square on, and I expect Congress to do the same thing. I expect Congress to do the same.

First of all, we want to make sure the court system is uncluttered. We want to

make sure that if a person is injured, they have their day in court. Frivolous and junk lawsuits make it hard for those who get injured to have their day in court, for starters. And secondly, obviously, if they've been hurt by a bad doc, there needs to be a judgment, and that person needs to be able to recover the cost of their care, the recovery, and the economic losses for the rest of their life. Every good doc wants to make sure that the legal system works fairly. Good docs aren't afraid to stand up in a court of law. They just don't want to be run out of business because of these junk lawsuits, just filing suit after suit after suit.

People ought to be allowed to recover economic damages. But for the sake of a strong health care system, for the sake of making sure health care is accessible and affordable, we need a $250,000 cap on noneconomic damages.

States that have got a hard cap have seen positive results, have seen the judicial system work well and the medical field stay vibrant. And if harm is caused by truly egregious behavior, patients should be able to recover reasonable punitive damages.

What I propose is fair, see. I've laid out something that's balanced and fair, something that addresses a critical national need, and that is the cost of medicine. The problem is, is that some in the United States Senate don't see it that way. That bill I put up there passed the House of Representatives, and it's stuck in the Senate. And your Senators need to hear from you about a balanced, fair system. For the sake of Arkansas and States around the country, you need medical liability reform.

We need to make sure we've got joint and several liability reform as well. See, what happens is some of these junk lawsuits, they'll just file against everybody. Even though they may not be like 100-percent responsible for an issue, they'll have to pay 100 percent of the cost. That's not fair. That hurts hospitals in particular and a lot of docs as well. There needs to be good reform. There just needs to be good, sound national reform that's fair and balanced and full of common sense.

The House passed a bill. It's stuck in the Senate. These Senators have got to understand no one has ever been healed by a frivolous lawsuit. And I'm going to stay on the issue until we get it fixed. This is a national problem.

Let me talk about one other issue, and then I'll let you get back to work. Today I met Mary Lynn Roberson at the airport. Mary Lynn has volunteered—she's right there. I told her I was going to say her name. Thank you, Mary Lynn. She has volunteered here for nearly three decades. She visits with family and friends of surgery patients. In other words, she's spreading love, is what she's doing. And the reason I bring that up, and her work, is because the true strength of America is the fact that there are Mary Lynns in every community who are willing to take time out of their personal life to love a neighbor just like you'd like to be loved yourself.

We're a mighty nation when it comes to our military, and we'll keep it that way. We're a mighty nation when it comes to wealth in our economy, and it's getting better. But the most mighty aspect of our Nation is the fact that our citizens, from all walks of life, care deeply about a neighbor in need.

One of the most compelling things about being the President is I get to see on a daily basis the true compassion of our fellow citizens. And I hear just unbelievably fantastic stories about people overcoming big odds, because a neighbor is helped. Somebody has just taken time out of their life to make a difference.

My call to the good people of Little Rock is to work with the Boy Scouts—and I thank you for being involved in such a values-based program—or to start a program in your house of worship to feed the hungry or find shelter for the homeless. If you are interested in helping make a difference, mentor a child, teach a child how to read.

What a fantastic gift that is to teach a child to read. After all, I like to say reading is the new civil right. And you can help.

The strength of this country is the fact that we're a compassionate country. And there are thousands of people who are soldiers in the army of compassion, working hard to change lives, just like you're doing here at this hospital.

I'm so grateful that you gave me a chance to come by and talk about issues of national concern. I'm particularly grateful for the love you show for people who hurt here in society. This country is a great country because it is full of great people.

I'm honored to be here. May God bless your work, and may God continue to bless America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:14 a.m. at the Baptist Health Medical Center. In his remarks, he referred to Russell D. Harrington, Jr., president and chief executive officer, Baptist Health System; Doug Weeks, senior vice president and administrator, Baptist Health Medical Center; Gov. Mike Huckabee and Lt. Gov. Win Rockefeller of Arkansas; Mayor Jim Dailey of Little Rock, AR; Mayor Patrick Hays of North Little Rock, AR; State Senator Gilbert Baker and State Representative Marvin Parks of Arkansas; and Khalid Sheik Mohammed, senior Al Qaida leader responsible for planning the September 11 attack, who was captured in Pakistan on March 1, 2003.

Remarks Prior to Discussions With President Aleksander Kwasniewski of Poland and an Exchange With Reporters

January 27, 2004

President Bush. I want to welcome my good friend and a good friend of our country to the White House. I appreciate so very much you coming by, Mr. President.

I've gotten to know this man well over the years. He is a leader. He understands that people need to lead their country towards peace and freedom and prosperity, and President Kwasniewski is doing just that. He's making a mark on the continent of Europe through his leadership. He stands strong.

In every conversation I've had with him, he has a deep love for the Polish people. He expresses his desire for close relations, because he understands close relations between our countries is in the people's interest.

And Mr. President, I'm so glad you're back. I appreciate your friendship. I appreciate your strength. Welcome.

President Kwasniewski. I must talk in Polish because I see Polish TV here.

[*At this point, President Kwasniewski spoke in Polish, and no translation was provided.*]

President Kwasniewski. And now to Americans——

President Bush. We'll answer some questions here.

President Kwasniewski. Some questions and maybe short statement to you, because——

President Bush. Absolutely, they love to be informed.

President Kwasniewski. ——you understand Polish, or not fully?

President Bush. Well, he speaks French, but not Polish. [*Laughter*]

President Kwasniewski. French is the next time, not yet.

I would like to say that it is a tradition; we began each year with this Polish-American consultation. Last year was very important, difficult. We are together as allies in Iraq. I'm sure that we have all chances to finish this mission with success, in favor

of Iraqi people, in favor of the security in the world, in favor of all of us. And this visit I hope will be very good to solve some of our bilateral issues, which are necessary to eliminate in our relations, because the people, especially the people in Poland and Polish Americans, they expect very much to make the relations between Poland and the United States as excellent as possible. And with such a friend as George W. Bush, I'm sure that they are ready to do.

President Bush. Thank you, sir. Terry [Terence Hunt, Associated Press].

Iraqi Weapons of Mass Destruction

Q. Mr. President, a year ago you said the dictator of Iraq has got weapons of mass destruction. Are you still confident that weapons of mass destruction will be found in Iraq, given what Dr. Kay has said?

President Bush. Let me first compliment Dr. Kay for his work. I appreciate his willingness to go to Iraq and I appreciate his willingness to gather facts. And the Iraqi Survey Group will continue to gather facts.

There is no doubt in my mind that Saddam Hussein was a gathering threat to America and others. That's what we know. We know from years of intelligence, not only our own intelligence services but other intelligence-gathering organizations, that he had weapons. After all, he used them. He had deep hatred in his heart for people who love freedom. We know he was a dangerous man in a dangerous part of the world. We know that he defied the United Nations year after year after year. And given the events of September the 11th, we know we could not trust the good intentions of Saddam Hussein; he didn't have any.

There is no doubt in my mind the world is a better place without Saddam Hussein. America is more secure. The world is safer, and the people of Iraq are free.

You want to call on the Polish press?

President Kwasniewski. Yes, please.

U.S. Military Aid for Poland

Q. Polish Television, a question for Mr. President Bush. Mr. President, there is a feeling in Poland that America is not doing enough for Polish effort in Iraq. Are you planning to extend military support for Poland?

President Bush. I look forward to talking to my friend about that today. In my '05 budget request there is a $66 million request to help the Polish military, particularly with airlift capacity, C–130 aircraft. The Polish army is a sophisticated, fine group of soldiers. And one area where Poland needs some help is the capacity to move those soldiers, and we look forward to helping the Government do that.

Iraqi Weapons of Mass Destruction/ Prewar Intelligence

Q. Mr. President, do you have any questions about the prewar intelligence? And the Democrats are wanting an independent commission to look into this. Would you go along with that?

President Bush. Well, first of all, I think the—I think it's very important for us to let the Iraq Survey Group do its work so we can find out the facts and compare the facts to what was thought.

The first part of your question was?

Q. Do you have any questions about the prewar intelligence? Were you ill-served by the intelligence community?

President Bush. Well, first of all, I've got great confidence in our intelligence community. These are unbelievably hard-working, dedicated people who are doing a great job for America.

And secondly, there is no doubt in my mind that Saddam Hussein was a grave and gathering threat to America and the world. There is just no doubt in my mind. And I say that based upon intelligence that I saw prior to the decision to go into Iraq, and I say that based upon what I know today. And the world is better off without him. And we're now in the business of making sure Iraq is free and democratic.

And that's important as well for long-term stability and peace in the world. And we're making good progress toward that goal.

President Kwasniewski. May I add one thing?

President Bush. Sure, please.

President Kwasniewski. Because it might be quite interesting for American journalists.

Many months before Iraqi action, I met predecessor of Hans Blix in Warsaw. I invited him to my palace, and we discussed about mass destruction weapons, Iraq, and everything. And he told me very important thing, that Saddam has these weapons or is ready to produce these weapons, because to have such an impression that he has mass destruction weapons is a part of his doctrine to keep own power in Iraq and to be strong in the region.

So I think that it's very difficult today to judge how it was when he had—when he decided to continue this project of mass destruction weapons. But that was information of predecessor of Mr. Blix in Warsaw, that absolutely Iraq is ready to produce if it's necessary to keep the power of and the dictatorship of Saddam and to play such important role in the region.

President Bush. Yes, Dave [David Gregory, NBC News].

Q. Mr. President, but how do you describe and account for the difference between what you claimed prior to the war about what he possessed and what he was capable of, and what the intelligence said he possessed and was capable of in terms of a nuclear weapon within the decade, and the fact that David Kay says the intelligence was inaccurate and wrong, and nothing has been found? Don't you owe the American people an explanation?

President Bush. Well, I think the Iraqi Survey Group must do its work. Again, I appreciate David Kay's contribution. I said in the runup to the war against Iraq that—first of all, I hoped the international community would take care of him. I was hoping the United Nations would enforce its resolutions, one of many. And then we went to the United Nations, of course, and got an overwhelming resolution—1441—unanimous resolution that said to Saddam, "You must disclose and destroy your weapons programs," which obviously meant the world felt he had such programs. He chose defiance. It was his choice to make, and he did not let us in.

I said in the runup that Saddam was a grave and gathering danger; that's what I said. And I believed it then, and I know it was true now, and as Mr. Kay said, that Iraq was a dangerous place. And given the circumstances of September the 11th, given the fact that we're vulnerable to attack, this Nation had to act for our security.

Visa and Immigration Policy

Q. Will you—[*inaudible*]—this week the visas for Polish tourists coming to the United States?

President Bush. Visa issue?

Q. Visa. Visas—[*inaudible*]—President, do you offer anything on the visa policy for the Polish people?

President Bush. Well, we're working with the President on this very delicate issue. And there is the opportunity for some prescreening to make sure that Polish citizens headed to the United States are not inconvenienced. We've got a study group we're going to put together to make sure that we come up with rational policy. But let me make sure everybody understands: The Congress decides the visa policy. That's what the Congress decides. And our study group will work with the Polish authorities in a way that makes it clear what the realities are here in the United States and makes it clear what the realities are on the ground in Poland.

Listen, let me just take a step back on this very important issue. We value our friendship with Poland. Poland is our great friend. There are thousands of Polish Americans who——

President Kwasniewski. Millions.

President Bush. Millions, excuse me. I just don't want to overstate the case here. [*Laughter*]

President Kwasniewski. Especially before the election—millions and millions. [*Laughter*]

President Bush. ——that love Poland and that have got relatives in Poland. And we understand the need for dialog and travel. We've got visa rules set by the Congress that we just—that are on the books. And we look forward to working with the President on these issues.

President Kwasniewski. We will work, of course, but I would like to deliver this idea to you and to our friends. The future of the world is without visa, not with visa. That should be our goal.

President Bush. Yes.

President Kwasniewski. And of course, how to reach this important goal, that is task for politicians, because the future of the world, with Poland, with Eastern Europe, with the world is no visa, not visa. That's—me, very modest citizen of Poland, I speak to you. That is the future—that is the future.

President Bush. Well, it could be. Let me also say that I announced a very important piece of legislation—or called Congress to an important piece of legislation, which is to issue temporary-worker cards, which will help address much of the issue with the Polish people. And I would hope Congress would pass rational immigration policy—that is, not amnesty—rational immigration policy that matches willing worker with willing employer. And that also will help on this issue.

President Kwasniewski. It will help very much. We appreciate it very much. But, please, dear President, the future is no visa.

President Bush. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:23 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to David Kay, former CIA Special Advisor for Strategy Regarding Iraqi Weapons of Mass Destruction Programs; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. President Kwasniewski referred to Hans Blix, former executive chairman, United Nations Monitoring, Verification, and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC).

The Polish-American Alliance for the 21st Century: Joint Statement by President George W. Bush and Polish President Aleksander Kwasniewski
January 27, 2004

As partners in building a Europe whole, free, and at peace at the end of the 20th century, Poland and the United States will continue to work together, and with our European friends and allies, to achieve a more secure, prosperous, and just world in the 21st century. Today, we pledge to deepen the strategic alliance that joins our two nations, an alliance rooted in shared values and a common struggle for freedom.

The foundation of Polish and American security remains the NATO Alliance, which will maintain its mission to defend its members in the face of new challenges. We welcome Poland's pending entry into the European Union, and affirm that NATO and the EU must work together for the common good of their members and the world. We are determined to strengthen transatlantic relations, forging renewed unity, and acting in common purpose on the many challenges before us. We will do so at the June NATO Summit in Istanbul, where we will celebrate a united, enlarged Alliance of 26 nations in strategic partnership with an enlarged EU, cooperating with Russia and Ukraine, and preparing to handle the security challenges of our time. We

will work together to promote democratic and free market reforms in wider Europe, particularly in Ukraine and Georgia, as they strive to strengthen their integration with the Euro-Atlantic community.

We commit our nations to an ambitious goal, rooted in our shared values and experience: to promote freedom, democracy, human dignity, economic opportunity, and security cooperation in the Greater Middle East. Our joint efforts in the war on terrorism, in Afghanistan, and in Iraq, are essential for the security of our people today. Yet over the long term, the growth of freedom is vital to unraveling the nexus of threats posed by terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, tyranny, the lack of opportunity, and violent extremism.

Today, American and Polish soldiers are serving bravely in a just struggle against terrorists and in the international effort to bring peace, security, and freedom to Afghanistan and Iraq. We thank them for their dedication and sacrifice.

We agree on the importance of the rapid reconstruction of a sovereign Iraq with democratic institutions and respecting the rule of law. We welcome the widespread international support for this process, and in particular, recognize the vital and growing role the United Nations should play in these efforts.

Polish-American military cooperation since 1989 has proven its value, and we have agreed to increase this cooperation. Poland is embarking on a comprehensive transformation program to modernize its armed forces, strengthening its ability to respond with the United States to global challenges. The United States supports this program. In particular, we remain committed to the goals of the U.S.-Polish Defense Transformation Initiative, and the United States will provide new assistance to Poland in acquiring C–130 military transport aircraft, which will increase the effectiveness and mobility of Polish capabilities.

We note with satisfaction the growing support worldwide for our shared efforts to implement the Proliferation Security Initiative, announced by President Bush in Krakow in May 2003, and we agree to enhance cooperation in bioterrorist attack prevention in Central and Eastern Europe.

Poland and the United States are growing partners in trade and investment, which will grow even faster as Poland continues to improve its business climate. The sale of U.S. combat-proven fighter aircraft to Poland marks an important opportunity to increase defense industry ties and other forms of industrial cooperation and investment. We welcome the interest of Polish firms in participating in the reconstruction of Iraq. To facilitate this participation, building on the recent visit of U.S. Commerce Secretary Evans to Poland, the United States will send experts to Poland to provide information on the Iraq reconstruction process and procurement opportunities to Polish firms. In addition, the United States will also establish in Poland a regional center to provide information on an ongoing basis regarding Iraqi reconstruction.

We support contacts between our societies and travel between our countries by our peoples. The United States recognizes that security concerns are imposing inconveniences on legitimate travelers. To improve the ease and safety of such travel, the United States will establish in Warsaw a program to pre-screen visitors traveling from Poland to the United States. We agree to hold regular, High-Level Working Group consultations starting at an early date to discuss ways to enhance travel security and facilitate travel for Polish and American citizens. We look forward as well to enactment of a U.S. temporary worker program that will provide new opportunities to Poles, among others, to work in the United States.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Congressional Leaders
January 27, 2004

Legislative Agenda

I want to thank the Members from the Senate and the House who are here, both Republicans and Democrat leaders who are here to discuss the upcoming session. We've got a lot of common interests this year, interests of continuing to fight and win the war against terror. We need to protect our homeland. We need to put policies in place that help people find work. We'll work together on the health needs of our fellow citizens. We've got to be wise with the people's money. I look forward to constructive conversation today and working together constructively throughout the year. This is an election year. It's a year where people say, "Nothing can get done." We need to prove them wrong. We need to continue to do the people's business in a sound way.

I want to thank the Members for coming. I appreciate the chance to visit with you, and I look forward to a good relationship here in 2004.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:34 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks on Access to Health Care
January 28, 2004

The President. Thank you for being here. Please be seated. Thanks for coming. If you're wondering who these characters are behind me, these are people who have just shared their stories about what it means to be an employer or employee and facing rising costs of health care. The cost of health care is an issue in our country, and we must deal with it in a rational way. And that's what I want to discuss with you today.

I want to thank those folks who are standing behind me for sharing their stories. I will try to do my best to share some of their stories with you. They come from all parts of our country. George Akers, for example, is from Naples. He's here with his boss, who owns the company, a small-business entrepreneur. That would be Naples, Florida. Joe is from Horizon Builders in Maryland. Pam Wimbish is from Illinois. She's self-employed. Rick Bezet is the pastor of the New Life Church in Little Rock, Arkansas. These are people who are working for a living, people who are employing people, people who are worried about health care.

Phil Hadley is, as I told you, is George's boss. He's an entrepreneur. He's a—one of the great parts of America is the entrepreneurial spirit of our country. The fact that small businesses are vibrant and alive is an important part of the economic recovery of our country. After all, most new jobs are created by small-business owners, people who are dreamers and hard workers. But Phil told me he's worried about making sure his employees are covered by good health care.

Lynn Martins is with us. She's a restaurant owner. She is selling food and, at the same time, worried about whether or not the people that are waiting the tables can get insurance.

The Sameses are with us, Krista and Ted. They're self-employed. By the way, Kris is

a home-schooler; she home-schools her children. And they've decided to do something about the high cost of health care by taking an innovative approach to buying health care, which I'm going to describe to you here in a minute.

Anyway, thank you all for coming. These are—their stories are typical stories. Their stories are the stories that occur every day in America as people make decisions about how to allocate money toward health care.

Fortunately, the positive news is that we've got the best health care system in the world. And we need to keep it that way. We need to keep it that way by keeping the private market strong, by resisting efforts that are happening in Washington, DC, to say the Federal Government should be running health care. See, we don't believe that. I don't believe it. I believe the best health care system is that health care system generated in the private markets.

And the best way to keep the private markets strong is to make sure we've got the best research and development, is to make sure the doctor-patient relationship is strong, is to empower consumers to make more choices, is to give them more opportunities to make choices in the private sector.

We're making progress in terms of the modernization of the health care system, starting with the Medicare bill that was passed. The Medicare bill said we have an obligation to our seniors in our country, and we need to fulfill that obligation. And for the first time since Medicare was founded, I had the honor of signing a bill that modernizes the system, which essentially says there needs to be prescription drug coverage for seniors; there needs to be preventive care available for seniors; and seniors need to be given options to choose from, to tailor a program that best meets their needs. The Medicare bill is a vital part of a vibrant health care system. I was proud to sign it, and any attempt by Congress to weaken it will meet my veto.

One of the ways to help make sure health care functions better is to help people who can't afford health care to have access to health care, access other than emergency rooms and hospitals. And so I'm a big proponent of what's called community health centers that operate primary care services in rural and underserved urban areas. When I showed up here in Washington, there was about 3,000 of them. I vowed that we would expand and/or open 1,200 more. We've done 600—we've met 600—we've fulfilled half our obligation, as far as I'm concerned. And in the budget I'm submitting, we will finish the additional 600 in years 2005 and 2006. This is a smart way to make sure that people get health care. It's more cost-effective that people are able to go to these centers and not go to an emergency room, which is by far the most expensive way for somebody to get health care.

Congress needs to pass refundable tax credits to help the working uninsured. It's an approach that says we trust low-income Americans to be able to make the rational decision for their health care.

Another thing we need to do here in Washington is to promote the—make sure health care technology is widespread, that the—even though medicine is modern in the sense that we're making great new discoveries, it's kind of ancient when you think about how the records are kept. When you're still writing records down by hand and sharing information through files, it's not exactly a modern system. And we believe a lot of medical errors can be saved as a result of the use of proper technology, and there will be cost savings to be had as well.

Another way to save costs, to stop the rise of the cost of health care, is there for to be rational laws in dealing with doctors. Our legal system is out of control right now. There's just too much litigation. There's frivolous and junk lawsuits all over the country. It's like there's a giant lottery, and the lawyers are the only winners. And

we're driving good docs out of business. Make no mistake about it, a lot of good docs are stopping to practice medicine because their premiums are going up because of the junk and frivolous lawsuits. And so these lawsuits, which are—people will settle just to get them out of the way—raises costs. Doctors, for fear of being sued, practice what's called defensive medicine. That raises the cost. As a matter of fact, the cost of premium increases and the cost of defensive medicine—in other words, prescribing too much to cover yourself so if you get sued, you can say, "Well, wait a minute. I did everything I could"—costs the Federal Government about 28 billion a year. Think about that—$28 billion. That means it's costly to the taxpayer.

I view this as a national issue that requires a national solution. And so I proposed medical liability reform. The House passed a good bill which recognizes that if—by the way, if you get hurt, you ought to recover full economic damages. In other words, if a bad doc practices bad medicine, there ought to be a consequence. But there ought to be a cap on noneconomic damages.

The House passed the bill. It's stuck in the Senate. Senators have got to understand, if they're truly worried about health care costs, we need medical liability reform that's fair and reasonable—fair and reasonable. We want health care to be affordable and accessible. When you drive doctors out of business and drive the cost up because of lawsuits, medicine becomes less affordable and less accessible.

The Medicare bill I signed in December created an additional tool that will help workers lower their health care costs, and they're called health savings accounts. They became available on January 1st. Health savings accounts address a growing need in our health care system. These accounts will help working Americans afford health insurance that is growing out of their reach. They will help restrain the health care costs that are affecting us all.

Right now, many insurance plans will cover virtually all of your health care costs in exchange for a high premium payment, which is paid by employers and their employees in various percentages, in different percentages. Under America's system of private medical care, families will continue to have this option, of course. We just want to provide additional options for families from which to choose, and the health savings account is one such option.

Under the system that currently exists, consumers really don't know how far their health care dollars are going. You pay the premium, and then you just show up and collect the benefits. You have no idea what you're spending money on. They pay a flat rate for insurance, but they really don't know the true costs of medical services they receive. There's no demand for better prices. There's no selectivity in the marketplace. There's no pressure on the price structure of health care.

When consumers don't have the incentive to get better prices, costs go up, and that's what's happening in America. And then when costs go up, insurance companies pass on those costs in the form of higher premiums, so everybody pays. That's the current system we have today. And it's those higher premiums and increasing costs that make it difficult for some to have health care insurance.

The doctor-patient relationship is also a vital part of a good health care system. And as these folks behind me said, you know, they got a little tired of having bureaucracies in between the patient and the doc. And that's what's happened in certain segments of the health care industry.

And we need a consumer-driven health care system, and we need better information about health care prices. And a consumer-driven health care system with better information will help control the cost of health care. That's the rationale of the health savings accounts.

The best way to empower citizens is to let them save and spend their health care

dollars as they see fit—in other words, start to empower people to make the right decisions with their health care dollars; give them control over routine costs so that people see the doctor when they need to, spend their dollars wisely, and still be able to have coverage for major medical bills.

The health savings account incorporates the philosophy I just described. There's two major features. First, to get a health savings account, you or your employer must obtain a separate high-deductible insurance policy to cover major medical expenses, such as surgery or hospital stays. The premiums for these high-deductible plans cost far less than traditional insurance. Yet the plans still cover for major expenses.

Secondly—the good news, by the way, is insurance companies are now beginning to offer these plans more and more, along with HSAs. In other words, the market is demanding and the suppliers are providing these kinds of high-deductible catastrophic plans, I guess is the best way to describe them. They don't cost nearly as much as normal group plans cost.

Secondly, to cover routine medical expenses—in other words, this part of the—this aspect of the health care system says, "We'll cover major costs for you at a much reduced cost to the consumer." Second, to cover routine medical expenses such as bills for regular doctor visits or medicines, you can set up a health savings account with up to $2,600 a year for an individual or up to $5,150 for a family.

Now, contributions to these accounts are tax-free. The earnings in these accounts—in other words, if you don't spend all the money and you got that money invested, the earnings are tax-free, and when you withdraw them to pay for routine medical expenses, the withdrawals are tax-free. In other words, there's incentives built in for people to put money aside to meet routine medical expenses, expenses other than costly catastrophic expenses or high hospitalization expenses. Because the HSA is tax-free, it will save the Americans between 10 to 35 percent of out-of-pocket medical expenses, depending on a person's tax bracket.

Not only does the HSA start to empower you to make decisions; it actually provides tax relief at the same time. Whatever you don't spend, by the way, in a year—you put 2,600 in, you don't use all that money—that can be saved for future medical bills. In other words, you start to save money and accumulate money. So instead of sending all your health dollars to an insurance company, you and your employer can use an HSA to lower your insurance premiums, to cover major medical bills, and to keep the savings to cover routine costs, and to save for future issues you may have to deal with.

When more Americans sign up for these HSAs, we'll see positive effects for our families and the economy this way: First, many American families who choose HSAs will pay less overall for their health care. People behind me who have chosen HSAs will testify that that's the case. I'm going to testify on their behalf here in a minute. [*Laughter*] Insurance premiums will be lower, and people will be able to draw from tax-free money to pay for routine expenses.

Secondly, HSAs will encourage people to spend wisely for their routine medical expenses. If you put in 2,600 tax-free, that 2,600 is yours, and if you spend unwisely, you're spending your own money unwisely, and you begin to see the consequences as the savings for that particular—or the contribution for that year begins to dwindle. When people consider the true costs of their medical care, they will push health care providers to offer better services and better prices. When it's your money you're spending, you see it; you write the check; you have the tendency to demand better service. If somebody else is spending the money for you, there's no cost control because the demand—the decisionmaking process has been taken out of the economic equation.

Third, HSAs will encourage people to save for their health care needs both now and in the future. We encourage people to save for their future retirement needs. HSAs do the same thing for medical needs. There's incentives built in to encourage savings, and that's important.

Fourth, because citizens will see savings on an annual basis as a result of wise choices they make, there is an incentive to take care of their bodies and to live healthier lives. This is the beginning of, hopefully, what will be the next wave of medicine and the direction of medicine, is how do we encourage people to make right choices? How do we prevent disease in the first place?

As you know, I'm an exerciser. I like to exercise. I exercised a little too much, and my knee hurts. [*Laughter*] But nevertheless, I feel—I made the right choice to exercise on a daily basis. I'm a healthier person for it. And HSA—that would show up in an HSA because there would be more money left over on an annual basis because I am a healthier person, more of my own money that will be accumulating, that will be being saved. The healthier your life, the more money you build up tax-free in your health savings account.

Fifth, HSAs will make it easier for some people who are now uninsured to purchase health insurance. Low premiums mean greater affordability and greater accessibility, especially for small businesses who are having trouble paying for the health insurance for their employees.

Because some people may not be able to afford these low-cost plans, I made a proposal to strengthen HSAs. I did so in my State of the Union. If your employer does not contribute to your premiums, you should be able to deduct from your income taxes the cost of your premiums for your high-deductible insurance. If you really think about what I've just said, it provides an interesting opportunity for small businesses who aren't paying for health insurance to be able to encourage an employee to do so.

Much of the money you contribute to the HSA and the money you spend on premiums—so the money you contribute—not "much," all the money you contribute to your HSA—and the money you spend on your premiums for high-deductible insurance will not be taxed. This is an incentive plan to encourage people to be able to have an insurance policy that's affordable. And it's necessary, and it's needed. And the Congress needs to understand how responsible the decision they made in the Medicare bill was. I mean, this is a major reform in a positive way for the American people.

The other thing we need to do—and Congress needs to listen to—is the call for association health plans. What that means is small businesses can band together across the country to negotiate lower health insurance rates and cover more workers. See, State rules prevent many small businesses from working together to increase their buying power, which makes it harder for them to offer affordable coverage for their employees. It makes sense, when you think about it, to allow people from Texas and Oklahoma to bind risk, to share risk. If you're a restaurant owner in Texas, you ought to be able to take your employees and put them in the same pool as a restaurant owner in Maryland, so you can spread the risk.

You'll hear a story here in a second about a restaurant owner that can't share risk and, therefore, is in a—has to buy a group plan or try to buy a group plan without the benefits of large purchasing power. Big companies have got purchasing power. Small businesses ought to be allowed to bind together so they've got the same purchasing power.

And the Congress needs to act on association health plans. This is an important part of making sure the small-business sector of America is strong and vibrant. The

bill passed the House. It's stuck in the Senate. The Senate ought to act. And for those of you who are concerned about health care for—the cost of health care for small businesses, you need to let your Senators know. There's no excuse for this bill not to go forward. It would be a major reform. It would help a lot of small-business owners in the country.

Let me tell you some stories. Speaking about small businesses, I told you Phil Hadley is here. He's with Collier Pest Control out of Naples, Florida. He's got an employee with him named George Akers, who's with us. George is the guy with the flat-top, the turtleneck—[*laughter*]—has never seen snow before. [*Laughter*] He's the real deal. [*Laughter*]

Collier was having trouble buying health insurance that the company could afford, the people could afford, working for them. The premiums were going up year after year. And George was getting tired of it and was contemplating not having any insurance at all—wanted to work but—about to try to self-insure, which would be highly risky. He bought him a new HSA. Phil found it; they worked together on it. The HSA and the lower premiums that he pays to cover catastrophic care saves George about $5,500 a month.

George Akers. No, a year.

The President. A year—[*laughter*]—5,500 a year. I meant to say $550 a month. Five thousand, five hundred a year. Think about that. He went from worrying about having health insurance at all to taking a health savings account, and he now saves $550 a month. Actually, it's more than $5,500 a year. [*Laughter*] He's covered for catastrophic care. He's got incentives in his own plan to make right choices, to cover the routine medical costs.

Pam Wimbish is with us from the Chicago area. She's self-employed. She was worried about health care. There's Pam. She was really worried about health care. She had a high-cost insurance plan, and being a self-employed person, she was kind of wondering what's next, what happens next year or next month, when you get high bills. There are a lot of self-employed people in America, by the way, a lot, a lot of sole proprietors, a lot of one-person shops out there making a huge contribution to our economy.

She signed up for an HSA. It's made a huge difference, she said. She's saving money. She's saving money not only in the outflow; she's saving money by the account building up, the HSA account, which is her savings account. It's her own money available for health. And there's nothing like having your own—managing your own system, is there? I mean, there's just something inherently American about controlling your own destiny, and that's what these HSAs do.

The Sameses are with us. I mentioned that Krista is a home-schooler. I also forgot to tell you she's an accountant. Ted is a doc. They're a professional family, just like a lot of other families in America. They purchased an HSA. They're using HSAs. They found that an HSA makes their life—their desire to make sure their family is insured so much more affordable and reasonable.

Rick Bezet is with us. He's a pastor in a Little Rock church. You think—he's got a couple of flocks he must tend to—one is the people who come to church, but he's also an employer. He's got people working for him. He's saving about $5,000 per employee per year by switching to a health savings account.

These people care deeply about their employees. They want them to be satisfied workers. And they're now taking advantage of new law, which provides interesting financial opportunities for their businesses.

Joe Bohm is with us. Joe is a homebuilder from Crofton, Maryland. He's got 90 employees. Just like a lot of other small businesses, his premiums went up 15 percent this year, and he's tired of it. And he's tired of not having the capacity to bargain better with a group of people just

like—in the same situation he's in. But the law won't allow it.

There's some—people say, "Why won't the law? It sounds rational, why won't it?" Because there are some vested interests that won't allow this to happen. I guess there's people not willing to allow for there to be competition. They don't want to give up any market share. They like the fact that Government won't let people compete. I don't. The more competition the better, particularly when it comes to making sure people are able to get a better deal for their health insurance.

Lynn Martins is with us. She runs Seibel's Restaurant. She says it's pretty good food, if you're interested. [*Laughter*] She used to be in an association health plan in her State, Maryland. Then, incredibly enough, they said, "You can't use those plans anymore. You can't have an association health plan." And guess what happened? The premiums went up 50 percent—because the State wouldn't allow for there to be association health plans, and her little stand-alone business doesn't have the same purchasing power in the marketplace, and the premiums went up. Bad law, bad decisions by lawmakers, ran her premiums up. And they're still going up.

And so she, too, wants to be able to be in an association health plan. She wants restaurateurs to be able to pool and get better costs in the marketplace. She's also fascinated by health savings accounts. She wasn't exactly sure what they were, and then all of a sudden she started hearing the stories of people standing behind me, and it dawned on her that this is perhaps a really good way to make sure her employees have got health insurance.

Imagine the combination of health savings accounts and association health care plans together. I mean, you're talking about providing interesting opportunity for the small-business sector in America. And remember, we're interested in job creation, and we need to make sure the small-business sector is as strong as possible. Tax relief is one way to invigorate the small-business sector. Congress needs to make all that tax relief permanent, by the way. And another way is to address the high cost of health care by rational policy. And today I described a series of steps of rational policy. The Congress must act on it. If they're truly interested in health care costs in America, I've just laid out a way, a strategy for them to address the costs, address the costs in a way that does not undermine the private sector, undermine that part of our health care philosophy that has made us the greatest in the world.

We don't want the Federal Government running health care. We don't want the Federal Government making decisions. Private medicine needs to be invigorated and strengthened, and the way to do that is give people more options, empower consumers, protect the doctor-patient relationship, and allow small businesses to pool their risk so they can provide good insurance for their employees.

Thank you for coming and giving me a chance to describe a vision for a better America when it comes to health care. Please feel free to contact the Members of Congress in the Senate. [*Laughter*]

Again, I want to thank my fellow Americans for standing up here to help add some credibility to the stories I've just told you. They are living proof of what can happen when people are given good choices to make, and proof of what happened—for the need for us to make sure Congress continues to implement good policy.

Appreciate you all coming. God bless. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:55 a.m. in Room 450 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building.

Remarks Following Discussions With Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey
January 28, 2004

The President. It is my honor to welcome Prime Minister Erdogan to the Oval Office for the second time. I've been looking forward to this meeting because Turkey is a friend and an important ally of America. I have found that the Prime Minister is a person who is easy to talk to. He's a straightforward man, which makes it easy to be able to deal with common issues.

And we talked about Iraq, and I assured him the United States' ambition is for a peaceful country, a democratic Iraq that is territorially intact.

He briefed me on the Cyprus talks, and I appreciated his trying to find a solution—a solution to a long-standing dispute.

I appreciate the Prime Minister's steadfast determination to fight terror. Both of us understand what it means to have our fellow citizens destroyed by the merciless killing of terrorists. Both of us understand that we must stay on the offensive against terrorists and bring them to justice before they hurt innocent people.

Over lunch, we'll discuss other issues of importance. I'm really looking forward to going to Turkey later on this year. It's going to be an important meeting. Every one of my friends who has traveled to your country has come back with great stories of warm hospitality and magnificent sights.

So I'm proud to welcome our friend to the Oval Office.

Prime Minister Erdogan. First of all, I would like to thank you very much. It, indeed, made us very happy to learn that after listing PKK and KADEK in the list of terrorist organizations, the United States has decided to list KONGRA-GEL among terrorist organizations. We were very happy for that. We thank you.

It's very obvious where Turkey stands in the fight against terrorism—that needs to be mutual and international, especially in the aftermath of what happened on September 11th. We are in a common effort to fight terrorism, and we share the same views regarding our strategic partnership in restructuring Iraq.

I also share the same views in—in developing Middle East. And we spoke of the fact that we support the good will mission of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, and we are willing to restart the negotiations, taking Annan's plan as a reference point.

I state once again that the Turkish side is determined for a solution. We will always be a step ahead of our Greek counterparts, and we're determined to solve this as soon as possible.

I thank you for your invitation, for your——

The President. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:05 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, Prime Minister Erdogan referred to Secretary-General Kofi Annan of the United Nations. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Message to the Congress Reporting a Certification Required by the Ratification Resolution of the Chemical Weapons Convention
January 28, 2004

To the Congress of the United States:

Consistent with the resolution of advice and consent to ratification of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling, and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, adopted by the Senate of the United States on April 24, 1997, I hereby certify pursuant to Condition 7(C)(i), Effectiveness of the Australia Group, that:

- Australia Group members continue to maintain equally effective or more comprehensive controls over the export of: toxic chemicals and their precursors; dual-use processing equipment; human, animal, and plant pathogens and toxins with potential biological weapons applications; and dual-use biological equipment, as that afforded by the Australia Group as of April 25, 1997; and
- The Australia Group remains a viable mechanism for limiting the spread of chemical and biological weapons-related materials and technology, and the effectiveness of the Australia Group has not been undermined by changes in membership, lack of compliance with common export controls and nonproliferation measures, or the weakening of common controls and nonproliferation measures, in force as of April 25, 1997.

The factors underlying this certification are described in the enclosed statement of justification.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,

January 28, 2004.

Message to the Congress on the United States Air Force Operating Location Near Groom Lake, Nevada
January 28, 2004

To the Congress of the United States:

Consistent with section 6001(a) of the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) (the "Act"), as amended, 42 U.S.C. 6961(a), notification is hereby given that on September 16, 2003, I issued Presidential Determination 2003–39 (copy enclosed) and thereby exercised the authority to grant certain exemptions under section 6001(a) of the Act.

Presidential Determination 2003–39 exempted the United States Air Force's operating location near Groom Lake, Nevada, from any Federal, State, interstate, or local hazardous or solid waste laws that might require the disclosure of classified information concerning that operating location to unauthorized persons. Information concerning activities at the operating location near Groom Lake has been properly determined to be classified, and its disclosure would be harmful to national security. Continued protection of this information is, therefore, in the paramount interest of the United States.

The determination was not intended to imply that, in the absence of a Presidential exemption, RCRA or any other provision of law permits or requires the disclosure of classified information to unauthorized

persons. The determination also was not intended to limit the applicability or enforcement of any requirement of law applicable to the Air Force's operating location near Groom Lake except those provisions, if any, that might require the disclosure of classified information.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
January 28, 2004.

Remarks in a Discussion on the National Economy in Merrimack, New Hampshire
January 29, 2004

The President. Thank you, Dale. Appreciate it. Thank you all. Be seated, please. It's nice to be back. I understand there's been some activity in the State of New Hampshire recently. [*Laughter*] I appreciate your hospitality. It's great to be back at Fidelity. It's good to see Mr. Johnson, Ned Johnson, who is the founder of this fantastic company. And Abby, the president—Abby Johnson. There is nothing wrong with a child following in the father's footsteps. [*Laughter*]

It is really good to be back here again. I really appreciate you coming. We're going to have an interesting discussion today about the economy. And before we get to there, I do want to say something about some of the elected officials that have joined us, starting with your two United States Senators. My buddy Judd Gregg does a fabulous job for the people of New Hampshire, and I'm really proud he's here. Thank you, Judd. And so is Sununu—John Sununu is doing a fine job as well.

I am proud that Jeb Bradley, the Congressman from this district, traveled with me today. I appreciate Jeb's leadership and his friendship in the Congress. Thank you, Jeb. And of course, there's Charlie Bass, who is the other Congressman from this great State—good friend, fine Congressman. I appreciate you coming, Charlie.

I know we got State officials here. The attorney general is here; the leader of the senate is here; the speaker of the house is here. I appreciate Bernie Streeter, the mayor of Nashua, being here. It's good to see you again, Bernie. I want to thank a lot of my buddies who are on the Executive Council for the great State of New Hampshire. It's good to see Ruthie Griffin and Ray and Dave Wheeler. I appreciate you all coming. I'm honored that you're here.

Most of all, I want to thank you all for giving us a chance to talk about the economy. Before we do so, though, I do want to point out a citizen named Dan Hebert who is with us. Dan is a USA Freedom Corps volunteer. Two years ago, I started what's called the USA Freedom Corps. It was started to give people a chance to serve their communities. There's a lot of volunteering going on in this State, and you just witnessed an accolade for one.

But so we in Washington started this web site for people to be able to tap into kind of modern technology to find out what was available in your area, if you wanted to follow your heart and serve your community. And Dan is one such person. He is a—he's using his 25 years in business to help youngsters understand the basics of the economy. In other words, he's mentoring a child.

We talk about the great strengths of our country—oftentimes, people think about the military might of America. And by the way, it is a great strength, and we're going to keep it that way. They talk about the wealth of the country. But the truth of

the matter is, the strength of our country is the heart and soul of our citizens, people who are willing to volunteer time to serve in a cause greater than themselves, which is to help somebody who hurts or to lend a talent to help somebody achieve the American Dream.

And I appreciate all of you who are volunteering. I love it when I hear a company like Fidelity is at 3,500 man-hours of volunteer time. It speaks to the—it speaks to the charitable nature of the executives of this company, and it speaks to the great hearts of the employees.

Dan, I want to thank you for coming as well. I appreciate you coming out to the airport. I appreciate you setting an example. And if the people of New Hampshire are interested in serving your State, love your neighbor just like you'd like to be loved yourself. Volunteer of your time to help somebody who hurts, and New Hampshire will be a better place when you do so.

We're here to talk about this economy. I want to remind you what our economy has been through. See, I'm really optimistic about the future. I think after you hear this discussion, I think you'll be optimistic—at least, if you pay attention to what you hear. [*Laughter*] But I'm optimistic because I know what we've been through, and I want you to think about what we've been through.

First, we had a recession in America. The stock market started to decline in March of 2000. It was kind of a leading indicator of what was to come. And then the country went into a recession. The first three quarters of '01 were negative growth. When you have negative growth, it means people are not working. And times were tough. The people of New Hampshire know what I'm talking about. When that recession came, it was awfully hard for some people to be able to do their duty as a mom and a dad to put food on the table, because their work wasn't steady. And they were worried about employment, if they were working at all.

And then things started to get pretty good; we started coming out of it. And then the enemy hit us. And make no mistake about it, that affected America. It affected our economy in a big way. It also affected our psychology. There was a day when we thought oceans could protect us from an enemy, that we were okay if there was a threat overseas because oceans served as protection for America. September the 11th changed that forever. It changed that point of view, and the war affected us.

As an aside, I do want to thank the people of New Hampshire for understanding the stakes, that the world has changed, that in order to make America secure, we must stay on the offensive against those who would do us harm. And to that end, you've sent brave souls from the New Hampshire National Guard into harm's way. And I want to thank the moms and dads and husbands and wives of those troops who are making a great sacrifice for the country.

I particularly want to pay tribute to Sergeant Randy Rosenberg of Berlin, New Hampshire, who paid the ultimate price for our security and freedom. Our prayers go to his loved ones, and we thank him for his service. I want his loved ones to know and the people of New Hampshire know that a free and peaceful Iraq is in this Nation's interests. A free and peaceful Iraq in the heart of the Middle East is in our Nation's long-term security interests. It will mean our children can grow up in a more secure and peaceful world.

I also want you to know strongly that I believe that freedom is not America's gift to the world; freedom is the Almighty's gift to each person in this world. And where we see suffering and tyranny and starvation and brutalization, this Nation will act. We'll act for our own security; we'll act for the freedom of others. We've made some tough choices recently. But all these choices were aimed for one thing, to make America more

secure, the world more free, and the world more peaceful.

And then when we got going after the attacks, we had some corporate scandals in America which affected the economy. It affected the economy because when CEOs act incredibly irresponsibly like they were, it creates doubt. In a system that requires trust, there was doubt. And we acted, though. We didn't sit around trying to figure out what to do. We passed tough laws to hold corporate criminals to account. The message is very clear now to people in corporate America: If you've got the responsibility to shareholders and employees, we expect you to tell the truth; we expect you to be above-board; we expect you to be honest; and if not, there will be consequences.

And then, finally, we began a march to war for our security, and it's hard to be optimistic during a period when you're marching to war. March to war is not a positive thought. Now we're marching to peace. Now times have changed. We're beyond that period. We'll debate about the decision, and I look forward to those discussions with the American people. I'm absolutely convinced it was the right thing to do, and I look forward to explaining it clearly to the American people.

But now we're secure in the peace. And we move—we've been through a lot, if you think about it, in 3 years. It's a lot for an economy to go through and a nation to go through. But this is a strong nation because we're entrepreneurial, we believe in our people. It's a strong nation, really, because the American people are strong, tough, resilient, compassionate people.

Congress acted too—I had a little hand in it. [*Laughter*] It said, "If we've got a slow economy, if we've got a lot of things we overcome, let us let people keep more of their own money." We believe that when people have more money to spend, to save, or invest, the economy will grow and people are more likely to find work. The tax relief we passed was essential to get the economy going. It's essential to let people have money.

It's working. It's working. The economy is growing. People are finding work. There's an excitement in our economy. And the tax relief we passed made sense then; it makes sense now; and Congress needs to make this tax relief permanent. We need to make sure that people—[*applause*].

Yesterday I gave a talk about how to continue economic vitality. One of them is to help—controlling costs of health care. There's ways to do that without nationalizing health care. I'm absolutely convinced, if the Federal Government tries to run the health care system, it will foul it up: People will get lousy care; the doctor-patient relationship will be destroyed; and the cost of medicine will go up. I believe in allowing small businesses to pool risk across association health plans in order to control costs. I believe in expanding health savings accounts for Americans, which will create cost savings in the system. I believe we need medical liability reform all across America to get rid of the junk lawsuits that raise the cost of medicine.

Our housing market is strong. We intend to keep it that way. There's a homeownership gap in America, by the way, that we need to address. There's a minority homeownership gap. I want to thank the Congress for working with us to pass what we call a downpayment plan to help the poor—the poor make a downpayment on a home. We're simplifying the fine print, the rules in Washington.

Listen, if you're a first-time homebuyer and you take a look at one of these mortgage application forms, you pass out over the amount of small words in the thing. [*Laughter*] It makes you nervous. So we're simplifying it. We're helping people understand what it means to buy a home. We're making good progress when it comes to closing the minority homeownership gap. Homeownership is high in America today, and that's good for the country. The more

people own something, the more they have a stake in the future of this country.

You can tell I'm upbeat, and I've got reason to be. And I've got reason to be. Not only the numbers say things are looking pretty good; the American people are telling me they feel pretty good. The American people feel confident about the future.

I'm here with Louise Hickey. She's a Fidelity employee, been here 5 years. She is—she saved $1,100 on tax relief last year. Now, that may not sound like a lot to some of the people who are rolling in cash—[*laughter*]—that's a lot. It made a difference.

Welcome.

[*Louise Hickey, senior executive secretary, human resources/payroll department, Fidelity Investments, made brief remarks.*]

Ms. Hickey. My future is with Fidelity, I hope. I hope to retire from Fidelity.

The President. It is now. [*Laughter*]

Ms. Hickey. Well, the only thing that would keep me from that would be an offer from the White House that I couldn't refuse. [*Laughter*]

The President. I don't know; I'm not so sure. [*Laughter*]

[*Ms. Hickey made further remarks.*]

The President. Louise talked about the marriage penalty relief. It doesn't make any sense to tax marriage. I mean, you're trying to encourage marriage in America, not discourage it. And the Tax Code ought to do so.

By the way, part of the tax relief we passed, of course, was to raise the child credit from $600 to $1,000 a child. It means if you've got young kids, it helps. We're about to talk to somebody, Steve Marshall, who has got young kids. It helps a lot.

I want to remind you about another aspect of the tax relief. We're reduced taxes on everybody, as opposed to trying to pick or choose winners in the political debate. Everybody got tax relief. It had a significant impact not only on individuals' lives—that is, rate reduction did—but it also affected small businesses.

A lot of small businesses are what they call sole proprietorships or Subchapter S corps. They pay tax at the individual tax rate level. And by reducing all taxes, we benefited the small-business sector of America. And that's very important, for this reason: 70 percent of new jobs in America are created by small businesses. And if you're interested in job creation, it seems to make sense to stimulate growth in the small-business sector, which is precisely what we did.

We're going to hear from some small-business owners in a minute. But I just wanted to remind you about some of those aspects of the Tax Code—by the way, all of which are set to expire. In order to get the bill out of the Congress, they said, "Fine, we'll give you tax relief, but we're going to take it away pretty soon." So when you hear me talk about making it permanent, the reason I have to say that is that the law isn't permanent.

And you're about to hear the story of a fellow who's got three young kids. Steve Marshall works at Fidelity, been here since '96. Steve, I appreciate you coming. Tell us about your family. Tell us about the tax savings, about $2,200. By the way—and that's per year. It's not just a year. This is permanent, so long as it's in existence. And one of the things we're going to keep talking to Congress about—I don't have any problem with these Congressmen and Senators but—[*laughter*]—is to make it permanent.

Steve, welcome.

[*Steve Marshall, manager, Fidelity Investments, Nashua, NH, made brief remarks.*]

The President. One of the things that he mentioned, he said, he spent the money to renew his—to remodel his house. Well, somebody had to come and remodel the house. Somebody had to buy the equipment. The way this economy works is,

when you put money in circulation, you increase demand for goods and services, and that's important when times are slow. So Steve goes out and demands an additional good and a service. He demanded the service of somebody remodeling his house. The good was the toilet or whatever he put in the bathroom. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Marshall. Toilet and shower. It's beautiful.

The President. Shower, yes, the shower. [*Laughter*] I'd suggest a toilet as well. [*Laughter*] But any rate, it puts money in circulation. That's how the economy works. So when you hear people say, "Tax relief didn't affect the economy," think about Steve and the fact that he had additional money that not only could he set aside for savings, but he had additional money to go spend. And it's that spending on the margin that got things moving throughout the economy, because there's millions of decisions being made daily with people who have got extra money.

The other thing you've got to know is that if the tax relief isn't made permanent, just next year alone he will have a $1,000 tax increase. In other words, the child credit goes away in 2005. That means the benefits of the tax relief start getting sucked out of the economy at the exact wrong time. We need to keep this money in the hands of the people of America.

Listen, Government has got plenty of money, and it needs to stay focused and principled. We need to be wise with the taxpayers' money. But it turns out, when you're trying to keep your economy going, the best way to do so is not through Government spending, but it's through the spending of thousands of individuals across our economic spectrum.

And this is exactly why I've asked Steve to come today, so he can help explain how you increase demand and what it means for a family's security. He's got three young kids. He's now got a little extra money in his pocket to save or to spend, and all of a sudden, life looks better. He's more optimistic, and that's important for this Nation, for people to feel that way.

So thanks for coming. Your baby is beautiful, by the way. I see her back there.

Amy Meaney is with us. Amy is an employee of Fidelity as well. She's ready to go.

[*Amy Meaney, health, welfare, and payroll benefits associate, Fidelity Investments, Goffstown, NH, made brief remarks.*]

Ms. Meaney. And I do have a question for you on behalf of New England. We need to know, are you rooting for the Pats this weekend? [*Laughter*]

The President. Did you notice who was in the box with Mrs. Bush at the State of the Union? Tom Brady.

Let me change the subject here. [*Laughter*] See, if you're a young family—[*laughter*]—no kidding, think about this. [*Laughter*] Think about a young family worried about their future, worried about jobs, worried about the economy, worried about what we've been through, and all of a sudden, there's $2,000 additional a year to spend. It makes a huge difference. It makes a huge difference.

Sometimes in Washington we forget the effects of policy on people, the positive effects. And this $2,000 means a lot to the Meaney family. By the way, if Congress doesn't act to make the child credit permanent, they lose $715. It's like a tax increase. When you're coming out of economic slow times, you don't want to tax people. It will slow this economy down. We're making progress. The third quarter growth of last year was the highest in nearly 20 years. Things are positive.

And Congress has got to know that when they say, "Oh, we must let the tax cuts expire," it affects the Meaneys. It affects them to the tune of $715 per year. And with two little kids, that matters.

I appreciate you coming. Quit putting me on the spot. [*Laughter*]

So we've got employees of Fidelity here, citizens who are trying to get ahead. And

I appreciate you sharing the stories. We've also got some entrepreneurs, some business owners, some dreamers, some people who are willing to take risk in order to produce good product or good services and, at the same time, employ people.

Michael Barrett is with us. He's the CEO of AeroSat Corporation. Michael, how long you been in business? Give us a little feel for what you're doing. Let her go. [*Laughter*]

Michael Barrett. Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you for having us here. AeroSat Corporation was inspired by your father in 1991. At that time——

The President. I'll tell him. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Barrett. Thank you.

[*Mr. Barrett made brief remarks.*]

The President. The role of Government is not to create wealth; it is to create an environment in which people like Michael feel free and comfortable about taking risk. Listen, we can't make Michael have good ideas. We can't make him develop a good business plan. We can't make people be good business people, but we can say, "If you're willing to invest, here's some more money. Here's some incentive to do so."

He invests $1.4 million. That means he's buying equipment from somebody. Somebody has to manufacture it. Somebody is now working to manufacture that product. There is more vibrancy in the economy. Just like when an individual makes a decision to purchase something, when a business does, the same thing happens; the effect throughout the economy is so positive and so strong. He said, "You know, well, we hired 11 people last year." That doesn't sound like a lot to some of these mega-corporations. It's a lot to a small business, and it's a lot to America, when you think about the number of Michaels there are all over the country hiring an additional 11 people on an annual basis.

Most new jobs in America are created by people like Michael, small-business owners, 70 percent of the new jobs. And therefore, any good policy says, we must recognize the worth of the small businesses, provide incentive for small businesses, and when we do so, make those incentives permanent.

So I appreciate you, Michael, for coming.

Are you ready, Gerardine? We've got Gerardine Ferlins is with us. Gerardine is the president of Cirtronics. Gerardine is running a big company, and we're honored you're here. Thanks for coming. We look forward to hearing your story.

[*Gerardine Ferlins made brief remarks.*]

The President. I appreciate it. I knew our generation would amount to something. [*Laughter*] Listen, one of the things that really is so wonderful about our country is the entrepreneurial spirit. You've just—you've heard it. You've heard people talk about the joy of creating job opportunities for fellow citizens and the joy of beating all odds and succeeding and then the recognition of the responsibility that comes with success. And I appreciate that a lot. It's really a good example for people to see.

By the way, if there's any young women here in New Hampshire wondering whether or not they can go into the business world, just take a look at Gerardine. Realize what is absolutely possible if you've got a good idea and the heart to work hard and the ability to dream big——

Ms. Ferlins. We're 65 percent women. That's the good and bad news for the men in the organization. [*Laughter*]

The President. All right, big Joe. Joe Landers is with us. He's the president and CEO of Customized Structures, Inc. He's in the housing industry, not a bad place to be these days, I suspect. Tell us about your company. Tell us about whatever you want to tell us. You've got the floor.

[*Joseph Landers made brief remarks.*]

Mr. Landers. If I might add, just as a side note, I don't know if you're aware of it, but your father's compound in

Kennebunkport actually has a modular home on it that was put there for the Secret Service when he was President.

The President. Oh, yes, that's good. [*Laughter*] Well, I'll tell him to buy a new one here—[*laughter*]—from you. [*Laughter*]

Listen, I started off by telling everybody I felt optimistic about the future of this country. And they've made my case. I hope—if you listen to the stories of what's happening in America, you get this sense of optimism and the can-do spirit and the willingness of people to invest and save, because they're confident about this country. And I am too. And I'll tell you, I'm going to repeat one reason why: I love the people of this country. I love the spirit of America. I love the entrepreneurial spirit, the spirit of love, the deep compassion, the love of family. The values of this country are strong, which makes America strong, which makes me grateful to be the President of the greatest country on the face of the Earth.

Thank you all for coming, and God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:37 p.m. at Fidelity Investments. In his remarks, he referred to Dale Gilpin, vice president and general manager, Merrimack Regional Site, Fidelity Investments; Edward C. "Ned" Johnson 3d, chairman and chief executive officer, Fidelity Investments; Abigail Johnson, president, Fidelity Management and Research Co.; Bernie Streeter, mayor, Nashua, NH: Ruth L. Griffin, Raymond J. Wieczorek, and David K. Wheeler, members, New Hampshire Executive Council; and Tom Brady, quarterback, New England Patriots.

Exchange With Reporters in Merrimack
January 29, 2004

Swan Chocolates

Q. Mr. President——

The President. Now what was that look for?

Q. I'm wondering what you think of John Kerry, sir?

The President. You're supposed to be thinking about what it means to start your own business, like these people here have done.

Q. Mr. President, what about consternation over weapons of mass destruction?

[*At this point, the President continued his tour of the chocolate shop.*]

The President. Here are the owners, right here. They started their business last year. Had a dream, living their dream, and they're making good product. And I expect people in the national press corps to leave some cash behind. [*Laughter*]

That would be you, Allen [Mike Allen, Washington Post]. Go buy some—[*laughter*]—they'll help you, right over there. [*Laughter*]

NOTE: The exchange began at approximately 3:45 p.m. at Swan Chocolates. In his remarks, the President referred to Michael and Theresa Anderson, owners, Swan Chocolates. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Remarks at a Bush-Cheney Reception in Old Greenwich, Connecticut
January 29, 2004

Thank you all for coming. Thanks for coming. This is a huge crowd. I'm honored. I appreciate so many people being here tonight. I appreciate Debbie mentioning Yale. Some of my classmates from the mighty class of 1968 are here. They were the ones who invented shock and awe when they heard I was President. [*Laughter*] They're all fine lads. They themselves were C students. [*Laughter*] Vice President Cheney went to Yale. It just goes to show if you drop out, you can be the Vice President. [*Laughter*]

But I appreciate you coming. We're laying the foundation for what is going to be a great national victory in November of this year. I'm loosening up. [*Laughter*] And I'm getting ready. [*Laughter*] But politics is going to come in its own time. See, I've still got a job to do, and I want you to tell your friends and neighbors that my administration will continue to work hard to earn the confidence of every American by keeping this Nation strong and secure, prosperous and free.

I want to thank my cousin Debbie for finally doing something positive. [*Laughter*] No, I want to thank her. I love Debbie, and I want to thank her for her leadership for this event. She married my great friend Craig, the former Ambassador to the Czech Republic, who represented our Nation so well.

I'm not Debbie's favorite in my family. [*Laughter*] Laura is her favorite. [*Laughter*] And Laura was her first choice. [*Laughter*] She couldn't make it, but she sends her love. She's a fabulous First Lady for this country.

I want to thank Rick as well for your hard work, thank your team. You've done a fabulous job. It's important that you be well-funded if you're going to run a national campaign, so I want to thank you for your help. I also want to thank my friend Mercer Reynolds. He's from Cincinnati, Ohio. He is the national chairman for the Bush-Cheney campaign, and he's doing a fabulous job on my behalf. Thank you for coming, Mercer. I appreciate you being here.

I want to thank your fine Congressman, Chris Shays, for his friendship and leadership. Somebody told me the funniest thing, that somebody is actually challenging Shays in this year. We need to send him back to Congress. He's doing a great job.

I want to thank you, Lieutenant Governor, for being here tonight, and all the State and local officials. I appreciate you coming. I'm counting on you. You need to organize and turn out that vote. And I appreciate your service to your State, and I appreciate what you're fixing to do for this campaign.

I want to thank—Debbie mentioned that we have some family in this neck of the woods. I remember coming to Grove Lane here in Greenwich to visit my grandfather and grandmother, two really fine, fine people. If you can't count on your family, it's hard to count on anybody in politics, so I'm really happy that some of my family has showed up tonight. [*Laughter*] I appreciate Uncle Jon and Uncle Pres—that's Jon Bush and Prescott Bush—and Jody and Beth. I'm honored that they're here and proud to be a member of their family with them.

I want to thank the political activists who are here, Herb Shepardson and Charlie Glazer and Jo McKenzie. Thank you all for coming. I want to thank all the grassroots activists. These are the people who put up the signs, get on the phones, turn out the vote. These are the people who go to the community centers, places of worship, coffee shops, and you put out the word. I'm counting on you. You cannot win

a campaign without a good grassroots organization. So for those of you getting ready to get after this campaign, I want to thank you.

And when you're out there, you tell them this: You tell them, in the last 3 years our Nation has acted decisively to confront great challenges. I came to this office to solve problems, not to pass them on to future Presidents and future generations. I came to seize opportunities instead of letting them slip away. My administration is meeting the tests of our time.

Terrorists declared war on the United States of America, and war is what they got. We have captured or killed many key leaders of the Al Qaida network. And the rest of them know—and the rest of them can be certain we're on their trail.

In Afghanistan and Iraq, we gave ultimatums to terror regimes. Those regimes chose defiance, and those regimes are no more. Fifty million people—50 million—in those 2 countries once lived under tyranny, and today they live in freedom.

Three years ago, our military was not receiving the resources it needed, and morale was beginning to suffer, so we increased the defense budgets to prepare for the threats of a new era. And today, no one in the world can question the skill and the strength and the spirit of the United States military.

Three years ago, the economy was in trouble, and a recession was beginning. And then attacks on our country and scandals in corporate America and war all affected the people's confidence. But we acted. We passed tough new laws to hold corporate criminals to account. And to get the economy going again, I have twice led the United States Congress to pass historic tax relief for the American people.

This administration understands that when Americans have more money to spend or save or invest, the whole economy grows, and people are more likely to find a job. So we're returning more money to the people to help them raise their families. We're reducing taxes on dividends and capital gains to encourage investment. We've given small businesses incentives to expand and to hire new workers. With all these actions, we're laying the foundation for greater prosperity so that every single citizen has a chance to realize the American Dream.

This economy in America is strong, and it is getting stronger. The figures for third quarter of 2003 showed that the economy grew at the fastest rate in nearly 20 years. Productivity is high. Business investment is rising. Housing construction is expanding. Manufacturing activity is increasing. We've added over a quarter million new jobs. The tax relief we passed is working.

Three years ago, there was a lot of talk about education reform in Washington, but there wasn't much action. So I acted. I called for and the Congress passed the No Child Left Behind Act. With a solid bipartisan majority, we delivered the most dramatic education reforms in a generation. We've increased funding, particularly for poor students. But for the first time, the Federal Government is asking the question, "Can our children read and write and add and subtract?" This administration is challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations. We're raising the bar. We expect every child to read and write and add and subtract, and we expect every school to teach every child. The days of excusemaking are over in America. No child shall be left behind in this country.

We reorganized our Government and created the Department of Homeland Security to better protect our borders and ports and to safeguard the American people. We passed trade promotion authority to open up new markets for America's entrepreneurs and farmers and ranchers. We passed budget agreements to bring much-needed spending discipline to Washington, DC.

And last month, we completed the greatest advance in health care coverage for America's senior citizens since the founding

of Medicare. There's a lot of talk about Medicare in Washington over the years. The system got old and tired and stale. So we acted. The new Medicare law that I proudly signed will give older Americans the option of a prescription drug benefit and more control over their health care, so they can receive the modern medicine they deserve.

We've got a record of accomplishment. On issue after issue, this administration has acted on principle, has kept its word, and has made progress for the American people. And the Congress gets a lot of credit. I enjoy working with Congressman Shays and the Speaker of the House, Denny Hastert, Majority Leader Bill Frist. We're working hard to change the tone in Washington—there's just too much politics up there, too much needless politics, endless backbiting, zero-sum attitude—and the best way to do that is to work on behalf of the people and deliver results.

And the Congress gets a lot of credit for the successes over the last 3 years, and so do the people in my administration. I put together a fantastic group of Americans from all walks of life to serve the American people, people who came to Washington, DC, with one thing in mind, service to their country. Speaking about good people in my administration, our Nation has had no finer Vice President than Dick Cheney. Mother may have a second opinion. [*Laughter*]

In 3 years, we've come far, but our work is only beginning. I've set great goals worthy of a great nation. First, America is committed to expanding the realm of freedom and peace for our own security and for the benefit of the world. And second, in our own country, we will continue to work for a society which is prosperous and compassionate, so every citizen has a chance to realize the full promise of our land.

It is clear that the future of freedom and peace depend on the actions of America. This Nation is freedom's home and freedom's defender. We welcome this charge of history, and we are keeping it. The war on terror continues. I wish I could tell you it didn't, but it does. The enemies of freedom are not idle, and neither are we. This country will not rest; we will not tire; we will not stop until this danger to civilization is removed.

We are confronting that danger in Iraq, where all people can be certain they will never again have to fear the brutality of Saddam Hussein. The Ba'athist holdouts largely responsible for the current violence now know there will be no return to corrupt power and privilege they once held. All Iraqis who have taken the side of freedom have taken the winning side.

We face terrorists who would rather go on killing the innocent than accept the rise of liberty in the Middle East. And there is a reason why, because, see, they know that the advance of freedom in Iraq would be a major defeat in the cause of terror. The collection of killers is trying to shake the will of America. America will never be intimidated by thugs or assassins.

We're aggressively after the terrorists in Iraq, defeating them there so we do not have to face them in our own cities. Other nations are helping in Iraq, because they understand a free and democratic and peaceful Iraq is in their interests. The whole world becomes more secure. And the Iraqi people are assuming more of their own defense and heading towards self-government. And these are not easy tasks. I recognize that, but I believe they're essential tasks. We will finish what we have begun, and America will win this essential victory in the war on terror.

We're working to oppose proliferation around the world. Last month, after talks with the United States and Great Britain, Libya voluntarily committed to disclose and dismantle all of its weapons of mass destruction programs. Leaders around the world now know with certainty, weapons of mass destruction do not bring influence or prestige; they bring isolation and other unwelcome consequences. Nations who

abandon the pursuit of these weapons will find an open path to better relations with the United States of America.

Our greatest security comes from the advance of human liberty, because free nations don't support terror, free nations do not attack their neighbors, free nations do not threaten the world with weapons of mass destruction. And Americans believe that freedom is the deepest need and hope of every human heart. I believe that freedom is the future of every nation. And I know, like you know, that freedom is not America's gift to the world; freedom is the Almighty God's gift to every man and woman in this world.

My administration also understands that unprecedented influence brings tremendous responsibilities. We have duties in this world, and when we see disease and starvation or hopeless poverty, we will not turn away. This strong and powerful Nation is a compassionate nation. And America now leads the world in bringing hope and medicines to millions of men and women and children suffering from AIDS. This incredible Nation of ours is leading the world in this very important work of human rescue.

We have challenges here at home, and our actions will prove that we're equal to those challenges. This administration understands entrepreneurship. We understand the vital role of risktaking. We will continue to promote a progrowth economic agenda so fellow citizens can find work.

We also understand the effects of frivolous and junk lawsuits on our society. For example, in health care, we need to cut down on these frivolous lawsuits which are running up the cost of medicine. People who have been harmed by a bad doc deserve their day in court, yet the system should not reward lawyers who are simply fishing for a rich settlement. Frivolous lawsuits drive up the cost of health care for every citizen, and they affect the Federal budget. Medical liability reform is a national issue which requires a national solution.

This administration has acted. We passed good legislation up to the Hill, and it was passed by the United States House of Representatives, for which I am grateful. It's stuck in the Senate. Perhaps you ought to notify your two United States Senators to get it unstuck. For the sake of a health care system that is available and affordable, we need medical liability reform now. No one has ever been healed by a frivolous lawsuit.

I have a responsibility to make sure the judicial system runs well, and I've met that duty. I have nominated superb men and women for the Federal courts, people who will interpret the law, not legislate from the bench. Some Members of the Senate are trying to keep my nominees off the bench by blocking up-or-down votes. Every judicial nominee deserves a fair hearing. It is time for some Members of the United States Senate to stop playing politics with American justice.

We've got more work to do, and the Congress needs to get me an energy bill. We need a bill which encourages more conservation. We need a bill which unleashes the technology of our country to be advanced in how we explore and use energy. But for the sake of economic security and for the sake of national security, this Nation must become less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

A strong and prosperous nation must also be a compassionate nation. I will continue to advance what I call compassionate conservatism, which means we'll use the most innovative ideas to the task of helping our fellow citizens who hurt. There are still millions of men and women who want to end their dependence on Government and become independent through hard work. Congress must build on the success of welfare reform to bring training and, therefore, work into the lives of more of our fellow citizens. We need to make sure more Americans can serve their communities and

their country through vibrant citizen service programs. Congress needs to complete work on the Faith-Based Initiative.

You see, many of the problems that citizens face are problems of the heart, problems of addiction, problems that can't be solved necessarily by a Government program. And yet one of the great strengths of our country is the fact that we're a country of many faiths, Christian, Jewish, Muslim. And in many of those programs emanating out of those faiths come healing programs, programs that change people's lives. Our country should not fear faith-based programs. We ought to welcome faith-based programs, and Government ought to be their ally.

I believe part of being a compassionate society is one in which we encourage ownership. This administration will constantly strive to promote an ownership society in America. We want more people owning their own home. There's a minority homeownership gap in America that must be addressed. This administration is addressing it. We want more people owning and controlling their own retirement accounts. We want people owning and managing their own health care plans, like health savings accounts. We want more people owning their own small businesses, and the administration understands that. You see, we fully understand that when a person owns something, he or she has a vital stake in the future of this country.

A compassionate society is one in which people respect one another, respect their religious views, respect their opinions. It's a society in which people take responsibility for the decisions they make. The culture of this country is changing from one that has said, "If it feels good, just go ahead and do it," and, "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each of us understands we are responsible for the decisions we make in life. If you are lucky enough to be a mom or a dad, you are responsible for loving your child with all your heart. If you're worried about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you're responsible for doing something about it. If you are a CEO in corporate America, you're responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And in this new responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we would like to be loved ourselves.

The culture of service and responsibility is strong here in America. I really believe it's the great strength of our country. Two years ago, I started what's called the USA Freedom Corps to encourage people to love their neighbor, to do something to help somebody in need. And the response has been really strong, and I am grateful. Our faith-based programs and charities all across America are vibrant—integral part of our society. Policemen and firefighters and people who wear our Nation's uniform are reminding us what it means to sacrifice for something greater than ourself. Once again, the children of America believe in heroes because they see them every day.

In these challenging times, the world has seen the resolve and courage of America. I've been privileged to see the compassion and the character of the American people. All the tests of the last 3 years have come to the right nation. We're a strong country, and we use that strength to defend the peace. We're an optimistic country, confident in ourselves and in ideals bigger than ourselves. Abroad, we seek to lift up whole nations by spreading freedom. At home, we seek to lift up lives by spreading opportunity to every corner of America. This is the history—this is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it and know that for our country, the best days lie ahead.

God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:10 p.m. at the Hyatt Regency Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Debbie Stapleton, master of ceremonies and second cousin of the President,

and her husband, Craig; Rick Lazio, chief executive officer, Financial Services Forum; Lt. Gov. M. Jodi Rell of Connecticut; his relatives Jonathan J. Bush and his wife, Jody, and Prescott Bush, Jr., and his wife, Beth; and Hebert J. Shepardson, State chairman, Charles L. Glazer, national committeeman, and Jo McKenzie, national committeewoman, Connecticut State Central Committee, Republican Party.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Economists and an Exchange With Reporters

January 30, 2004

The President. Thank you all for coming. I just had a very interesting discussion with some of our Nation's finest economists about the state of our economy and how we can work together to make sure that the economy continues to grow. Today we received news that indicates that the economy is strong and getting stronger. Fourth quarter growth in 2003 was at 4 percent.

We also discussed ways for Congress to make sure we sustain growth. We need to make sure the tax cuts are permanent. If Congress doesn't make the tax cuts permanent, they will have raised taxes on the working people of this country at the exact wrong time. We need to make sure we continue to be a nation which trades freely. We need to make sure that we have less regulation. We need to do things that are wise to control the cost of medicine without nationalizing health care.

We had a really good discussion. I want to thank you all for coming. These economists are optimistic about our future, and so am I. And the American people can know that we continue to work hard to make sure this economy is vibrant and robust and strong so our fellow citizens can find good jobs.

I'll be glad to answer a couple of questions. Scott [Scott Lindlaw, Associated Press], have you got one today, perhaps?

Iraqi Weapons of Mass Destruction

Q. Yes, sir, I do. Thanks, Mr. President. Senator McCain, David Kay, among many others, say it's time for an independent investigation into weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and intelligence. Why resist this kind of inquiry now, when your own weapons inspector says it's needed?

The President. I want the American people to know that I too want to know the facts. I want to be able to compare what the Iraqi Survey Group has found with what we thought prior to going into Iraq.

One thing is for certain, one thing we do know from Mr. Kay's testimony as well as from the years of intelligence that we had gathered, is that Saddam Hussein was a danger. He was a growing danger. And given the circumstances of September the 11th, this country went to the United Nations and said, "Saddam Hussein is a danger. Let us work together to get him to disarm." He was defiant. He ignored the request of the international community, and this country led a coalition to remove him. We dealt with the danger, and as a result, the world is a better place and a more peaceful place, and the Iraqi people are free. And a free Iraq is in this Nation's national interest. A free Iraq will bring a much-needed change in a part of the world that has fostered terror.

Caren [Caren Bohan, Reuters].

Q. Are you dead set against it?

The President. Caren.

Q. Ruling it out?

The President. I want to know the facts. Caren.

Q. Are you against the idea of a new——

The President. Is this a followup to Scott's question?

Q. Yes.

The President. Let me repeat, I just—let me repeat what I just said.

Q. Okay.

The President. I want to know the facts. And I want to know exactly—I want to compare what the ISG finds with what we thought going in.

Keil [Richard Keil, Bloomberg News].

Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement, and Modernization Act of 2003

Q. Mr. President, are you concerned at all that the new ballooning cost of Medicare bill will get you in trouble, political trouble, with members of your own party who voted for it only on the assurance that it wouldn't go above $400 billion?

The President. Well, I, 2 weeks ago, received an estimate about Medicare. I asked two questions to the estimators. One, does the Medicare reform do what we want it to do still, which is to provide modern medicine for our seniors and to introduce competition, which will eventually hold down costs of Medicare. And secondly, the new estimate of Medicare costs fulfilled my promise to reduce the deficit in half over a 5-year period of time.

And the budget we'll submit on Monday does fulfill that promise, that we'll reduce the deficit in half. Now, it's going to require Congress to be wise with the taxpayers' money. The Medicare reform we did is a good reform, fulfills a long-standing promise to our seniors. Congress is now going to have to work with us to make sure that we set priorities and are fiscally wise with the taxpayers' money. I'm confident they can do that if they're willing to make tough choices. And so the budget we submit will show that we can cut the deficit in half over a 5-year period.

NOTE: The exchange began at 11:34 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to David Kay, former CIA Special Advisor for Strategy Regarding Iraqi Weapons of Mass Destruction Programs, and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Remarks Following Discussions With Secretary General Jakob Gijsbert "Jaap" de Hoop Scheffer of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization *January 30, 2004*

President Bush. Mr. Secretary General, welcome. We are proud that you're here. The Secretary General and I have had a good discussion about NATO, my administration's commitment to a strong and vibrant NATO, our mutual desire to make the world more peaceful through freedom. I appreciate your willingness to discuss important theaters like Afghanistan and Iraq, the need for us to make sure our militaries are transformed and modern. I know that we will have a good working relationship, and I know you'll do a great job on behalf of all of us who treasure the NATO—the NATO Alliance.

So welcome, sir.

Secretary General de Hoop Scheffer. Thank you very much. Thank you very much, Mr. President. Also, from my side, may I say that I entirely share your opinion, as we discussed in our conversation. But NATO is about values. NATO is defending values which might be normal for us, but our—in other parts of the world, less normal.

And that's why we are in Afghanistan fighting terrorism. And NATO is going to

take a larger role in Afghanistan. That's what we discussed. We have, of course, touched upon Iraq, the political developments in Iraq, the upcoming 1st of May for the transfer of sovereignty in Iraq, and a possible greater NATO role after that. We discussed the Balkans. We have discussed NATO-Russian relationship.

In other words, the full range of subjects NATO is dealing with, defending these values as an organization which is undergoing a fundamental transformation process, taking in, in a short time, new member states, seven new member states—it's a matter of weeks—transforming into an organization which can defend those values wherever there is a necessity in the world—be it in the Balkans, where NATO has been very successful be it in Afghanistan; be it in Iraq, where NATO is now supporting the Polish-led multinational division and where NATO might take on a greater role when the sovereign Iraqi Government would ask NATO to do that.

So I very much enjoyed, Mr. President, my conversation with you. And I'm sure that with your support, with the support of the United States, and all the other NATO Alliance, we are going to make this a success.

Thank you so much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

The President's Radio Address
January 31, 2004

Good morning. This coming week, my administration will release our proposed budget for fiscal year 2005. In that detailed blueprint for Government spending, Americans will see my priorities clearly at work. We will devote the resources necessary to win the war on terror and protect our homeland. We'll provide compassionate help to seniors, to schoolchildren, and to Americans in need of job training. And we will be responsible with the people's money by cutting the deficit in half over 5 years.

With troops currently on the ground fighting our enemies, my budget increases defense spending by 7 percent, money that will go the pay for equipment, ammunition, and troop housing. We'll keep our military strong and ready for every challenge that may come. Since I took office, we have increased pay for our men and women in uniform by 21 percent. Next year, I propose raising their pay by another 3.5 percent. Our troops put their lives on the line to defend America, and we owe them our best in return.

Given the continued terrorist threat against the American people, my budget nearly triples homeland security spending over 2001 levels, including an increase of nearly 10 percent next year, to $30.5 billion. This money will help tighten security at our borders, airports, and seaports, and improve our defenses against biological attack. I'm proposing to raise the budget for the FBI by 11 percent, including a $357 million increase in spending on counterterrorism activities. America will not let its guard down in our war on terror.

My budget also focuses on our priorities at home. This year, we'll begin moving towards prescription drug coverage under Medicare by providing drug discount cards to seniors. We'll also help lower-income seniors this year and next with up to $600 in direct assistance for drug costs.

We're devoting additional resources to our schools to help them meet the higher

expectations set by the No Child Left Behind Act. My budget calls for a 49-percent increase over 2001 spending on our public schools. There will be additional money for early reading programs for schools in low-income areas and for enhanced Pell grant scholarships for students who complete a rigorous curriculum.

My budget also asks Congress to fund my Jobs for the 21st Century Initiative, which will help young people and adults gain the skills they need to fill the new jobs in our changing economy. This initiative will help high school students who are falling behind in reading and math by supporting better teaching methods. And with the support of Congress, we will provide new funding to America's fine community colleges to help them teach the skills our changing economy demands.

We're meeting these priorities within a responsible budget. Under my plan, overall discretionary spending will grow at less than 4 percent. And non-security-related spending would rise less than 1 percent, the smallest such proposed increase in 12 years. By exercising spending discipline in Washington, DC, we will reduce the deficit and meet our most basic priorities.

To assure that Congress observes spending discipline, now and in the future, I propose making spending limits the law. This simple step would mean that every additional dollar the Congress wants to spend in excess of spending limits must be matched by a dollar in spending cuts elsewhere. Budget limits must mean something and not just serve as vague guidelines to be routinely violated. This single change in the procedures of the Congress would bring further spending restraint to Washington.

Americans expect Government to meet its most basic responsibilities, protecting citizens from harm and promoting prosperity and compassion at home. Americans also expect our Government to live within spending limits. My 2005 budget is designed to meet both of these goals, using tax dollars wisely and by focusing resources where they are most needed.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 10:13 a.m. on January 30 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on January 31. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 30 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks to the 2004 Congress of Tomorrow Luncheon in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

January 31, 2004

Thanks for coming. I thought I would give the State of the Union again. [*Laughter*] Actually, I'll spare you. I do want to thank the leadership for the House and the Senate, first and foremost, for being such good friends and great Americans. Speaker Denny Hastert is doing a fabulous job on behalf of the American people, and I want to thank Majority Leader Bill Frist for doing a fabulous job as well. I appreciate your leadership. The country is better off by having these two good souls leading the Congress.

I want to thank McConnell, Santorum, and Kyl, DeLay, Blunt, and Deborah Pryce as well for sitting up here with me and for your leadership. I appreciate it very much. I'm proud to work with you.

I want to thank my friend Dennis Miller, who is here. I'm honored that he is here.

He's a solid American who—[*applause*]. And of course, like you, I was most impressed by the vocalist this morning, Tim Kelly. Thank you, Tim.

I know that a member of my Cabinet is here. Is that an accurate statement? Where's Elaine? Elaine, thanks. You're doing a great job. I appreciate so much your service. Your service is great. Your choice of husbands is somewhat questionable. [*Laughter*] That's not right—I mean, what the heck. [*Laughter*] I really appreciate what you've done.

I want the people—as you travel around the country, please remind people that one of the jobs of the President is to find really good folks to serve our Government, people from all walks of life, honorable, decent people who have put country ahead of self-interest. And I have done just that. And Elaine is an example of the really quality people that are serving our country in my Cabinet, and I want to thank you for being here.

And finally, I want to thank Jerry Clymer for hosting this event and making sure it runs well.

I think one of the things I was thinking about what to tell you here, when I was flying in from Washington, was that we're serving in historic times. And first I want to thank you for your service during these historic times. It's not easy to serve in the Congress or the Senate. It's a tough life when you come and you work hard and you represent your constituencies, and then you fly home. I see Thomas of California or Heather of New Mexico, some people who are traveling a long way to serve the country. And so the first thing I want to tell you is, I'm proud of your service and appreciate your willingness to serve our country. And I also want to thank your spouses as well; I want to thank your family members.

When you swear in, you never know what's going to happen, and you better be ready to respond. And this Congress, in working with this administration, can say, "We have responded to the challenges of our time. We have met the tests."

As we look back on the last 3 years, we've gone to war to uphold the most solemn duty of Government, and that is to protect its people. We have dealt with national emergency. We not only responded to the emergency; we all worked together to help heal the psyche of the country that had been damaged.

We dealt with recession. The economy was negative in growth for the first three quarters of 2001, yet we responded. Instead of trying—sitting around committee rooms or White House conference tables trying to figure out what to do, we figured it out. And we acted quickly, and we responded. Instead of the economy still languishing as a result of some incredible problems we face, it's now growing, and it's getting stronger.

We had some people that didn't tell the truth in America, these corporate CEOs that forgot what it meant to be a responsible citizen, and we responded. The Congress and the White House worked together to pass meaningful legislation that sends clear signals to our fellow citizens: Regardless of their party or where they live, we expect people who are running corporations in America to tell the truth. We responded.

What I'm telling you is, history has dealt us a hand, and we're playing it well for the American people. And I want to thank you for that, very much.

These are historic times, because we're at war. You're a war Congress. And this upcoming year we will continue to make sure our troops have what it takes to fight and win the war against terror—and not only make sure we fight and win the war against terror but to make sure we continue to promote our values of freedom and, therefore, peace in parts of the world where people long for freedom and peace, where people are desperate for freedom.

See, what we believe is that freedom is not America's gift to the world; freedom

is the Almighty God's gift to each person who lives in this world. And America—no question, we will win the war on terror by staying on the offensive. This administration and this leadership is committed to making sure that we stay on the offensive against the terrorists. And we will be.

But as well, we've got to make sure we continue to protect the homeland. And I want to thank the Members of Congress for working to implement a plan that is now being executed to better protect the homeland, to take lessons learned and to look at flawed systems and coordinate better, so we can tell the American people as best as we possibly can, "We're working together to make sure the homeland is secure." I want to thank you for your understanding of that solemn obligation and for your willing to work to make sure the homeland security programs are funded and implemented.

At home, we've got to make sure that the economy keeps growing. And one of the things we've shown the American people is we understand how the economy works. The economy doesn't work by growing Government. The economy works by growing people's wallets so they can spend, save, or invest. The tax cuts we passed are working. I look forward to taking the case to the American people and explain as clearly as I possibly can: This Congress heard the needs of the people looking for jobs; it responded; the tax cuts are working; and now we need to make them permanent.

There's a lot on—there's a lot involved with making sure the economy continues to grow, and that's cost containment of health care, controlling the costs of health care to citizens and small businesses and large businesses. And we've got to continue to make sure we're a trading nation and open up markets for our entrepreneurs—less regulation. There's a lot of things we can do together to keep the economy growing. But one clear signal we need to send to the American people and the markets is, we're going to be wise when it comes to the expenditure of the people's money.

And we submitted a budget that says just that, and we look forward to working with you on it. You spend. I propose. Together, we're responsible. And this is going to be a challenging year for making sure we spend the people's money wisely, and I sent up an initiative to do just that. It cuts the deficit—the plan cuts the deficit in half over the next 5 years. And we look forward to working with you to make sure we meet that important goal, so that we can say to the American people, "We've set priorities. We understand whose money we spend, and we're going to cut this deficit in half through wise policy."

And finally at home, it's important for us to kind of play to the strength of the country, to remember the true strength of America. It's not our military—and by the way, we'll keep the military strong—and it's not the size of our wallets, although we want to make sure our wallets all across the country are healthy. The strength of the country is the hearts and souls of the American people. That's where we find our true strength. See, we understand the proper relationship between Government and the people. It's the people's Government we represent.

And as well, we shouldn't be afraid to empower those organizations that are serving our fellow citizens in an incredibly important and efficient way. They're serving because of love, first and foremost. They're following their hearts to mentor a child or to feed the hungry or to help the addicted. Congress understands—I know the leadership does, and I know you do as well—the true strength of America is the American people. We must listen to them. We will trust their judgments, and we must empower them to love their neighbors just like they'd like to be loved themselves.

Oh, '04 is going to be an unusual year for us all. It's an election year, and the people are probably saying, "Well, they're going to play politics with our time." That's

not my attitude, and I know it's not the leadership's attitude. Working together, like we have done over 3 years, working together to accomplish important things for the people, we can show the cynics and the critics that we're capable of doing the people's business, election year or not.

And I look forward to working with you. I appreciate your friendship. I'm proud to be serving with such a fine group of people during historic times. And there's no doubt in my mind, we're making a significant difference for this country's security, prosperity, and freedom.

God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:25 a.m. at the Loews Philadelphia Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Senators Mitch McConnell, Rick Santorum, and Jon Kyl; Representatives Tom DeLay, Bill Blunt, Deborah Pryce, William M. Thomas, and Heather Wilson; comedian Dennis Miller; and 10-year-old Timmy Kelly, who sang the national anthem.

Statement on Representative Jennifer Dunn's Decision Not To Seek Reelection

January 31, 2004

Jennifer Dunn is a good friend and an outstanding public servant. For more than a decade, she has delivered results for the people of Washington State. She has championed sound policies that encourage economic growth and create jobs. She has led the way in providing tax relief for the American people; promoting the advancement of small and women-owned businesses; helping America's children, including by sponsoring the Amber Alert bill; and protecting the environment. She is a superb legislator and a strong leader who has stood for the best of Washington State's values and who has improved the lives of its people.

Laura and I are grateful for Jennifer's friendship, and we extend our best wishes to her, her husband, Keith, and her two sons.

Remarks Following a Cabinet Meeting and an Exchange With Reporters

February 2, 2004

The President. I want to thank the members of my Cabinet for their service to our country. I'm proud of the team I've put together to serve our citizens. These are good, honorable people who have come to Washington, DC, to put the Nation's interests above their self-interest.

We had a good discussion today about our Nation's priorities. Secretary Powell briefed us on the alliances—the strong alliances we have around the world, a deep desire to continue to work with nations to bring freedom and peace around the world. The Secretary of Defense briefed us on the progress we're making in Afghanistan and in Iraq. Appreciate the briefing I got from Tom Ridge about homeland security efforts. And we've got a lot of really fine people in the country who are working overtime, long hours, to protect the American people, and they're doing a really fine job.

And finally, Josh Bolten gave us a briefing on our budget. This administration is putting together—has put together a budget and will be submitting it to Congress, which sets clear priorities: winning the war on terror, protecting our homeland, making sure our children get educated, making sure the seniors get a modern Medicare system. And at the same time, we're calling upon Congress to be wise with the taxpayers' money. We look forward to working with them to bring fiscal discipline to the appropriations process so we can cut the deficit in half over a 5-year period of time.

Again, I'm proud of the Cabinet—appreciate your work.

I'll be glad to take a couple of questions. Terry [Terence Hunt, Associated Press], you might have a question.

Weapons of Mass Destruction

Q. Yes, Mr. President. I'd like to ask you about this intelligence investigation that you're going to order. Do you think that the country is owed an explanation about the Iraq intelligence failures before the election, so that voters have this information when they elect a new President?

The President. Well, the—first of all, I want to know all the facts. We do know that Saddam Hussein had the intent and the capabilities to cause great harm. We know he was a danger, and he was not only a danger to people in the free world; he was a danger to his own people. He slaughtered thousands of people, imprisoned people.

What we don't know yet is what we thought and what the Iraqi Survey Group has found, and we want to look at that. But we also want to look at our war against proliferation and weapons of mass destruction kind of in a broader context. And so I'm putting together an independent, bipartisan commission to analyze where we stand, what we can do better as we fight this war against terror.

Before I move forward with the commission, I want to sit down with Mr. Kay. I appreciate his service. I've invited him to come down to the White House. I'll be doing so soon. I do want to get a briefing from him.

Steve [Steve Holland, Reuters].

Fiscal Year 2005 Budget

Q. Sir, do you worry that your budget passes along problems to future generations? You often say you don't want to do that.

The President. No, I'm confident our budget addresses a very serious situation, and that is that we are at war, and we are dealing—had dealt with a recession. And our budget is able to address those significant factors in a way that reduces the deficit in half. We propose; the Congress disposes. And so we look forward to working with the appropriators to meet our priorities and to reduce the deficit in half. We're confident we can do so.

The reason we are where we are, in terms of the deficit, is because we went through a recession, we were attacked, and we're fighting a war. And these are high hurdles for a budget and for a country to overcome, and yet we've overcome them, because we've got a great country full of decent people. And the economy is getting better. And as the economy gets better, it enables us to send up a budget to the Congress that does cut the deficit in half.

Super Bowl XXXVIII

Q. What part of the Super Bowl did you like the best? The halftime or the ending? [*Laughter*]

The President. I don't want to admit it, but because this White House starts early, I missed it—again. Saw the first half; did not see the halftime. I was preparing for the day and fell asleep, but don't tell anybody. [*Laughter*]

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:55 a.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to David Kay,

former CIA Special Advisor for Strategy Regarding Iraqi Weapons of Mass Destruction Programs; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks on Signing the American Heart Month Proclamation
February 2, 2004

The President. Thanks for the warm welcome. Thanks for the kind introduction. [*Laughter*] I don't know why you reminded them about the pretzel. [*Laughter*] I am so pleased you all are here. I want to thank Members of the United States Senate who came today, starting with Majority Leader Bill Frist, and Karyn. We're honored you are here. Thanks for coming. Thad Cochran, Susan Collins, and Byron Dorgan, you all are really kind to join us here. It's really important for the Congress to be involved with this initiative, as well as the White House.

I appreciate my friend Elias Zerhouni. He's doing a fabulous job at the National Institute of Health. You really have taken on a tough assignment, and you've done it with such class. Thank you for your service.

I want to thank all the survivors of heart disease who are here. I asked the Vice President what he was up to. [*Laughter*]

The First Lady. What did he say?

The President. He said he was heading to the treadmill. [*Laughter*] I want to thank everybody who is—who shares in this important cause. I really appreciate Laura for helping to lead The Heart Truth, the campaign to educate women about heart disease. I'm really proud of you.

By spreading vital information, this campaign will save women's lives. Heart disease is the leading cause of death for women—and men—so it's important that we send this heart truth message to all our citizens, to all Americans.

It's also important for people to know that the risk of heart disease can be greatly reduced with good diet and regular exercise. Whatever our age or physical condition or however busy we may be, we can all do something to stay healthy, and that's important.

The miracles of modern medicine we now enjoy make us forget some wisdom from the past, such as, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. It made sense then, and it makes sense today, particularly when you're dealing with heart disease. And so we started what's called the HealthierUS Initiative, which is encouraging Americans to focus on four simple goals: Exercise daily, eat right, avoid tobacco, drugs, and excessive alcohol, and get preventive screenings to detect problems early.

By focusing on these commonsense steps, we can save many lives we lose each year to preventable conditions like heart disease. In other words, just do some wise things with your life. It's just not all that complicated, but it's up to you to make the right choice. It's up to our fellow citizens to make the right decision necessary to protect their bodies.

I want to thank all of you all for working so hard to help citizens make the right choice, to send a clear message, to help people understand the need for healthier lives in America.

And now it's my honor to welcome the heart disease survivors to join Laura and me as I sign the proclamation of American Heart Month, 2004.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:59 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his

remarks, he referred to Karyn Frist, wife of Senator Bill Frist. The proclamation is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Homeland Security Presidential Directive/HSPD–9—Defense of United States Agriculture and Food
January 30, 2004

Subject: Defense of United States Agriculture and Food

Purpose

(1) This directive establishes a national policy to defend the agriculture and food system against terrorist attacks, major disasters, and other emergencies.

Background

(2) The United States agriculture and food systems are vulnerable to disease, pest, or poisonous agents that occur naturally, are unintentionally introduced, or are intentionally delivered by acts of terrorism. America's agriculture and food system is an extensive, open, interconnected, diverse, and complex structure providing potential targets for terrorist attacks. We should provide the best protection possible against a successful attack on the United States agriculture and food system, which could have catastrophic health and economic effects.

Definitions

(3) In this directive:

(a) The term "critical infrastructure" has the meaning given to that term in section 1016(e) of the USA PATRIOT Act of 2001 (42 U.S.C. 5195c(e)).

(b) The term "key resources" has the meaning given that term in section 2(9) of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (6 U.S.C. 101(9)).

(c) The term "Federal departments and agencies" means those executive departments enumerated in 5 U.S.C. 101, and the Department of Homeland Security; independent establishments as defined by 5 U.S.C. 104(1); Government corporations as defined by 5 U.S.C. 103(1); and the United States Postal Service.

(d) The terms "State," and "local government," when used in a geographical sense, have the same meanings given to those terms in section 2 of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (6 U.S.C. 101).

(e) The term "Sector-Specific Agency" means a Federal department or agency responsible for infrastructure protection activities in a designated critical infrastructure sector or key resources category.

Policy

(4) It is the policy of the United States to protect the agriculture and food system from terrorist attacks, major disasters, and other emergencies by:

(a) identifying and prioritizing sector-critical infrastructure and key resources for establishing protection requirements;

(b) developing awareness and early warning capabilities to recognize threats;

(c) mitigating vulnerabilities at critical production and processing nodes;

(d) enhancing screening procedures for domestic and imported products; and

(e) enhancing response and recovery procedures.

(5) In implementing this directive, Federal departments and agencies will ensure

that homeland security programs do not diminish the overall economic security of the United States.

Roles and Responsibilities

(6) As established in Homeland Security Presidential Directive–7 (HSPD–7), the Secretary of Homeland Security is responsible for coordinating the overall national effort to enhance the protection of the critical infrastructure and key resources of the United States. The Secretary of Homeland Security shall serve as the principal Federal official to lead, integrate, and coordinate implementation of efforts among Federal departments and agencies, State and local governments, and the private sector to protect critical infrastructure and key resources. This directive shall be implemented in a manner consistent with HSPD–7.

(7) The Secretaries of Agriculture, Health and Human Services, and the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency will perform their responsibilities as Sector-Specific Agencies as delineated in HSPD–7.

Awareness and Warning

(8) The Secretaries of the Interior, Agriculture, Health and Human Services, the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, and the heads of other appropriate Federal departments and agencies shall build upon and expand current monitoring and surveillance programs to:

(a) develop robust, comprehensive, and fully coordinated surveillance and monitoring systems, including international information, for animal disease, plant disease, wildlife disease, food, public health, and water quality that provides early detection and awareness of disease, pest, or poisonous agents;

(b) develop systems that, as appropriate, track specific animals and plants, as well as specific commodities and food; and

(c) develop nationwide laboratory networks for food, veterinary, plant health, and water quality that integrate existing Federal and State laboratory resources, are interconnected, and utilize standardized diagnostic protocols and procedures.

(9) The Attorney General, the Secretary of Homeland Security, and the Director of Central Intelligence, in coordination with the Secretaries of Agriculture, Health and Human Services, and the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, shall develop and enhance intelligence operations and analysis capabilities focusing on the agriculture, food, and water sectors. These intelligence capabilities will include collection and analysis of information concerning threats, delivery systems, and methods that could be directed against these sectors.

(10) The Secretary of Homeland Security shall coordinate with the Secretaries of Agriculture, Health and Human Services, and the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, and the heads of other appropriate Federal departments and agencies to create a new biological threat awareness capacity that will enhance detection and characterization of an attack. This new capacity will build upon the improved and upgraded surveillance systems described in paragraph 8 and integrate and analyze domestic and international surveillance and monitoring data collected from human health, animal health, plant health, food, and water quality systems. The Secretary of Homeland Security will submit a report to me through the Homeland Security Council within 90 days of the date of this directive on specific options for establishing this capability, including recommendations for its organizational location and structure.

Vulnerability Assessments

(11) The Secretaries of Agriculture, Health and Human Services, and Homeland Security shall expand and continue vulnerability assessments of the agriculture

and food sectors. These vulnerability assessments should identify requirements of the National Infrastructure Protection Plan developed by the Secretary of Homeland Security, as appropriate, and shall be updated every 2 years.

Mitigation Strategies

(12) The Secretary of Homeland Security and the Attorney General, working with the Secretaries of Agriculture, Health and Human Services, the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, the Director of Central Intelligence, and the heads of other appropriate Federal departments and agencies shall prioritize, develop, and implement, as appropriate, mitigation strategies to protect vulnerable critical nodes of production or processing from the introduction of diseases, pests, or poisonous agents.

(13) The Secretaries of Agriculture, Health and Human Services, and Homeland Security shall build on existing efforts to expand development of common screening and inspection procedures for agriculture and food items entering the United States and to maximize effective domestic inspection activities for food items within the United States.

Response Planning and Recovery

(14) The Secretary of Homeland Security, in coordination with the Secretaries of Agriculture, Health and Human Services, the Attorney General, and the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, will ensure that the combined Federal, State, and local response capabilities are adequate to respond quickly and effectively to a terrorist attack, major disease outbreak, or other disaster affecting the national agriculture or food infrastructure. These activities will be integrated with other national homeland security preparedness activities developed under HSPD–8 on National Preparedness.

(15) The Secretary of Homeland Security, in coordination with the Secretaries of Agriculture, Health and Human Services, the Attorney General, and the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, shall develop a coordinated agriculture and food-specific standardized response plan that will be integrated into the National Response Plan. This plan will ensure a coordinated response to an agriculture or food incident and will delineate the appropriate roles of Federal, State, local, and private sector partners, and will address risk communication for the general public.

(16) The Secretaries of Agriculture and Health and Human Services, in coordination with the Secretary of Homeland Security and the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, shall enhance recovery systems that are able to stabilize agriculture production, the food supply, and the economy, rapidly remove and effectively dispose of contaminated agriculture and food products or infected plants and animals, and decontaminate premises.

(17) The Secretary of Agriculture shall study and make recommendations to the Homeland Security Council, within 120 days of the date of this directive, for the use of existing, and the creation of new, financial risk management tools encouraging self-protection for agriculture and food enterprises vulnerable to losses due to terrorism.

18) The Secretary of Agriculture, in coordination with the Secretary of Homeland Security, and in consultation with the Secretary of Health and Human Services and the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, shall work with State and local governments and the private sector to develop:

(a) A National Veterinary Stockpile (NVS) containing sufficient amounts of animal vaccine, antiviral, or therapeutic products to appropriately respond to

the most damaging animal diseases affecting human health and the economy and that will be capable of deployment within 24 hours of an outbreak. The NVS shall leverage where appropriate the mechanisms and infrastructure that have been developed for the management, storage, and distribution of the Strategic National Stockpile.

(b) A National Plant Disease Recovery System (NPDRS) capable of responding to a high-consequence plant disease with pest control measures and the use of resistant seed varieties within a single growing season to sustain a reasonable level of production for economically important crops. The NPDRS will utilize the genetic resources contained in the U.S. National Plant Germplasm System, as well as the scientific capabilities of the Federal-State-industry agricultural research and extension system. The NPDRS shall include emergency planning for the use of resistant seed varieties and pesticide control measures to prevent, slow, or stop the spread of a high-consequence plant disease, such as wheat smut or soybean rust.

Outreach and Professional Development

(19) The Secretary of Homeland Security, in coordination with the Secretaries of Agriculture, Health and Human Services, and the heads of other appropriate Federal departments and agencies, shall work with appropriate private sector entities to establish an effective information sharing and analysis mechanism for agriculture and food.

(20) The Secretaries of Agriculture and Health and Human Services, in consultation with the Secretaries of Homeland Security and Education, shall support the development of and promote higher education programs for the protection of animal, plant, and public health. To the extent permitted by law and subject to availability of funds, the program will provide capacity building grants to colleges and schools of veterinary medicine, public health, and agriculture that design higher education training programs for veterinarians in exotic animal diseases, epidemiology, and public health as well as new programs in plant diagnosis and treatment.

(21) The Secretaries of Agriculture and Health and Human Services, in consultation with the Secretaries of Homeland Security and Education, shall support the development of and promote a higher education program to address protection of the food supply. To the extent permitted by law and subject to the availability of funds, the program will provide capacity-building grants to universities for interdisciplinary degree programs that combine training in food sciences, agriculture sciences, medicine, veterinary medicine, epidemiology, microbiology, chemistry, engineering, and mathematics (statistical modeling) to prepare food defense professionals.

(22) The Secretaries of Agriculture, Health and Human Services, and Homeland Security shall establish opportunities for professional development and specialized training in agriculture and food protection, such as internships, fellowships, and other post-graduate opportunities that provide for homeland security professional workforce needs.

Research and Development

(23) The Secretaries of Homeland Security, Agriculture, and Health and Human Services, the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, and the heads of other appropriate Federal departments and agencies, in consultation with the Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy, will accelerate and expand development of current and new countermeasures against the intentional introduction or natural occurrence of catastrophic animal, plant, and zoonotic diseases. The Secretary of Homeland Security will coordinate these activities. This effort will include

countermeasure research and development of new methods for detection, prevention technologies, agent characterization, and dose response relationships for high-consequence agents in the food and the water supply.

(24) The Secretaries of Agriculture and Homeland Security will develop a plan to provide safe, secure, and state-of-the-art agriculture biocontainment laboratories that research and develop diagnostic capabilities for foreign animal and zoonotic diseases.

(25) The Secretary of Homeland Security, in consultation with the Secretaries of Agriculture and Health and Human Services, shall establish university-based centers of excellence in agriculture and food security.

Budget

(26) For all future budgets, the Secretaries of Agriculture, Health and Human Services, and Homeland Security shall submit to the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, concurrent with their budget submissions, an integrated budget plan for defense of the United States food system.

Implementation

(27) Nothing in this directive alters, or impedes the ability to carry out, the authorities of the Federal departments and agencies to perform their responsibilities under law and consistent with applicable legal authorities and Presidential guidance.

(28) This directive is intended only to improve the internal management of the executive branch of the Federal Government, and it is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity, against the United States, its departments, agencies, or other entities, its officers or employees, or any other person.

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: This directive was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 3.

Remarks Following Discussions With Secretary-General Kofi Annan of the United Nations
February 3, 2004

President Bush. It's my honor to welcome the Secretary-General here to the Oval Office. We've just had a really constructive dialog about a lot of issues. And the world is changing for the better, and the United Nations is playing a vital role in that change. And we talked about Iraq and Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, the Middle East, the continent of Africa. And I'll let the Secretary-General speak for himself, but I'm upbeat and optimistic about the future of the world.

We've got a lot of work to do in certain areas and, obviously, a lot of focus right now on Iraq. And I have always said that the United Nations needs to play a vital role, and it's an important role. And we have discussed ways to make sure that by working together, the Iraqi people can be free and their country stable and prosperous and an example of democracy in the Middle East. And the United Nations does have a vital role there, and I look forward to working with the Secretary-General to achieve that.

Secretary-General Annan. Thank you very much, Mr. President. As you heard the President say, we've had a very good and lengthy meeting on a whole host of issues. We realize that last year we were all taken up with war, the question of war and peace in Iraq. But we have many other

issues to work on together, the President and I have agreed, other areas which are important that we will be working on.

On Iraq, I believe that the stability of Iraq is in everyone's interest. The U.N. does have a role to play, and that's why, following the meeting of 19 January, I have decided to send in a team, a team that will go in to try and work with the Iraqis in finding the way forward. Everyone agrees that sovereignty should be handed over to Iraq as soon as possible. The date of 30 June has been suggested, but there is some disagreement as to the mechanism for establishing the provisional government. And I hope this team I'm sending in will be able to play a role getting the Iraqis to understand that if they could come to some consensus and some agreement on how to establish that government, they're halfway there.

We are going to go there to help the Iraqis, to help them establish a government that is Iraqi, a government that will work with them to assure their future, in terms of political and economic destiny. And the team will talk to as many Iraqis as possible and help them steer things in the right direction. The CPA—that is the coalition led by Mr. Bremer—and the Iraqi Governing Council, when they met me in New York, indicated that they would accept the conclusions of the U.N. team, so we do have a chance to help break the impasse which exists at the moment and move forward.

On other issues, as the President indicated, we are going to work very closely together. We've had some successes, and there are very positive developments around the world, which we are also going to try and build on and consolidate.

So thank you very much, Mr. President.

President Bush. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:56 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, Secretary-General Annan referred to L. Paul "Jerry" Bremer III, Presidential Envoy to Iraq. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks at the "Churchill and the Great Republic" Exhibit
February 4, 2004

Thank you all very much. I'm honored to join you as we welcome a magnificent collection to the Library of Congress. I've always been a great admirer of Sir Winston Churchill, admirer of his career, admirer of his strength, admirer of his character—so much so that I keep a stern-looking bust of Sir Winston in the Oval Office. He watches my every move. [*Laughter*]

Like few other men in this or any other age, Churchill is admired throughout the world. And through the writings and his personal effects, we feel the presence of the great man, himself. As people tour this exhibit, I'm sure they'll be able to smell the whiskey and the cigars. [*Laughter*]

I appreciate Jim Billington for hosting this exhibit and for hosting me. It's good to see Marjorie. I appreciate the members of Winston Churchill's family who have come: Lady Mary Soames, the daughter; Winston Churchill III—the man bears a mighty name—and his wife, Luce; Celia Sandys, who is a granddaughter. Thank you all for coming. We're honored to have you here in America.

I'm pleased to see my friend the Ambassador from the United Kingdom to America, Sir David Manning, and Lady Manning here as well. I appreciate the Members of Congress who have come—the chairman. We've got a couple of mighty

powerful people here, Winston, with us today: Chairmen Lugar and Warner, Senator Bennett, Congressmen Bill Young, Doug Bereuter, Jerry Lewis, Tom Petri, Vern Ehlers, and Jane Harman. I'm glad you all are here. Thanks for taking time to come.

This exhibit bears witness to one of the most varied and consequential lives of modern history. Churchill's 90 years on Earth joined together two ages. He stood in the presence of Queen Victoria, who first reigned in 1837. He was the Prime Minister to Elizabeth II, who reigns today. Sir Winston met Theodore Roosevelt, and he met Richard Nixon.

Over his long career, Winston Churchill knew success and he knew failure, but he never passed unnoticed. He was a prisoner in the Boer War, a controversial strategist in the Great War. He was the rallying voice of the Second World War and a prophet of the cold war. He helped abolish the sweatshops. He gave coal miners an 8-hour day. He was an early advocate of the tank, and he helped draw boundary lines that remain on the map of the Middle East. He was an extraordinary man.

In spare moments, pacing and dictating to harried secretaries, he produced 15 books. He said, "History will be kind to me—for I intend to write it." [*Laughter*] History has been kind to Winston Churchill, as it usually is to those who help save the world.

In a decade of political exile during the 1930s, Churchill was dismissed as a nuisance and a crank. When the crisis he predicted arrived, nearly everyone knew that only one man could rescue Britain. The same trait that had made him an outcast eventually made him the leader of his country. Churchill possessed, in one writer's words, an "absolute refusal, unlike many good and prudent men around him, to compromise or to surrender."

In the years that followed, as a great enemy was defeated, a great partnership was formed. President Franklin Roosevelt found in Churchill a confidence and resolve that equaled his own. As they led the Allies to victory, they passed many days in each other's company and grew in respect and friendship. The President once wrote to the Prime Minister, "It is fun to be in the same decade with you." And this sense of fellowship and common purpose between our two nations continues to this day. I have also been privileged to know a fine British leader, a man of conscience and unshakable determination. In his determination to do the right thing and not the easy thing, I see the spirit of Churchill in Prime Minister Tony Blair.

When World War II ended, Winston Churchill immediately understood that the victory was incomplete. Half of Europe was occupied by an aggressive empire. And one of Churchill's own finest hours came after the war ended in a speech he delivered in Fulton, Missouri. Churchill warned of the new danger facing free peoples. In stark but measured tones, he spoke of the need for free nations to unite against communist expansion. Marshal Stalin denounced the speech as a "call to war." A prominent American journalist called the speech an "almost catastrophic blunder." In fact, Churchill had set a simple truth before the world, that tyranny could not be ignored or appeased without great risk. And he boldly asserted that freedom—freedom was the right of men and women on both sides of the Iron Curtain.

Churchill understood that the cold war was not just a standoff of armies but a conflict of visions, a clear divide between those who put their faith in ideologies of power and those who put their faith in the choices of free people. The successors of Churchill and Roosevelt, leaders like Truman and Reagan and Thatcher, led a confident Alliance that held firm as communism collapsed under the weight of its own contradictions.

Today, we are engaged in a different struggle. Instead of an armed empire, we face stateless networks. Instead of massed

armies, we face deadly technologies that must be kept out of the hands of terrorists and outlaw regimes.

Yet in some ways, our current struggles or challenges are similar to those Churchill knew. The outcome of the war on terror depends on our ability to see danger and to answer it with strength and purpose. One by one, we are finding and dealing with the terrorists, drawing tight what Winston Churchill called a "closing net of doom."

This war also is a conflict of visions. In their worship of power, their deep hatreds, their blindness to innocence, the terrorists are successors to the murderous ideologies of the 20th century. And we are the heirs of the tradition of liberty, defenders of the freedom, the conscience, and the dignity of every person. Others before us have shown bravery and moral clarity in this cause. The same is now asked of us, and we accept the responsibilities of history.

The tradition of liberty has advocates in every culture and in every religion. Our great challenge is to support the momentum of freedom in the greater Middle East. The stakes could not be higher. As long as that region is a place of tyranny and despair and anger, it will produce men and movements that threaten the safety of Americans and our friends. We seek the advance of democracy for the most practical of reasons, because democracies do not support terrorists or threaten the world with weapons of mass murder.

America is pursuing a forward strategy of freedom in the Middle East. We're challenging the enemies of reform, confronting the allies of terror, and expecting a higher standard from our friends. For too long, American policy looked away while men and women were oppressed, their rights ignored, and their hopes stifled. That era is over, and we can be confident. As in Germany and Japan and Eastern Europe, liberty will overcome oppression in the Middle East.

True democratic reform must come from within. And across the Middle East, reformers are pushing for change. From Morocco to Jordan to Qatar, we're seeing elections and new protections for women and the stirring of political pluralism.

When the leaders of reform ask for our help, America will give it. I've asked the Congress to double the budget for the National Endowment for Democracy, raising its annual total to $80 million. We will focus its new work on bringing free elections and free markets and free press and free speech and free labor unions to the Middle East. The National Endowment gave vital service in the cold war, and now we are renewing its mission of freedom in the war on terror.

Freedom of the press and the free flow of ideas are vital foundations of liberty. To cut through the hateful propaganda that fills the airwaves in the Muslim world and to promote open debate, we're broadcasting the message of tolerance and truth in Arabic and Persian to tens of millions. In some cities of the greater Middle East, our radio stations are rated number one amongst younger listeners. Next week, we will launch a new Middle East television network called Al Hurra, Arabic for "the free one." The network will broadcast news and movies and sports and entertainment and educational programming to millions of people across the region. Through all these efforts, we are telling the people in the Middle East the truth about the values and the policies of the United States, and the truth always serves the cause of freedom.

America is also taking the side of reformers who have begun to change the Middle East. We're providing loans and business advice to encourage a culture of entrepreneurship in the Middle East. We've established business internships for women to teach them the skills of enterprise and to help them achieve social and economic equality. We're supporting the work of judicial reformers who demand independent courts and the rule of law. At the request

of countries in the region, we're providing Arabic language textbooks to boys and girls. We're helping education reformers improve their school systems. The message to those who long for liberty and those who work for reform is that they can be certain they have a strong ally, a constant ally in the United States of America.

Our strategy and our resolve are being tested in two countries in particular. The nation of Afghanistan was once the primary training ground of Al Qaida, the home of a barbaric regime called the Taliban. It now has a new constitution that guarantees free election and full participation by women.

The nation of Iraq was for decades an ally of terror ruled by the cruelty and caprice of one man. Today, the people of Iraq are moving toward self-government. Our coalition is working with the Iraqi Governing Council to draft a basic law with a bill of rights. Because our coalition acted, terrorists lost a source of reward money for suicide bombings. Because we acted, nations of the Middle East no longer need to fear reckless aggression from a ruthless dictator who had the intent and capability to inflict great harm on his people and people around the world. Saddam Hussein now sits in a prison cell, and Iraqi men and women are no longer carried to torture chambers and rape rooms and dumped in mass graves. Because the Ba'athist regime is history, Iraq is no longer a grave and gathering threat to free nations. Iraq is a free nation.

Freedom still has enemies in Afghanistan and Iraq. All the Ba'athists and Taliban and terrorists know that if democracy were to be, it would undermine violence—their hope for violence and innocent death. They understand that if democracy were to be undermined, then the hopes for change throughout the Middle East would be set back. That's what they know. That's what they think.

We know that success of freedom in these nations would be a landmark event in the history of the Middle East and the history of the world. Across the region, people would see that freedom is the path to progress and national dignity. A thousand lies would stand refuted, falsehoods about the incompatibility of democrat values in Middle Eastern cultures. And all would see, in Afghanistan and Iraq, the success of free institutions at the heart of the greater Middle East.

Achieving this vision will be the work of many nations over time, requiring the same strength of will and confidence of purpose that propelled freedom to victory in the defining struggles of the last century. Today, we're at a point of testing, when people and nations show what they're made out of. America will never be intimidated by thugs and assassins. We will do what it takes. We will not leave until the job is done.

We will succeed because when given a choice, people everywhere, from all walks of life, from all religions, prefer freedom to violence and terror. We will succeed because human beings are not made by the Almighty God to live in tyranny. We will succeed because of who we are, because even when it is hard, Americans always do what is right.

And we know the work that has fallen to this generation. When great striving is required of us, we will always have an example in the man we honor today. Winston Churchill was a man of extraordinary personal gifts, yet his greatest strength was his unshakable confidence in the power and appeal of freedom. It was the great fortune of mankind that he was there in an hour of peril. And it remains the great duty of mankind to advance the cause of freedom in our time.

May God bless the memory of Winston Churchill. May God continue to bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:31 p.m. in the Northwest Gallery of the Thomas Jefferson Building at the Library of Congress. In his remarks, he referred to James H.

Billington, Librarian of Congress, and his wife, Marjorie Ann; Queen Elizabeth II and Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Statement on the Decision of the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court on Same-Sex Marriage
February 4, 2004

Today's ruling of the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court is deeply troubling. Marriage is a sacred institution between a man and a woman. If activist judges insist on redefining marriage by court order, the only alternative will be the constitutional process. We must do what is legally necessary to defend the sanctity of marriage.

Statement on Representative W.J. " Billy" Tauzin's Decision Not To Seek Reelection
February 4, 2004

Billy Tauzin has always been a friend to American consumers and seniors as chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee. He is a strong leader and a good friend, and we will miss his experience and sense of humor. Laura and I wish Billy and Cecile the best.

Remarks at the National Prayer Breakfast
February 5, 2004

Thank you and good morning. Laura and I are honored to join you once again for this annual prayer breakfast. This event brings us together for fellowship, and it's a good chance to see who gets up early in Washington. [*Laughter*]

I appreciate the warm welcome. I appreciate the friendship and the kindred spirit. All of us believe in the power of prayer. And for a lot of people here in Washington, a prayer has been answered with three words: Coach Joe Gibbs. [*Laughter*] Joe is admired for a great career, and even more, he is respected for his convictions and his character. Joe, we're glad to see you back on the job. I'm all in favor of second terms. [*Laughter*]

This event is also a chance to hear beautiful songs of praise. Shortly, we'll hear the wonderful voice of Twila Paris. And Laura and I were delighted once again to hear the Watoto chorus from Uganda. This is our third time to hear these beautiful voices. I hope to hear them a lot more. These boys and girls have known great sadness and loss, yet their voices carry a message of hope and joy. And we're so glad—so glad—they could be with us here this morning.

I appreciate being in the presence of John Abizaid, our general. He is a decent

and honorable man. I want to thank Senators Inhofe and Nelson for taking time out of their busy days to organize this important prayer breakfast. I appreciate your leadership. I appreciate being in the presence of—[*applause*]—a little slow to catch on there.

I see the majority leader, Frist, is here, and a lot of Members of the Senate, and a lot of Members of the House. Thank you all for coming, members of my Cabinet who are here, members of the Joint Chiefs I see, distinguished citizens.

When we come together every year, we leave aside the debates of the working day. We recognize our dependence on God and pray with one voice for His blessings on our country. We're in the Capital of the most powerful nation on Earth, yet we recognize the limits of all earthly power. God serves His own purposes and does not owe us an explanation. In prayer, we ask for wisdom and guidance, and the answers seldom come in blinding revelations. Yet prayer can bring good things, grace for the moment and faith in the future.

Americans are a prayerful people, and this past year we've offered many prayers. We have prayed for the safety of our Nation and for those who defend us. We've prayed for the families of men and women killed or wounded in conflict, that in grief and trouble, God may be their refuge and their strength. We've prayed for the people of Iraq and Afghanistan, that they may live in safety and in freedom. Many Americans have prayed every day and every week for those in authority, and I thank them for that wonderful gift, and I know you do as well.

Many prayers also express our gratitude, and Americans in a time of danger have found much to be grateful for. We are thankful for the goodness and character of our fellow citizens, revealed on the morning of September the 11th and present every day in the life of this country. We are thankful that we live in a free nation, with the strength to defend our freedom. We are thankful for the brave and decent men and women of the United States military who volunteer to defend us all.

America's Armed Forces have shown great skill in battle, perseverance under extremely difficult conditions. They've also shown the best of our country in other ways as well. The world has seen the kind of people America sends forth from our towns and neighborhoods to serve in freedom's cause. They are the sort of people who, when the fighting is done, are kind and compassionate toward innocent citizens. And their compassion, as much as their courage, has made this country proud.

As General Abizaid can attest, the people under our command in Iraq have been caring and generous toward the people they have liberated. Seeing great need, our service men and women have rebuilt hospitals, repaired schools, and organized the donation of books and clothing and toys for Iraqi children. Others have helped to build clinics and lay out soccer fields.

One member of the Army National Guard, Specialist Glenn Carlson, spent his time on leave in New York, collecting children's clothing to take back to Iraq. Here's what he says: "I think that in the end, it will be the simple acts of kindness that make the difference." Specialist Carlson and many others are helping to build a free Iraq, not only by using force against the violent but by extending the friendship and compassion of the American people.

Our people in uniform understand the high calling they have answered because they see the nation and the lives they are changing. A guardsman from Utah named Paul Holton has described seeing an Iraqi girl crying and decided then and there to help that child and others like her. By enlisting aid through the Internet, Chief Warrant Officer Holton had arranged the shipment of more than 1,600 aid packages from overseas. Here's how this man defines his own mission: "It is part of our heritage that the benefits of being free, enjoyed by

all Americans, were set up by God, intended for all people. Bondage is not of God, and it is not right that any man should be in bondage at any time, in any way." Everyone in this room can say amen to that.

There's another part of our heritage we are showing in Iraq, and that is the great American tradition of religious tolerance. The Iraqi people are mostly Muslims, and we respect the faith they practice. Our troops in Iraq have helped to refurbish mosques, have treated Muslim clerics with deference, and are mindful of Islam's holy days. Some of our troops are Muslims themselves, because America welcomes people of every faith. Christians and Jews and Muslims have too often been divided by old suspicions, but we are called to act as what we are, the sons and daughters of Abraham.

Our work in a troubled part of the world goes on, and what we have begun, we will finish. In the years of challenge, our country will remain strong and strong of heart. And as we meet whatever test might come, let us never be too proud to acknowledge our dependence on Providence and to take our cares to God.

I want to thank you for continuing this fine annual tradition and for your hospitality. May God bless you, and may He always watch over our country. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:50 a.m. at the Washington Hilton Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Joe Gibbs, head coach, Washington Redskins, National Football League; Gen. John P. Abizaid, USA, combatant commander, U.S. Central Command; and Senators James M. Inhofe and Bill Nelson, cochairmen, National Prayer Breakfast.

Remarks at the Port of Charleston, South Carolina
February 5, 2004

Thank you all very much. Thank you all. I am glad to be back in the great State of South Carolina. I appreciate you all coming out. I'm so honored to have been invited to one of America's great cities, Charleston, South Carolina.

This is one of the busiest container ports in our country. It's an important hub of commerce. And we will work to make sure that not only is the port strong for economic reasons; we will make sure that the port defends the people, is ready to defend against the threats of a new era, that this port is secure and safe for not only the people of South Carolina but for the people of the great United States of America.

I appreciate my friend Tom Ridge for becoming the first Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security. He's got a big job, and he's doing it well.

I want to thank Governor Mark Sanford for greeting me at the airport and for driving with me to the Port of Charleston. Mark is doing a great job for the people of South Carolina. I know that the Lieutenant Governor is with us today, Lieutenant Governor Andre Bauer. I appreciate you coming, Andre.

I flew down on Air Force One with some of the members of the mighty South Carolina congressional delegation, starting with Senator Lindsey Graham. He was telling me what to do during the entire flight. [*Laughter*] I appreciate so very much Congressman Jim DeMint, Congressman Joe Wilson, Congressman Gresham Barrett, and the Congressman from this district, Henry Brown, for joining us as well. These are good, honorable citizens. They're working hard in Washington, DC, on behalf of the people of South Carolina. I'm proud to call

them friend. I'm proud to work with them for the good of the country.

I appreciate the mayor, Joe Riley, being here today. Mr. Mayor, thank you for coming. You're the mayor of a great city. Last time I saw the mayor, he said, "Need I remind you that your mother was educated in this great city." [*Laughter*] No, you didn't need to remind me, Mr. Mayor. She reminds me all the time. [*Laughter*]

I appreciate my friend Speaker David Wilkins, who has joined us. All the members of the statehouse who are here, thanks for coming, State and local officials.

I want to thank the members of the—oh of course, my friend the Adjutant General, Stan Spears, is with us today. General, it's good to see you again. I appreciate Commander Gary Merrick, Captain Jim Tunstall of the mighty Coast Guard. I appreciate their service here, and I want to thank the members of the Coast Guard who are with us. I'm proud of the men and women of our Coast Guard, who are always ready—always ready to protect the American people.

I want to thank the members of the Air Force 437th Airlift Wing who are with us today. I appreciate the members of the United States Navy who are with us today. I thank the cadets from the Citadel who have joined us today.

I want to thank the employees of the Department of Homeland Security. Thank you for your work. Thank you for your dedication. Thank you for what you're doing to make this part of the world as safe and secure as you can.

I want to thank South Carolina's State and local first-responders who are with us, the police and the firefighters and the emergency squad personnel.

But most of all, thank you for coming. I've got some things I want to talk about. [*Laughter*] This country is a strong country, and we're rising to meet great challenges.

The first great challenge is to make sure people can find work. The first great challenge of this country is to have a progrowth environment so people can find a job. Our economy is growing. It's getting better, but I want to remind you of where we have come from. See, people say, "President Bush is optimistic." You bet I'm optimistic. I know where we have been, and I know where we're going.

We have—this country went through a recession. And as we were coming out of the recession, we got attacked. And make no mistake about it, that attack hurt our country's economy. It also—you'll hear me talk about how it affected my view of national security as well. It hurt.

And as we began to recover from that, we discovered that some of our fellow citizens forgot what it meant to be a responsible citizen. In other words, they didn't tell the truth. They didn't tell the truth to their employees, and they didn't tell the truth to their shareholders. And that affected the confidence of our economy. By the way, we passed laws to hold those corporate criminals to account. They will understand now that there is a consequence for not telling the truth.

And then, of course, there were the uncertainties of war. That affected the economy. Yet we're still strong, in spite of the hurdles. And one reason we're strong is because we acted in Washington, DC. We passed tax relief. You see, we understand that when somebody has got more money in their pocket, they're more likely to demand a good or a service. And when they demand that good or a service, somebody is more likely to produce the good or a service. And when somebody produces that good or a service, someone is more likely to be able to find work. The tax relief we passed, the willingness to have people have more money in their pocket to spend, to save, or invest, is helping this economy recover from tough times.

We also understand that most new jobs are created by small businesses. Most new jobs in the American economy are created by the entrepreneurs and small-business owners of America. And so the tax relief

we passed not only helped individuals and helped families raise children, but it was also directed at the small-business sector of our economy. We must never forget the vital role that small businesses play in the United States economy.

Things are looking good across the country. New home construction in 2003 was the highest in 25 years. Homeownership rates are the highest ever. And for the first time, most minority households own their own homes. We're closing the housing gap in America. Manufacturing activity is increasing. Inflation is low. Interest rates are low. Exports are growing. Productivity is high. Jobs are on the rise. The tax relief we passed has made a difference.

One of the things I know about your great State—I've spent some quality time in South Carolina in the past—one of the things I know about your great State is this is a State full of decent, hard-working, honorable people. You've got a great workforce in the State of South Carolina. Many foreign companies and companies from other States move here because South Carolina workers are dependable, good people.

Yet, the State has got economic challenges. Even though the unemployment rate is down, it's still too high. Many factory workers in textiles and apparel have faced layoffs. But there are new jobs being created, and the challenge at all levels of government is to make sure that people are trained for jobs which actually exist.

I laid out what's called the Jobs for the 21st Century program, which says to States and local communities, "We want to help you. We want to help you make sure the hard-working people who are looking for work have got the skills necessary to take advantage of a changing economy." The numbers aren't as good as they can be, but they will be with focused efforts. They will be so long as Washington promotes a pro-entrepreneur, pro-growth agenda. They will be if the Congress makes sure the tax cuts we passed are permanent.

I'm optimistic about our economy's future because the numbers look good, but that's not the true reason I'm optimistic. I'm optimistic because I understand the entrepreneurial spirit of America. I'm optimistic because I know the type of worker we have in this country. I'm optimistic because I trust the American people.

The second great challenge is to fight and win the war on terror. After we were attacked in 2001, I said time would pass and people would assume that the threats to our country had gone away. That's false comfort. The terrorists continue to plot against us. They still want to harm us. This Nation will not tire; we will not rest until this threat to civilization is removed.

Part of doing our duty in the war on terror is to protect the homeland. That's part of our solemn responsibility, and we are taking unprecedented steps to protect the homeland. In the 2005 budget, as the Secretary mentioned, we proposed increases in homeland security spending, and some of those increases are measures to protect our seaports. And that's why I've come to this vital seaport, to remind people—to remind the American people, as they pay attention to the debates in the Halls of Congress, that we have a solemn duty to protect our homeland, including the seaports of America.

Our National Targeting Center in Northern Virginia, where I'll be going tomorrow with the Secretary, is analyzing cargo manifest information and focusing frontline inspection on high-risk shipments. We're looking at things differently now in America. We're adjusting our strategies to better protect the American people.

We've got a Container Security Initiative, which means we're posting officers at foreign ports to identify and inspect high-risk shipments before they're loaded and shipped to America. We've extended the reach out to make sure America is more secure. We're doing things more wise in order to protect our country. We're not waiting for ships and planes to arrive.

We've got what we call a Proliferation Security Initiative, fancy words which means America is working with other governments to track and stop the shipments of dangerous weapons and dangerous cargo. We're determined to keep lethal weapons and materials out of the hands of our enemies and away from our shores.

We have a duty to protect the American people, a solemn duty. And there's a lot of people in this crowd who have heard that duty, and I appreciate your service. I appreciate your willingness to sacrifice on behalf of the people.

Another vital tool in the homeland security is for Congress to pass laws that enable us to do our job. I'm referring to the PATRIOT Act. The PATRIOT Act gives Federal law enforcement the tools they need to seize terrorists' assets and disrupt their cells. It removes—the PATRIOT Act removed legal barriers that prevented the FBI and the CIA from sharing information, information that is vitally needed to uncover terrorist plots before they are carried out in America. Imagine a system that would not allow people who collect information to share information. It makes it awfully hard to protect the homeland if the FBI and the CIA can't share data in order to protect us. The PATRIOT Act made that possible.

The PATRIOT Act imposes tougher penalties on terrorists and their supporters. We want to send a clear message to people that there will be a consequence. For years, we've used similar provisions, provisions that are now in the act, to catch embezzlers and drug traffickers. What's in the PATRIOT Act today is nothing new. We've been using these provisions in the past. If the methods are good enough for hunting criminals, they're even more important for hunting terrorists. The Congress needs to extend the PATRIOT Act.

We'll do everything in our power to defend the homeland. Yet, we understand this, that the best way to defend the homeland is to stay on the offensive. The best way to protect America is to find the killers and bring them to justice before they ever harm another American, and that's exactly what this administration will continue to do.

There are thousands of our troops and troops of our friends on an international manhunt. We're running down Al Qaida. We're finding them where they hide. For our own security, we're bringing them to justice. Nearly two-thirds of the Al Qaida leaders have been captured or killed. And we're chasing the rest of them. There is no hole deep enough to hide from America.

Part of this new war, this different kind of war, is to confront regimes that harbor terrorists, that support terrorists, that could supply them with weapons of mass murder. This is an essential part of the war on terror. When America speaks, we better mean what we say. And I said right after September the 11th, "If you harbor a terrorist, if you feed a terrorist, you're just as guilty as the terrorists," and the Taliban found out exactly what we meant.

It wasn't all that long ago that Afghanistan was a haven for terrorists. This is where many terrorists learned to kill. There were training camps, places for them to hide. Thanks to the United States and our friends, thanks to the bravery of many of our fellow citizens, Afghanistan is no longer a haven for terror. Afghanistan is a free country.

America also confronted a gathering threat in Iraq. The dictatorship of Saddam Hussein was one of the most brutal, corrupt, and dangerous regimes in the world. For years, the dictator funded terrorists and gave reward money for suicide bombings. For years, he threatened and he invaded his neighbors. For years, he murdered innocent Iraqis by the hundreds of thousands. For years, he made a mockery of United Nations demands that he account for his weapons. For years, Saddam Hussein did all these things. But he won't be doing any of them this year. Instead, he's sitting

in a prison cell, and he will be sitting in a courtroom to answer for his crimes.

The liberation of Iraq was an act of justice, delivering an oppressed people from an evil regime. The liberation of Iraq removed a source of violence and instability from the Middle East, and the liberation of Iraq removed an enemy of this country and made America more secure.

America and our friends have shown the world that we are serious about removing the threats of weapons of mass destruction, and the facts are becoming clearer. In Iraq, our Survey Group is on the ground, looking for the truth. We will compare what the intelligence indicated before the war with what we have learned afterwards. As the chief weapons inspector said, "We have not yet found the stockpiles of weapons that we thought were there." Yet, the Survey Group has uncovered some of what the dictator was up to.

We know Saddam Hussein had the capability to produce weapons of mass destruction. He had the scientists and technology in place to make those weapons. We know he had the necessary infrastructure to produce weapons of mass destruction because we found the labs and dual use facilities that could be used to produce chemical and biological weapons. We know he was developing the delivery systems, ballistic missiles that the United Nations had prohibited. We know Saddam Hussein had the intent to arm his regime with weapons of mass destruction, because he hid all those activities from the world until the last day of his regime.

And Saddam Hussein had something else; he had a record of using weapons of mass destruction against his enemies and against innocent Iraqi citizens. Knowing what I knew then and knowing what I know today, America did the right thing in Iraq.

We had a choice: Either take the word of a madman, or take action to defend the American people. Faced with that choice, I will defend America every time. September the 11th, 2001, was a lesson for America, a lesson I will never forget and a lesson this Nation must never forget. We cannot wait to confront the threats of the world, the threats of terror networks and terror states, until those threats arrive in our own cities. I made a pledge to this country; I will not stand by and hope for the best while dangers gather. I will not take risks with the lives and security of the American people. I will protect and defend this country by taking the fight to the enemy.

When you're the Commander in Chief, you have to be willing to make the tough calls and to see your decisions through. America is safer when our commitments are clear, our word is good, and our will is strong. And that is the only way I know how to lead.

If some politicians in Washington had their way, Saddam Hussein would still be in power. All of the Security Council resolutions and condemnations would still be issued and still be ignored, scraps of paper amounting to nothing. Other regimes and terror networks, had we not acted, would have concluded that America backs down when things get tough. Saddam would still have his weapons capabilities, and life would sure be different for the Iraqi people. The secret police would still be making arrests in the middle of the night. Prisons and torture chambers would still be filled with victims. More innocent Iraqis would have been sent to mass graves. Because we acted, Iraq's nightmare is over. Their country, our country, and the entire world are better off because the regime of Saddam Hussein is gone and gone forever.

Because of American leadership, the world is changing for the better. Other dictators have seen and noted our resolve. Colonel Qadhafi in Libya got the message and is now voluntarily disclosing and eliminating his weapons of mass destruction programs.

These are historic times, times of change. In Afghanistan and Iraq, more than 50 million people once lived under tyranny. And now they live in free societies, societies that are moving toward democracy, societies that will set an example for all of the Middle East. And that's important. That's important for our own security. Free societies do not attack their neighbors. Free societies do not develop weapons of mass terror. Freedom and peace go hand in hand. These are great and hopeful events, and they came about because America and our allies acted bravely in the cause of freedom.

We know there are challenges ahead. We know that freedom still has enemies in Iraq and Afghanistan, surviving Ba'athists, the Taliban, suicide bombers, and foreign terrorists. All these enemies have one goal: They want to stop the advance of freedom and to shake the will of the United States of America. But they don't understand us. They don't understand the nature of the American people. We will never be intimidated by thugs or assassins. The killers will fail, and the people of Iraq and Afghanistan will live in freedom. And that's important to us in America, because we understand freedom is not America's gift to the world. We understand freedom is the Almighty God's gift to each man and woman in this world.

South Carolina is a State that is really proud of the people who wear the uniform. Over 5,000 reservists and National Guardsmen are currently deploying in Iraq and Afghanistan and Kosovo and for the defense of the homeland. Hundreds of officers from the Citadel are serving in Iraq and Afghanistan and elsewhere in the war on terror. Like everyone who serves in uniform today, these fine citizens of your State are protecting this Nation from danger, and they're making us proud.

I made a commitment to the men and women of our military: America is asking a lot of you, and you deserve a lot in return. You deserve our praise and our thanks, and we will give you the resources you need to fight and win the war on terror.

So we depend on our military; our people in uniform depend on their families. These are challenging times for military families. Some of them have experienced great loss. We ask for God's blessings. We ask God to give them strength in their time of grief. Our Nation will never take their sacrifice for granted. All of us are grateful to the families of the men and women who wear the uniform of the United States.

By the unselfish dedication of Americans in uniform, people in our own country and in lands far away can live in freedom and know that—the peace that freedom brings. America has been given great responsibilities, and those responsibilities have come to the right country. By our actions, we have shown what kind of nation we are, a good and just and generous people. We don't shrink from any challenge. We're rising to the call of history. Now and in the future, this great land will lead the cause of freedom and peace.

May God bless you all. Thank you for coming. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:12 a.m. at the Union Pier Terminal. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Mark Sanford and Lt. Gov. R. Andre Bauer of South Carolina; Mayor Joseph P. Riley, Jr., of Charleston, SC; David H. Wilkins, speaker, South Carolina House of Representatives; Maj. Gen. Stanhope S. Spears, Adjutant General of South Carolina; Comdr. Gary W. Merrick, USCG, commanding officer, Coast Guard Marine Safety Office, Charleston, SC; Capt. Jim Tunstall, USCG, commander, USCG Group Charleston; David Kay, former CIA Special Advisor for Strategy Regarding Iraqi Weapons of Mass Destruction Programs; and Col. Muammar Abu Minyar al-Qadhafi, leader of Libya.

Remarks on Establishment of the Commission on the Intelligence Capabilities of the United States Regarding Weapons of Mass Destruction
February 6, 2004

Good afternoon. Today, by Executive order, I am creating an independent Commission, chaired by Governor and former Senator Chuck Robb, Judge Laurence Silberman, to look at American intelligence capabilities, especially our intelligence about weapons of mass destruction.

Last week, our former chief weapons inspector, David Kay, reported that Saddam Hussein's regime had weapons programs and activities in violation of United Nations Security Council resolutions and was a gathering threat to the world. Dr. Kay also stated that some prewar intelligence assessments by America and other nations about Iraq's weapons stockpiles have not been confirmed. We are determined to figure out why. We're also determined to make sure that American intelligence is as accurate as possible for every challenge in the future.

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction poses the most serious of dangers to the peace of the world. Chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons in the hands of terrorists or terror regimes could bring catastrophic harm to America and to our friends. It is the policy of the United States Government to oppose that threat by any means necessary. Our efforts against proliferation begin with and depend upon accurate and thorough intelligence.

The men and women of our intelligence community and intelligence officers who work for our friends and allies around the world are dedicated professionals engaged in difficult and complex work. America's enemies are secretive. They are ruthless, and they are resourceful. And in tracking and disrupting their activities, our Nation must bring to bear every tool and advantage at our command.

In Iraq, America and our coalition enforced the clearly stated demands of the world, that a violent regime prove its own disarmament. In the aftermath of September the 11th, 2001, I will not take risks with the lives and security of the American people by assuming the good will of dictators.

And now, as we move forward in our efforts to prevent the spread of weapons of mass destruction, we must stay ahead of constantly changing intelligence challenges. The stakes for our country could not be higher, and our standard of intelligence gathering and analysis must be equal to that of the challenge.

The Commission I have appointed today will examine intelligence on weapons of mass destruction and related 21st century threats and issue specific recommendations to ensure our capabilities are strong. The Commission will compare what the Iraq Survey Group learns with the information we had prior to our Operation Iraqi Freedom. It will review our intelligence on weapons programs in countries such as North Korea and Iran. It will examine our intelligence on the threats posed by Libya and Afghanistan before recent changes in those countries. Members of the Commission will issue their report by March 31st, 2005.

I've ordered all departments and agencies, including our intelligence agencies, to assist the Commission's work. The Commission will have full access to the findings of the Iraq Survey Group.

In naming this Commission—these men as Cochairmen of the Commission, I'm also naming today Senator John McCain; Lloyd Cutler, former White House Counsel to Presidents Carter and Clinton; Rick Levin, the president of Yale University; Admiral Bill Studeman, the former Deputy Director of the Central Intelligence Agency; Judge Pat Wald, a former judge on the DC Court

of Appeals. Those are seven members named. The Commission calls for up to nine members. As we vet and find additional members to fill out the nine, we will let you know.

Thank you for your attention.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:32 p.m. in the James S. Brady Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to David Kay, former CIA Special Advisor for Strategy Regarding Iraqi Weapons of Mass Destruction Programs; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. The Executive order is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks to Reporters at the National Targeting Center in Reston, Virginia
February 6, 2004

I'm glad I came here to the National Targeting Center. This is a building full of modern technology and hard-working people. People here are working incredibly long hours to better secure the homeland, and I am here to thank them for their service to our country.

A lot of our citizens really don't know the extent to which our Government and many of the employees are really working hard. Here I've learned—I've seen how we are able to mate information with terrorist lists or information with potentially dangerous cargo so we can spread valuable information throughout the country at ports of entry or border crossings.

It's a fascinating place. It's a place where after 9/11 we grew, grew with getting the very best programs and programmers and computers to keep us better protected. I really want to thank the people here.

On another front, I'm pleased, obviously, with the new job growth. I have been saying that this economy looks pretty strong, and today 112,000 new jobs were created last month—a report that 112,000 new jobs were created last month. And that's good. Things are getting better. There is more to do, but this economy is growing in strength, and I'm obviously pleased with that.

Thank you all for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:45 p.m.

Statement on the Terrorist Attack on the Moscow Subway
February 6, 2004

I condemn in the strongest terms the terrorist attack on the Moscow subway. I join the American people in grieving for the victims and for their families. No cause ever justifies the killing of innocent life. The United States stands with Russia in opposing terrorist acts and in our determination to bring the perpetrators to justice.

The President's Radio Address
February 7, 2004

Good morning. The past few weeks have confirmed that America's economy is strong and growing stronger. The Nation's unemployment rate fell to 5.6 percent in January, the fourth consecutive monthly decline, and we added 112,000 new jobs, the largest single month increase since December of 2000. Overall, the Nation has added 366,000 jobs in the past 5 months.

There's more evidence of a strengthening economy. Manufacturers report new orders. GDP rose at a 6.1 percent in the second half of 2003, the fastest pace in nearly 20 years. Inflation remains low, and our Nation's homeownership rate just reached an alltime high. For the first time in our history, more than half of minority households own their own homes.

All of these are signs that our economic recovery is becoming a lasting expansion. Yet many of the new jobs being created require workers to learn new skills, and we can make sure that more Americans are prepared for these new opportunities.

Our efforts begin in our elementary schools, where students learn the basic skills that carry them through life. With the No Child Left Behind Act, we have raised standards, and we're making sure children learn the basics. Now we need to stay the course of reform, because the No Child Left Behind Act is opening the door of opportunity for all of America's children.

We must also help high school students to prepare for the new jobs our economy is creating. I've asked Congress to pass my Jobs for the 21st Century proposal, a plan that would help students who fall behind in reading and math, expand advanced placement programs in low-income schools, and provide larger Pell grants for students who prepare for college with demanding courses in high school.

We also recognize that many workers change jobs in the middle of their careers, and they often get the training they need at community colleges. I have asked Congress to provide $250 million to community colleges to help Americans get the skills they need for high-growth fields. Over the last several weeks, I have met with men and women who are studying at these colleges and are on their way to better careers.

Toledo, Ohio, I met with Mike Potter. After getting laid off in March 2003, Mike enrolled at Owens Community College's integrated systems technology program, which is supported by a Department of Labor grant. Mike got a new job soon and is earning more than he did before. Here is what Mike told me: "People don't want to see a person with just one skill anymore. They want several skills."

My administration is committed to helping more people like Mike learn the skills they need. And we will continue pursuing a progrowth economic agenda so that every person who wants to work can find a job.

We'll help create more jobs in America by making tax relief permanent, by enforcing spending discipline and reducing the deficit, by enacting commonsense reforms to our regulatory and legal systems, by taking steps to make health care more affordable and accessible, by passing a national energy policy, and by opening up more foreign markets for trade. Taking these steps will add momentum to our Nation's economic expansion and extend jobs and prosperity to more Americans.

I'm optimistic about our future, and one reason is because of America's workers and entrepreneurs. They are talented and hardworking, and they carry with them the spirit that has always made America a place of hope and opportunity.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 11 a.m. on February 6 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on February 7. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 6 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks in a Discussion on the National Economy in Springfield, Missouri
February 9, 2004

The President. Jack, thanks for having me. I want to thank the good folks who work here for allowing us to disrupt your day to talk about our economy and how it works. And hopefully out of this discussion, people will learn better how people make decisions, decisions with their own money or decisions with investors' money. I hope people come away from this discussion with this great sense of optimism about the future for our country. It's exactly what I believe. I believe we ought to be—[*applause*]. So this ought to be a lot of fun.

I am thrilled to be here with the two United States Senators from Missouri, Kit Bond and Jim Talent. I appreciate their friendship and thank them for coming. Congressman Roy Blunt, who you know well, is with us today. He's a man who knows a good deal. I said, "Would you like to fly down to your hometown on Air Force One?" [*Laughter*] Guess what his answer was? [*Laughter*]

I appreciate the mayor coming, Tom Carlson. Mr. Mayor, thank you for being here. Fill the potholes. [*Laughter*] Sorry, Mr. Mayor, you didn't ask for any advice. [*Laughter*]

I also want to thank the other State and local officials and community and business leaders for coming here. Thank you all for coming as well.

Before I begin to talk a little bit about the economy and then of course have our panelists talk about what they think and some of the decisionmaking they made, I want to introduce a fellow who you may or may not know. His name is Travis Morrison. Travis, why don't you stand up right quick. [*Applause*] I guess you know Travis. [*Laughter*] I didn't until I arrived, but I know a lot of people like Travis.

See, Travis is a person who takes time out of his life to volunteer in your community. When the tornadoes hit here, he went up to help those who suffered. When people are looking for food, particularly children, he's willing to take time out of his life to fill the knapsacks full of food for the kids. He walks for the March of Dimes. He works for the United Way. He's a soldier in the army of compassion.

A lot of times, this country talks about our strengths, and we should. We talk about the military strength of America, and that's important, and we're going to keep us strong. We talk about how fat our wallets may be, and that's important too. But the true strength of America is found in the hearts and souls of people like Travis, people who are willing to love their neighbor just like they'd like to love themselves.

I like to talk about the Travis Morrisons of the world because everybody can be an army—a soldier in the army of compassion. Everybody can make a difference. This country's strength is found in the faith centers and neighborhoods and community centers, where people help somebody who hurts. And one of my jobs is to lift that spirit of America and invigorate it and to call people to action. One of the best ways

to do so is to remind people that in Springfield, Missouri, there are thousands of people like Travis, and if you want to help your community, help make somebody's life a little brighter. Travis, thanks for what you do. Thanks for being a solid, sound American by volunteering to help somebody who hurts.

Speaking about strengths, our country has been through a lot over the last 3 years. I just want you to think about what the economy has been through. In March of 2000, the stock market started to decline. And that matters if you own stocks, and a lot of you do. You own them through your retirement accounts, for example. It's the indication of the rough times ahead. See, when a stock market sometimes indicates—is a predictor of the future, and sure enough, in the first quarter of 2001, the country was in a recession. And when you're in a recession, it means somebody is not going to be able to work. Things are going backwards. The economy is in decline. People are starting to get laid off. There's a lot of uncertainty out there. People just aren't sure what their future looks like. It's tough times when the country is in a recession.

We started to recover from the recession, and then we got attacked on September the 11th, 2001. In other words, we had tough economic times to begin with, and then the enemy hit us. And that changed us. It really did. It hurt us economically. It changed our whole outlook about the world. Perhaps by now, you're beginning to get an impression of how it changed my outlook. It changed the way I look at the threats to America. It reminded me that my most important duty, my most solemn obligation, is to protect our country and the people. I'll never forget the lessons of September the 11th, and when I see a grave and gathering threat to the United States, we will deal with it. We will deal with it for the good of our country.

The war on terror goes on, unfortunately, but we're going to win. We're going to win because America is tough and strong and disciplined and patient. We'll win because we've got fabulous men and women in the United States military who are willing to sacrifice for our own security and for the freedom.

And then, after we settled in with the new reality of the world, we discovered that some of the corporate citizens in America forgot what it meant to be a responsible citizen. See, when you're a CEO of a corporation, you have a responsibility. Jack knows that, and I suspect he might talk about—at least when he talks, you'll hear he recognizes that. But we had some people in this country who didn't tell the truth to their shareholders and their employees.

By the way, we passed laws—and I want to thank the Senators and the Congressmen who are here—we passed laws, and now they know there will be a consequence in America for not telling the truth. We expect people in positions of responsibility, in CEO America, in corporate America, to be honest to their shareholders and their employees. That affected the people's confidence. Make no mistake about it. When we started reading that some of these CEOs of publicly held companies lied with the numbers, it affected people's confidence.

And then, of course, as you know, I made the tough decision to secure America by—after having gone to the United Nations and after having worked to—given Mr. Saddam Hussein a chance to disarm himself, to do what the world had demanded, we went and disarmed him.

The march to war affected the people's confidence. It's hard to make investment. See, if you're a small-business owner or a large-business owner and you're thinking about investing, you've got to be optimistic when you invest. Except when you're marching to war, it's not a very optimistic thought, is it? In other words, it's the opposite of optimistic when you're thinking you're going to war. War is not conducive to—for investment.

And so we've overcome a lot. And I say we've overcome a lot because we're growing. The growth is good. New jobs are being created. Interest rates are low. Homeownership in America is at one of the highest levels ever, and that's positive. People are owning their own home.

A lot of it had to do with the fact that we cut your taxes, a lot of the reasons why this economy is growing. Make no mistake about it, the main reason the economy is growing is because the entrepreneurial spirit of America is strong and we've got the greatest workers in the world. But it helps when those workers have got more money in their pocket, and it helps when the small-business owners have got more money in their coffers. And that's what tax relief does. See, when you cut the taxes for the people, you let them keep more of their own money. It means somebody is going to demand an additional good or a service, and when they demand an additional good or a service in our economy, somebody is going to produce that good or a service. And when somebody produces it, somebody is more likely to find work.

And secondly, we did some smart things with the tax relief. We said, "If you have a child, you ought to get help with raising that child," so we increased the child credit to $1,000 per child. It says that we want the Tax Code to work the right way. We used to penalize marriage. That doesn't make any sense. We ought to be rewarding marriage in the Tax Code, and so—there was a marriage penalty.

We helped small businesses by encouraging them to invest. We cut the taxes on everybody. Sometimes in Washington you see them play favorites—so-and-so gets a tax relief, so-and-so doesn't. My attitude is, if you're going to give tax relief, you ought to give it to everybody who pays taxes. And we did that, and it's helping. People got more money in their pocket to spend. You know what I'm talking about.

Small businesses are feeling pretty good about their future, because there's incentives for them to invest. And by the way, it's very essential for you to understand that when you say cutting taxes on everybody who pays taxes—in other words, you're reducing individual income-tax rates—that affects small business. Most small-business owners are sole proprietorships or Subchapter S corporations, which means they pay tax at the individual income-tax rate. So when you hear us talking about cutting individual income taxes, think small business as well.

And most new jobs in America are created by small businesses. It makes sense to invigorate the small-business sector of this country. If you're worried about job creation, if you're worried about somebody finding work, it makes sense to stimulate the small-business sector of this economy. And that's what we did.

Now, I want to—before we let Jack talk—he's probably wondering whether or not I'm filibustering. [*Laughter*] I think that's what you call it in the Senate, isn't it? Yes. Anyway, I do want to talk to you real quick that—this is one of the real challenges we face—a couple of challenges. One, my attitude is, in order to make sure people can find work, that we need to open up markets for U.S. products.

I believe we need to have tort reform so that these frivolous and junk lawsuits—[*applause*]. I know we need tort reform particularly when it comes to health care. The costs of health care are going up dramatically. And that affects small-business owners; it affects employees. One cause of increasing health care costs is the frivolous lawsuits that are running these docs out of business, that are causing people to have to practice defensive medicine. We need medical liability reform now in Washington, DC.

We need association health plans so small businesses can pool risk so they can better provide health insurance for their employees. We need health savings accounts. We've expanded them in the Medicare law, but I want people to understand

they're available now. And it's a really good way for people to buy insurance, whether you're a small-business owner and/or an employee. People ought to look into health savings accounts.

We want less regulation. We need an energy plan. We need to be less dependent on foreign sources of energy. If you're a business, you need to have reliable sources of energy available.

But I don't know if you know this or not, but the tax relief we passed is set to expire, parts of it. And some of it's going to expire next year, in 2005. In other words, the child credit is going down in 2005 unless Congress acts. The marriage penalty is going back up in 2005 unless Congress acts. And that's going to be an interesting part of the national dialog. I believe we need to make the tax cuts permanent.

There are some in Washington—and they're going to say, "Let's not make the tax cuts permanent." That means it's going to raise your taxes. When you hear people say, "We're not going to make this permanent," that means tax increase. Now is not the time to raise taxes on the American people. This economy is getting better. We're showing good growth, good, strong growth. Yet, some in Washington want to raise your taxes. Make no mistake about it—let me tell you what's going to happen when they raise them. They're going to say, "Oh, we've got to raise it so we can pay down the deficit." No. They're going to raise the taxes and increase the size of the Federal Government, which would be bad for the United States economy. People have got to understand and listen to the rhetoric carefully. When they say, "We're going to repeal Bush's tax cuts," that means they're going to raise your taxes. And that's wrong, and that's bad economics.

Anyway, that's enough from me. [*Laughter*]

Jack Stack. I'm stimulated, stimulated.

The President. I'm not interested in you being stimulated; I'm interested in the economy being stimulated. [*Laughter*] And since you're an entrepreneur—[*laughter*]. See, one of the things that's fabulous about this country is people can start their own business. We want people owning something in America. We want you owning your home. We want you owning your own business. We want you owning your retirement account or your health care plan. We want you managing your affairs.

And Jack understands what it means to own something. He's an entrepreneur. He's a risktaker. And as a result of being an entrepreneur and a risktaker and somebody who has actually made it happen in a positive way, he's also an employer. He's hiring people.

So, Jack, thanks for your—letting me come by.

Mr. Stack. It's nice to have you here. You are definitely the toughest act to follow I've ever had in my entire life. [*Laughter*]

The President. I think you can handle it.

[*At this point, Mr. Stack, chief executive officer, Springfield ReManufacturing Corp., made brief remarks.*]

The President. Thanks for your vision.

Mr. Stack. Thank you.

The President. He said "bonus depreciation." That means that it was the tax relief passed by Congress encouraged him to invest. When he buys a piece of equipment, somebody has to make the equipment, which means somebody is more likely to find a job. So when Jack makes a decision to buy a piece of equipment, based upon the tax relief, he really says, "I'm going to not only help my workers become more productive—which means better pay over time—but it means somebody is going to have to make the equipment." And that's how the economy works. It's an economy that responds to the decisionmaking processes of a lot of people around the world like Jack.

He said he's going to add employees. That's great. That's what I'm hearing all

over the country. You know, 10 people here, 15 people there, but it adds up in America. It adds up because there's a lot of entrepreneurs and a lot of small businesses. In order to figure out how this economy is going to do and whether or not to be upbeat about it, just listen to the businessowners, the small-business owners who are on the leading edge of hiring folks.

We've got a fellow here named Mike Sadler. Mike is the president of Custom Manufacturing and Polishing. Why don't you tell us what you do.

[*Mike Sadler made brief remarks.*]

The President. Mike's company is a Subchapter S. That's a legal term for they pay tax at the individual income-tax rate. So when you hear people talking about reducing the individual income-tax rates, you're really cutting taxes on his business as well. That's important if you're interested in job growth because he has got more money in his coffers, money that will enable him to more likely hire somebody as the demand for his products stays strong, money that will enable him to pay for health care benefits for employees.

In other words, money available in the private sector and particularly in the small-business coffers is money that's going to be put to good use. It's money that's going to make it easier for somebody to find a job. And I'm telling you, Congress should not raise the taxes on people that are creating jobs and of people that are spending this money wisely.

So I want to thank you, Mike, for coming. I appreciate your entrepreneurial spirit. You hiring anybody this year?

Mr. Sadler. We're probably going to get two or three, yet, this year.

The President. Two here or three there, all of a sudden, it starts adding up all across the country.

Tricia is with us. Tricia Derges is the president and CEO of Mostly Memories. It's an interesting name.

Tricia Derges. It's an interesting company.

The President. All right, well, tell us about it.

[*Ms. Derges made brief remarks.*]

The President. Good. Let me just pick up a couple of things she said. One, she is going to invest. I don't want to get repetitive, but I'm going to—somebody has got to make the conveyor belt. That's how the economy works. When your people talk about stimulating the economy, tax relief encourages her to make a decision, and that decision then affects somebody's ability to find work.

Secondly, she talked about people who have been laid off. One of the most important things our society must do is to train people for jobs which exist. And I hope that the State of Missouri uses the community college system here in a way that says, "Let's devise curriculum based upon the needs of the employers, so that people can find work." We've constantly got to upgrade the skills of our fellow citizens. As this economy changes, people need to get—learn new skills. And the best place to do that is a place like the community college. That's why I've called on Congress to provide money for job training.

And I'm sure you had to help these people learn their jobs. But it's amazing what happens when people are able to gain new skills and a new lease on life, be more productive as a worker. Higher productivity means better pay.

I'll never forget meeting a lady in Arizona, where she told me that she had worked 15 years as a graphic artist, went to community college, took some courses, then got employed by a high-tech company and makes more in her first year in her new job as she did after 15 years in her old job. And so education provides ample opportunity for new workers if it's done right. And the best way to do it is to trust the local people to put a curriculum in

place to train people for jobs which actually exist.

Mr. Mayor, this is a good way to recruit business, by the way, is if you've got a good worker training program so that the employers know that they can find somebody who can do the job.

Speaking about people doing the job, Gary Brown is with us. He's a warehouse supervisor here at SRC Automotive. Thanks for being with us. You've got kids. You've got——

Gary Brown. Yes, a lot of kids.

The President. How many have you got?

Mr. Brown. I have four kids.

The President. That is a lot. [*Laughter*]

[*Mr. Brown made brief remarks.*]

The President. He got tax relief. See, everybody who pays taxes got tax relief. They told me about $3,000.

Mr. Brown. That's right.

The President. That may not sound like a lot—might not sound a lot to somebody. It's a lot to him.

Mr. Brown. Yes, it is.

The President. Sounds like a lot to me.

Mr. Brown. Yes, and if we continue going down that road, it's only going to help us to—my wife is a stay-at-home mom. We home-school all our kids, and we'd like to continue that——

The President. Congratulations.

Mr. Brown. ——and hopefully keep them home-schooled and with a good education.

The President. Yes, that's a—first of all, Mom, you're doing—that's tough. [*Laughter*] But it's—I appreciate that. I appreciate the idea of you wanting to give your children the education from you and the mom. Tax relief helps; $3,000 makes it a little easier for mom to stay at home, to help them meet their dreams and aspirations.

I'm going to tell you what's going to happen if Congress doesn't make this permanent. When the child credit goes back down, this man and his family are going to pay $1,500 more—let me rephrase that—instead of $3,000 a year, they're only going to receive $1,500 a year from the Government. That's like a $1,500 tax increase. Now is not the time for Congress to be raising taxes on the people.

Mr. Brown. To put some—talk about my wife a little bit. One thing she also does is she also takes care of my nephew, whose mom is right now serving in the 203d Engineer Battalion in Iraq.

The President. Fabulous. Yes, thanks. I appreciate that. Pass the word, the Commander in Chief is incredibly proud.

Mr. Brown. I will. Thank you.

The President. Thank her for her service. And you might remind her, when Iraq is free and democratic and peaceful, it will change the world.

These are historic times. These are times where we have a chance to define a more peaceful world for our children. I mean, we'll keep America secure by taking—making the tough decisions, by speaking clearly, and by being strong. But it's also important for our fellow citizens—and people who wear our uniform can attest to this—that a free Iraq in the midst of a part of the world where there's such hatred, such despondency and hopelessness, will be an historic moment for world peace. See, free societies are peaceful societies. People need to see what can happen when there's a free society.

And you tell your relative——

Mr. Brown. Sister.

The President. Sister. You tell your sister, thanks a lot, and it's a meaningful sacrifice she is making.

Mr. Brown. Thank you.

The President. Teresa, thanks for coming.

Teresa Noblitt. It's an honor to be here with you.

The President. You don't have a big family, do you?

Ms. Noblitt. Yes.

The President. How many kids?

Ms. Noblitt. Four. [*Laughter*]

The President. It seems to be running here—is this company policy? [*Laughter*] You've got five—six—three.

Tell us about yourself. You're an accountant?

[*Ms. Noblitt, accountant, SRC Automotive, made brief remarks.*]

The President. Yes, that's good. See, one of the things she's saying is that with the tax relief, means she can save more money and put it aside for her kids' education. That's noble and important.

See, tax relief can be used to spend, and that's good, because it increases consumer demand, but tax relief also is being saved by a lot of our families, and that savings are really important in a society that rests upon the flow of capital. Savings actually is capital to be invested so people can find work. Tax relief is vital.

This family received $2,700 in tax relief this year, every year, unless Congress, of course, doesn't act. When the child credit goes down and the marriage penalty goes up, which is going to happen in '05 unless this Congress acts, makes a decision, does what is right, this good family will pay $1,300—have $1,300 less in money to spend. And it means people in Congress will be spending it.

Now, we've got plenty of money in Washington. I would rather have Teresa making the decision with that $1,300 than the people in Congress. She makes wise decisions with her money.

I hope you've enjoyed the conversation. I have. One of the things that you hear if you listen carefully to what these folks are saying is that Government policies can make a difference in people's lives in a positive way. The entrepreneurial spirit in this country is strong. You've got people who started businesses out of garages and had people delivering goods in the streets, and they had to kick them out and make them go get a warehouse. [*Laughter*] A guy takes a huge risk on a giant debt-to-equity ratio and has succeeded. People buy the company. A man over here buys a company. This is—I love the entrepreneurial spirit in the country, and tax policy has got to encourage it, and we're going to keep it strong here in America.

The other thing you hear, mothers and dads doing their duty, being responsible citizens by loving their children. Government needs to stand with the moms and dads. We need to be squarely on their side, whether it be sending signals to professional sports teams, we're not going to put up with any—you ought not to be putting up with any steroid use amongst your players. We ought to be supporting the moms and dads who are trying to teach their children the right lessons in life. We also ought to be supporting them, helping them raise their kids, and tax relief helps people raise their children.

I'm glad you all came. I'm thrilled to be back in this part of our country, the great Springfield, Missouri. It's got good folks here, good, honest, down-to-earth, hard-working people that really represent the backbone of America. I'm proud that you all sat up here today and shared your stories with us. I hope the people listening have a better sense of how this economy works. I hope the people listening come away with a great sense of optimism about the future of America, primarily because the great strength of America is the people of this country. And you just heard five good people talk about America and where we're headed.

May God bless you all, and may God continue to bless this country.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:25 p.m. at SRC Automotive, Inc. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Thomas J. Carlson of Springfield, MO; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Remarks at the National Defense University
February 11, 2004

Thanks for the warm welcome. I'm honored to visit the National Defense University. For nearly a century, the scholars and students here have helped to prepare America for the changing threats to our national security. Today, the men and women of our National Defense University are helping to frame the strategies through which we are fighting and winning the war on terror. Your Center for Counterproliferation Research and your other institutes and colleges are providing vital insight into the dangers of a new era. I want to thank each one of you for devoting your talents and your energy to the service of our great Nation.

I want to thank General Michael Dunn for inviting me here. I used to jog by this facility on a regular basis. Then my age kicked in. [*Laughter*] I appreciate Ambassador Wolfgang Ischinger from Germany. Mr. Ambassador, thank you for being here today. I see my friend George Shultz, a distinguished public servant and true patriot, with us. George, thank you for coming, and Charlotte, it's good to see you. I'm so honored that Dick Lugar is here with us today. Senator, I appreciate you taking time and thanks for bringing Senator Saxby Chambliss with you as well. I appreciate the veterans who are here and those on active duty. Thanks for letting me come by.

On September the 11th, 2001, America and the world witnessed a new kind of war. We saw the great harm that a stateless network could inflict upon our country, killers armed with box cutters, mace, and 19 airline tickets. Those attacks also raised the prospect of even worse dangers, of other weapons in the hands of other men. The greatest threat before humanity today is the possibility of secret and sudden attack with chemical or biological or radiological or nuclear weapons.

In the past, enemies of America required massed armies and great navies, powerful air forces to put our Nation, our people, our friends at risk. In the cold war, Americans lived under the threat of weapons of mass destruction but believed that deterrents made those weapons a last resort. What has changed in the 21st century is that in the hands of terrorists, weapons of mass destruction would be a first resort, the preferred means to further their ideology of suicide and random murder. These terrible weapons are becoming easier to acquire, build, hide, and transport. Armed with a single vial of a biological agent or a single nuclear weapon, small groups of fanatics or failing states could gain the power to threaten great nations, threaten the world peace.

America and the entire civilized world will face this threat for decades to come. We must confront the danger with open eyes and unbending purpose. I have made clear to all the policy of this Nation: America will not permit terrorists and dangerous regimes to threaten us with the world's most deadly weapons.

Meeting this duty has required changes in thinking and strategy. Doctrines designed to contain empires, deter aggressive states, and defeat massed armies cannot fully protect us from this new threat. America faces the possibility of catastrophic attack from ballistic missiles armed with weapons of mass destruction, so that is why we are developing and deploying missile defenses to guard our people. The best intelligence is necessary to win the war on terror and to stop proliferation, so that is why I have established a commission that will examine our intelligence capabilities and recommend ways to improve and adapt them to detect new and emerging threats.

We're determined to confront those threats at the source. We will stop these

weapons from being acquired or built. We'll block them from being transferred. We'll prevent them from ever being used.

One source of these weapons is dangerous and secretive regimes that build weapons of mass destruction to intimidate their neighbors and force their influence upon the world. These nations pose different challenges; they require different strategies.

The former dictator of Iraq possessed and used weapons of mass destruction against his own people. For 12 years, he defied the will of the international community. He refused to disarm or account for his illegal weapons and programs. He doubted our resolve to enforce our word, and now he sits in a prison cell while his country moves toward a democratic future.

To Iraq's east, the Government of Iran is unwilling to abandon a uranium enrichment program capable of producing material for nuclear weapons. The United States is working with our allies and the International Atomic Energy Agency to ensure that Iran meets its commitments and does not develop nuclear weapons.

In the Pacific, North Korea has defied the world, has tested long-range ballistic missiles, admitted its possession of nuclear weapons, and now threatens to build more. Together with our partners in Asia, America is insisting that North Korea completely, verifiably, and irreversibly dismantle its nuclear programs.

America has consistently brought these threats to the attention of international organizations. We're using every means of diplomacy to answer them. As for my part, I will continue to speak clearly on these threats. I will continue to call upon the world to confront these dangers and to end them.

In recent years, another path of proliferation has become clear as well. America and other nations are learning more about black-market operatives who deal in equipment and expertise related to weapons of mass destruction. These dealers are motivated by greed or fanaticism or both. They find eager customers in outlaw regimes, which pay millions for the parts and plans they need to speed up their weapons programs. And with deadly technology and expertise on the market, there's the terrible possibility that terrorists groups could obtain the ultimate weapons they desire most.

The extent and sophistication of such networks can be seen in the case of a man named Abdul Qadeer Khan. This is the story as we know it so far.

A.Q. Khan is known throughout the world as the father of Pakistan's nuclear weapons program. What was not publicly known until recently is that he also led an extensive international network for the proliferation of nuclear technology and know-how. For decades, Mr. Khan remained on the Pakistani Government payroll, earning a modest salary. Yet, he and his associates financed lavish lifestyles through the sale of nuclear technologies and equipment to outlaw regimes stretching from North Africa to the Korean Peninsula.

A.Q. Khan, himself, operated mostly out of Pakistan. He served as director of the network, its leading scientific mind as well as its primary salesman. Over the past decade, he made frequent trips to consult with his clients and to sell his expertise. He and his associates sold the blueprints for centrifuges to enrich uranium as well as nuclear designs stolen from the Pakistani Government. The network sold uranium hexafluoride, the gas that the centrifuge process can transform into enriched uranium for nuclear bombs. Khan and his associates provided Iran and Libya and North Korea with designs for Pakistan's older centrifuges as well as designs for more advanced and efficient models. The network also provided these countries with components and, in some cases, with complete centrifuges.

To increase their profits, Khan and his associates used a factory in Malaysia to manufacture key parts for centrifuges. Other necessary parts were purchased

through network operatives based in Europe, in the Middle East, and Africa. These procurement agents saw the trade in nuclear technologies as a shortcut to personal wealth, and they set up front companies to deceive legitimate firms into selling them tightly controlled materials.

Khan's deputy, a man named B.S.A. Tahir, ran SMB Computers, a business in Dubai. Tahir used that computer company as a front for the proliferation activities of the A.Q. Khan network. Tahir acted as both the network's chief financial officer and money launderer. He was also its shipping agent, using his computer firm as cover for the movement of centrifuge parts to various clients. Tahir directed the Malaysia facility to produce these parts based on Pakistani designs and then ordered the facility to ship the components to Dubai. Tahir also arranged for parts acquired by other European procurement agents to transit through Dubai for shipment to other customers.

This picture of the Khan network was pieced together over several years by American and British intelligence officers. Our intelligence services gradually uncovered this network's reach and identified its key experts and agents and money men. Operatives followed its transactions, mapped the extent of its operations. They monitored the travel of A.Q. Khan and senior associates. They shadowed members of the network around the world. They recorded their conversations. They penetrated their operations. We've uncovered their secrets. This work involved high risk, and all Americans can be grateful for the hard work and the dedication of our fine intelligence professionals.

Governments around the world worked closely with us to unravel the Khan network and to put an end to his criminal enterprise. A.Q. Khan has confessed his crimes, and his top associates are out of business. The Government of Pakistan is interrogating the network's members, learning critical details that will help them prevent it from ever operating again. President Musharraf has promised to share all the information he learns about the Khan network and has assured us that his country will never again be a source of proliferation.

Mr. Tahir is in Malaysia, where authorities are investigating his activities. Malaysian authorities have assured us that the factory the network used is no longer producing centrifuge parts. Other members of the network remain at large. One by one, they will be found, and their careers in the weapons trade will be ended.

As a result of our penetration of the network, American and the British intelligence identified a shipment of advanced centrifuge parts manufactured at the Malaysian facility. We followed the shipment of these parts to Dubai and watched as they were transferred to the BBC *China,* a German-owned ship. After the ship passed through the Suez Canal, bound for Libya, it was stopped by German and Italian authorities. They found several containers, each 40 feet in length, listed on the ship's manifest as full of used machine parts. In fact, these containers were filled with parts of sophisticated centrifuges.

The interception of the BBC *China* came as Libyan and British and American officials were discussing the possibility of Libya ending its WMD programs. The United States and Britain confronted Libyan officials with this evidence of an active and illegal nuclear program. About 2 months ago, Libya's leader voluntarily agreed to end his nuclear and chemical weapons programs, not to pursue biological weapons, and to permit thorough inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency and the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. We're now working in partnership with these organizations and with the United Kingdom to help the Government of Libya dismantle those programs and eliminate all dangerous materials.

Colonel Qadhafi made the right decision, and the world will be safer once his commitment is fulfilled. We expect other regimes to follow his example. Abandoning the pursuit of illegal weapons can lead to better relations with the United States and other free nations. Continuing to seek those weapons will not bring security or international prestige but only political isolation, economic hardship, and other unwelcomed consequences.

We know that Libya was not the only customer of the Khan network. Other countries expressed great interest in their services. These regimes and other proliferators like Khan should know: We and our friends are determined to protect our people and the world from proliferation.

Breaking this network is one major success in a broadbased effort to stop the spread of terrible weapons. We're adjusting our strategies to the threats of a new era. America and the nations of Australia, France and Germany, Italy and Japan, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Spain, and the United Kingdom have launched the Proliferation Security Initiative to interdict lethal materials in transit. Our nations are sharing intelligence information, tracking suspect international cargo, conducting joint military exercises. We're prepared to search planes and ships, to seize weapons and missiles and equipment that raise proliferation concerns, just as we did in stopping the dangerous cargo on the BBC *China* before it reached Libya. Three more governments, Canada and Singapore and Norway, will be participating in this initiative. We'll continue to expand the core group of PSI countries. And as PSI grows, proliferators will find it harder than ever to trade in illicit weapons.

There is a consensus among nations that proliferation cannot be tolerated. Yet this consensus means little unless it is translated into action. Every civilized nation has a stake in preventing the spread of weapons of mass destruction. These materials and technologies and the people who traffic in them cross many borders. To stop this trade, the nations of the world must be strong and determined. We must work together. We must act effectively.

Today I announce seven proposals to strengthen the world's efforts to stop the spread of deadly weapons. First, I propose that the work of the Proliferation Security Initiative be expanded to address more than shipments and transfers. Building on the tools we've developed to fight terrorists, we can take direct action against proliferation networks. We need greater cooperation, not just among intelligence and military services but in law enforcement as well. PSI participants and other willing nations should use the Interpol and all other means to bring to justice those who traffic in deadly weapons, to shut down their labs, to seize their materials, to freeze their assets. We must act on every lead. We will find the middlemen, the suppliers, and the buyers. Our message to proliferators must be consistent, and it must be clear: We will find you, and we're not going to rest until you are stopped.

Second, I call on all nations to strengthen the laws and international controls that govern proliferation. At the U.N. last fall, I proposed a new Security Council resolution requiring all states to criminalize proliferation, enact strict export controls, and secure all sensitive materials within their borders. The Security Council should pass this proposal quickly. And when they do, America stands ready to help other governments to draft and enforce the new laws that will help us deal with proliferation.

Third, I propose to expand our efforts to keep weapons from the cold war and other dangerous materials out of the wrong hands. In 1991, Congress passed the Nunn-Lugar legislation. Senator Lugar had a clear vision, along with Senator Nunn, about what to do with the old Soviet Union. Under this program, we're helping former Soviet states find productive employment

for former weapons scientists. We're dismantling, destroying, and securing weapons and materials left over from the Soviet WMD arsenal. We have more work to do there. And as a result of the G–8 Summit in 2002, we agreed to provide $20 billion over 10 years, half of it from the United States, to support such programs.

We should expand this cooperation elsewhere in the world. We will retain WMD scientists and technicians in countries like Iraq and Libya. We will help nations end the use of weapons-grade uranium in research reactors. I urge more nations to contribute to these efforts. The nations of the world must do all we can to secure and eliminate nuclear and chemical and biological and radiological materials.

As we track and destroy these networks, we must also prevent governments from developing nuclear weapons under false pretenses. The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty was designed more than 30 years ago to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons beyond those states which already possessed them. Under this treaty, nuclear states agreed to help nonnuclear states develop peaceful atomic energy if they renounced the pursuit of nuclear weapons. But the treaty has a loophole which has been exploited by nations such as North Korea and Iran. These regimes are allowed to produce nuclear material that can be used to build bombs under the cover of civilian nuclear programs.

So today, as a fourth step, I propose a way to close the loophole. The world must create a safe, orderly system to fuel civilian nuclear plants without adding to the danger of weapons proliferation. The world's leading nuclear exporters should ensure that states have reliable access at reasonable cost to fuel for civilian reactors, so long as those states renounce enrichment and reprocessing. Enrichment and reprocessing are not necessary for nations seeking to harness nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

The 40 nations of the Nuclear Suppliers Group should refuse to sell enrichment and reprocessing equipment and technologies to any state that does not already possess full-scale, functioning enrichment and reprocessing plants. This step will prevent new states from developing the means to produce fissile material for nuclear bombs. Proliferators must not be allowed to cynically manipulate the NPT to acquire the material and infrastructure necessary for manufacturing illegal weapons.

For international norms to be effective, they must be enforced. It is the charge of the International Atomic Energy Agency to uncover banned nuclear activity around the world and report those violations to the U.N. Security Council. We must ensure that the IAEA has all the tools it needs to fulfill its essential mandate. America and other nations support what is called the Additional Protocol, which requires states to declare a broad range of nuclear activities and facilities and allow the IAEA to inspect those facilities.

As a fifth step, I propose that by next year, only states that have signed the Additional Protocol be allowed to import equipment for their civilian nuclear programs. Nations that are serious about fighting proliferation will approve and implement the Additional Protocol. I've submitted the Additional Protocol to the Senate. I urge the Senate to consent immediately to its ratification.

We must also ensure that the IAEA is organized to take action when action is required. So, a sixth step, I propose the creation of a special committee of the IAEA Board which will focus intensively on safeguards and verification. This committee, made up of governments in good standing with the IAEA, will strengthen the capability of the IAEA to ensure that nations comply with their international obligations.

And finally, countries under investigation for violating nuclear nonproliferation obligations are currently allowed to serve on

the IAEA Board of Governors. For instance, Iran, a country suspected of maintaining an extensive nuclear weapons program, recently completed a 2-year term on the Board. Allowing potential violators to serve on the Board creates an unacceptable barrier to effective action. No state under investigation for proliferation violations should be allowed to serve on the IAEA Board of Governors or on the new special committee. And any state currently on the Board that comes under investigation should be suspended from the Board. The integrity and mission of the IAEA depends on this simple principle: Those actively breaking the rules should not be entrusted with enforcing the rules.

As we move forward to address these challenges, we will consult with our friends and allies on all these new measures. We will listen to their ideas. Together, we will defend the safety of all nations and preserve the peace of the world.

Over the last 2 years, a great coalition has come together to defeat terrorism and to oppose the spread of weapons of mass destruction, the inseparable commitments of the war on terror. We've shown that proliferators can be discovered and can be stopped. We've shown that for regimes that choose defiance, there are serious consequences. The way ahead is not easy, but it is clear. We will proceed as if the lives of our citizens depend on our vigilance, because they do. Terrorists and terror states are in a race for weapons of mass murder, a race they must lose. Terrorists are resourceful. We're more resourceful. They're determined. We must be more determined. We will never lose focus or resolve. We'll be unrelenting in the defense of free nations and rise to the hard demands of dangerous times.

May God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:30 p.m. at Fort Lesley J. McNair. In his remarks, he referred to Lt. Gen. Michael M. Dunn, USAF, president, National Defense University; former Secretary of State George Shultz and his wife, Charlotte; President Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan; and Col. Muammar Abu Minyar al-Qadhafi, leader of Libya. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives Transmitting Appropriations Requests for the Judicial Branch
February 11, 2004

Dear Mr. Speaker:

As a matter of comity, I am transmitting to the Congress the enclosed requests from the Judicial Branch for FY 2004.

The details of these requests are set forth in the enclosed letter from the Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

Sincerely,

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 12.

Remarks in a Discussion on Education and the Jobs for the 21st Century Initiative in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania
February 12, 2004

The President. Thank you all very much. It is nice to be back in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Thank you for such a warm welcome. Behave yourself. [*Laughter*] I—we're going to have an interesting dialog today about how our economy works, how we can make sure people are prepared to take advantage of a growing economy. I hope that the students here at this very fine high school are able to have a better understanding about their future and how to seize opportunities.

Before we begin the discussion, I do want to thank the high school for welcoming me and quite a large entourage. [*Laughter*] Rich, thank you and your staff. I appreciate the teachers of this fine high school. I want to thank you all for teaching. Teaching is such a noble profession.

I've come to this high school—it's a high school that's willing to raise the bar, challenge what I've been calling the soft bigotry of low expectations, that is willing to measure, willing to change if you need to change, willing to use curriculum that actually works, in order to make sure every child is educated, every child has a chance to succeed. This is a fabulous high school. I'm proud of the administrators and teachers and students who make it such.

I also want to thank the parents who are here for paying attention to your sons and daughters, for caring about the quality of the education they receive. I often talk about the need for us to usher in a period of personal responsibility. Nothing is more responsible than a parent understanding that he or she is the first teacher of a child and he or she must pay attention to the education of their children.

I also want to thank our panelists, who we'll talk to in a minute here. But I also want to thank members of the mighty Pennsylvania congressional delegation for traveling with me today.

The senior Senator—I try to downplay the senior part—[*laughter*]—today is actually his birthday. That would be Arlen Specter, who is traveling with us. I look forward to working with him. Where is the Senator? He's somewhere around here anyway. Either that, or he knew this was going to be a long speech. [*Laughter*] We're working well together. We've got some challenges in Washington. I appreciate him working with my administration on issues such as judges.

Speaking about friends and people who I think is doing a great job for the State of Pennsylvania, Senator Rick Santorum is with us as well. [*Applause*] Don't go overboard. [*Laughter*] I've got to fly back with him to Washington. [*Laughter*]

I appreciate the Congressman from this district, Tim Holden. Congressman, thank you for accompanying us today. The Congressman kindly allowed others from the Pennsylvania congressional district to come into his district today, Members such as John Peterson, Joe Pitts, Don Sherwood, Todd Platts, Bill Shuster, and Jim Gerlach. Thank you all for coming.

We've got senators here; we've got State representatives here; we've got mayors here. Thank you all for being here—city councilmen, a lot of citizens.

I'm proud to be here to share with you some thoughts about how to make sure the American Dream shines brightly in every corner of the country. Before we have a little discussion about economics and of what we can do to make sure people are prepared for the new jobs of the 21st century, I do want to herald a Lauren Simkulak. Lauren is a senior at this high school. She came out to meet me at Air

Force One. She was invited to do so because, you see, she is volunteering her time. She's taking time out of her busy life. If you're a senior in high school, your life can be very busy, sometimes with studying, sometimes with other things, but nevertheless—[*laughter*]. She's involved with the Four Diamonds Fund, a fund to create awareness for cancer. She is a volunteer in the army of compassion.

The reason I bring that up is that oftentime, you hear our country's strength is defined as our military might. We're going to stay strong. You hear people talk about the might of America being the size of our wallets. We want more citizens having bigger wallets. But the truth of the matter is, the strength of this country is the heart and souls of the American people, people who are willing to love a neighbor just like they'd like to be loved themselves.

Here's my message to the high school students who are listening, and to anybody else: Find somebody who hurts and surround them with love. Governments—you can do so in all kinds of ways. You can do so in the Boys or Girl Scouts. You can do so in the Boys or Girls Club. You can do so through your church or your synagogue or mosque. The strength of America is the fact that we're a loving, compassionate, decent people who are willing to help save America, one soul at a time. I appreciate the service of people in this—[*applause*].

I want the students here to understand we've been through historic times in this country. You hear me often say I'm optimistic about the future. Well, one reason I'm optimistic is because I've seen what we have just been through as a nation. Remember, this country has been through a recession, an attack by an enemy which clearly hates what we stand for. We had some corporate scandals, and by the way, we expect our citizens in positions of responsibility to tell the truth. We passed tough laws, by the way, to send those corporate criminals to justice, which is exactly where they belong because they betrayed the trust to employees and shareholders. And then I made the tough decision about dealing with threats by committing some incredibly brave citizens into harm's way to remove a danger, to remember the lessons of September the 11th and remove a danger before it became imminent and before it could conceivably strike America again. All that affected our economy.

Think about what this economy has been through, recession, an attack, a national emergency, corporate scandals, and war. And yet, the economy is growing. The numbers are good, see. The numbers are good, but I don't worry about numbers. I worry about people. There are still some people looking for work because of the recession. There are people looking for work because jobs have gone overseas, and we need to act in this country. We need to act to make sure there are more jobs at home and people are more likely to retain a job.

I've got some ideas that I'd like to share with you, before we get to making sure we educate people for the jobs that are being generated in the 21st century. The first idea is to make sure there's certainty in the Tax Code. As you know, we acted by cutting taxes. We saw all the challenges to our economy. We cut taxes, which basically meant people had more money in their pocket.

It's kind of a simple Crawford, Texas, economic lesson. When you have more money in your pocket, you're likely to demand a good or a service—an additional good or a service. And when you make a demand for an additional good or a service, in our economy, somebody will produce the good or a service. And when somebody produces the good or a service, somebody is more likely to retain a job or find a job. In other words, the tax cuts stimulated growth.

The tax cuts also made it more likely that the small-business sector of our country would be strong and vibrant. Seventy

percent of the new jobs in America are created by small businesses. And that's why much of the tax cuts, the individual tax cuts as well as the encouraging of investment—those tax cuts which encourage investment, were aimed at small businesses.

The tax cuts are making a difference, but unfortunately, they are set to expire, which means if Congress doesn't renew the tax cuts, the child credit will go down. So, in other words, if you're now getting a bigger child credit because you're a mom or a dad, you're going to pay more taxes. It's a tax increase. The marriage penalty will go up if Congress doesn't act. In other words, they'll be raising your taxes. In order to make sure people can find work or retain a job, we need to make the tax cuts permanent. There needs to be certainty in the Tax Code. People need to be able to plan. Small businesses need to be able to plan. Individuals need to be able to plan. We do not need a tax increase right now in our country.

Health care costs are too high. It's going to be hard to increase jobs with health care costs going up. I put out a plan to address health care costs, associated health plans, health savings accounts. But one of the interesting components of making sure we control the rising costs of health care is to make sure our judicial system doesn't run docs out of business and run the cost of medicine up for patients. We need medical liability reform in the United States.

We've got too many lawsuits in America. It's one thing to be taking a lawsuit based upon a real claim. There's too many junk lawsuits which are running up the cost of doing business. It makes it hard to increase the job base. It makes it hard for people to retain a job when people are getting sued right and left. We need tort reform at the Federal level. We need class-action reform. We need asbestos reform. We need to get less regulations on people who are trying to create jobs. Washington oftentimes poses too many mandates, which makes it hard to retain a job.

The other day I met with an entrepreneur from Philadelphia. She runs a small foundry. She said, "I've got some issues. I'm worried about jobs." She said, "I'm worried about the taxes jumping up and down." She said, "A lot of my customers are getting sued, which makes it hard for them to buy products from me."

She also said something very interesting; she said she's worried about reliable energy supplies. You see, when you have blackouts or brownouts and you're trying to employ people, it's awful hard to have—to do so. In order to get jobs back, in order for people to retain jobs, we need an energy plan in this country. We need to modernize the electricity grid. We need to become less reliant on foreign sources of energy.

Listen, Pennsylvanians are great entrepreneurs and farmers. We ought to be opening up markets for Pennsylvania products. In other words, there's a lot of things we can do. But I'm confident about the future of this economy because I've seen what we've been through. I know the spirit of America. I know the entrepreneurial spirit. I know the fact we've got the best workers in the world. Productivity increases are high. This is a fabulous country. There's nothing we can't overcome, and we are overcoming it. And as we overcome the recession and war and emergency, we better make sure we've got a workforce that is prepared for the higher paying jobs of the 21st century. And that's what we're here to talk about today.

A good education system begins at the early grades. We passed what's called the No Child Left Behind Act. It basically says we trust local people to chart the path to excellence. We're going to spend more Federal money, but we want to know whether or not the children are learning to read, write, and add and subtract. This business about just shuffling kids through the system has got to end. It's got to end.

We've got to make sure that as we focus on primary and secondary education, we never forget the fact that we can strive

for higher standards at the high school level. One of the things you hear people talking about is reading programs to make sure that those kids who have been shuffled through now have a chance to learn to read before it's too late and, by the way, using curriculum that actually works, not curriculum that sounds good, not curriculum that may be based upon some interesting theory, but curriculum that actually makes a difference, so that when we measure, we can see clearly that children are learning to read.

We need to expand AP courses. We're going to talk a little bit about AP. One of the interesting things about AP courses, it says clearly that we expect the best from our children. AP courses challenge our kids. It also means that they're more likely to go to college and strive for higher goals. Too many of our minority students aren't getting AP classes. I've got a plan to make sure AP is spread throughout all segments of our society.

We've got to make sure that math and sciences are—we've got to focus on math and science. We've got to encourage people who have got expertise in math and science to come into classrooms. Oftentimes you'll hear school districts say, "We're pinched for teachers. We need extra help with math and science." We've got a program to encourage people to come in and teach part-time to help out. In other words, we're focused on making sure that secondary and elementary education works well and that high schools work well.

And another interesting part of our society which oftentimes gets overlooked is the fabulous community college system in America. You've got a great community college here in—[*applause*]. Community colleges are available and affordable. They're particularly affordable because the Federal Government wants to help people go to community college with all kinds of different scholarship programs, including Pell grants, which we intend to expand, particularly for those students who are willing to take rigorous academic programs, are willing to set their sights.

The community college system is flexible, and you're going to hear an interesting and innovative program that deals with your health care system here in Harrisburg and central Pennsylvania and the community college and the high school, to prepare folks for the jobs which actually exist.

Listen, it used to be in job training that they never asked the question whether jobs—do the jobs exist for the training programs. The way I used to put it is, you used to train 500 hairdressers for 10 jobs. And yet we satisfied our requirement at the State level because they didn't ask whether or not the jobs actually existed. They just asked, were you training somebody. Now we're beginning to ask the question, when you train somebody, is there a job, and does the curriculum make sense for the job.

So what you're about to hear is, educational excellence here in Harrisburg exists; innovative programs exist. People who are listening in different communities around Pennsylvania and the country might want to pay attention to what is happening in this community.

Rich—I appreciate your hospitality—is the principal of the mighty Rams.

Richard Mazzatesta. You're more than welcome here, Mr. President.

The President. I guess I should have said you're the head Ram. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Mazzatesta. Well, Dr. Hasson might think that I'm the second head Ram. [*Laughter*]

The President. You can call her a Ram. I'm not. [*Laughter*] I'm going to call her, "Ma'am." [*Laughter*]

Barbara Hasson. Barbara.

The President. Barbara, that's right.

[*Richard Mazzatesta, principal, Central Dauphin High School, made brief remarks.*]

The President. Well, I'm here to help. [*Laughter*] However, educational excellence will only be found at the local level. And

by that I mean, is that it's important to have local control of schools so that good superintendents and good principals are able to be—adjust according to the circumstances. The Federal Government can write checks, and we are. Federal funding is up. What's changed is we're finally asking the question, are we getting any results for our money? Good schools don't mind answering that question.

Rich said something interesting about the No Child Left Behind Act. What's interesting in this piece of legislation is that because of measuring, you're able to determine whether or not a child can read or write and add and subtract early. And what the measurement system allows you to do is, one, analyze curriculum. You know, is it working? Is the reading program we've got working? But also, it enables you to focus attention on a particular child that might slip behind, which will make it easier, by the way, when this law is fully implemented, for high schools because you'll have a more literate population coming your way at some point in time.

We've got kind of a gap in the pipeline. There's been a—because we haven't focused that intensely on measurement, there's some kids who are just being shuffled through, and you're having to remediate. But we're going to correct that by having high standards early, enough money to help—provide remedial help so that no child is left behind. That's why we called it that law. We don't want anybody left behind in America.

Barbara—listen, I've been listening to Barbaras all my life. [*Laughter*]

Dr. Hasson. And as I told the President backstage here, he's going to listen to one more Barbara. [*Laughter*]

[*Dr. Hasson, superintendent, Central Dauphin School District, made brief remarks.*]

The President. Let me see here—[*laughter*]—I think we're doing our responsibility here at the Federal level. Most funding should be at the State and local level, in order to make sure you've got local control of the schools. We've increased the Federal funding at the—for elementary and secondary school programs up by 49 percent over the last 4 years.

I think—let me say a couple of things Barbara said. First, because you measure, you know whether or not children are learning. I hear people say, "Well, I can't believe you're making people measure." Look, I didn't like to take tests either, but that's too bad. You see, we've got to know. If you don't know whether a child can read and write and add and subtract, it's likely that child will be just shuffled through. And guess who gets hurt? Guess who gets hurt? A lot of inner-city kids get hurt. We want the American Dream to be everywhere.

A lot of kids whose parents may not speak English as a first language, they're easy to quit on. Let's just move them through, see. But we're through with those days in America. Every child has worth. I believe every child can learn, and our systems must challenge mediocrity when we find it, must be willing to raise the bar.

Barbara, that's why I'm here. You're willing to raise the bar. She said, "We accept the challenge." It's not my challenge. It's a national challenge to make sure every single child can learn. If you can't read, there is no way you're going to be able to take advantage of the fantastic opportunities being created in America. If you can't read, you're going to be left behind when it comes to these unbelievable job opportunities that are going to exist.

And so what we're talking about really here is the basics of job training, aren't we? And that's to give the people the skills necessary to take advantage of a changing, dynamic, exciting economy.

Schools can't survive without good teachers, and we've got one with us right here. Rebecca is a—shall I tell them 31-year teacher? No, I won't say that. [*Laughter*] It might give away our age. [*Laughter*] She's been in the classroom for 31 years.

She is an incredibly dedicated professional who told me that after 31 years, she still loves walking into the classroom. Rebecca is in charge of the English AP. Would you share with us your story?

[*Rebecca Deitman, teacher, Central Dauphin High School, made brief remarks.*]

The President. I appreciate your dedication. You're leading with your heart, and you've got to be. See, the issue with AP is whether or not teachers know how to teach AP. That's one of the bottlenecks, to make sure more advanced placement—AP means raising the bar, is what it means. It means challenging students to the max, which is what we want to do in society, don't we? And part of the money that we're going to spend out of Washington is to make sure that there is teacher training money.

Another bottleneck is—you know, a kid goes home and says, "Mom, I want to take the AP exam. How much does it cost?" And it's quite costly. And so therefore, a lot of students say, "Well, I'm not going to take the course, because it's too much money to take the exam." We've got to help, particularly, low-income students pay for the exam. We cannot allow the cost of a test to prevent students from reaching high. And so part of the AP program—[*applause*].

[*Ms. Deitman made further remarks.*]

The President. What Barbara mentioned, for example, is not only training AP teachers how to teach AP, which is essential, but if you remember, Barbara said, "We're making sure our teachers have been retrained in the curriculum we're now going to use for reading at the primary level." Teacher training is an essential aspect of making sure our children get the best education possible.

And one of the reasons you measure, by the way, is to test whether or not the curriculum is working. And if the curriculum is not working, you need superintendents and principals and teachers bold enough to say it's not working. And so then you pick what you think will work, and then you've got to train teachers to teach that curriculum. That's what the No Child Left Behind Act also does.

And you've got a vibrant school district here. You see, if you listen carefully, what people are saying is, "We're going to challenge every child." And that's the beginnings of educational excellence. And we need to challenge every child because the jobs of the 21st century are going to require a lot of smarts. People have to have the capacity to think. It used to be, you know, crank somebody out of high school, and if they could run a backhoe, that's going to be fine. And there's nothing wrong with backhoe drivers. We're going to need them. But we're also going to need computer programmers or people working in the health sciences.

There's some exciting new fields coming, and therefore, the education system must start early, make sure the high schools continue to raise the bar, and our community colleges must be flexible enough to have a curriculum that actually meets the needs of the local communities. In other words, you don't need to be training people for jobs that don't exist.

And somebody who understands that is Edna. She runs the Harrisburg Area Community College, which as I understand it, is the oldest community college——

Edna Baehre. That's correct.

The President. The youngest leader with the oldest college.

Dr. Baehre. Don't I wish. [*Laughter*]

The President. Tell us about your school. Tell us how you've made the curriculum relevant. Tell us what you're doing.

[*Dr. Baehre, president, Harrisburg Area Community College, made brief remarks.*]

The President. Now, what—let's see if I can say—kind of summarize what you just said. There's a lot of interesting job opportunities, whether it be forklift drivers

or health care providers, and there are people who need to get extra training to be able to do those jobs. And you're helping them. And that's good. That's what we want our community colleges to do.

[*Dr. Baehre made further remarks.*]

The President. All right, Roger. Roger is the CEO of PinnacleHealth System. He's here because you're looking for people to work. One of the most exciting fields is the health care field—one of the exciting fields to find work. But you've got to able to have some—got a skill set that makes you employable.

And tell us what you've done with the community college. Tell us what kind of people you're looking for.

[*Roger Longenderfer, president and CEO, PinnacleHealth System, made brief remarks.*]

The President. Thank you, Roger. Thanks for being innovative.

The message I heard from Roger is if you're looking for work in central Pennsylvania and you're willing to retrain, willing to go back to school, you can find work, see. There's jobs in this part of the world that may require a different skill set than you have, but there is ample opportunity to retrain, particularly at the community college level. And I'm sure there's some people listening out there saying, "I want to work. I'm worried about my job security, but I may be too old to go back to the community college." That's not the way it works. The community college accepts all comers. What Roger is looking for is smart, capable, hard-working people who need just a little extra training so that he can put them to work.

Speaking about young workers, Athan's mother is here. Athan is 4?

Cari Aftosmes. Four-and-a-half.

The President. Four-and-a-half, yes. I want to make sure she's 4½. Cari is a student at HACC. She's got an interesting story that I would like for her to share with you. By the way, for the Congress to understand, she got a $1,000 child credit for Athan, and if they don't make the tax cuts permanent, she's going to be paying taxes next year.

[*Ms. Aftosmes made brief remarks.*]

The President. It's a fabulous story. Cari, first of all, understands her most important responsibility is to love her child with all her heart and, therefore, to be able to provide for her child. She's also willing to say, "I can do better. I want to do better. I want to serve my community, and I understand it's going to take a little extra time to get the skills necessary." So she actually became entrepreneurial. She said, "How best to improve?" And she researched and she found a good company willing to pay for her tuition, a community college system that was able to develop a curriculum that matched her desires. And here she is on the cusp of a new career, one that pays better, with better benefits.

See, education enables our workers to be more productive. When you hear about productivity increases, what you're really hearing about is better paying jobs. But it requires a certain spirit, doesn't it? It requires somebody to seize the moment, some citizen to say, "I want to do better." Government can't make you do better. We can provide the opportunities, and we all work hard to do so. But it requires the spirit of a person like Cari to rise up and say, "I want to do my duty as a mom. I'm going to do my duty as a wife. I'm going to do my duty as a citizen to provide care and comfort for people in hospitals." She took advantage of the opportunity. For those of you looking for work out there, take advantage of the opportunities available to embetter yourself.

Listen, I'm going to tell you something. We've been through a lot in this country. We're going to win the war on terror. We're going to promote freedom and peace. The world is going to be more free and therefore more peaceful. At home,

we're going to be a society which understands the issues facing our fellow citizens, helps our fellow citizens realize great expectations of our society, encourages the entrepreneurial spirit of Americans, enables people to realize their dreams by having an education system which works and functions well.

And as well this is a society where people who hurt and are lonely and hopeless can find solace, because there's a loving citizen with arms open, willing to do their duty as an American by loving their neighbor.

I am so honored to be back here in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. I thank you for the warm welcome. I thank our panelists for this discussion. And may God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:06 a.m. at Central Dauphin High School.

Remarks in a Discussion on Parental Options and School Choice
February 13, 2004

The President. Thank you, John. Listen, I'm thrilled to be here. I love to come to centers of excellence. This high school is a center of excellence. It is a school that—I was so pleased to hear that 98 percent of the senior class will be going on to higher education. That is a—I would say that's what's called dashing false expectations, is the best way to put it.

See, I would suspect that prior to coming to a place that demanded high standards and high excellence, people would say, "Well, these certain kids can't learn." See, there's an attitude in our society that maybe certain children can't learn, so therefore let's have a system that just shuffles them through. But not at this school. This school believes in the worth and value of every child, that every child can learn. And therefore, this school is not afraid to raise expectations and set glorious heights and demand excellence. And as a result, you've achieved a startling achievement: 98 percent of the high school seniors are going to higher education.

I want to congratulate you and congratulate Jim, congratulate the teachers, congratulate the parents but, most importantly, congratulate the students. I appreciate you setting goals and making the right choices to achieve those goals.

This is a fabulous high school. It's a great place to come and talk about the expectations of our society. It's a great place to come and talk about how we can encourage people to achieve new heights. It's a good way to—it's a good place to come and talk about how you challenge the status quo when the status quo is promoting mediocrity. So thank you for letting me come.

I appreciate so very much the Secretary of Education being here. He's going to say some words in a minute. You know, when I was looking for a Secretary of Education, I wasn't interested in finding a theorist, somebody who talked about the philosophy of the education or talking about somebody—trying to find somebody who has actually done it. And he was the superintendent of schools in Harris County, which is Houston, Texas. He understands the philosophy behind the law that we just passed a year ago, a law I'm going to talk a little bit about. He's doing a great job. He's a good, sound man. I've known him for a long time. I'm proud that he's serving us. Thank you for coming, Rod. I'm glad you're here.

I noticed Tom Davis and Rodney Frelinghuysen, who are with us today, Members of the United States Congress, who pushed for the initiative I'm going to

describe. They're educational entrepreneurs. This is good legislation. I'm really proud of the work that you two gentleman have done on behalf of citizens and parents of this—of Washington, DC. It's really good legislation, and I want to thank you for your efforts.

The Lieutenant Governor from Maryland, Michael Steele, is with us. He's a graduate of this fine high school. I appreciate you coming, Michael.

I appreciate his Excellency Kevin Farrell for coming, and please give Cardinal McCarrick my very best. There's no finer person in our country than Cardinal McCarrick, and I'm proud to call him friend. He's a decent, decent man. The bishop said that he was in Kosovo, and—spreading love and American good will. No better person to do so than Cardinal McCarrick, by the way.

Patty Weitzel-O'Neill is the superintendent. Thank you, Patty, for your hospitality. Elfreda Massie is the interim superintendent of DC public schools. Elfreda, thank you for being here. I want to assure you that the message you're going to hear today is one that says that all systems can achieve excellence. I believe that. I think it's very important for us to work not only in DC but around the country for a public school system that promotes excellence for every single child. And I want to thank you for your leadership and your willingness to take on a tough assignment. I appreciate you coming.

And I want to thank the chairman of the board of the school. One of the toughest jobs in America is to be on the school board. You get all the complaints and none of the glory. But thank you and the board members for being here.

I, again, want to thank the students so very much. We passed an interesting piece of legislation a couple of years ago called the No Child Left Behind Act. I love the sound of that because that's what I believe society must strive for. No child should be left behind. That kind of says some child or children may be being left behind, doesn't it? If the admonition is "no child left behind," maybe some are, and I think they have been. And one of the reasons I think they have is because I don't think we've set the bar high enough.

This society of ours must challenge what I've called the low—the soft bigotry of low expectations. That means when you lower the bar, when you don't believe in the human potential of a person, you're likely to get lousy results. So I think we need to raise the bar everywhere, just like you've done here at Archbishop High, to challenge every child.

Then I think you've got to measure. See, I don't know how you know whether or not you're achieving excellence if you're not willing to measure. I hear people say around the country, "I don't like tests." Well, I didn't like them either—[*laughter*]—you know? But that's just the way it is. If you're going to try to figure out whether a child can learn to read and write and add and subtract early in life, you better measure. You better find out early, before it's too late.

A society that doesn't want to leave any child behind is a society which says, "Show me whether or not the curriculum is working. Show me whether or not the school is doing what it's supposed to be doing." I suspect Archbishop High is good because it not only sets the bar, but you're willing to measure. And when you find a child that needs help, you provide that child help.

That ought to be the—that ought to be the paradigm, to use a fancy word, for every school district in America. We need to raise the bar. And so what we said here in Washington, DC, is we're willing to spend more money, particularly on Title I students. But for the first time, the Federal Government is asking the question, "Can you show us whether or not we're achieving objectives?"

You see, we're tired of children being just shuffled through. It's time now to determine whether or not we're meeting the goal of, for example, every child reading at grade level by the third grade. That's not too much to ask, is it, for a society, to be able to read at grade level by third grade?

So we set the goal. Now it's up to the school district to show us whether or not we're meeting the goal, and if not, there's extra money available to make sure that no child is left behind. But at some point in time, in order to challenge mediocrity where we find mediocrity, parents have to be given other options.

And so the No Child Left Behind Act has got an interesting way of providing that for parents. We say, "We measure. We post the scores. We look at results, and if the results don't measure up, a parent has got the ability to take extra money for tutorial work at a private institution or a public institution, or a parent can send a child to another public school." It's the beginnings of what's called school choice.

But I didn't feel like, and Congress didn't feel like, and I know a lot of parents here in Washington didn't feel like that was enough. So we worked on a new initiative. It's an initiative that says, "Here in Washington, we want all aspects of schools to work, so there's money available for the public school system." And I want to thank the Mayor, by the way, for his involvement in this project. And he said, "As you're talking about school choice, make sure you don't forget the other schools as well, see." And so we've got money available to make sure public education can do the best it can possibly do. There's money available for the charter school movement, which provides parents interesting options.

But there's also a new approach here in Washington that I want to talk about today. It's an approach that says there are school systems that are capable of meeting expectations, and when a parent has a child trapped in a school that won't teach and won't change, we've got to liberate that family, got to give them options. So the Congress wisely—and I might say with administration nudging or insistence—said, "Why don't we provide a $7,500 scholarship for parents whose children go to—low-income parents whose children go to schools that aren't working, so that that scholarship can follow the child to a place like Archbishop Carroll High School." And there's $14 million, some of it for administrative purposes, but 90 percent of it is going to go to the families.

This is an historic moment for education. It's the first time ever where the Federal Government has recognized that school choice is a viable alternative for parents. It's an opportunity for us to say to a mother or a dad, "Here's your chance to achieve your expectation for your child." You see, a society that is responsible is one in which a mother and dad love their children with all their heart and all their soul. And a parent who does that wants the very best—the very best—for their children.

And so this initiative is one that's the beginning of what I hope is change all across the country. It's the beginning of a go-by for other school districts and other communities. It says, "Look, we want our public schools to succeed. We want them to do well, but we're going to raise the bar and raise expectations. And when we find children trapped in schools that will not change, parents must be given another viable option." And so here in DC, for the first time, hopefully starting this fall, parents will be given an option. When parents are dissatisfied, they will now have a chance to take scholarship money to send their child to a school of their choice.

We've got some people here who understand what I'm talking about. We've got some grandmothers and moms and school-choice agitators. Well, I don't know, that's a little harsh, isn't it? Okay, advocates, advocates. Before we begin, I might ask the leader here about expectations. When a child comes to this school, tell me how

you achieve 98 percent graduates going to college.

[*John T. Butler III, president, Archbishop Carroll High School, made brief remarks.*]

The President. I appreciate the attitude. He's challenged the soft bigotry of low expectations by setting the bar high. You mentioned AP. You know, one of the things we need to do in America is to spread AP programs—that's called advanced placement programs. Those are high-quality, high-expectation, high-achievement programs. Too often, though, in our communities, a parent will take a look and say, "I don't—I'm not so sure I want to pay for the AP exam. My budget can't afford it." I think Government ought to help people pay for the AP exam. Low-income people ought not to fear their child taking an advanced placement exam because they can't afford the fee. That doesn't make any sense. Plus I think we need to have money available to help teachers teach the advanced placement program. It's one thing to aspire to advanced placement, but if you don't have a teacher who knows how to teach advanced placement, it's not going to become a reality.

But I appreciate the AP program. AP programs work. The AP program is part of a challenging curriculum. And once you pass the AP, you're—there's very little you can't accomplish, by the way. It means that you've excelled. I know you've got a lot of AP students here.

Mr. Butler. We do. The faculty are really important in that regard as well. We are fortunate to have dedicated faculty who sacrifice a lot, and they give long hours to ensure that students are getting what they need. And they go beyond the call of duty, frankly, on a daily basis to ensure that they're providing support—even to today, we have students who are at Harvard, as a matter of fact. Our debate team is at Harvard.

The President. Oh, I don't know what's so good about that. [*Laughter*] But——

Mr. Butler. Well, I understand that you've spent some time there as well.

The President. Well, I mean, I thought he was going to say Yale. But you know, that's all right. No, that's good, they're at Harvard. Yes. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Butler. It is.

The President. Yes, I went there, okay—much to the shock of some of the press corps. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Butler. But I think giving our young people opportunities to get out of the building and get to universities in this community but outside of this community as well really helps to reinforce that. It also helps, too, to have alums such as Michael Steele—I'm glad he's with us today—to hold up as an example of what happens when you work hard.

The President. Michael, good. Listen, Rod, why don't you share some thoughts. Rod took—I told you, he took on a tough assignment. And I will tell you the children in Houston, Texas, benefited from his leadership. And he's a good, solid citizen.

[*Secretary of Education Roderick R. Paige made brief remarks.*]

The President. I appreciate you—thank you, Mr. Secretary.

Local control of schools is important because innovation oftentimes takes place in spite of government. Archbishop Carroll, obviously, has been able to survive without government telling them what to do, and you're doing what's right.

But the other thing about local control of schools is the more power there is at the local level, the more parents have an opportunity to change things. And so one of the key components of the No Child Left Behind Act is that it's up to you to chart the path to excellence. We just want to know, see? That's all we're asking.

The Federal Government is finally saying, "Show us whether or not you're achieving the objectives, but you figure it out." And it's amazing what happens when parents decide to get involved. A lot of parents

think everything is fine with their school until the test scores show up, until there's comparison, until they take a look at—across boundaries. Say, in DC, I bet there's a lot of folks wondering why my school doesn't have a 98 percent college attendance with the seniors. So information is important, but empowering parents is important.

Virginia Walden-Ford is with us today. She is—she is a great citizen in that she's willing to seize the moment to try to effect change. She's a tireless worker on behalf of children and parents. She's somebody who has made a difference. I want to welcome you here, Virginia. Tell us about your family. Tell us about what you're doing. Tell us about how you got involved with the Parents for Choice. She's the executive director, by the way, for Parents for Choice in DC movement.

[*Virginia Walden-Ford, executive director, D.C. Parents for School Choice, made brief remarks.*]

The President. One person can make a difference. Now Virginia has got to make sure that the parents who want to learn how the program works can find a resource. I know you will. There's—this—for example, this might stimulate a few phone calls. I suspect there's going to be some mothers and dads wanting to contact you to find out how the program works. How do you apply for the $7,500 scholarship? What does it take to be eligible? And how do we get the scholarship money out? We'll help. I know you got an advertising campaign getting ready to go.

Mrs. Walden-Ford. We do. We have a bus campaign that begins on Monday. This past week, we spent time sending out forms, just asking parents to call for information, thousands of them. So we are in the field. We are activists. And I'm not embarrassed about being called——

The President. I said "agitators," don't change it. [*Laughter*]

Mrs. Walden-Ford. Oh, okay—I'm not embarrassed. Well, I was——

The President. That's not a bad word.

Mrs. Walden-Ford. Look, look, Congressman Davis, I think I was a little bit of an agitator too. [*Laughter*] But when you believe in something, you fight for it, or you raise your voice and get on—and I know we got on Congressman's nerves. I know we did. But that was okay because we got it done.

The President. I do too, occasionally, myself, you know? [*Laughter*]

[*Mrs. Walden-Ford made further remarks.*]

The President. Good job, thank you. Catherine Hill is with us today. Catherine is raising a niece, a nephew, and two grandsons. She is a—thank you for being here, Catherine. Would you mind sharing with us some of your thoughts?

[*Catherine L. Hill, aunt and grandparent of DC students, made brief remarks.*]

The President. Catherine made a decision early on that one of your nephews—was it your nephew or grandson?—went to school in Maryland. So that's what we call school choice. [*Laughter*] In other words, she said, "I'm not satisfied. I've got high expectations for my loved one." And evidently, the expectations weren't being met, so you made a decision.

Now, what we need to do is make sure the decision is closer to home. She's a resident in Washington, DC. She lives here. It's important that decisions be made more readily available for parents.

I want to say something that Rod said, and it's very important. As you make those decisions, somebody might get the message and say, "Wait, we're not doing something right. We must earn Catherine's support by raising expectations." Why—somebody ought to be asking the question, why is Catherine making a unbelievably tough call to drive hours to another State or out of this District to a State? And hopefully that causes somebody to say, "Maybe we're not

doing something right. Maybe we ought to work harder to win the confidence of Catherine Hill or the Catherine Hills of the world." That's what Rod was talking about. You see, when a parent makes the decision, votes to move a child, hopefully that will cause the response to be, we've got to do something better or something different. The customer is Catherine Hill and her children.

And so I want to thank you for your story. More importantly, I want to thank you for setting such an unbelievable example. Imagine Catherine raising a niece, nephew, and two grandsons. That in itself is an overpowering job. And yet at the same time, you keep that clear vision about what is best, and I'm going to appreciate your example.

Ms. Hill. And I also want to say that he graduated in June of 2003. So that's a blessing.

The President. That is.

Elizabeth Stallans is with us. I oftentimes tell people the toughest job in America is being a single mom. That's the hardest work in our country. And it's important for our school systems to make that job easier, not harder. And I appreciate you coming, Elizabeth. Thank you for being here. We look forward to hearing your story.

[*Elizabeth Stallans, parent of a DC student, made brief remarks.*]

The President. Thank you, Elizabeth. Very good. Thank you, Elizabeth. There's strong testimony. Thank you both.

Listen, John, thanks for having us. I've got to say something about the Catholic schools in America. The Catholic school system provides an incredibly important service in our country. They serve as a model. They also take on a lot of students that are the so-called hard-to-educate but always do a good job. They're willing to help with the financially disadvantaged parent. Catholic schools are an incredibly important part of the fabric of our country, and I want to thank the educators who are here. I want to thank you for the service you provide.

I know you share with me a deep desire that all schools do well, all school systems achieve the national objective, which is excellence for every child, regardless of their background. There's no doubt in my mind we can achieve it. In order to achieve it, you've got to have the right mindset, and you must be willing to challenge the status quo when it's failing. This society must be willing to never accept mediocrity when it comes to the education of our children.

You know, the President has got a pretty big microphone. I've got a chance to spotlight success. And by coming here today, I am spotlighting success, this success that we want to be a success all over the District of Columbia. We want people to be able to compete with you, John.

Mr. Butler. I look forward to that.

The President. Yes, sir. I know you do, because you love children——

Mr. Butler. I do.

The President. ——from the bottom of your heart. So do I. Thank you all for coming. I want to wish the seniors all the very best. I want to congratulate you. Would the seniors stand up, please?

Thank you for letting us come. Thank you for letting me come. Remember, your senior year isn't over until you graduate. [*Laughter*] Good luck in college. Good luck whatever you decide to do.

May God bless you. May God bless this high school. And may God continue to bless our great country.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:49 p.m. at Archbishop Carroll High School. In his remarks, he referred to James Mumford, principal, Archbishop Carroll High School; Bishop Kevin J. Farrell, Auxiliary Bishop of Washington; Theodore E. Cardinal McCarrick, Archbishop of Washington; Patricia Weitzel-O'Neill, superintendent of schools, Archdiocese of Washington; Lavern

Chatman, chair, Board of Trustees, Archbishop Carroll High School; and Mayor Anthony A. Williams of the District of Columbia.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting a Notice of Intention To Enter Into a Free Trade Agreement With Australia
February 13, 2004

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

In accordance with section 2105(a)(1)(A) of the Trade Act of 2002 (the "Trade Act"), I am pleased to notify the Congress of my intent to enter into a free trade agreement (FTA) with the Government of Australia.

This agreement will create new opportunities for America's workers, farmers, businesses, and consumers by eliminating barriers in trade with Australia. Australia is already a major trade and investment partner of the United States, as well as one of the strongest and most dependable friends this country has ever had. This agreement will provide opportunities to further deepen this important relationship, for the mutual benefit of our two nations.

Consistent with the Trade Act, I am sending this notification at least 90 days in advance of signing the United States-Australia FTA. My Administration looks forward to working with the Congress in developing appropriate legislation to approve and implement this free trade agreement.

Sincerely,

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Richard B. Cheney, President of the Senate. The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

The President's Radio Address
February 14, 2004

Good morning. On September the 11th, 2001, America and the world saw the great harm that terrorists could inflict upon our country, armed with box cutters, mace, and 19 airline tickets.

Those attacks also raised the prospect of even worse dangers, of terrorists armed with chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear weapons. The possibility of secret and sudden attack with weapons of mass destruction is the greatest threat before humanity today.

America is confronting this danger with open eyes and unbending purpose. America faces the possibility of catastrophic attack from ballistic missiles armed with weapons of mass destruction, so we are developing and deploying missile defenses to guard our people. The best intelligence is necessary to win the war on terror and to stop proliferation, so we are improving and adapting our intelligence capabilities for new and emerging threats. We are using every means of diplomacy to confront the regimes that develop deadly weapons. We are cooperating with more than a dozen nations under the Proliferation Security Initiative to interdict lethal materials transported by land, sea, or air. And we have shown our willingness to use force when force is

required. No one can now doubt the determination of America to oppose and to end these threats to our security.

We are aggressively pursuing another dangerous source of proliferation, black-market operatives who sell equipment and expertise related to weapons of mass destruction. The world recently learned of the network led by A.Q. Khan, the former head of Pakistan's nuclear weapons program. Khan and his associates sold nuclear technology and know-how to rogue regimes around the world, such as Iran and North Korea. Thanks to the tireless work of intelligence officers from the United States and the United Kingdom and other nations, the Khan network is being dismantled.

This week, I proposed a series of new, ambitious steps to build on our recent success against proliferation. We must expand the international cooperation of law enforcement organizations to act against proliferation networks, to shut down their labs, to seize their materials, to freeze their assets, and to bring their members to justice.

We must strengthen laws and international controls that fight proliferation. Last fall at the United Nations, I proposed a new Security Council resolution requiring all states to criminalize proliferation, enact strict export controls, and secure all sensitive materials within their borders. I urge the Council to pass these measures quickly.

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, one of the most important tools for preventing the spread of nuclear weapons, is undermined by a loophole that allows countries to seek nuclear weapons under the cover of civilian nuclear power programs. I propose that the world's leading nuclear exporters close that loophole. The Nuclear Suppliers Group should refuse to sell enrichment and reprocessing equipment and technologies to any state that does not already possess full scale, functioning enrichment and reprocessing plants.

For international rules and laws to be effective, they must be enforced. We must ensure that the International Atomic Energy Agency is fully capable of exposing and reporting banned nuclear activity. Every nation should sign what is called the Additional Protocol, which would allow the IAEA to make broader inspections of nuclear sites. We should also establish a special IAEA committee to focus on safeguards and verification. And no nation under investigation for proliferation violations should be able to serve on this committee or on the governing board of the IAEA. Governments breaking the rules should not be trusted with enforcing the rules.

Terrorists and terrorist states are in a race for weapons of mass murder, a race they must lose. They are resourceful. We must be more resourceful. They are determined. We must be more determined. We will never lose focus or resolve. We will be unrelenting in the defense of free nations and rise to the hard demands of our dangerous time.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 10:55 a.m. on February 13 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on February 14. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 13 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks in a Discussion on the National Economy in Tampa, Florida
February 16, 2004

Connie Horner. Welcome, President Bush and the First Lady. It is a tremendous honor for all of us to be here with you on President's Day.

The President. Thank you.

Ms. Horner. We're all wondering how you enjoyed the race yesterday?

The President. A lot. [*Laughter*] I had the honor of calling Dale Earnhardt, Jr., after the race to congratulate him. I said, "There's nothing wrong with a fellow following in his father's footsteps." [*Laughter*] We had a great time, really a good time.

And it's such an honor to be here in Tampa. It's a beautiful part of our country. Thanks for having me.

[*At this point, Ms. Horner, president, NuAir Manufacturing, made brief remarks.*]

The President. You're probably wondering why we're here. It's because we're going to herald the entrepreneurial spirit of America and talk about small-business ownership and job creation. And we're going to talk to some people who are working hard to do their duty as a parent, what it means to try to make a living in this environment.

Our country has been through a lot recently. We really have, I know. I want to remind people that—during the course of this conversation—there's nothing we can't overcome as a nation, because of the people.

So we're going to—we'll have a discussion here about the economy. But before we do, obviously you saw that Laura is here, and I'm really, really pleased she's traveling with me.

I want to thank the Horners for having us here. Mr. Horner, thank you very much for your hospitality, and Ms. Horner.

I also want to thank members of the congressional delegation who have come to say hello and to listen. I appreciate their friendship. Congressman Mike Bilirakis, Congressman Adam Putnam—good to see Adam—Ginny Brown-Waite, Congresswoman Waite, good to see you. Congresswoman Katherine Harris is with us. Thank you all. I appreciate you all being here.

I know the Lieutenant Governor is here, Toni Jennings. By the way, you might tell the Governor I was looking for him. [*Laughter*] He's——

Audience member. He's working.

The President. Yes, I know he's working. He's in Costa Rica. [*Laughter*] He is—I'm really proud of that man. He is a fabulous brother and a great Governor. Give him my best. The attorney general is with us. General, good to see you, Charlie Crist.

I know we've got some mayors here, the mayor of St. Pete, the mayor of Seminole, and the mayor of Clearwater. Thank you all for coming. I'm honored you're here. My only advice is, fill the potholes—[*laughter*]—a lot of citizens and local officials.

Last night when I arrived from Daytona Beach, I met a fellow named Candy Corona. I don't know if Candy is here. He thought he might be able to get here. There he is. Candy, good to see you. Thank you for coming. So you're wondering why I would introduce Candy. I'll tell you why, because the strength of this country is not our military, even though we will keep it strong. The strength of this country isn't the fact that we've got wealth—and the good news is we're generating more for our people. The strength of this country is the fact we've got people who are willing to volunteer to serve a neighbor in need. That's the strength. The strength of the country is the hearts and souls of our fellow citizens. That's the true strength of America.

Candy is a volunteer. He takes time out of his life to paint houses for senior citizens. That means a lot to the senior citizen

who he is helping. You see, ours is a country where citizens—not because of government, by the way—decide to help somebody in need, and they change America one heart and one soul at a time.

And the reason Candy is here—I've asked him to come—is so we can herald that great aspect of the country. People want to serve our Nation. You can do so in a lot of ways. You can mentor a child. You can feed the hungry. You can help the housing of those who can't help themselves. There are all kinds of ways you can serve America by loving your neighbor just like you would like to be loved yourself. Candy, thank you for the example you set, and we're proud you're here. Thank you.

We have a lot of reasons to be optimistic in America. I want to remind you what this country has been through right quick. First of all, in the year 2000, the economy began to slow down, and a recession came our way in early 2001. Now, when you have a recession, it means the economy is going backwards and people can't find work. You might remember the times of uncertainty during a recession—you know, you're wondering whether or not there's another window to make, or you're wondering whether or not there's another product to sell. And when you're having trouble selling product, the labor market becomes soft and negative. People can't do their jobs, which is to put food on the table for their families. And so the recession really affected us.

And we started to come out of the recession, and then the enemy hit us. And that hurt. It hurt a lot. It hurt our economy, of course, but it also hurt our national psychology, because we thought oceans could protect us from harm. It caused me to look at the world in different ways. It meant I couldn't look at a threat and hope it would go away and, when I saw a threat, that we couldn't take the good will of madmen and dictators, that my most solemn duty is to protect the American people. So when we saw gathering threats, we had to deal with them. That's what September the 11th said. And we did deal with them. And the world is safer and America is more secure as a result of dealing with threats.

And then it turned out some of our citizens forgot to tell the truth. Corporate CEOs didn't tell the truth to their shareholders and their investors, and that affected the psychology of the country. We had a recession, and then we were attacked by a hateful enemy. And then some of our own citizens let us down, didn't they? And people began to wonder about the capitalist system; how could they trust the word of corporate America if CEOs weren't willing to tell the truth.

We passed laws, by the way, to hold them to account. And if you notice, slowly but surely, justice is being delivered. I mean, the message is clear: If you lie, cheat, or steal, there will be a consequence here in America.

Then, as I mentioned, I made the tough decision to go to war. Laura reminded me that early in the summer of 2002 on our TV screens it started to say, "March to War," a prediction of war. It's not a good environment to invest capital when you see on your TV screens "March to War." It's hard to be optimistic about the future when you think you're marching to war. Now we're marching to peace. Now the world is more peaceful.

But we've overcome a lot, when you think about what this country has been through. Those were a lot of obstacles and hurdles for this Nation to handle. And yet, our economy is strong. I will argue vociferously that one of the reasons it's strong is because the Congress wisely heeded my call and let people keep more of their own money. You see, when people have more money in their pocket, they're more likely to demand a good or a service. And in our economy, when somebody demands an additional good or a service, somebody is likely to produce it. And when somebody produces a good or a service, somebody is more likely to find work.

The tax relief was a vital part of this economic recovery. I say "recovery"—the facts bear me out. The last 6 months of growth have been tremendous. Housing starts are way up. Inflation is low. Interest is low. New jobs are being created. Reports for manufacturing activity is up. Things are looking better for America.

We increased the child credit to help people raise their families, and we'll talk about that here in a little bit. We reduced the effects of what they call a marriage penalty. I can't imagine a Tax Code that penalizes marriage. It seems like we want a society that encourages marriage, not penalizes marriage.

We helped our senior citizens with relief on dividends and capital gains. But one of the vital aspects of the tax relief plan was the help it provided to small business. You see, most small businesses pay tax at the individual income-tax level. A lot of Americans don't understand that, but it's true. A lot of small businesses are sole proprietorships. When you're a sole proprietorship, it means you pay tax at the individual income-tax level. A lot of small business are what they call Subchapter S corporations, which means that they pay tax at the individual income-tax level.

So I went to Congress and said, "Let's reduce all taxes on people who pay tax." I mean, if you pay tax, you ought to get tax relief. We ought not to try to pick and choose who the winners and losers are when it comes to tax relief. Part of that is just out of simple fairness, and part of it is because I understand the importance of small businesses. See, if you're worried about people working and you realize most new jobs are created by small businesses, it makes sense to have policies that encourage small businesses to grow.

So the tax relief plan you hear some people maligning around our country helps small-business growth. It put money in the coffers of small businesses. It helped invigorate the entrepreneurial spirit here in America, which is important. Plus we had additional tax relief to encourage investment, and you'll hear some talk about that today. No, the tax relief came at the right time. It is making an enormous difference.

And now what the United States Congress must do is to make the tax relief permanent. The tax relief is set to expire. It was good policy, but it's going to expire. The child credit goes down next year, unless Congress acts. The penalty on marriage goes up, unless Congress acts. A family of four—a married couple with two children making $40,000 a year will see a $915 tax increase, unless Congress acts. You hear people in Washington saying, "Oh, let's not make the tax cuts permanent." When you hear somebody say that, they're saying, "We're going to tax you. We're going to raise your taxes." You'll hear some discussion about what that means for a family when their taxes go up, but from an economic perspective, I'm telling you, now is not the time to raise the taxes on the American people.

There's some other things we need to do here in this country. We need to make sure that other people open their markets to U.S. products. Our markets are open to other countries. Let's open theirs. We're good at things. Just give our people a chance to sell them overseas, and we'll compete.

We've got to make sure we've got energy here in this country. We need to make sure we've got reliable electricity. Congress needs to get me an energy bill this year. We need to make sure that—these small-business owners will tell you, too much paperwork can stifle innovation and the entrepreneurial spirit. The Federal Government, the State government, Lieutenant Governor, and the local governments must do everything they can to make the paperwork burden less on small businesses, not more. We need less regulation when it comes to overburdening the people who are creating jobs here in America.

Health costs are a real problem here in this country. They're on the rise. I put forth

some plans to help deal with the rising cost of health care, such as health savings accounts. These are innovative new approaches. I urge people to contact your health care providers to understand the power of health savings accounts. We've got association health plans, a plan that stalled in Congress, that allows small business to pool risk. You see, small businesses can't associate now in order to buy insurance like big businesses can, and small businesses ought to be allowed to try to contain costs by pooling risk.

But I tell you one thing we need to do in this country in order to control the cost of rising medical care, we need to get rid of the junk and frivolous lawsuits that are driving good doctors out of business. There's some powerful interests in Washington that don't want to see this happen. But if you talk to small-business owners all across the country, they will tell you, rising health care cost is a problem. And if you talk to doctors and medical care providers, they'll tell you frivolous lawsuits are driving them out of business. If you talk to people about defensive medicine, they'll tell you frivolous lawsuits are driving up the cost to taxpayers.

It's estimated that the Federal Government spends over $20 billion a year because of the practice of defensive medicine because of frivolous and junk lawsuits. We need to do something about it. The House passed a good bill, but the special interests have got it bottled up in the United States Senate. These Senators, like the two from your State, have got to understand that medical liability reform is good for job creation. It's good for small businesses, and it's good for America, and we need it now.

Anyway, you can understand why I'm optimistic about this country. I've seen what we have overcome. But I'm really optimistic because the thing that really makes America work are the people in this country, the spirit of the American people, the incredible workers we have in this country. Our Nation has got the best workers in the world by far, right here.

And the other thing about America is the great entrepreneurial spirit. It is strong. It is alive. It is well. It is one of the great success stories of our country, in which somebody can come with a good idea and dream big and start their own business. That's what I love about the country. One of the vital roles of Government is to create an environment in which the entrepreneurial spirit flourishes. That's one of the most important roles of Government. I believe this administration is doing so. I believe we set the stage for further growth of small businesses, so people can own something. We want people owning something in America. We want you owning your own home. We want you owning and managing your own retirement accounts and health care plans, and if you're so inclined, we want you owning and running your own small business.

Connie Horner has the great opportunity here in America to run her own business. She's a CEO of a thriving, vibrant business. And if you've got a business inclination, there's nothing more exciting than running your own small business. And I can just tell she feels that way when I first met her. She's enthusiastic. One of the things she told me right off the bat is, "We're successful because we've got a great workforce here, people who care about what they're doing." So Connie, thank you for having me. Why don't you share with the people your story. Tell them about your plans this year. If you're thinking about adding a job, you might mention that. If you're not, that's okay; you can mention that too. [*Laughter*]

[*Ms. Horner made further remarks.*]

The President. There's a couple of things she said. She said the Tax Code encouraged her to make an investment. Well, when she invests in a piece of equipment, somebody has to manufacture the equipment. In other words, the Tax Code caused this company

to make a decision, an economic decision. In other words, demand increased for a product in this case. Somebody has to make that. There's a ripple effect. Good tax policy creates a ripple effect throughout the economy. So not only does the increased equipment help this company, particularly help the workers become more productive—and by the way, productivity increases for American workers means better pay. That's what that means. It means our workers become the best in the world, which will yield better pay.

Part of the decisionmaking was because we allowed for the expense of certain capital expenditures. And we allowed for accelerated depreciation. It's important for small businesses to have consistent tax laws. In other words, you don't want planners and thinkers to be saying, "Gosh, the tax law may or may not be the same next year." That creates confusion in the decisionmaking process. We need constancy here, and so I appreciate you bringing that up. I also want you to know, she said, "We may add 40 workers this year." That's really good news for two groups of people. One, the workers here, it means that there's reliable jobs. She wouldn't be adding 40 workers if people's jobs weren't secure who already have them here. But the other good news is for the 40 that could find work here.

But plus, there are thousands of entrepreneurs in America, all over the country, making the same kind of decisions—40 workers here, 5 workers there begin to add up to excitement and new jobs. And that's what we're interested in, and that's what we're talking about, how to create an environment where people are willing to take risk so that somebody can find work.

[*Ms. Horner made further remarks, concluding as follows.*]

Ms. Horner. And we are just incredibly optimistic about our future, and we have you to thank for that.

The President. Actually, you've got yourself to thank for it, see? You've got yourself to thank for it. People—all governments can do is create an environment. It's up to our fellow citizens to seize the opportunity. We can't make you be bold. We can't make you be smart. We can't make you make the right decisions. That's up to you. I mean, the truth of the matter is, this economy is good because of the people in America. But thank you for the credit. Of course, I'll take it any time you give it. [*Laughter*]

Again, I want the people who might be listening in to see the connection between investment and jobs. Connie says that, "We're going to invest a million dollars this year." Investment means purchasing, in this case, equipment. And somebody has got to make the equipment. So when you hear policies that encourage investment, I hope you make the connection between the word "investment" and the creation of jobs. And that's why so much talk with the economists are about—are people investing, because that investment cycle will lead to the increase of employment. So when you hear Connie say, "We're thinking about investing a million dollars," that's positive news for somebody who is wondering whether or not they can find a job.

Now, speaking about investing—good job, by the way. Sam Leto is with us. Sam is the chairman of Tampa Brass & Aluminum Corporation. He's about to tell you what that company does. I'm about to tell you, however, that Sam's company is organized as a Subchapter S corporation, which means that when you reduce taxes on the individual taxpayer, you're really reducing taxes on his business. And one of the fundamental questions that you must ask during an economic slowdown is, "Who do you want spending the people's money?" I obviously made the decision that I think it's best that the small-business owners spend money on their employees and on making sure their companies are modern

and in good shape. I'd rather—in an economic recession, I'd rather that, in order to get out of this recession, that the people be spending their money, not the Government trying to figure out how to spend the people's money.

And so Sam is a person who—Sam has got him a small business. Sam, tell us about it.

[*Sam Leto, chairman of the board, Tampa Brass & Aluminum Corp., made brief remarks.*]

The President. Yes, one thing—I'm going to interrupt you for a quick second, Sam—another piece of bad legislation that I think we corrected, at least corrected temporarily—it's going to come back unless Congress acts—is to get rid of the death tax. Let me tell you what the death tax does.

Here's a fellow who has worked hard to build his business up, and he has made the decision to, obviously, to leave it to your family, unless, of course, they misbehave, in which case he may change his mind. [*Laughter*] The Government is now taxing his company's earnings. When he goes on and leaves his business to his sons and daughter, they'll tax it again. That doesn't make any sense, does it, to get taxed twice. It's not good for farmers to have the death tax. It's not good for the ranchers of America. It's not good for the small-business owners. Congress got rid of the death tax, except it comes back to life in 2011. We need to get rid of it forever for the sake of entrepreneurs.

[*Mr. Leto made further remarks, concluding as follows.*]

Mr. Leto. Mr. President, we have to keep this tax cut.

The President. Thank you, sir. I agree. Good job, Sam. Sam's feeling pretty upbeat about life, it sounds like to me. That's good. You see, a lot of the—a lot of economic growth depends upon the psychology of the people making decisions all throughout our economy, whether it be the consumers wanting to buy more or whether it be employers willing to invest more. And so far the entrepreneurs have been upbeat. And it's—but you're going to say, "Well, of course, they just pick the upbeat people." Well, the truth of the matter is, people are pretty upbeat all over the country. That's what I'm here to report to you. There's an optimism in our country that is undeniable. And we've got growth. And the key question is are we wise enough to continue the policies but to keep the policies in place that encourage growth.

We've got with us Kevin Govin. He's the COO of MarkMaster, Inc. Tell us what MarkMaster, Inc., does.

[*Kevin Govin, chief operating officer, MarkMaster, Inc., made brief remarks.*]

The President. Kevin, thanks. I want to pick up on two things he said. Both of them have to do with education. He said his son goes to a community college. It's essential that State governments take advantage of the community college system here to make sure people are trained for the jobs which will exist as we head into the 21st century.

Technology races through our economies, as you know. Oftentimes the labor market is lagging behind in the change necessary to make sure the workers have got the skills necessary. I strongly believe the community college system is a place to make sure workers gain the skills necessary to be able to hold the jobs of the future. I think it's very—I appreciate you mentioning community college systems. There's a lot of fantastic community college systems here in Florida and around the country. I've asked Congress to put money forth for grantmaking to community colleges so we can train people.

We've got a lot of good people. But as the economy changes, as these new machines come into be, people need to learn how to use them. As the health care industry changes, people need to be able to know what it means to be a nurse in the

modern era. And so we've got to train people and train them well.

I also know that one of the great things about our country and having a vibrant small-business sector is that oftentimes some of the best and hopeful programs are instigated by CEOs, programs to help workers embetter themselves, education programs, training programs. People have got to understand here in this country that there are a lot of people who look to America and say, "Gosh, I want to be able to provide for my family here."

And therefore we need a work system that is—promotes legal activity, not illegal activity; a work system that says if you can't—if an employer can't find an American worker and yet there's somebody else willing to do the job, there ought to be a card, a worker card—not a citizenship card but a card to allow people to work, so that we can recognize what is taking place illegally here, an underground economy. That's not the American way. The American way is rule of law. The American way is understanding people come here to put food on the table for their children. And again, I repeat to you, I don't believe we ought to be promoting blanket amnesty for people who are working here, but I do believe we ought to have an orderly system that allows people to legally apply to work when they can't find an American worker. This will help our homeland security issues, and it will make sure employers can find willing workers, which is an important part of making sure this economy continues to grow.

Speaking about willing workers, I'm sitting next to one, Noemi Gonzalez. She is an accounting clerk here at NuAir Manufacturing. She is excited to be here.

Noemi Gonzalez. Yes, I am.

The President. Would you tell us your story? We spent time talking about small-business growth, the entrepreneurial spirit. But every small-business owner will tell you, their businesses cannot survive without really good workers, good, hard-working, decent, honorable Americans. We've got two here with us today, a representative sample, I might add. Noemi.

Ms. Gonzalez. Okay, I don't have—I have a big business, my family.

The President. Si.

Ms. Gonzalez. And my three children.

The President. Adonde? Ahi.

Ms. Gonzalez. And my granddaughter. That's my big business.

The President. That is your most important job, by the way. Accounting is important, but not nearly as important as being a mother.

Ms. Gonzalez. And a grandmother.

The President. And a grandmother. Well, you don't look old enough to be a grandmother. [*Laughter*]

Ms. Gonzalez. I'm really glad to work here at NuAir, thanks to Connie. I've been her employee for 2 years, and I'm really glad of the tax relief, because now I can think ahead, to send my daughter to college.

The President. Yes, she got $2,400 in tax relief last year.

Ms. Gonzalez. And I know there's a lot of people like me; they're glad to receive the tax relief.

The President. You know, that may not sound a lot to some people in Washington, $2,400. They throw a lot of numbers around in Washington. That's a lot to her. That's a lot of money to a lot of people. When you got people who are working hard to maintain their family—she's looking after her granddaughter as well—$2,400 is a lot. It's a lot of money. It's a lot of security. It's a lot of hope, and this Congress must understand that. They understand 2,400. And if we don't make the tax relief permanent, she pays an additional $1,200 next year. And that's not right. And that's not right. And she said—I'm putting words in your mouth. What are you going to do with money? You said you're going to save? [*Laughter*]

Ms. Gonzalez. Well, we're planning a vacation to go to Texas.

The President. That's good. Yes. [*Laughter*]

Ms. Gonzalez. Family vacation. Texas.

The President. Yes. *Que inteligente.*

Ms. Gonzalez. Viva la gente. We're planning a family vacation with my family. We're going to see my nephew. He's coming from Iraq. He has been there for a year.

The President. Oh, fantastic. Where are you going? *Adonde?*

Ms. Gonzalez. San Antonio.

The President. San Antonio?

Ms. Gonzalez. San Antonio, Texas.

The President. You tell your nephew, "On behalf of a grateful Commander in Chief and a grateful country, thank you for your service."

Ms. Gonzalez. Thank you. He's so glad to do it. He's so happy to do it, and we're a really proud family. Thank you very much. Thank you.

The President. Okay, Noemi, thanks. What a fantastic American story, isn't it? You know, the nephew serving for a cause greater than himself, Noemi working hard to support her family. The word you heard was, "I'm going to take some of the tax relief and save it for my child's education." The best education programs start at home. A child's first teacher is a mom or a dad. A mom or dad must understand that education is the gateway to success in this country. We've got to make sure our public schools, by the way, function well. But we've also got to make sure—but personal responsibility, being responsible for your families, also an important part of making sure people get educated here. Good job.

I was looking for you yesterday on the racetrack, Steve. I was—I heard I was coming here to meet you. And I said—well, they said, "He's a race car driver." So I was looking—[*laughter*]—but I didn't see you.

Steve Martin. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. The fact that you're willing to get in there and race those kind of cars on those steep banks says a lot about you, though—positive, I might add. [*Laughter*] But thank you. Tell us about yourself. Thanks for being here today.

[*Mr. Martin, installation manager, NuAir Manufacturing, made brief remarks.*]

The President. I appreciate it. Thank you. I just want to remind everybody that tax—the child credit is going down next year. And if you listen to some of them talking out of Washington these days, that's fine with them. They're going to repeal—when you hear them say, "Repeal the Bush tax cuts," don't be thinking about Bush. Be thinking about people like Steve and Noemi. That's what you need to be thinking about when you hear that talk. Because when the child credit goes down, it means everybody who has got a child, in essence, pays increased taxes. That doesn't seem to be good policy to me. You've heard the effects of what tax relief means to individual Americans. It means they've got more money to make decisions, whether it's to save or go on a vacation to Texas or to have a quality of life issue at home. These are important issues. These are issues made by individual Americans, with their own money, by the way.

And that's what the tax relief says to me. It says that we've got a proper perspective on who ought to be making decisions with your money. Listen, we've got money in Government. You don't have to worry about that. But the fact that there's more money in your pockets have made this economy strong, and that's where we need to keep it. And it's a fundamental debate going on in this country. It's pretty clear where I stand. I stand squarely with the people in this debate. I want them to have more of their own money.

I hope you've enjoyed this conversation as much as I have. It's a—it is a way for six people to have a conversation about the economy and in an unusual way, isn't it? [*Laughter*] Yes, well—but there has been some pretty interesting points that have come out of it. One, there's a sense of

optimism, at least amongst the employers who are here. The tax relief has made a difference in small-business people's lives. You've heard plans for 5, 6 employees or 60 employees or 20 employees, whatever it may be.

But this is happening all over the country. Small businesses are alive and well. Good policy recognizes that most new jobs in America are created by small-business owners. And therefore, tax policy and fiscal policy and public policy all ought to be aimed at strengthening the small-business sector of America. And then, of course, there's the individual stories about hard-working, decent Americans worried about their families, and what they do with the more money in their pocket.

And that's what tax relief is all about, and it's important for people in Washington, DC, to hear the voices of the people, to hear what people are saying about this economy. No, I'm optimistic for this country. I've seen what we've been through, and I know the character of the people of this country. There's nothing that we can't overcome in America.

I want to thank you all for coming. May God bless you, and God bless this country.

NOTE: The discussion began at 9:03 a.m. at NuAir Manufacturing. In his remarks, the President referred to NASCAR driver Dale Earnhardt, Jr.; Gov. Jeb Bush, Lt. Gov. Toni Jennings, and State Attorney General Charlie Crist of Florida; Mayor Richard M. Baker of St. Petersburg, FL; Mayor Dottie K. Reeder of Seminole, FL; and Mayor Brian Aungst, Sr., of Clearwater, FL.

Remarks to Military Personnel at Fort Polk, Louisiana
February 17, 2004

Thank you all. What a week, first NASCAR and today Fort Polk, Louisiana. Thank you for the warm welcome. It is an honor to be here with the soldiers and families of Fort Polk. This post is home to some of the Army's oldest and finest units. All of you are living up to the motto of our 2d Armored Calvary Regiment, "Always ready."

The 2d Calvary is now deployed in Iraq. So is the mighty Warrior Brigade from Fort Polk. This post has long been vital to the defense of America, and today, the men and women of Fort Polk are serving with skill and bravery in the war on terror. Since our Nation was attacked on September the 11th, 2001, this post has trained and deployed more than 10,000 troops to fight the terrorist enemy. The JRTC Operations Group is providing superb training for America's soldiers. And with people like you in the fight against terror, there is no doubt that the enemy will be defeated and freedom will prevail.

In the war, America depends on our military to meet the dangers abroad and to keep our country safe. The American people appreciate this sacrifice, and our Government owes you more than gratitude. We must always make sure that America's soldiers are well-equipped and well-trained to fight this war on terror.

Every person in uniform also depends on the faithful support of their family. Military families have faced many hardships in this time of testing, and you have faced them together. Every military installation is a strong and caring community. You look out for each other. You accept the sacrifices of service to America. And I want you to know, our whole Nation is grateful to our military families.

I appreciate General Kamiya for his introduction. When I was walking here from

Marine One, somebody told me he just got promoted. Congratulations, General. Les Brownlee, the Acting Secretary of the Army, is with us. General Pete Schoomaker, who is the Army Chief of Staff, is with us today. General, thank you for coming. General Ellis, I appreciate you being here. Colonel Woolfrey, Command Sergeant Major Christian; Command Sergeant Major Savusa is with us as well. I'm honored that you men are here.

Today I had the privilege of traveling with Senator Mary Landrieu from the State of Louisiana, Congressman David Vitter, and Congressman Rodney Alexander. I want to thank all the State and local officials who are with us today. I appreciate so very much Kevin Sharp and John Berry for taking time out to provide the entertainment for the troops and families today.

I just met Margie Nobles. Margie volunteered more than 1,400 hours helping families of soldiers during their transition to Fort Polk and during times of deployment. People often talk about the strength of America being our military, and it is strong, and I intend to keep it that way. But the real strength of the country lies in the hearts and souls of our citizens, people like Margie who are willing to help somebody who hurts, people who are willing to take time out of their busy lives to love a neighbor just like you'd like to be loved yourself. For those of you who are soldiers in the army of compassion, I want to thank you for your service to your community and to your country.

The Fort Polk community is also home to thousands of veterans and retired military. Our veterans defended our Nation and served the cause of freedom in the great struggles of the 20th century. Many veterans from the area are with us today, and we honor your faithful service to America.

Our service men and women today follow in a great tradition of achievement and courage. You're living up to that tradition in hard missions and decisive victories. This generation of our military has been called to duty to fight and to win the first war of the 21st century.

The struggle began on a September morning, when terrorists murdered thousands of our fellow citizens. We saw the violence and grief that terrorists can inflict. We had a glimpse of a far worse harm that the terrorists intend for us. And on behalf of this Nation, I made a pledge: Whether we bring our enemies to justice or bring justice to our enemies, justice will be done.

Life in America in many ways has returned to normal, and that's a good thing. And I want every American to know that I understand my job as your President. I have a duty to protect the American people, and my resolve is the same today as it was on the morning of September the 12th, 2001. My resolve is the same as it was on the day when I walked in the rubble of the Twin Towers. I will not relent until this threat to America is removed, and neither will you.

In the past 29 months, many terrorists have learned the meaning of justice. Nearly two-thirds of Al Qaida's known leaders have been captured or otherwise dealt with. The terrorists are on the run, with good reason to fear what the night might bring. Thousands of very skilled and determined military personnel are on an international manhunt, going after the remaining killers who hide in caves and in cities. When they attacked our country, the terrorists chose their own fate, and they are meeting that fate, one by one.

Success in the war on terror also requires that we confront regimes that might arm terrorists with the ultimate weapon. There's no greater danger before this Nation and humanity than the possibility of secret and sudden attack with a nuclear or chemical or biological weapon. We must confront this danger with open eyes and unbending purpose. I've made clear the policy of this country: America will not permit terrorists and dangerous regimes to threaten us with the world's most deadly weapons.

With good allies at our side, we have shown this resolve in decisive action to liberate two nations once ruled by terror regimes. The first to see our determination were the Taliban, who made Afghanistan the primary base of Al Qaida. That was where the training camps operated. That is where the attacks of September the 11th were conceived. And that's where we first took the fight to the enemy.

Two years after we liberated Afghanistan, our troops continue to face danger. Our coalition is leading aggressive raids to rout out surviving members of the Taliban and Al Qaida. The new Afghan army is adding to the stability of that country. Afghanistan still has challenges, but that nation is a world away from the nightmare of the Taliban.

As of last month, Afghanistan has a new constitution, guaranteeing free elections and full participation by women. Businesses are opening, health care centers are being established, and the children of Afghanistan are back in school—boys and girls. The people of Afghanistan are building a nation that is free, that is proud, and that is fighting terror. And America is honored to be their friend.

The former regime in Iraq also witnessed America's resolve to confront dangers before they fully materialize. My administration looked at the intelligence information, and we saw a danger. Members of Congress looked at the same intelligence, and they saw a danger. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence, and it saw a danger. We reached a reasonable conclusion that Saddam Hussein was a danger. We remembered his history. He waged aggressive wars against neighboring countries and aspired to dominate the Middle East. He cultivated ties to terrorists. He built weapons of mass destruction. He used weapons of mass destruction against his own people. He hid those weapons.

In 1998, the President and the Congress made it the policy of the United States to change the regime in Iraq. In September of 2001, America made a decision: We will not live in the shadow of gathering threats. In 2003, after 12 years of deception by Saddam Hussein, he was given one final chance. The U.N. Security Council demanded a full accounting of his weapons programs or face serious consequences. Saddam Hussein chose defiance. And we had a choice of our own: Either take the word of a madman, or take action to defend America and the world. Faced with that choice, I will defend America every time.

Having broken the Ba'athist regime in Iraq, we face a remnant of violent Saddam supporters. Men who ran away from our troops in battle are now dispersed and attack from the shadows. These killers are joined by foreign terrorists. Recently in Iraq, we intercepted a letter sent by a terrorist named Zarqawi, a man well-known to our intelligence services. Zarqawi operated in and out of Saddam Hussein's Iraq. He ordered the murder of an American diplomat in Jordan. He fought against our troops in Afghanistan. And now, in a letter we intercepted, Zarqawi is urging Al Qaida members to wage terrorist war on our coalition in Iraq.

In the document, Zarqawi describes the terrorists' strategy. He lays it all out: To tear the country apart with ethnic violence; to undermine Iraqi security forces; to demoralize our coalition; to prevent the rise of a sovereign democratic government. This terrorist outlines his efforts to recruit and train suicide bombers. He boasts of 25 attacks on innocent Iraqis and coalition personnel.

Zarqawi and men like him have made Iraq the central front in our war on terror. The terrorists know that the emergence of a free Iraq will be a major blow against the worldwide terrorist movement. And in this, they are correct. But we've seen this enemy before, and we know how to deal with them. Fighting alongside the people of Afghanistan, we are defeating the terrorists in that country. And fighting alongside

the people of Iraq, we will defeat the terrorists there as well. Iraq, like Afghanistan, will be free.

We're making good progress against these enemies by staying on the offensive, with hundreds of patrols and swift and precision raids every single day. Thanks to our military, thanks to our brave soldiers, Iraq's citizens do not have to fear the dictator's secret police or ending up in a mass grave. The torture chambers are closed. Of the top 55 officials of the former regime, we have captured or killed 46. And as for the once all-powerful ruler of Iraq, we found him hiding in a hole.

At the same time, we're helping Iraqis make daily progress toward democracy. A year ago, Iraq's only law was the whim of one brutal man. Today, our coalition is working with the Iraqi Governing Council to draft a basic law with a bill of rights. But we're now working with Iraqis and the United Nations to prepare for a transition to full Iraqi sovereignty. As democracy takes hold in Iraq, the enemies of freedom will do all in their power to spread violence and fear. They're trying to shake the will of our country and our friends. But they don't understand America. They don't understand the nature of our troops. This country and our military will never be intimidated by a bunch of thugs and assassins.

It is the nature of terrorism that a few evil people can bring grief to many. Here in the Fort Polk community, you have sent brave men and women to confront this evil, and you have said farewell to some of your best. One of them was Private First Class Rey David Cuervo, who was killed in Baghdad. Private Cuervo was born in Mexico and is one of several noncitizens in the military who have given their lives in the defense of America. At my direction, each of them has been posthumously granted a title to which they have brought great honor: Citizen of the United States.

Last month, PFC Cuervo was laid to rest under a marker with these words: "All gave some, and some gave all." We do not take freedom for granted in America, and we do not take for granted the courage of those who face the danger and do the fighting. May God comfort the families of the lost. May He keep this Nation always grateful for their sacrifice.

All the men and women we have sent to Iraq and Afghanistan have given vital service in the war on terror. By liberating these countries, we and our coalition have delivered more than 50 million people from cruel oppression. We've removed sources of violence and instability from the greater Middle East. We've removed from power enemies of this country. We have made America more secure.

We face a clear choice in the greater Middle East: Either freedom will advance, or that region will continue to export violence to the world. The work of building democracies in nations that have endured decades of tyranny is hard. It's hard work. It will require the kind of sustained commitment that won the cold war. We accept that duty. We accept that duty in our time because our cause is right.

Even governments that did not join in the removal of Saddam's regime now understand that democracy in Iraq must succeed. And that work will succeed, because the appeal of freedom is universal. Freedom is not America's gift to the world; freedom is the Almighty God's gift to every man and woman in this world.

The will of this country is strong. The will of our coalition is strong. And what we have begun, we will finish.

For all Americans, the last 3 years have brought tests we didn't ask for and for achievements shared by all. And by our actions, we have shown what kind of nation we are. We're a nation with a mission, and that mission comes from our most basic beliefs. We believe that freedom is the right of every single person in the world. By the unselfish dedication of Americans in uniform, people in our own country and

in lands far away, people can live in freedom and know the peace that freedom brings.

America has been given great responsibilities, and they have come to the right country. We don't shirk from any challenge. We're rising to the call of history. Now and in the future, this great Republic will lead the cause of freedom and peace.

May God bless you all, and may God continue to bless our country. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:37 p.m. at Fort Polk Army Airfield. In his remarks, he referred to Brig. Gen. Jason K. Kamiya, USA, commanding general, Col. Arthur "Wade" Woolfrey, Jr., USA, deputy commander, and Command Sgt. Maj. Iuniasolua T. Savusa, USA, Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk; Gen. Larry R. Ellis, USA, commanding general, and Command Sgt. Maj. Carl E. Christian, USA, U.S. Army Forces Command; country music entertainers Kevin Sharp and John Berry; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi; and USAID officer Laurence Foley, who was killed in Amman, Jordan, on October 28, 2002. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Reporting a Certification Required by the Ratification Resolution of the Chemical Weapons Convention
February 17, 2004

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. Chairman:)

Consistent with the resolution of advice and consent to ratification of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, adopted by the United States Senate on April 24, 1997, and based on the recommendation of the Department of Commerce, I certify that for calendar year 2003:

> In connection with Condition 9, Protection of Advanced Biotechnology, the legitimate commercial activities and interests of chemical, biotechnology, and pharmaceutical firms in the United States were not harmed significantly by the limitations of the Convention on access to, and production of, those chemicals and toxins listed in Schedule 1 of the Annex on Chemicals.

Sincerely,

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Richard G. Lugar, chairman, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations.

Interview With Mouafac Harb of the Middle East Television Network
January 29, 2004

President's Religious Perspective

Mr. Harb. Mr. President, thank you very much for supporting our channel and our initiative. We will make sure on our channel, your policy, the point of view of your administration, will always be presented

clearly and in fair context. However, we will make sure—we want to be a model for the free press, the American tradition—other point of views, relevant ones, will always be there, even if they are critical of you.

The President. Well, I understand that. I hope so. First of all, I appreciate your willingness to allow the people in the Middle East to hear my views. My views are one that speaks to freedom. I believe the Almighty God's gift to every person in the world is freedom, and I work for free societies because I believe in people.

I want people to know that I respect religion. I'm a religious man, myself. I respect the religion of other people as well. I believe we pray to the same Almighty God. I want people to know that I believe in peace. I want there to be peace. I also want people to know that it's very important for us to work together to fight terror, to fight those who would be willing to kill innocent lives in order to foster their own personal agendas.

I appreciate that. I also don't mind people expressing opinions other than mine. I expect that to happen. It happens here in America, and I expect it to happen around the world.

Freedom and Democracy in the Middle East

Mr. Harb. You may be the only world leader today, and maybe the first American President, to pay a lot of attention to freedom and democracy in the Middle East. Why is that? Are you so committed to that?

The President. I am very committed to freedom and democracy in the Middle East. I believe people can self-govern around the world. Now, there are some, admittedly, say, "Well, they can't have freedom and democracy in the Middle East." But I think that point of view is condescending. I think it diminishes the hopes and aspirations of the citizenry of the Middle East. I absolutely believe in freedom and peace, and I look forward to working with governments to achieve freedom and peace.

Now, I recognize not every government is going to fashion a free society in the vision of America. I don't expect that, but I do expect every government to uphold the aspirations of the average citizens in a free society.

National Endowment for Democracy

Mr. Harb. You mentioned in the State of the Union Address that you would be doubling the budget for the National Endowment of Democracy towards the Middle East. What's your vision? How are you trying to accomplish that?

The President. Well, I think we need to work with governments and institutions and NGOs to encourage the institutions of a free society. See, one of the interesting things in the Oval Office—I love to bring people into the Oval Office, right around the corner from here, and say, "This is where I office, but I want you to know the office is always bigger than the person." In other words, free societies are societies where people come and go, but the institutions that protect the rights of people never leave. And that's what the institute is going to be working on, free press, just like we just talked about, free elections, free society.

Evolution of Democracy

Mr. Harb. You said you would be working with governments in the Middle East.

The President. Sure.

Mr. Harb. And you know the type of governments that now exist in the Middle East, and for how long the U.S. has been accused of playing ball with governments that people hate. When you say you want this strategy, forward strategy of freedom, are you saying you're going to be abandoning the monarchies and, you know, those guys?

The President. No, of course not. I know them well. First of all, many of the countries in the Middle East are modernizing.

And that's what I look for. I fully understand it takes time for free societies, truly free societies to evolve. I don't expect instant success. After all, in my own country it took a while for our current system to evolve.

Take Saudi Arabia, for example. First of all, I respect Crown Prince Abdullah and like Crown Prince Abdullah. He's a man of great faith and great integrity who gave a speech the other day about the need to modernize and to reform Saudi society. I take him for his word. To me that was a positive development.

King Abdullah of Jordan, the King of Morocco, I mean, there's a series of places—Qatar, Oman—I mean, places that are developing—Bahrain—they're all developing the habits of free societies. They evolve differently. But nevertheless, progress is being made. And for that, I'm very grateful.

Discussions With Middle Eastern Leaders

Mr. Harb. When you sit down with the leaders of the countries you just mentioned, Mr. President, do you get a sense of the urgency, when we talk about the issues of reform and democracy, from them?

The President. Well, I get a sense of two things from them. One, I do believe they understand the need to reform. But I also know they agree that we need to continue to work together to fight terror. And that's vital, because it's hard for a free society to develop with terrorists killing innocent people.

For example, I have a vision in the Middle East for there to be a Palestinian state. I'm the first President to have ever articulated a Palestinian state. I believe there needs to be a Palestinian state, and I'm not going to change my opinion. On the other hand, I know how hard it is to achieve a Palestinian state so long as there's groups of terrorists willing to murder in order to prevent that from happening.

And so I hear two things. I hear, one, the need to reform, to include more people in the process which is taking place, but also the clear understanding from leaders that we must continue to work together to fight off the terrorists. And I say this with conviction. There's a—the murderous ambitions of a few are trying to derail the hopes of many. And my Government wants to work with governments to prevent that from happening.

Roadmap for Peace/Reform of the Palestinian Authority

Mr. Harb. Has the roadmap failed? Do we need a new approach to revive the peace talks and work towards your vision?

The President. No, not at all, no. The roadmap is in place. What has failed is the—some parties are not advancing on the roadmap. They're stuck. And I stood up with Mr. Abu Mazen, at that time the Prime Minister of the Palestinian Authority, with Prime Minister Sharon, in Aqaba, Jordan—and King Abdullah, of course, our host—and we linked arms and said, "Let us move forward on the roadmap to peace." There needs to be a commitment to fight terror. There needs to be a commitment to put the institutions of a free society in place. There needs to be a commitment on the Israelis to worry about the plight of the average Palestinian citizen—to encourage a society to evolve that is commercially viable and free. There needs to be a commitment from the neighborhood to help fight off the flow of funds to fund the terrorist groups, that would stop.

And we were making progress. We really were, and then he got shoved aside. And so the roadmap is still intact. The vision for where we need to go is intact. What we need right now are parties who are willing to take a risk for peace and to lead. And I look forward to working with any such party.

Mr. Harb. Why then are some people in the U.S. or some of your friends and allies in the Middle East say that you're not personally doing enough? How would you respond to that?

The President. Well, I would remind them of the pictures of Aqaba, Jordan. I mean, it's—it is a rare occurrence when the President stands up with Israel, the Palestinian Authority, and says, "We're linked together to move toward peace." The problem was, was that somebody undermined that peace process by making it very difficult for Prime Minister Abu Mazen to work to achieve his vision. And that somebody was Chairman Arafat. I'm sorry that happened. On the other hand, I still believe that a Palestinian state is essential for the aspirations of the Palestinian people. And I fully understand there needs to be a firm commitment to fight off terror in order for that to happen.

Transition in Iraq

Mr. Harb. On the issue of Iraq, how do you see the transition of sovereignty to the Iraqis?

The President. Moving. I mean, if you really take a step back, we're here in February of 2004, and the Iraqi people weren't really liberated until April of 2003. We haven't been there a year. And yet, there's tremendous progress being made. The first thing I pay attention to—there are voices speaking out about how to achieve democracy. Had those voices spoken out last year or the year before or the year before, they probably wouldn't be a voice anymore, given the fact that Saddam Hussein was willing to torture and kill dissidents.

And today, a free society is emerging. And it may look bumpy at times, but democracy sometimes looks bumpy. I mean, here in our own country I'm sure people take a step back and say, "What is happening in the election process?" I mean, it looks like there are some sharp elbows. But I am encouraged by what is taking place in Iraq. I appreciate so very much the fact that the Shi'as speak out for freedom. I appreciate the fact that the Sunnis are questioning whether or not they have a role in the future of their country. I appreciate the fact that the Kurds are active. I appreciate the fact that all three parties are trying to work for a common law that guarantees the religious rights of others, the minority rights of people in a free society.

So I think it's very positive. We look forward to working with the United Nations to help the process along, to add some international legitimacy to what the Iraqis think is necessary to move the process toward a new constitution and elections of people.

Ayatollah Sistani

Mr. Harb. From the outside, it looked like the Grand Ayatollah in Iraq, he's a religious man, he's calling for immediate elections, and we're kind of hesitant to do it right now. What's your reaction to that?

The President. Well, that's very interesting. No, I understanding completely. First of all, I admire the fact that he is confident enough in democracy to call for elections. I mean, after all, America believes in elections. I think the only hesitancy from the experts is whether or not the process is ready to absorb direct elections. And we want to work with Mr. Sistani, the Ayatollah. He's a wise man. He's a distinguished gentleman who cares deeply about the Iraqi people. And I'm confident we can work toward a solution that is in Iraq's interest and, at the same time, addresses his deep desire to have the people of Iraq participate in the process.

I think the fact that he's willing to be involved is a very positive development. It shows people care about the future of Iraq. We just must all work together to come up with an Iraqi solution as to how best to get a constitution written and then direct elections. The first step, of course, is a general law and then a temporary assembly of some kind to help—so we can hand over sovereignty. And then the process moves forward.

Syria

Mr. Harb. If we can move towards Syria.

The President. Sure.

Mr. Harb. You had a couple of phone calls with the Syrian President after September 11, and things looked, you know, that the President of Syria was going in the right direction, according to your administration. And then things went sour. What happened?

The President. Well, first of all, I think we made some legitimate requests. I said, "Look, Hezbollah is a terrorist organization. They headquartered in your country. You need to shut down those headquarters. You need to prevent terrorist activities from being planned and/or orders being—emanating out of Syria. Secondly, you've got to work on the border to make sure that the border between Iraq and Syria is not porous, but, in fact, you are able to stop the flow of people and contraband and information back and forth. We don't want terrorists coming in from Syria into Iraq to kill innocent Iraqis and/or American troops." And it's very important for us to keep sending that message to him. That's why I appreciate doing this interview. The message still stands. And we would hope there would be a strong cooperation on these very reasonable points.

Mr. Harb. The Syrian President sent a couple of signals recently expressing his willingness to resume peace talks with Israel. Would you be willing—how do you assess this——

The President. It's very interesting. First of all, I'm interested in peace. And the fact that a party is willing to talk about peace is, I think, a positive signal. I look forward to understanding fully what that means. As you know, there was—some progress had been made prior to my arrival as President on Syrian-Israeli peace talks. And we've just got to understand the intent, the sincerity, and the desire of both parties involved—that would be Syria and Israel.

Libya

Mr. Harb. Libya.

The President. Yes.

Mr. Harb. Although some people, maybe in Washington, and you may consider what happened with Libya as a success for diplomacy, but it did not sit well with the Libyans. It looks like it contradicts this forward strategy of freedom.

The President. How do you mean it didn't sit well with them? It sat well with Colonel Qadhafi because he made the decision.

Mr. Harb. But in terms of democracy, I mean, you know, Qadhafi is a dictator——

The President. Oh, whether or not democracy then follows—I see. Well, we hope it does, of course, and we look forward to working with him. But first things first. We had no relationship with Libya, and now the relationship can improve because he has made a very wise decision to disclose programs and dismantle those programs. To me, it's a signal that Colonel Qadhafi is interested in a peaceful—is interested in peace and a resumption of relations with a country like the United States, and that will begin to change the relationship.

Right now we want to make sure that we all fulfill our obligations. And a key obligation is for the United States and Great Britain and the IAEA to work with the Libyans to fully disclose and dismantle, in a transparent way, weapons programs.

Mr. Harb. Would it be safe to say that the United States would not fully normalize with Libya unless the human rights record of the Libyan Government were to improve——

The President. Well, obviously, there's a lot of conditionality in any relationship. We do want to improve relationships with Libya, but the first thing—the first step, of course, is for the Colonel to fulfill his commitment to the entire world, and that is to disclose and dismantle. And then the relationship will evolve.

Iran and Weapons of Mass Destruction

Mr. Harb. On the issue of weapons of mass destruction—Iran.

The President. Yes.

Mr. Harb. Libya is a case where diplomacy worked. Iraq is a place where——

The President. Diplomacy didn't work.

Mr. Harb. ——didn't work.

The President. Well, it didn't work. It was tried for 12 years, and it didn't work. And the world continually said, "Disarm," and he didn't do it. And finally, I went to the United Nations and said to the United Nations, "For your sake and for our sake—you, the United Nations' sake—for our sake, America, and for the world's sake, let us enforce these resolutions."

Mr. Harb. So we've got the Libyan model, and we've got the Iraqi model.

The President. Yes.

Mr. Harb. Which one would fit Iran today?

The President. All models must start with a strong effort by the world community to convince people to abandon—in this case, abandon programs, nuclear weapons programs. And we certainly hope the Iranian situation can be resolved diplomatically. I appreciate very much the fact that members of the European Community have spoken with one voice about the need for Iran * to fully disclose and disarm its weapons programs, and IAEA is very much involved.

So, in other words, we're now early in the stage, obviously, and it's a stage where I'm hopeful that diplomacy will work.

Iraq

Mr. Harb. You mentioned the international community. Are you satisfied with the way the international community is reacting towards the rebuilding of Iraq?

The President. Yes, I really am. I mean, gosh, there's a lot of countries that are very much involved in Iraq. The other night in the State of the Union, I began to read off the list. And the longer the list got, the more the American people begin to realize this is a truly internationalized effort. And people are contributing money. I mean, I was talking about forces on the ground, and the level of contributions are very generous—starting with the United States, I might add. And I'm most proud of the Congress for being willing to help rebuild Iraq, because they understand, like I understand, that a free Iraq is going to be an agent of change in a positive way in the Middle East.

Again, I want to go back to where we began. See, if you didn't believe certain countries in the Middle East could be free, then you wouldn't be worried about rebuilding of a country. But I believe they can be free, and I know free societies are peaceful societies. And I believe in the Iraqi people of all walks of life, and I believe that they're going to show the world what is possible.

After all, the Iraqi people have such a—Iraqi history is so rich. The culture of Iraq is fantastic. And it's—I have visions of a university system that really leads the Middle East in education and on the forefront of science and engineering, because I know the Iraqi Americans who are here, very bright, capable, honorable people who have come to our country, realized the benefits of freedom, taken advantage of some fantastic opportunities, and made great citizens.

Well, the same thing is going to happen in Iraq. And that will cause others to say, "Well, gosh, if it's happening in Iraq, let's follow that model of a free society." And the American Congress understands that. I understand that. And a lot of people around the world understand it. And I am grateful for the contributions that people are willing to make for the reconstruction of Iraq.

Mr. Harb. Are you concerned that Iraq's neighbors may work to undermine the democracy because it doesn't suit the region?

* White House correction.

The President. Well, it's an interesting question. I certainly hope not. But if—look, one of the neighbors to Iraq is Turkey. And they withstood any pressure, if there was any pressure, to undermine the development of a free and secular society. They still maintain its respect for Islam.

Pakistan is another country which is evolving, showing what is possible in terms of a free society and an active Parliament and, at the same time, honoring Islam.

No, I think a truly free society will resist foreign efforts to undermine the development of that society.

2004 Election/Future of the Middle East

Mr. Harb. Mr. President, this is an election year for you.

The President. Yes.

Mr. Harb. If, hypothetically, people in the Middle East could vote, would the next 4 years be—if you were to be elected—would be good for them?

The President. Oh, absolutely.

Mr. Harb. Why would they vote for you?

The President. Absolutely. Well, they'd vote for me because I am strong on the war on terror, for starters. I refuse to relent to terrorist groups. There's no negotiation with these people. These are people that are willing to kill people who are devout, religious people, and not care about it. They kill innocent women and children and not care about it. More Muslims have died at the hands of killers than—I say more Muslims—a lot of Muslims have died—I don't know the exact count—at Istanbul. Look at these different places around the world where there's been tremendous death and destruction because killers kill.

They would appreciate George W. in the future because I understand that freedom and prosperity go hand in hand. And a free society is more likely to be a prosperous society where people can realize their hopes and aspirations.

Listen, I'm a dad. I love my girls more than anything in life, our daughters. I know that other dads feel the same way about their children, and all they want is for their children to have a chance to succeed, to grow up in a peaceful society, to be well-educated, and to realize their God-given potential. I share that dream.

I think the people of the Middle East will see that the Bush administration is unrelenting when it comes to dealing with the few who want to hurt the many but, at the same time, believes in the people of the Middle East, believes in their hopes and aspirations.

Mr. Harb. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

The President. Yes, sir.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 10:02 a.m. in the Map Room at the White House for later broadcast, and the transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 18. In his remarks, the President referred to Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia; King Abdullah II of Jordan; King Mohamed VI of Morocco; former Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) of the Palestinian Authority; Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of Israel; Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, Iraqi Shiite leader; President Bashar al-Asad of Syria; and Col. Muammar Abu Minyar al-Qadhafi, leader of Libya. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting a Report on Iraq
February 17, 2004

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Consistent with the Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution of 2002 (Public Law 107–243), the Authorization for the Use of Force Against Iraq Resolution (Public Law 102–1), and in order to keep the Congress fully informed, I am providing a report prepared by my Administration. This report includes matters relating to post-liberation Iraq under section 7 of the Iraq Liberation Act of 1998 (Public Law 105–338).

Sincerely,

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Richard B. Cheney, President of the Senate. This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 18.

Remarks Prior to Discussions With President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali of Tunisia and an Exchange With Reporters
February 18, 2004

President Bush. A couple statements, and I'm going to answer a couple of questions afterwards.

Mr. President, welcome. I'm glad you're here in the Oval Office. Thank you for your friendship. I'm looking forward to a good discussion.

I want to thank you for working with the United States in the war on terror. I want to thank you for your understanding for the need for Iraq to be democratic and free. I appreciate the fact that you've got an education system that is modern and viable, that women in your country are given equal rights. I look forward to talking to you about the need to have a press corps that is vibrant and free as well as an open political process. There's a lot we can talk about. Tunisia can help lead the greater Middle East to reform and freedom, something that I know is necessary for peace for the long term.

So welcome.

President Ben Ali. Mr. President, thank you for very much for this opportunity. I am delighted to be here in the United States, and thank you very much for your generous invitation.

As you know, the Tunisian-U.S. relationships have been always unique and ancient. They go back for two centuries. Mr. President, we also look forward to increasing and cementing those relationships between the two countries in all spheres and every area, in order to continue to support the friendship between the two peoples and between the two countries.

We share principles together, Mr. President, and that is the establishment of states on the basis of democracy, human rights, and combating terror. We believe that Tunisia is an ally of the United States and the relationships between the two countries has strategic dimension.

And I would like to take this opportunity to thank the friendly American people who stood by us during our liberation and after our independence. Thank you very much.

President Bush. A couple of questions. Scott [Scott Lindlaw, Associated Press].

Same-Sex Marriage

Q. Thanks, Mr. President. More than 3,000 same-sex couples have taken vows since San Francisco started issuing marriage licenses to gays and lesbians. This Massachusetts court ruling could result in the first legally recognized gay marriages in May. Do these developments make you any more inclined to endorse a constitutional amendment banning gay marriage?

President Bush. I strongly believe that marriage should be defined as between a man and a woman. I am troubled by activist judges who are defining marriage. I have watched carefully what's happened in San Francisco, where licenses were being issued even though the law states otherwise. I have consistently stated that if—I'll support law to protect marriage between a man and a woman. And obviously these events are influencing my decision.

Q. Are you close to a decision?

President Bush. I'm watching very carefully. But I'm troubled by what I've seen. People need to be involved with this decision. Marriage ought to be defined by the people, not by the courts. And I'm watching it carefully.

Stevie [Steve Holland, Reuters].

National Economy

Q. Mr. President, do you think the economy is strong enough to produce 2.6 million jobs this year, as your economic report projected?

President Bush. I think the economy is growing, and I think it's going to get stronger. I do think there are some things we need to do. We need to make sure the tax cuts are permanent. I look forward to continuing to talk about this issue. Uncertainty in the Tax Code could affect small-business planning. Uncertainty in the Tax Code will make it harder for our citizens to make rational decisions about spending money. We need to have an energy policy, open up markets for trade. We need less regulation. We need tort reform. There are things we can do to make sure the economy grows.

I'm pleased by the fact that since August, there's been 366,000 new jobs, in one survey. There was another survey called the Household Account that's been more optimistic. But I'm mindful there are still people looking for work, and we've got to continue building on the progress we've made so far.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:32 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Remarks Following a Discussion on the National Economy
February 19, 2004

The President. Thanks for coming. I want to thank the folks who have joined me here on the stage. We've just had a chat about their personal circumstances, and I'll share some of their stories with you.

We were talking about our economy and the hopes of families, how to keep the entrepreneurial spirit strong in America. I hope I conveyed to them my sense of optimism about the future of the country. After all, I've seen firsthand what we've been through, and we've been through a lot. And in spite of that, our economy is strong, and it's getting stronger. There's still room for improvement.

Let me walk you through right quick of what these families and small-business owners and large business and CEOs have dealt with, what the country has dealt with in the last 3 years. First, the economy began to slow down in March of 2000. The stock market started to go down. That affected

people's savings. And if you watch your savings accounts go down, it tends to have a negative effect on people's attitudes.

Then the country got into—went into a recession, early of 2001. Recession means that people's incomes, at the employer level, are going down, basically, relative to costs, people are getting laid off. It's a slowdown. It's a time of—it's a tough time for risktakers. It's a very tough time for workers. A lot of industries felt like they needed to lay off people, which created uncertainty.

And then on September the 11th, the country got attacked, a vicious attack by brutal killers that affected the Nation's psychology. It affected how I view the world, by the way. When we see gathering threats, the country now must take them very seriously. We can't let threats become imminent. We can't trust madmen with the security of the American people.

September the 11th attacks hurt the economy. We began to recover. I mean, this is a strong nation. The entrepreneurial spirit is really strong. You might remember the attitude after September the 11th: No terrorist is going to hold this country down or hold us back. I saw that spirit firsthand when I went to New York shortly after the attacks. It was just such an uplifting experience in the midst of tragedy and horror, to see the will of the American people.

Then the economy got affected because some of our citizens forgot to tell the truth. They assumed positions of responsibility and behaved irresponsibly. Corporate CEOs didn't tell the truth to employees or shareholders, and that affected the economy. Capitalism is based upon trust, open books, honest accounting. And a lot of citizens were beginning to wonder what went on. Fortunately, we passed tough laws, and those who betrayed the trust are now paying the price for having done so. There needs to be serious consequences for people who are—don't tell the truth.

And then, as you know, I made the very difficult decision to deal with Saddam Hussein. It's the right decision. The country is more secure. The Iraqi people are free from the clutches of tyranny.

The march to war affected our economy. When you turn on your TV screen in the summer of 2002 and it says, "America's March to War," that's not very conducive for investment. Marching for war doesn't instill a lot of confidence in the future. It creates uncertainty. People who employ people don't like uncertainty. We need certainty in order to have a—to have risktakers feel comfortable about taking risk.

We've been through a lot. But we acted here in Washington. I led. I convinced the Congress to cut the taxes on the people, because I felt like, during this time of uncertainty and economic slowdown, if people had more of their own money, they would demand an additional good or a service. And in our marketplace, when that happens, a producer will produce that good or a service. And when that happens, the economy gets moving; somebody is more likely to find work. And that's what happened.

We cut the taxes on everybody who pays taxes. I don't think it makes sense for tax-cutters to say, "Okay, you win, and you lose." My attitude was, if you pay taxes, you ought to get relief. And we cut all taxes, and one of the important things about cutting all income taxes is we really affect the capacity of small businesses to grow, because many small businesses pay tax at the individual income-tax level. A sole proprietor pays tax at the individual income tax. The Subchapter S pays tax at the individual income-tax level. So when you cut all rates, you're not only affecting the purchasing power of families and individuals; you're affecting small-business capital formation. And it helped, and it worked. And at the same time, I asked Congress to increase the limit for deductibility of $100,000 from $25,000 to encourage capital investment in the small-business sector.

And why did I focus on small businesses, or why did the Congress focus with me on small business? And the answer is, most new jobs are created by small businesses in America. Some estimates say up to—and if you're interested in job creation, why not focus on the job creators? So the tax relief was passed not only to help individuals but to help our small-business sector. We also increased the child credit to $1,000. We reduced the marriage penalty. I like to remind people that the Tax Code ought to encourage marriage, not discourage marriage. [*Laughter*] Seems like we want people to stay married, and the Tax Code ought to encourage that.

We helped on dividend and capital gains to encourage investment and particularly to help the elderly. We put the death tax on its way to extinction. I'm going to talk a little bit about that in regards to one of our guests, but the death tax is a bad tax—bad tax.

Think about all the people who are starting their own businesses, who are working hard to realize the American Dream. They're preparing their estates to leave something to their—whoever they choose to, a son or a daughter. And it becomes awfully difficult to do so because the Government is taxing assets twice. They tax you when you earn. They tax you when you die. And it's a bad tax. It's bad for farmers. It's bad for ranchers. It is particularly bad for small-business owners. Fortunately, the Congress heard the call. We've still got a little issue to make sure it stays gone forever that I'll talk about here in a minute.

The tax relief we passed—111 million * taxpayers this year will save $1,586 * off their taxes. That's a lot of money that will be in circulation as a result of individual decisionmaking. See, there's a fundamental debate here in Washington. It's who do you want spending money? Look, we need money here. There's plenty of money in Washington. We need money to fight the war and win the war on terror. We need money to protect the homeland. We need money to meet priorities, but I felt it was important to let people spend their own money. I think the collective decision-making of the American people with their own money is wiser than the decision-making of the Federal Government.

Twenty-five million small-business owners will receive an average cut of $3,000 this year. That's important. A lot of companies being started up in garages—it's kind of the American Dream, isn't it? I remember when my friend Michael Dell started his computer company in a garage. [*Laughter*] Who knows where the next Michael Dell will be, but perhaps this $3,000 will help that person achieve his or her dream about building their own company.

Nearly 5 million taxpayers will be off the rolls as a result of the tax relief this year. What's interesting is that the tax relief lowered rates, but the amount withheld from the paycheck was not adjusted until summertime last year. And so the Treasury Department estimates Americans will receive an additional $50 billion in higher refunds and lower tax payments when they file their taxes in April—April 15th of this year. That's positive news, to help keep this momentum, this economic momentum, alive and well.

Tax relief is working. Factory orders are up. Housing is strong. Unemployment rate is down from 6.3 percent last June to 5.6 percent in January. Things are positive.

But there's more that Congress should do to keep the momentum alive. One, we need an energy plan. If you're a manufacturer, you need reliable sources of energy. I've talked to a lot of small manufacturers who explained what it means to have their power disrupted as a result of an antiquated electricity grid. Unreliable supplies of energy creates uncertainty for price. There needs to be certainty. We need an energy plan. Congress needs to get me a

* White House correction.

bill. They need to stop talking. They need to get a bill to my desk.

We need tort reform. Too many small businesses are—like you, I'm concerned about the cost of providing decent medical care to your employees and yourselves. Medical costs are up. Some practical things we can do—health savings accounts are a very practical way for small-business owners and employees to deal with increasing costs. I urge you to look at those.

Associated health care plans are vital for small-business owners and small-business plans. Medical liability reform at the national level will help control health care costs. It's stuck in the Senate, of course. There's some special interests here in Washington that simply are not interested in seeing reasonable medical liability law passed. There are very powerful interests here in Washington that prevent the kinds of laws to pass that will help control costs. And I'm going to continue working, and I think it's an important issue—I know it's an important issue for small-business owners and employees.

We need to continue to open up markets. Our markets are relatively open compared to the rest of the world, and if our markets are open, let's open up other markets so people can sell. We're good at things. We ought to be selling them to other people around the world. There needs to be free trade, and there needs to be a level playing field when we trade. There needs to be less regulation in Washington, DC.

But one thing's for certain, is we need to make the tax cuts permanent. Interestingly enough—I don't know if you're aware of this, but all the tax cuts we passed are set to expire. But the Congress giveth; the Congress taketh away. [*Laughter*]

And these tax relief will be—will expire on an irregular basis. In other words, they don't all expire at the same time. For example, this coming year, the child credit—the tax relief we put in the child credit goes away. The penalty in the marriage penalty gets worse. And the expanded 10 percent bracket will go away. See, if Congress doesn't do anything, there will be tax increases on the American people. That's what that means. When you hear, "We're going to repeal the Bush tax cuts," that means tax increases. That's what that is. "I'm going to raise your taxes," is what they're saying.

There's a philosophical difference here. Who would you rather spending your money, you or the Federal Government? And that's the debate I look forward to taking across the country.

Raising taxes at this point will hurt our economy. When the economy is coming out of recession, it's beginning to grow. It makes no sense to raise the taxes on the people. If the Congress doesn't act, the tax relief would be an increase of about $28 billion on the American people for the year 2005. That's $28 billion going into the U.S. Treasury out of your pockets—be reducing demand by that amount, be taking capital out of small-business coffers if that happens.

That's part of the debate. "Let's raise your taxes so we have more money to spend on programs in Washington, DC." That's the debate, and I believe strongly that the tax relief needs to be permanent. You see—listen to this story. If you're a family of four earning $40,000, when those provisions expire in 2005, it'll be a $915 tax increase for that family. That's a lot of money for a family making $40,000. The small-business deductions expire in '06. These have been really effective. Congress needs to make them permanent.

And so I talked to some folks up here today about what tax relief has meant to them. And maybe the best way I can make my point to the tax-raisers and spenders here in Washington is to listen to the stories of people like Amy Cofer. She is a mom of two, soon to be a mom of three. Amy is right there. Joe is a police officer. Joe is out there dedicating his life to the

protection of our fellow citizens. They saved $1,700 in taxes in '03.

That probably doesn't sound like a lot when you're up here, when you're dealing with a lot of zeros behind the numbers. It's a lot for that family, though. She talked about paying her son's preschool tuition with that. She made a choice to send her son to a school that she thought was good. That's a whole other subject, by the way—parents being—[*laughter*]—but it helped pay for her son's tuition. The money meant something to them. It made life easier by being—that money, to help pay for the preschool tuition. It took pressure off of their bill paying. If Congress doesn't act, there will be a $1,000 tax increase on this family. It's a new family, a new child coming—doesn't make sense to have this family pay a thousand dollars. See, Congress has got to make the tax cuts permanent. It helps families like the Cofers.

Katie Powers is here as well. Katie and—there she is—Katie and David have two children, Nicholas and Allison. They had tax relief of $3,500. The tax burden will go up by $2,000 if they doesn't make the tax cuts permanent. When you hear people say, "Let's just let the tax cuts expire," that's a tax increase. It's a code word for, "I'm raising your taxes to increase the amount of money we have to spend here in Washington on new programs, on programs that meet a particular political desire of the appropriators." That's what they're telling you.

Shemetra Washington—Shemetra is a—started a new job this month, by the way, at New Technology Management in Virginia. [*Laughter*]

Audience member. Yeah! [*Laughter*]

The President. About time you hired her. [*Laughter*] She's got the toughest job in America. She's a single mom. She's raising Raegan and Lauryn. She is going to grad school, a human resource person who's going to get a master's degree. She's been taking—she's working, raising her family, and going to grad school to upgrade her skills so she can make more money. She got a tax cut of $1,700 in 2003. She said it went to help pay for her education, helped her upgrade her skills so she becomes a more productive person, which means she'll get better pay as time goes on.

Again, if they don't make the tax cuts permanent, she has to pay $1,000 more in taxes. I don't think we want Shemetra paying $1,000 more in taxes—[*laughter*]—when she's struggling with her family, raising that family.

See, there's a human dimension to all the talk about numbers, and it's important for the people here in Washington to think about the people whose lives will be affected if they don't act—they don't act—they don't act to make it easier for families to raise their children and to realize their dreams.

Guy Donaldson is with us. He's got an interesting story. He is a fruit orchard man out of Pennsylvania, apples, cherries, and peaches. [*Laughter*] I was lobbying for some of them to be sent over here for breakfast. [*Laughter*] See, he is—he, by the way, is a partnership, so his entity is taxed at the individual income-tax rate level. But he's more concerned about the death tax. His dream is to keep this farm in his family. It's been in his family now for the fourth generation. That's part of his dream. That's what he has decided that he would like to do with his assets, and he wants to leave the orchard to his kids.

I said, "Are they here today?" He said, "No, they're pruning trees." [*Laughter*] But the problem is, is that when you're asset-heavy in your small business or on your farm, it's really hard to leave it to your—the death tax makes it nearly impossible to leave to a family without having to mortgage the future so heavily or to sell off parts of the farm in order to pay the Government again.

The death tax is an unfair tax to farmers and ranchers and small-business people.

The Congress put it on its way to extinction. However, it comes back to life in 2011. It's hard to explain the rules of the Senate that allow that to happen, but it does. It just doesn't make sense. It doesn't make sense, as Guy was talking about, for him to have such uncertainty about an asset he loves and uncertainty about his family. And yet because Congress won't act, there is uncertainty. And that's not right, and it's not fair. They need to put the stake in the heart of the death tax forever, and get rid of it.

Rex Hammock is with us—last stander—from Nashville, Tennessee. He started his own company. I love the entrepreneurial spirit. Don't you love to be in a country where people feel comfortable about—where people feel comfortable and free to start their own business? And by the way, Government's role is to create an environment where the entrepreneurial spirit is strong, where people feel free and comfortable doing that.

And he did, and he's got what is called a Subchapter S corporation. Many of you know what that means, but for those who don't, it means that you get taxed at the individual income-tax level. So when we cut the rates on everybody, not just a few, it helped Rex, made him a little more comfortable in his ability to plan.

But more importantly, by raising the level of deductibility for small businesses to $100,000, it provided incentive for him to invest. And so this year, he told me, he's going to spend $100,000 on computers, scanners, and software to help his employees in his publishing business become more productive. It means they're more competitive. When you're more competitive, you've got a more productive workforce, and when you're competitive, it means you're more likely to stay in business. And it means you're more likely—your workforce is more likely to have steady work. And if you really get productive and can compete, it means you add employees. And he added two last year, and he plans on adding five this year.

Now, there's a lot of Rexes in the country, and you put two on here and five on there, and all of a sudden, there's a lot of people beginning to find jobs. And that's important. That's how jobs grow, through the individual decisionmaking of thousands of entrepreneurs and employers around the country.

He wants to invest in '05 and '06, same amounts. But as I told you, this aspect of the tax relief package will expire unless Congress acts. He said it's really hard—and he's right, by the way—really hard to be a planner with—in the face of tax uncertainty. How can you plan if you're not certain about what the Tax Code looks like? And there are entrepreneurs all over the country who are uncertain about what the Tax Code will look like after '06 because the tax relief plan has got uncertainties built into it. And an important aspect of the tax relief plan is the deductibility for small businesses. Then it goes away. Congress needs to make all aspects of the Tax Code permanent so people can plan their businesses and their lives.

And so it's time for them to step up on Capitol Hill. I'm ready to continue to lead on tax relief. They need to follow. They need to listen to the voices not just of me but of the people here on the stage. It's a time for action. It's a time to make the tax relief permanent. It's a time to listen to the voices of the hard-working families in America. It's a time to listen to the entrepreneurs of this country. It's a time to keep this recovery strong by doing what's right with the Tax Code.

I want to thank you all for coming today to give me a chance to spell out a practical way to make life a more hopeful place for America and small-business owners. Congress needs to act.

Thanks for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:09 p.m. in Room 450 in the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he

referred to former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; Amy Cofer, homemaker, and her husband, Joe, U.S. Supreme Court police officer; Katie Powers, senior staff accountant, and Shemetra Washington, human resource administrator, New Technology Management, Inc.; Guy Donaldson, fruit grower, Orrtanna, PA; and Rex Hammock, president, Hammock Publishing.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting a Report Relating to the Interdiction of Aircraft Engaged in Illicit Drug Trafficking
February 19, 2004

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Consistent with the authorities relating to official immunity in the interdiction of aircraft engaged in illicit drug trafficking, (Public Law 107–108, 22 U.S.C. 2291–4), and in order to keep the Congress fully informed, I am providing a report prepared by my Administration. This report includes matters relating to the interdiction of aircraft engaged in illicit drug trafficking.

Sincerely,

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Richard B. Cheney, President of the Senate. This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 20.

Statement on the Recess Appointment of William H. Pryor, Jr., as a United States Court of Appeals Circuit Judge
February 20, 2004

Today I exercised my constitutional authority to appoint William H. Pryor, Jr., to serve on the United States Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit. Bill Pryor has served as the attorney general of Alabama since 1997 and has had a distinguished career as a public servant and practicing attorney. His impressive record demonstrates his devotion to the rule of law and to treating all people equally under the law. He has received widespread bipartisan support from those who know him and know his record. I am proud to name this leading American lawyer to the appellate bench.

Attorney General Pryor was nominated more than 10 months ago but still has not received an up-or-down vote in the Senate. A bipartisan majority of Senators supports his confirmation. If Attorney General Pryor were given a vote on the floor of the Senate, he would be confirmed. But a minority of Democratic Senators has been using unprecedented obstructionist tactics to prevent him and other qualified nominees from receiving up-or-down votes. Their tactics are inconsistent with the Senate's constitutional responsibility and are hurting our judicial system.

As a result of today's recess appointment, Attorney General Pryor will fill a seat on the Eleventh Circuit that has been designated a judicial emergency. He will perform a valuable service on a court that needs more judges to do its work with the efficiency the American people deserve and

expect. Again I call on those in the Senate who are playing politics with the American judicial system to stop so that my nominees receive the up-or-down votes they deserve.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting a Notice of Intention to Enter Into a Free Trade Agreement With Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, and Nicaragua
February 20, 2004

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

In accordance with section 2105(a)(1)(A) of the Trade Act of 2002 (the "Trade Act"), I am pleased to notify the Congress of my intent to enter into a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the Governments of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, and Nicaragua (hereinafter "Central America").

This agreement will create new opportunities for America's workers, farmers, businesses, and consumers by eliminating barriers in trade with Central America. Our Central American partners have made dramatic progress in transitioning from countries wracked by civil war to peaceful, democratic societies. This agreement will write a new page of our history with Central America—one that depicts sustained engagement in support of democracy, peaceful regional integration, economic opportunity, and hope. This agreement is part of a broader strategy that my Administration is pursuing to expand economic opportunities and to promote economic growth and prosperity. We are also moving forward with negotiations to integrate the Dominican Republic in our FTA with Central America.

Consistent with the Trade Act, I am sending this notification at least 90 days in advance of signing the United States-Central America FTA. My Administration looks forward to working with the Congress to develop appropriate legislation to approve and implement an historic free trade agreement with Central America.

Sincerely,

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Richard B. Cheney, President of the Senate. The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

The President's Radio Address
February 21, 2004

Good morning. This week, I traveled to Fort Polk in Louisiana to visit with soldiers and family members who are giving vital service in the war on terror. Fort Polk is home to some of the Army's oldest and finest units. Since September the 11th, 2001, Fort Polk has trained and deployed more than 10,000 troops to fight the terrorist enemy worldwide, including in Afghanistan and Iraq. Thanks to their bravery and skill, America is waging this fight with focus and determination.

Over the last 29 months, many terrorists have learned the meaning of justice. Nearly two-thirds of Al Qaida's known leaders have been captured or killed. The terrorists are

on the run, with good reason to fear what the night might bring. Success in the war on terror also requires that we confront regimes that might arm terrorists with the ultimate weapons. America is determined to meet this danger and to deny terrorists and dangerous regimes the ability to threaten us with the world's most deadly weapons.

For 12 years, the former dictator of Iraq defied the international community. He refused to disarm or account for his illegal weapons and programs. My administration looked at the intelligence information, and we saw a threat. Members of Congress looked at the intelligence, and they saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence, and it saw a threat. All of us knew Saddam Hussein's history. He waged aggressive wars against neighboring countries and aspired to dominate the Middle East. He cultivated ties to terrorists. He built weapons of mass destruction. He hid those weapons. And he used chemical weapons against thousands of Iraqis and Iranians. Saddam Hussein doubted our resolve to enforce our word. Now he sits in a prison cell while his country moves toward a democratic future.

Today in Iraq, our coalition faces deadly attacks from a remnant of Saddam's supporters joined by foreign terrorists. Recently we intercepted a letter sent by a senior Al Qaida associate named Zarqawi to one of Usama bin Laden's top lieutenants. The letter describes a terrorist strategy, to tear Iraq apart with ethnic violence, to undermine Iraqi security forces, to demoralize our coalition, and to prevent the rise of a sovereign, democratic government. This terrorist outlines his efforts to recruit and train suicide bombers and boasts of 25 attacks on innocent Iraqis and coalition personnel. And he urges Al Qaida members to join him in waging war on our coalition and on the people of Iraq.

Zarqawi and men like him have made Iraq the central front in our war on terror. The terrorists know that the emergence of a free Iraq will be a major blow against the worldwide terrorist movement. In this, they are correct.

But we have seen this enemy before, and we know how to deal with them. Fighting alongside the people of Afghanistan, we are defeating the terrorists in that country, and fighting alongside the people of Iraq, we will defeat the terrorists there as well. Iraq, like Afghanistan, will be free.

Our coalition is working with Iraq's Governing Council to draft a basic law with a bill of rights. We're working with Iraqis and the United Nations to prepare for a transition to full Iraqi sovereignty. The establishment of a free Iraq will be a watershed event in the history of the Middle East, helping to advance the spread of liberty throughout that vital region. And as freedom takes hold in the greater Middle East, the people of the region will find new hope, and America will be more secure.

Two-and-a-half years ago, on a clear September morning, the enemies of America brought a new kind of war to our shores. Three days later, I stood in the rubble of the Twin Towers. My resolve today is the same as it was then: I will not relent until the terrorist threat to America is removed.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 11:35 a.m. on February 20 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on February 21. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 20 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. In his address, the President referred to Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; and senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks at a Dinner for the Nation's Governors
February 22, 2004

Good evening. Welcome to the White House. Laura and I are honored to host so many of our friends and new acquaintances. The Nation's Governors were the guests at our first official state dinner almost 3 years ago today. It's great to see so many of those same Governors with us tonight. It's kind of like being with members of your family. Right, Jeb? [*Laughter*]

I appreciate the fact that the Vice President is with us. I oftentimes say Dick Cheney is the finest Vice President our country has ever had. Mother always says, "Wait a minute." [*Laughter*] I want to thank the former Governors who are in my Cabinet, Tommy Thompson and John Ashcroft, Tom Ridge, who is not with us tonight, and the newest member of my Cabinet, Mike Leavitt.

I want to welcome the Nation's new Governors, Barbour and Fletcher, Kernan, Blanco, Walker, Tulafono, and Schwarzenegger. [*Laughter*] Last time I was with Governor Schwarzenegger, it dawned on me that we have some things in common. We both married well. [*Laughter*] We both have trouble with the English language. [*Laughter*] We both have big biceps. [*Laughter*] Well, two out of the three. [*Laughter*]

In the past 3 years, our country has faced some great challenges. We're still at war. The war on terror is a new kind of war in which every American is threatened and every level of government must work together. We've taken vital steps to secure our homeland, and I want to thank the Governors for their hard work. I'm going to continue to work with you to fulfill our solemn duty to protect the American people.

We share responsibility as well to enhance the entrepreneurial spirit so that our economy continues to grow and people can find work; work together to make sure Americans can gain affordable access to health care; to make sure every child learns to read and write and add and subtract. We've made good progress. We'll continue to meet our obligations in future years.

I've got great confidence in America because I believe in the strength of the American people. I've got great confidence in our Nation's Governors because you represent your State's highest ideals and you hold your people's trust.

It's a pleasure to host you all here. And now I'd like you all to join me in a toast to the Governors of the United States.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:12 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida; Gov. Haley Barbour of Mississippi; Gov. Ernie Fletcher of Kentucky; Gov. Joseph E. Kernan of Indiana; Gov. Kathleen Babineaux Blanco of Louisiana; Gov. Olene S. Walker of Utah; Gov. Togiola Tulafono of American Samoa; and Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger of California.

Remarks to the National Governors Association Conference
February 23, 2004

Well, that's it? Okay. [*Laughter*] Always love to get a short introduction. Hope you all cleaned the room up after last night. [*Laughter*] Laura and I really enjoyed that. Thanks for coming. It was a lot of fun. Everybody seemed pretty well behaved. I

don't know about Coach, but yes, I know, it's hard to take him out.

I'm glad members of my Cabinet are here. Obviously, the more communications we can have about issues that worry you, the easier it is for us to solve problems. Governors are problem-solvers, and so is the President. Our jobs are to identify problems and deal with them, and the best way to do so is in the spirit of cooperation.

That's sometimes hard in Washington, I readily concede. This is not a town that thrives upon cooperation, like most State capitals. But we'll continue to work hard to help you, because by helping our Governors, we really help our people. That's the job of a President.

Yesterday in my toast, I said the war on terror goes on, and it does. I wish I could report otherwise, but that's not a true assessment of the world. We are chasing Al Qaida. We're dealing with rogue nations and proliferation, but the war still goes on. And as a fellow Commander in Chief, it's important for you to know that. And therefore, it's essential that we continue to cooperate on matters of homeland security.

We'll have a robust budget in front of the Congress, and we expect it to be passed. Tom, evidently, has met with you all to talk about ways to make sure that the flow of money is expedited from the Federal Government to the State governments to the local governments. And that's essential. And I appreciate that he has convened a conference of Governors and mayors and local responders to make sure that we all do our jobs well. That's the purpose of the meeting.

I will tell you, the response to emergency and/or threats has been, from my perspective, really good. Governor Easley and Governor Warner of Virginia had to suffer through a devastating act of nature. But the response between the Federal Government and the State governments and the local governments was more seamless than ever, and I want to thank the Governors and their offices of emergency preparedness.

Ridge is doing a good job, from my perspective. He's taken on a tough assignment. I see Governor Rendell is nodding his head. You trained him well. But he's taken on a tough assignment, to bring together diverse agencies under one roof and have it function smoothly not only here in Washington but in the field. And we'll continue to work and make sure that the Office of Homeland Security enables you to do your job better.

There's talk about the PATRIOT Act. Let me just tell you it needs to be renewed, and I'll tell you why. Prior to the PATRIOT Act, the CIA and the FBI couldn't communicate on matters of intelligence. And yet, we're fighting a war against individuals and killers that can hide in our communities, hide in dark parts of the world, hide in caves, and we need to be able to communicate. It makes no sense not to have the tools available to chase these terrorists down. So you'll see me actively pursuing renewal of the PATRIOT Act, so not only can we do our job, the Federal Government, but people in the State and local level can too—do so as well.

The Joint Terrorism Task Force in your community require cooperation—interagency cooperation. It's essential they have the tools necessary to find these people and bring them to justice. That is our solemn call in this, the beginning of the 21st century. After all, the most important job of anybody in office is to protect the people of our country, which means we got to stay on the offense when it comes to dealing with Al Qaida, and we got to be wise about dealing with threats before they become imminent or fully materialize. That's the—to me, those are the lessons of September the 11th, 2001. It changed the calculation as to how you analyze and deal with threat.

We are on the hunt for Al Qaida. You just got to know that there's a lot of brave people searching them out. And I view the

hunt for Al Qaida as part of the war on terror. And it requires all assets, intelligence assets and military assets, to chase them down and bring them to justice. And we're doing pretty good—better than pretty good. If Al Qaida were a corporation, middle management has been brought to justice. And that's important for you to know. We can take comfort about the progress we're making. But we've got a lot more to do, and so we'll just stay on the hunt here in—out of Washington, DC.

As you know, I laid out some doctrine that said, "If you harbor a terrorist, you're just as guilty as the terrorist." And it's very important for the administration to follow through when they say something. It makes diplomacy a little easier when your word means something, and in Al Qaida, our word meant something. The Taliban is no longer in power. We've still got work there to do, but the country is now more free than ever before.

You ought to see the movie "Osama." It's an interesting movie. It talks about what it was like to be a woman in Afghanistan during the Taliban era. It will give you a perspective about what it means to be a Governor in a nation which is willing to sacrifice not only for its own security but for the freedom of others. When you hear talk about being a liberator, that movie will bring home what it means to be liberated from the clutches of barbarism.

A lot of my foreign policy is driven by the fact that I truly believe that freedom is a gift from the Almighty to every person and that America has a responsibility to take a lead in the world, to help people be free. And we're making progress in Afghanistan. We really are. Just look at the fact that young girls are now going to school for the first time in a long period of time.

Secretary Rumsfeld's wife and Karen Hughes and Margaret Spellings, who is my Domestic Policy Adviser—they're on a plane right now heading to Afghanistan to continue the progress toward a more free society.

And in Iraq, obviously, I made a tough choice. But my attitude is, is that the lessons of September the 11th mean that we must be clear-eyed and realistic and deal with threats before they fully materialize. I looked at the intelligence and came to the conclusion that Saddam was a threat. The Congress looked at the same intelligence, and it came to the conclusion that Saddam Hussein was a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence, and it concluded that Saddam Hussein was a threat. My predecessor and his administration looked at the same intelligence and concluded that Saddam Hussein was a threat, and that's why Congress passed a—resolved to remove Saddam from power, that regime change was a—was policy for the Government.

And there's a reason why not only did the intelligence say that he was a threat, his actions said he was a threat. He had used weapons of mass destruction on his own people. He hid weapons of mass destruction from inspectors. In other words, he wouldn't be open. The United Nations Security Council, at my request, took a look at the issue one last time and unanimously voted to have Saddam reveal, disclose, and destroy weapons of mass destruction and/or weapons of mass destruction programs and, if not, face serious consequences.

September the 11th affected my way of thinking when it came to the security of the country. We saw a danger, and so I gave him an ultimatum. The world, really, gave him an ultimatum. And he refused. And rather than take the word of a madman whose actions had proven unworthy of leadership, we acted, and we removed him. And the world is better off for it, in my judgment.

It is essential we succeed in Iraq, just like it's essential we succeed in Afghanistan. A free Iraq is an historic opportunity to help change the world. And I want to thank the Governors for going to Iraq. I want

to thank you for taking the risk to go and to say thanks to the troops on the ground, whether they be your Guard's troops or reservists or whether they be active duty personnel.

We can debate all day long about whether or not I made the right decision, but what is not in question is the bravery and skill of our troops. And I want to thank you for your support—support for people who are serving a cause greater than themselves, people who are willing to sacrifice not only for our own security but people who when, by and large, when you talk to them, understand that the long-term consequences of a free Iraq will make us more secure.

Some of the stories from Iraq are amazing stories. Just ask your Governors to account for what they saw and heard. It's important for you to know that we fully recognize there needs to be certainty in troop rotation, that we're asking families and troops to go serve the country, and there needs to be a certain timeframe. It's important for you to know that our troops will get the best equipment and best possible training.

I went to Fort Polk in Louisiana, and they showed me some of the training missions that our Guard units are going through, particularly the Guard unit out of Arkansas—Huckabee. And the training is very good. It is intense. It is realistic. It is preparing these souls for duty. And again, I want to thank you, as Commander in Chief, for understanding the mission.

See, the danger is, is that the Iraqi people think we'll cut and run. That's what they're worried about. I think if you ask the Governors, they'll tell you they heard that same sentiment. We're not going to cut and run. We've got to make it clear we're there to succeed, and we will.

And they're making progress on the ground. I don't think it's all that bad that people are arguing about the nature of government. It's a pretty good sign. We argue about government all the time here. As a matter of fact, later on this year, we'll be having a pretty good argument about government. [*Laughter*] But it's a good sign in Iraq. That's part of the process of heading for a society in which minority rights are recognized and human dignity is paramount. Again, I'll repeat to you, I view this as an historic moment. I truly believe that a free Iraq is going to change the world for the better.

I had a dinner with Koizumi—Prime Minister Koizumi in Tokyo, and we were eating Kobe beef, which is quite good, I might add. And we were talking about, of all things, North Korea, how best, as friends, to deal with North Korea. It dawned on me in the midst of that conversation, what would it have been like if we'd blown the peace with Japan. Would I have ever—or any American President ever been sitting down with a Prime Minister talking about how to deal with the current threat, for the common good?

During the course of the conversation, I also realized that 50 years from now, when we get it right in Iraq, some American President will be sitting down with the leader of Iraq, talking about the common good, how to maintain the peace, how to create a more hopeful society. This is an historic opportunity, and this country will not flinch from the hard duty ahead of us.

At home, obviously, the economy and jobs are on my mind. I know they're on yours as well. I'm pleased that the economy is growing; 5.6 percent unemployment is a good national number. It's not good enough, but it's a good number, particularly since what we've been through, which has been a recession, an emergency, and corporate scandal and war. And yet, the economy is growing, which is a good sign.

My view of government is to create an environment that is good for the entrepreneur, that encourages capital formation, particularly among small businesses. The tax relief we passed not only put more money into the pockets of individuals,

which I believe is good when you're trying to come out of a recession, but it also helps small businesses. Remember, most small businesses in your States are sole proprietorships or Subchapter S corporations. That's a fact, and when you cut income taxes—all taxes, not a few but all—you're providing additional capital for Subchapter S and sole proprietorships.

And if you're worried about job growth, it seems like it makes sense to give a little fuel to those who create jobs, the small-business sector. So I'll vigorously defend the permanency of the tax cuts, not only for the sake of the economy but for the sake of the entrepreneurial spirit, which is important in your States. It's important that people have got incentive to create jobs. Not only is it good for those people looking for work, it's good for the soul of the country for people to own something. We want us to be an ownership society in America.

There's more to do. We need an energy bill. We'll try to get one out of the Congress here. We need tort reform, it seems like to me. We need tort reform for class action; we need tort reform for asbestos. We need medical—national medical liability reform in order to help control the rising cost of health care, associated health care plans. I hope you support these. These are opportunities for small businesses to pool risk in order to better control the cost of health. That's where the focus ought to be, how best to address the rising cost of health care. And this administration will continue to do so for the sake of jobs—less regulations, obviously.

We won't back off our desire to open up markets for U.S. products—farm products, ranch products, manufacturing products. It's pretty easy to trade into America. What's hard is for Americans to trade into other countries. And so it's important for the administration to continue to focus on trade and the benefits of trade here at home.

And I mentioned the permanency of the tax cuts. It's very important for people who are planning for the future to have—wonder about tax relief, whether it will be there. It's essential that there be certainty in the Tax Code.

We also recognize that these are changing times. The economy is changing. People go to work in different ways. And therefore, the policy ought to reflect that. The policy ought to reflect it through health care, where people have got more control over their health care decisions. Health savings accounts are one such way to do that.

The education system is vital. However, as the economy changes, people have got to be prepared to work in the changing economy. I'm going to vigorously defend No Child Left Behind because I know in my heart of hearts it's the absolute right role for the Federal Government to provide money but insist upon results, to say for the first time, "Would you please show us whether or not the children are learning to read and write and add and subtract." And if not, there will be special help to make sure they do. And if so, there will be ample praise.

You design the accountability. I know Rod talked to you about flexibility and how we get to the numbers, which is good. Accountability isn't meant to punish anybody. Accountability systems are meant to help determine whether curriculum are working, whether or not the strategy is working, and whether or not people are being just shuffled through from grade to grade without concern as to whether or not they can read or write. That's what this is all about, and I look forward to working with you to make sure the system works well. And I just can assure you this is—there will be a vigorous defense of what I think is the one of the most constructive reforms in education policy at the Federal Government ever.

We have put out some policies to encourage reading and math, a program for high school students who are falling behind, additional money for advanced placement for low-income schools, increasing—larger Pell grants for students who prepare for

college by taking more rigorous courses. And of course, I've always felt that the community college system provides a great opportunity for job training. Elaine will talk about that to you. Community colleges are available, affordable; they're flexible. We don't need to be training 500 hairdressers for 50 jobs which exist. The system ought to be designed toward meeting the demand of your employers, and a good community college system will make it much easier for Governors and mayors to attract jobs to your communities. And I know a lot of you have used your community college system wisely.

Governor Napolitano—I was in Arizona, went to the Mesa Community College System. It's a fine community college system. One of the interesting stories there, a lady who worked for 15 years as a graphic design artist, and she went to the community college system to help get the skills necessary to become a viable employee in the high-tech world. And her starting pay—I believe it's called Cable One—was higher than her 15th year as a graphic artist because she took time, with Government help—I think a Pell grant in her case—to become reeducated. So we've got money in our budget to help invigorate the community college system.

Another issue that I think we need to work on—I know we need to work on is welfare. They need to reauthorize welfare. I hope the Congress will reauthorize welfare. Welfare reform had worked. You need to have certainty as you plan your—on how to help people become less dependent on government, and we need a welfare reform bill. And we'll push it here in Washington.

And finally, the Faith-Based Initiative—I want to talk a little bit about that. My attitude is, if a program works, let's use it. If a program can help save somebody's life, it seems like to me that program ought to be allowed to access monies aimed at helping people help themselves. And yet, that's not the way it was here in Washington. Faith-based programs were discriminated against. There was a process argument, and Governors are results-oriented people, and so am I. And it seems like to me, you ought have the flexibility and people at your grassroots level ought to have the flexibility to access taxpayers' money if they're able to meet common objectives. Now—and so—well, I couldn't get the bill out of the Congress, so I just signed an Executive order which opened up Federal grant money to faith-based groups on a competitive basis.

We're also making sure that our bureaucracies don't say to faith-based groups, "You can't be a faith-based group." If faith is part of being an effective program, it doesn't make sense to say to somebody, you can't practice your faith. And so we recognize, here in Washington, faith-based programs are a two-way street—one, there's a Federal interface, and two, that sometimes can be frightening to people of faith. And by the way, I'm talking about all faiths. This isn't just a single faith. It's Christian, Jewish, Muslim faiths, all of which exist because they've heard the universal admonition to love a neighbor like you'd like to be loved yourself.

And so I want to applaud those of you who have set up faith-based offices and encourage you, if you haven't, to do so. There is a lot of Federal money available to effective providers of social services. One such program is going to be the $100 million drug treatment programs, where now vouchers can be issued to people where they can choose where they go, whether it be kind of a clinical program or a program designed to help change somebody's heart. By the way, if your heart gets changed, it's a lot easier to quit drinking. I know. And so it's—so this is an opportunity that I think is a viable opportunity for Governors and States to really help people. And that's why we're in office, isn't it, is to do the best—[*applause*].

So regardless of your party, I hope you have this sense of optimism I do. You see the people in your States—we are lucky

to be leaders in such a fabulous country. We really are—good, honest, decent, honorable people. We've overcome a lot. There's more to do. There's a lot we can do together. So thanks for coming by the White House.

That's my pledge. This is going to be a year in which a lot of people are probably going to think nothing can get done, right, because we're all out campaigning. Well, that's not my attitude. I fully understand it's going to be the year of the sharp elbow and the quick tongue. But my pledge to you is, we'll continue to work with you. You've got what you—you've got to do what you've got to do in your home States, in terms of politics. But surely we can shuffle that aside sometimes and focus on our people, do what you were elected to do and what I was elected to do to make this country hopeful.

So thanks for coming by. I'll be glad to answer a couple of questions.

You're out of here.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:20 a.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Raymond "Coach" Blanco, husband of Gov. Kathleen Babineaux Blanco of Louisiana; Secretary of Homeland Security Tom Ridge; Gov. Michael F. Easley of North Carolina; Gov. Mark R. Warner of Virginia; Joyce Rumsfeld, wife of Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld; Karen Hughes, former Counselor to the President; Margaret Spellings, Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; Gov. Mike Huckabee of Arkansas; Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan; Secretary of Labor Elaine L. Chao; and Gov. Janet Napolitano of Arizona. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Message to the Senate Transmitting the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime and Two Supplementary Protocols
February 23, 2004

To the Senate of the United States:

With a view to receiving the advice and consent of the Senate to ratification, I transmit herewith the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (the "Convention"), as well as two supplementary protocols: (1) the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, and (2) the Protocol Against Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, which were adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on November 15, 2000. The Convention and Protocols were signed by the United States on December 13, 2000, at Palermo, Italy.

Accompanying the Convention and Protocols are interpretative notes for the official records (or "travaux preparatoires") that were prepared by the Secretariat of the Ad Hoc Committee that conducted the negotiations, based on discussions that took place throughout the process of negotiations. These notes are being submitted to the Senate for information purposes. I also transmit the report of the Department of State with respect to the Convention and Protocols.

The Convention and Protocols are the first multilateral treaties to address the phenomenon of transnational organized crime. Their provisions are explained in the accompanying report of the Department of State. The report also sets forth proposed reservations and understandings that would be deposited by the United States with its

instruments of ratification. With these reservations and understandings, the Convention and Protocols will not require implementing legislation for the United States.

The Convention and Protocols will be effective tools to assist in the global effort to combat transnational organized crime in its many forms, such as trafficking and smuggling of persons. They provide for a broad range of cooperation, including extradition, mutual legal assistance, and measures regarding property, in relation to serious crimes committed by an organized group that has a transnational element.

The Convention also imposes on the States Parties an obligation to criminalize, if they have not already done so, certain types of conduct characteristic of transnational organized crime. For the Convention, these are: participation in an organized criminal group (i.e., conspiracy), money laundering, bribery of domestic public officials, and obstruction of justice. The Protocols require parties to criminalize trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants. These provisions will serve to create a global criminal law standard for these offenses, several of which (e.g., trafficking in persons) currently are not criminal in many countries. The Trafficking Protocol also includes important provisions regarding assistance to and protection of victims of trafficking.

I recommend that the Senate give early and favorable consideration to the Convention and Protocols, and that it give its advice and consent to ratification, subject to the reservations and understandings described in the accompanying report of the Department of State.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
February 23, 2004.

Remarks to the Republican Governors Association
February 23, 2004

Thank you all very much. It is always an honor to welcome fellow Governors to Washington, DC. I'm a proud former member of the RGA. And tonight we're proud to welcome the newest members of this growing organization, Olene, Ernie, Haley, and Arnold. The Governor of California is new to politics, so he's still getting used to all the cameras and lights. [*Laughter*] I used to think the coolest Governor was from Florida. [*Laughter*]

The most distinguished former member of the RGA is a predecessor of Governor Schwarzenegger and a predecessor of mine. President Ronald Reagan had his 93d birthday this month, and tonight we want Nancy and his family to know we are thinking of this great American. Ronald Reagan's leadership revived America's economy, renewed America's strength, and lifted America's confidence. And that spirit of optimism and faith in fundamental American values is the spirit we will carry to victory in November of 2004.

I married really well. [*Laughter*] I am so honored—I appreciate you coming tonight, Laura. She's a great First Lady for our country. I'm really proud of the job she's doing.

I want to thank my friend Bob Taft for being the chairman of this august group. I appreciate Kenny Guinn from Nevada for being the vice chairman. I thank Governor Mitt Romney of Massachusetts for hosting this reception. I want to thank all the other Republican Governors who are here. I'm proud to call you friend.

I want to thank all of you who are here to support these Governors. They're making a significant difference in their States. They

bring such optimism and hope. I appreciate the members of my Cabinet who are here.

I also want to acknowledge a man who is not here. Vice President Dick Cheney spent the day campaigning in Minneapolis and Wichita, but he's recently completed another important assignment. Once again I put him in charge of my Vice Presidential search committee. [*Laughter*] He tells me he's reviewed all the candidates, and he's come back with the same recommendation as last time. [*Laughter*] In fact, I made the choice myself, after I had taken the measure of this man. They don't come any better, and I am proud to have Dick Cheney by my side.

We meet during the Presidential primary season. We're witnessing a clear trend. It looks like we have a winner in the Republican primaries. [*Laughter*] The other party's nomination battle is still playing out. The candidates are an interesting group with diverse opinions: For tax cuts and against them; for NAFTA and against NAFTA; for the PATRIOT Act and against the PATRIOT Act; in favor of liberating Iraq and opposed to it. And that's just one Senator from Massachusetts.

The other party is still not finished selecting its nominee. Yet this much is already certain: Come November, the voters are going to have a very clear choice. It's a choice between keeping the tax relief that is moving the economy forward or putting the burden of higher taxes back on the American people. It is a choice between an America that leads the world with strength and confidence or an America that is uncertain in the face of danger. The American people will decide between two visions of Government, a Government that encourages ownership and opportunity and responsibility or a Government that takes your money and makes your choices. I will set these alternatives squarely before the American people in a spirited campaign. I look forward to the contest.

We have a record of historic achievement. And most important, we have a positive vision for the years ahead, for winning the war against terror, for extending peace and freedom and creating jobs and opportunity here at home. We'll leave no doubt where we stand, and we will win our second term in November.

The last 3 years have brought serious challenges. We've given serious answers and the strong leadership these times of extraordinary change demand. We came to office with an economy heading into recession. We delivered historic tax relief, and the consumer spending and investment that resulted helped lift our economy back to growth so that people are getting hired again. At a time when competition is not just across town but across borders and continents, America's productive workers have made this economy the fastest growing of any major industrialized nation.

We had to confront corporate crimes that cost people jobs and savings, so we passed the strongest corporate reforms since Franklin Roosevelt and made it clear that we will not tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America.

We saw war and grief arrive on a quiet September morning, and from that day to this, we have pursued terrorists across the world. We've captured or killed many of the key leaders of the Al Qaida network, and the rest of them know we're on their trail. There is no cave or hole deep enough to hide them.

We confronted the dangers of state-sponsored terror and the spread of weapons of mass destruction. We have used the power of this country to end forever two of the most violent and dangerous regimes on Earth. More than 50 million people in Afghanistan and Iraq are reclaiming the rights and dignity of free men and women, and America has been proud, once again, to lead the armies of liberation.

When Dick Cheney and I came to Washington, we found a military that was underfunded and underappreciated, so we increased the defense budget to give our men and women the tools and training they

need to win the war on terror. And today, no one in the world can question the skill, the strength, and the spirit of the United States military.

We learned that on September the 11th, our homeland is no longer protected by vast oceans, so we reorganized our Government and created the Department of Homeland Security to safeguard the ports and borders and to better protect the American people.

When we came to office, people in this city had gotten used to gridlock. Old problems were used to score points. Old problems were politicized, debated, and just passed on from year to year. We didn't come here to this Nation's Capital to do things the Washington way. We chose to lead and to get things done. We passed major reforms to raise the standards of public schools. We passed reforms in Medicare to give prescription drugs and choice to our seniors. We're showing that with big goals and clear principles, you can get past old differences and make progress for all of the American citizens.

It's the President's job to confront problems, not to pass them on to future Presidents and future generations. It's the President's job to seize opportunities and not let them slip away. A President needs to step up and make the hard decisions and keep his commitments, and that is how I will continue to lead our country.

Great events will turn on this election. The man who sits in the Oval Office will set the course of the war on terror and the direction of our economy. The security and prosperity of America are at stake. Our course is clear.

In the next 4 years, we'll keep our enemies on the run and extend the frontiers of liberty. In the next 4 years, we'll help more Americans to find that there are opportunities in a changing economy. In the next 4 years, we will stand for the values that make us a good and decent country.

Our opponents have not offered much in the way of strategies to win the war or policies to expand our economy. So far, all we hear is a lot of old bitterness and partisan anger. Anger is not an agenda for the future of America. We're taking on the big issues with strength and resolve and determination, and we stand ready to lead this Nation for the next 4 years.

A big issue for every family in America is the Federal tax burden. With the largest tax relief since Ronald Reagan was President, we have left more money in the hands of those who earned it. By saving and spending and investing and to help create new jobs, the American people have used their money far better than the Federal Government would have.

Our opponents have their own plan for these tax cuts. They plan to take them away. They will use that money to expand the Federal Government. I have a better idea. To keep this economy growing, we will have fiscal discipline in Washington, DC. To keep this economy going, the tax cuts must be permanent.

We must do more to keep this economy growing. We need to protect small-business owners and employees from frivolous lawsuits and needless regulation. We need to control the costs of health care by passing medical liability reform. No one has ever been healed by a frivolous lawsuit. We need to pass sound energy legislation to modernize our electricity system and to make America less dependent on foreign sources of oil.

Our opponents talk about job creation, but they're against every one of these job-creating measures. Empty talk about jobs won't get anybody hired. The way to create jobs is our pro-growth, pro-entrepreneur, pro-small-business-owner agenda.

This economy of ours is going through a time of challenge and change. In the new economy, many workers change jobs several times or start their own businesses or work out of their homes as contractors. They often don't have pensions or health care through their jobs. Many have had to learn new skills. It's our responsibility

to help people gain the skills and security to make a good living and to look forward to their retirement.

All skills start with education. My administration has put education at the top of the agenda. We passed the No Child Left Behind Act, a good law that is bringing higher standards and accountability to every public school in America. We have a plan to help high school students who fall behind in reading and math. We have a plan to help community colleges train workers for the industries that are creating the most new jobs. We are strongly committed to education because we believe everyone in America should have a chance to learn and to succeed and to realize the great promise of our country.

My administration understands the importance of ownership in our society. We've set a great goal: We want every worker in America to become a saver and an owner. And we have an agenda to meet this goal. We'll help more people of every background to own their homes and build their own savings. We'll encourage more people to own their own small businesses. We'll help more people to own their own health care plans. We want younger workers to own and manage their own retirement under Social Security, so that one day every worker can have the security of a personal account. When people have solid assets to call their own, they gain independence and security and dignity and more control over their future. I believe in private property so much, I want everyone in America to have some.

On issue after issue, the American people have a clear choice. Our opponents are against personal retirement accounts, against putting patients in charge of Medicare, against tax relief. They seem to be against every idea that gives Americans more authority and more choices and more control over their own lives. We'll hear them make a lot of promises over the next eight months, and listen closely, because there's a theme. Every promise will increase the power of politicians and bureaucrats over your income, over your retirement, over your health care, and over your life. It's the same old Washington mindset. They'll give the orders, and you'll pay the bills. I've got news for them. America has gone beyond that way of thinking, and we're not going back. I trust the people, not Washington politicians, to make the best decisions for their own money, their own health, their own retirement, and their own lives.

Our future also depends on America's leadership in this world. The momentum of freedom in our time is strong, but we still face serious challenges. Al Qaida is wounded but not broken. Terrorists are testing our will in Afghanistan and Iraq. Regimes in North Korea and Iran are challenging the peace. The actions we take and the decisions we make in this decade will have consequences far into this century. If America shows weakness and uncertainty, the world will drift toward tragedy. That will not happen on my watch. This Nation is strong and confident in the cause of freedom, and no friend or enemy today doubts the word of the United States.

America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Afghanistan. The Taliban chose defiance, and the Taliban are no longer in power. America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Iraq. The dictator chose defiance, and now the dictator sits in a prison cell.

September the 11th, 2001, taught a lesson I have not forgotten. America must confront threats before they fully materialize. In Iraq, my administration looked at the intelligence and saw a danger. Members of Congress looked at the intelligence, and they saw a danger. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence, and it saw a danger. The previous administration and Congress looked at the intelligence and made regime change in Iraq the policy of our country. We all knew Saddam's history well. He waged aggressive

wars against neighboring countries and aspired to dominate the Middle East. He cultivated ties to terrorists. He built weapons of mass destruction. He hid those weapons. He used chemical weapons against thousands of Iraqis and Iranians.

In 2002, the United Nations Security Council yet again demanded a full accounting of Saddam Hussein's weapons programs. As he had for over a decade, Saddam Hussein refused to comply. So we had a choice to make: Either take the word of a madman, or take action to defend America and the world. Faced with that choice, I will defend America every time.

Others would have chosen differently. They now agree that the world is better off with Saddam out of power. They just didn't support removing Saddam from power. [*Laughter*] Maybe they were hoping he'd lose the next Iraqi election. [*Laughter*] We showed the dictator and a watching world that we mean what we say. Because our coalition acted, Saddam's torture chambers are closed. Because we acted, the Middle East is more peaceful. Because we acted, Iraq's weapons programs are ended forever. Because we acted, nations like Libya have gotten the message and renounced their weapons programs. Because we acted, an example of democracy is rising at the heart of the Middle East. Because we acted, the world is more free, and America is more secure.

We still face thugs and terrorists in Iraq who would rather go on killing the innocent than accept the advance of liberty. They know that a free Iraq would be a major defeat in the cause of terror. This collection of killers is trying to shake the will of America and the civilized world. They don't know us very well. America will never be intimidated by thugs and assassins.

We're aggressively striking the terrorists in Iraq, defeating them there so we do not have to face them in our own country. We're calling other nations to help Iraq build a free society, which will make us all safer. We're standing with the Iraqi people as they assume more of their own defense and move toward self-government. These aren't easy tasks, but they're essential tasks. We will finish what we have begun, and we'll win this important victory in the war on terror.

On national security, Americans have the clearest possible choice. Our opponents say they approve of bold action in the world but only if no other government disagrees. I'm all for united action, and so are the 34 coalition partners we have in Iraq right now. But America must never outsource America's national security decisions to the leaders of other governments.

Some of our opponents are skeptical that the war on terror is really a war at all. They view terrorism more as a crime, a problem to be solved with law enforcement and indictments. Our Nation followed that approach after the World Trade Center was bombed in 1993. The matter was handled in the courts and thought to be settled. But the terrorists were still training in Afghanistan, plotting in other nations, and drawing up more ambitious plans. After the chaos and carnage of September the 11th, it is not enough to serve our enemies with legal papers. With those attacks, the terrorists and their supporters declared war on the United States, and war is what they got.

The men and women who are fighting this war and who have seen the enemy understand the stakes. Last year, in a letter home from the Iraqi theater, a Navy Corpsman named Lonnie Lewis wrote this: "We have to remind ourselves of what this country stands for, life, liberty, and justice for all. In order to maintain those rights, we have to stop the threat of terrorism." Corpsman Lewis' letter concludes, "My family is first. My country is where they live. I will defend it."

This is the caliber of the people who are defending America. We are counting on them. The people of Iraq and people across the Middle East are depending on

them. And I assure you, ladies and gentlemen, the cause of freedom is in good hands.

This Nation is prosperous and strong, yet we need to remember the sources of America's greatness. We're strong because we love freedom. America has a special charge to keep, because we are freedom's home and defender. We believe that freedom is the deepest need and hope of every human heart. We believe that freedom is the future of every nation, and we know that freedom is not America's gift to the world. It is the Almighty God's gift to every man and woman in this world.

We also know that the greatest strength of this country lies in the hearts and souls of our citizens. We're strong because of the values we try to live by, courage and compassion, reverence and integrity. We're strong because of the institutions that help to give us direction and purpose, families and schools and religious congregations. These values and institutions are fundamental to our lives, and they deserve the respect of our Government.

We stand for the fair treatment of faith-based groups so they can receive Federal support for their works of compassion and healing. We will not stand for Government discrimination against people of faith.

We stand for welfare reforms that require work and strengthen marriage, which have helped millions of Americans find independence and dignity. We will not stand for any attempt to weaken those reforms and send people back into lives of dependence.

We stand for a culture of life in which every person counts and every person matters. We will not stand for the treatment of any life as a commodity to be experimented upon or exploited or cloned.

We stand for the confirmation of judges who strictly and faithfully interpret the law. We will not stand for judges who undermine democracy by legislating from the bench and try to remake the culture by court order.

And we stand for a culture of responsibility in America. We're changing the culture of America from one that has said, "If it feels good, do it," and, "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each of us understands we're responsible for the decisions we make. If you're fortunate enough to be a mother or a father, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart. If you're concerned about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you're responsible for doing something about it. If you're a CEO in America, you're responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And in this new responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourself.

For all Americans, these years in our history will always stand apart. There are quiet times in the life of a nation when little is expected of leaders. This is not one of those times. You and I are living in a period when the stakes are high and the challenges are difficult, the choices are clear, and resolve is needed.

None of us will ever forget that week when one era ended and another began. On September the 14th, 2001, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers. I remember a lot that day. Workers in hardhats were shouting, "Whatever it takes." One fellow pointed at me and said, "Don't let me down." As we all did that day, these men and women searching through the rubble took it personally. I took it personally. I've a responsibility that goes on. I will never relent in bringing justice to our enemies. I will defend America, whatever it takes.

In these times I've also been witness to the character of this Nation. Not so long ago, some had their doubts about the American character, our capacity to meet serious challenges, to serve a cause greater than self-interest. But Americans have given their answer. I've seen the unselfish courage of our troops. I've seen the heroism of Americans in the face of danger.

I've seen the spirit of service and compassion renewed in our country. We've all seen our Nation unite in common purpose when it mattered most.

We will need all of these qualities for the work ahead. We have a war to win, and the world is counting on us to lead the cause of freedom. We have a duty to spread compassion and opportunity to every part of America.

This is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it. And we know that for the United States of America, the best days lie ahead.

God bless. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:18 p.m. at the Washington Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Olene S. Walker of Utah; Gov. Ernie Fletcher of Kentucky; Gov. Haley Barbour of Mississippi; Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger of California; Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida; Gov. Bob Taft of Ohio; Gov. Kenny C. Guinn of Nevada; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks Calling for a Constitutional Amendment Defining and Protecting Marriage

February 24, 2004

Good morning. Eight years ago, Congress passed and President Clinton signed the Defense of Marriage Act, which defined marriage for purposes of Federal law as the legal union between one man and one woman as husband and wife. The Act passed the House of Representatives by a vote of 342 to 67 and the Senate by a vote of 85 to 14. Those congressional votes and the passage of similar defense-of-marriage laws in 38 States express an overwhelming consensus in our country for protecting the institution of marriage.

In recent months, however, some activist judges and local officials have made an aggressive attempt to redefine marriage. In Massachusetts, four judges on the highest court have indicated they will order the issuance of marriage licenses to applicants of the same gender in May of this year. In San Francisco, city officials have issued thousands of marriage licenses to people of the same gender, contrary to the California Family Code. That code, which clearly defines marriage as the union of a man and a woman, was approved overwhelmingly by the voters of California. A county in New Mexico has also issued marriage licenses to applicants of the same gender. And unless action is taken, we can expect more arbitrary court decisions, more litigation, more defiance of the law by local officials, all of which adds to uncertainty.

After more than two centuries of American jurisprudence and millennia of human experience, a few judges and local authorities are presuming to change the most fundamental institution of civilization. Their actions have created confusion on an issue that requires clarity.

On a matter of such importance, the voice of the people must be heard. Activist courts have left the people with one recourse. If we are to prevent the meaning of marriage from being changed forever, our Nation must enact a constitutional amendment to protect marriage in America.

Decisive and democratic action is needed, because attempts to redefine marriage in a single State or city could have serious consequences throughout the country. The Constitution says that "full faith and credit shall be given in each State to the public acts and records and judicial proceedings

of every other State." Those who want to change the meaning of marriage will claim that this provision requires all States and cities to recognize same-sex marriages performed anywhere in America.

Congress attempted to address this problem in the Defense of Marriage Act by declaring that no State must accept another State's definition of marriage. My administration will vigorously defend this act of Congress. Yet there is no assurance that the Defense of Marriage Act will not, itself, be struck down by activist courts. In that event, every State would be forced to recognize any relationship that judges in Boston or officials in San Francisco choose to call a marriage. Furthermore, even if the Defense of Marriage Act is upheld, the law does not protect marriage within any State or city.

For all these reasons, the defense of marriage requires a constitutional amendment. An amendment to the Constitution is never to be undertaken lightly. The amendment process has addressed many serious matters of national concern. And the preservation of marriage rises to this level of national importance.

The union of a man and woman is the most enduring human institution, honoring—honored and encouraged in all cultures and by every religious faith. Ages of experience have taught humanity that the commitment of a husband and wife to love and to serve one another promotes the welfare of children and the stability of society. Marriage cannot be severed from its cultural, religious, and natural roots without weakening the good influence of society. Government, by recognizing and protecting marriage, serves the interests of all.

Today I call upon the Congress to promptly pass and to send to the States for ratification an amendment to our Constitution defining and protecting marriage as a union of man and woman as husband and wife. The amendment should fully protect marriage while leaving the State legislatures free to make their own choices in defining legal arrangements other than marriage.

America is a free society which limits the role of government in the lives of our citizens. This commitment of freedom, however, does not require the redefinition of one of our most basic social institutions. Our Government should respect every person and protect the institution of marriage. There is no contradiction between these responsibilities.

We should also conduct this difficult debate in a manner worthy of our country, without bitterness or anger. In all that lies ahead, let us match strong convictions with kindness and good will and decency.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:43 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Statement on Senate Action To Block Medical Liability Reform
February 24, 2004

I am disappointed that a minority in the Senate has again decided to play politics and block our Nation's ability to accomplish medical liability reform.

Today's vote is a blow to America's families, because pregnant women are losing access to their obstetricians and gynecologists due to frivolous and abusive lawsuits. Pregnant women who need prenatal and obstetric health care services deserve access to doctors in their own communities. Without the passage of reasonable reforms,

the Nation's badly broken medical liability system will continue to drive physicians like obstetricians and gynecologists out of the practice of medicine and drive up the costs of health care for all Americans. For the benefit of America's families and for the sake of our health care system, there needs to be medical liability reform this year.

Statement on the Parliamentary Elections in Iran
February 24, 2004

I am very disappointed in the recently disputed parliamentary elections in Iran. The disqualification of some 2,400 candidates by the unelected Guardian Council deprived many Iranians of the opportunity to freely choose their representatives. I join many in Iran and around the world in condemning the Iranian regime's efforts to stifle freedom of speech—including the closing of two leading reformist newspapers—in the runup to the election. Such measures undermine the rule of law and are clear attempts to deny the Iranian people's desire to freely choose their leaders.

The United States supports the Iranian people's aspirations to live in freedom, enjoy their God-given rights, and determine their own destiny.

Statement on Signing the NASA Flexibility Act of 2004
February 24, 2004

Today, I have signed into law S. 610, the "NASA Flexibility Act of 2004." The Act strengthens the ability of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration to manage effectively the NASA personnel upon whom the future successes of America's civil space program depend.

Section 3 of the Act enacts new subsections 9802(g), (h), and (i) in title 5 of the United States Code, which purport to require or regulate the submission of certain plans, recommendations, and budget requests to the Congress. The executive branch shall construe these subsections in a manner consistent with the President's constitutional authority to supervise the unitary executive branch, to withhold information the disclosure of which could impair the deliberative processes of the Executive, and to recommend for the consideration of the Congress such measures as the President judges necessary and expedient.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
February 24, 2004.

NOTE: S. 610, approved February 24, was assigned Public Law No. 108–201. An original was not available for verification of the content of this statement.

Remarks Following Discussions With President Mikheil Saakashvili of Georgia and an Exchange With Reporters
February 25, 2004

President Bush. Here's what we're going to do. I will make a statement. The President will make a statement. I will then call upon an American correspondent to ask a question. The President will call upon a Georgian correspondent. We'll have two questions per side.

Mr. President, welcome. We followed the revolution that took place in your country very closely. We appreciate your firm commitment to democracy and freedom. We've had a very interesting discussion. I know firsthand that the President will do everything he can to earn the confidence of the people of Georgia by representing their will, by fighting corruption, by working for a system based upon integrity and decency and human rights.

I'm impressed by this leader. I'm impressed by his vision. I'm impressed by his courage. I am heartened by the fact that we have such a strong friend, a friend with whom we share values.

So Mr. President, welcome to the Oval Office. I appreciate the candid discussion we've had, and I'm proud to call you friend.

President Saakashvili. Thank you. It's a great honor, for me and for the people of Georgia, to be here in this Oval Office. It's not—our cooperation is very deep. We consider ourselves as very close ally and friend of the United States. We are proud to be friend of the United States. I am speaking on behalf of every Georgian.

I have to say that this cooperation, friendship—the U.S. helped us when we needed it most, and would like peoples—other peoples in Europe will never forget that. But our cooperation is—that held friendship is not only about security. It's not only about economy. Primarily it's about our shared values. And we are part of—proud part of antiterrorist coalition. We have forces in Iraq. We are cooperating on other issues.

We are also working very hard on our improved relations with Russia. I had a very interesting conversation with President Putin in Moscow, and I believe Russia should become our reliable partner and we should improve our relations.

But at the same time, we believe that America's help is absolutely essential, and we are grateful. We will stay grateful, and we want to be not only close ally, but we want to be strong ally. Georgia will become stronger. Georgia will become more democratic. Democracy is top priority. Freedom of speech is top priority. Free enterprise, free market is top priority. And I think Georgia can become a role model for the whole region. And this is very important. We need U.S. help in that.

Regarding our revolution, it was the proudest moment of my own life and of life of the whole generation. And we are so proud that we were supported in our fight for democracy and for people's right to choose by the United States, and Washington was the first to come and help us. And I'm sure we'll never forget that.

Mr. President, I really enjoyed being here at the White House. Thank you very much.

President Bush. Thank you. Hold on a second, please. Deb [Deb Riechmann, Associated Press], we're going to——

Q. What do you think about——

President Bush. Hold on, please. Will somebody translate——

President Saakashvili. It's in English.

President Bush. I understand. I understand. Hold on for a second. The way this is going to work is this.

Q. I'm from Georgia.

President Bush. I know you are, excuse me. We're going to start with the American

press, and then there will be a Georgian press, and then there will be an American press, and then there will be a Georgian press. That's the best way to maintain order, so we don't have everybody yelling at the same time.

Deb.

Federal Deficit/Social Security

Q. Mr. President, Chairman Greenspan today suggested trimming Social Security benefits for baby boomers to deal with the rising budget deficit. Do you think this is a good idea, a good way to ease the deficit, which is expected to top over $520 billion this year?

President Bush. First of all, let me talk about the short-term deficit. The best way to trim the deficit is to follow the budgetary plan I submitted to the United States Congress. We presented a plan that will cut the deficit in half over the next 5 years. I haven't talked to the Chairman or read his comments. I need to see exactly what he said. My position on Social Security benefits is this, that those benefits should not be changed for people at or near retirement.

As you know, in the 2000 campaign, I articulated a point of view that we ought to have personal savings accounts for younger workers that would make sure those younger workers receive benefits equal to or greater than that which is expected. I still maintain the same position, but I haven't seen his comments completely.

Georgia's Rose Revolution

Q. What do you think about Rose Revolution in Georgia?

President Bush. The Rose Revolution? It was an historic moment. It was a moment where the people spoke. It was a moment where a Government changed because the people peacefully exercised their voice and raised their voice. And Georgia transitioned to a new Government in an inspiring way.

The President and I discussed the ramifications of the Rose Revolution around other parts of the world. The possibility of people taking charge of their own lives and transforming society in a peaceful way is a powerful example to people around the world who long for freedom and long for honest government.

And so the Rose Revolution is an inspiring moment of history. And again, I want to congratulate the President and his team for insisting that democracy prevail through peaceful means.

Steve [Steve Holland, Reuters].

Situation in Haiti

Q. Mr. President, in Haiti, the rebels are advancing and a power-sharing deal has collapsed. Are you prepared to let President Aristide be overthrown?

President Bush. Secretary Powell and I have been in close consultations on this subject. We still hope to be able to achieve a political settlement between the current Government and the rebels. We are watching the situation very carefully. The Secretary of State has been in touch with Canadian officials and French officials and Caribbean officials, all aimed to convince the parties to come to the table and effect a peaceful solution.

In terms of our own planning here, I have made it abundantly clear to the Coast Guard that we will turn back any refugee that attempts to reach our shore. And that message needs to be very clear as well to the Haitian people. We will have a robust presence with an effective strategy. And so we encourage, strongly encourage the Haitian people to stay home as we work to reach a peaceful solution to this problem.

Q. Do you think it's possible you'll have to send troops there?

President Bush. What we are—incident to a political settlement, we will encourage the international community to provide a security presence. And that is also being discussed right now. But first things, first,

Steve, is to work on a—is to work on a political solution.

Georgia-Russia Relations

Q. ——very complicated problems, with Russian bases problems——

President Bush. Well, I appreciate you bringing up the Russian bases problem. We expect the Russian Government to honor the Istanbul commitment. The Istanbul commitment made it very clear that Russia would leave those places. We will continue to work with the President and President Putin on that commitment.

I also appreciate very much the President's work with the Russians. It's important that relations between Georgia and Russia be positive. I found it a very positive move and a very sophisticated move by the President that his first trip was to Russia, and I encouraged that. I thought it was a smart thing to do. And we will work with Vladimir Putin, with whom I've got a good relationship, to make sure relations are good with Georgia. It's important for the Georgian people to have good and strong and peaceful relations with Russia. There's a lot we can work on. We can work together to fight terror. Hopefully, as the Georgia economy approves—improves—and I'm confident it will—there will be opportunities for—business opportunities.

So the President has got a good vision and this has been a good trip. I believe in his abilities, and I appreciate his vision. And the people of Georgia will be well served by his leadership.

Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:26 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Vladimir Putin of Russia. A reporter referred to President Jean-Bertrand Aristide of Haiti. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on the Deployment of U.S. Military Forces in Response to Security Concerns for United States Embassy Personnel in Haiti

February 25, 2004

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Increasing armed rebellion in Haiti, the limited effectiveness of the Haitian National Police, and insecurity in Port-au-Prince brought on by increased armed pro-government gang activity have contributed to a climate of insecurity for the U.S. Embassy and its supporting facilities in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. These circumstances and the potential for further deterioration of the security environment in Haiti render the safety of the U.S. Embassy, its facilities, and U.S. personnel uncertain.

On February 23, 2004, a security force of approximately 55 U.S. military personnel from the U.S. Joint Forces Command deployed to Port-au-Prince, Haiti, to augment the Embassy security forces.

Although the U.S. forces are equipped for combat, this movement was undertaken solely for the purpose of protecting American citizens and property. It is anticipated that U.S. forces will provide this support until such time as it is determined that the security situation has stabilized and the threat to the Embassy, its facilities, and U.S. personnel has ended.

I have taken this action pursuant to my constitutional authority to conduct U.S. foreign relations and as Commander in Chief and Chief Executive. I am providing this report as part of my efforts to keep the

Congress informed, consistent with the War Powers Resolution.

Sincerely,

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Ted Stevens, President pro tempore of the Senate.

Message to the Congress Reporting a Certification Regarding NATO Invitees Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia

February 25, 2004

To the Congress of the United States:

Consistent with Condition (3) of the resolution of advice and consent to the ratification of the Protocols to the North Atlantic Treaty of 1949 on the Accession of Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia, adopted by the United States Senate on May 8, 2003, and based on the recommendation of the Department of State, I hereby certify to the Congress that each of these governments is cooperating fully with United States efforts to obtain the fullest possible accounting of captured or missing United States personnel from past military conflicts or Cold War incidents, to include:

(A) facilitating full access to relevant archival material; and

(B) identifying individuals who may possess knowledge relative to captured or missing United States personnel, and encouraging such individuals to speak with United States Government officials.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,

February 25, 2004.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 26.

Message to the Senate Reporting a Certification Regarding NATO Invitees Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia

February 25, 2004

To the Senate of the United States:

Consistent with Condition (l)(A) of the resolution of advice and consent to the ratification of the Protocols to the North Atlantic Treaty of 1949 on the Accession of Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia, adopted by the United States Senate on May 8, 2003, and based on the recommendation of the Department of State, I hereby certify to the Senate that:

(i) the inclusion of Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia in NATO will not have the effect of increasing the overall percentage share of the United States in the common budgets of NATO; and (ii) the inclusion of Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia in NATO does not detract from the ability of the United States

to meet or to fund its military requirements outside the North Atlantic area.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
February 25, 2004.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 26.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting a Report on the Security Progress of NATO Invitees Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia
February 26, 2004

Dear _____ *:*

Consistent with Condition 3(2)(A) of the Senate resolution of advice and consent to ratification to the Protocols to the North Atlantic Treaty of 1949 on the Accession of Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia, passed on May 8, 2003, I am providing a report prepared by my Administration.

This report describes the progress of the seven NATO invitees in satisfying the security sector and security vetting requirements for membership in NATO. As the report makes clear, all seven satisfy these NATO requirements.

Sincerely,

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Pat Roberts, chairman, and John D. Rockefeller IV, vice chairman, Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, and Porter J. Goss, chairman, and Jane Harman, vice chairman, House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence.

Remarks in a Discussion on the National Economy in Louisville, Kentucky
February 26, 2004

The President. Listen, thanks for having me. I want to thank you all for coming. What we're going to do here is have a—talk about how our economy works and how good public policy out of Washington can affect people's lives in a positive way, can encourage job growth, so people have got a hopeful future. That's what we're here to talk about. And the best way to talk about it is to have people who are actually living lives that—which have been affected by policy.

But first, I want to say some things, if you don't mind.

James Kirchdorfer, Sr. Go right ahead. [*Laughter*]

The President. Okay, good. [*Laughter*] I love the entrepreneurial spirit of America. It's one of the things that I think makes the country unique and strong. I love family-owned businesses. Nothing wrong with a son trying to follow in a father's footsteps. [*Laughter*]

I appreciate the Kirchdorfer family and employees for welcoming us here. Jim was bragging backstage about the success of this company is really based upon the fact you've got great workers, highly productive, well-motivated workers, which speaks volumes about your management style and your ability to make good decisions, like marrying your wife, Carolyn. [*Laughter*]

I appreciate a member of my Cabinet being here today. Elaine Chao is with us. The Senator married really well. [*Laughter*] So did she. Elaine, I appreciate your hard work. I want to thank very much my friend Anne Northup, who flew down with me today. We had a fascinating discussion about Kentucky. She's doing a great job. She's straightforward. She cares about people.

It's good to see the Governor and the Lieutenant Governor here. I want to thank you for coming, Governor and Governor. I appreciate you all coming. Ernie, thanks for being here. And Steve Pence—thanks, Steve.

Mr. Mayor—where's the mayor? Oh, Mr. Mayor, thanks for coming. Jerry Abramson, honored you're here. I really appreciate you taking time to be here. I want to thank you all for taking time out of your day to come and listen to this dialog.

There's a person I met at the airport I want to herald. Her name is Marina Partee. She is—thank you, Marina. She helps victims of domestic violence. See, she is a volunteer to make Louisville, Kentucky, a better place for all. She's one of those thousands of loving souls who are willing to provide comfort to those who hurt.

The reason I bring up Marina is that we talk about the strength of America a lot. We say that we're strong because we've got a great military—and we'll keep it that way, by the way—we're strong because we're a wealthy nation. The true strength of this country lies in the hearts and souls of our citizens. That's where we find the real strength of America. We find strength in the fact that there are souls who are willing to take time out of their busy lives to love a neighbor just like they would like to be loved themselves.

One of my jobs is to rally the armies of compassion, people who have heard the universal call to love. And Marina is a soldier in the army of compassion. I want to thank you for setting a fine example. I urge people in this fine city to help somebody who hurts. There are all kinds of ways that you can serve your community. You could mentor a child. You can help somebody who is homeless. You can help a shut-in. But be a part of the army of compassion. You represent the true strength of the country when you do so. So, Marina, thank you for coming. Thanks for the example. I'm proud you're here.

I'm optimistic about the future of this country because I know what we've been through. Yes, I saw firsthand what the Nation has overcome. We have overcome a recession. We overcame an attack. On September the 11th, the enemy attacked us, and it hurt our economy. It also affected our psychology, made us realize oceans were no longer—could no longer protect us from an enemy which hates what we stand for. And then, all of a sudden, we started to recover. Things got better because of the resiliency of our economy and the fact that Americans refused to give in to terror. Then we had some corporate scandals, scandals which affected our confidence. The capitalist system requires honesty and openness. But we dealt with it straightforward. We said, "If you're going to lie or cheat or steal, if you don't tell the truth to your shareholders and your employees, there will be serious consequences."

And then, as the economy kind of started to recover from those three, I made a tough decision, and that is to deal with threats before they fully materialize, threats abroad before they become imminent. And that, obviously, was not only in Afghanistan but in Iraq. I looked at intelligence and saw a threat. Congress looked at intelligence and saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence, and it saw a threat. Saddam Hussein said, "I'm not going to expose my weapons. I'm not going to get rid of my—I'm not going to allow inspectors in," he said. But this is the same man who had used them.

So I had to make a decision: Do I trust the word of madman, or do I remember the lessons of September the 11th? I vowed on September the 11th to do my duty to protect America, to deal with threats before they fully materialize. So I called upon our country and many other nations to respond. Some did; some didn't. But the world is better off without Saddam Hussein. The people of Iraq are better off without Saddam Hussein.

A march to war affects the confidence of the people. Laura reminded me, in July of 2002, on the television screens came the notation "America Is Marching to War." It's hard to invest capital when you're marching to war. It's hard to be optimistic, isn't it? War is not an optimistic thought. Now we're marching to peace. We're marching to peace.

But all those affected not only the psychology of the country but affected our economy. But we overcame the obstacles, and that's why I'm optimistic. I say we overcame them—the economy is growing. We added over 100,000 jobs since January, new jobs. Inflation is low; interest rates, low. Manufacturing activity is up. We're growing. The economy is getting better. There's more to do, but look at what we've overcome. And we overcame it because of good fiscal policy out of Washington, DC, in some part. We overcame it because the role of Government is not to manage the economy; the role of Government is to create an environment in which entrepreneurs are willing to take risk and create new jobs.

And so we cut the taxes on the people. We let people keep more of their own money. We understand that when somebody has got more of their own money to spend, they're likely to demand a good or a service. And in this economy, when somebody demands a good or a service, somebody will supply that good or a service. And when somebody supplies that good or a service, it means somebody is working. That's what that means.

We cut all taxes. I believe if you're going to cut taxes, you shouldn't try to pick and choose winners and losers in the Tax Code. Everybody ought to get tax relief. And so we reduced taxes on everybody who paid taxes. And it particularly helps small businesses when you cut income taxes, because, you see, most small businesses, like some up here, are what they call Subchapter S corporations, which means they pay tax at the individual income-tax level. A lot of small businesses are sole proprietorships, which means you pay tax at the individual income-tax level. So when you hear people talking about cutting income taxes on individuals, not only does it help families, those tax cuts help small businesses. And if you're worried about job creation, like I am, and you understand that most new jobs are created by small businesses, it made eminent sense to have policies that affected small businesses in a positive way.

We also helped families. We increased the child credit to $1,000 per child. That helps moms and dads do their solemn duty to raise their children. It reduced the marriage penalty—the tax relief reduced the marriage penalty. I think it makes sense to encourage marriage in our society through the Tax Code, not discourage marriage. We helped our senior citizens by reducing the tax on capital gains and dividends. We encouraged small-business investment by raising the limits of deductibility, and we'll hear some talk about that in a minute. And we put the death tax on its way to extinction.

Now, let me talk about the death tax right quick. See, I think it's really unfair to tax a person's assets twice, while they're living and after they die. I think people ought to be able to leave their business to whomever they choose without the Federal Government making it difficult to do so. I think a person ought to be able to live their farm—leave their farm to whomever they choose without the Federal Government making it difficult to do so. The death tax is bad for small businesses. It's

bad for farmers and ranchers. It makes—it's, in my judgment, bad policy, and it's on its way to being put to extinction. I say "on its way"—you'll hear me talk in a minute that these—some of these taxes don't really go away. It's like they go away for a period of time, but they come back.

Now, as I mentioned, we're doing well. But there are more things we need to do. We need an energy policy. It's hard to be a manufacturing company, for example, in America if you have uncertainty when it comes to energy supply and energy price.

We need tort reform. It is really hard to be a small-business owner and try to create new jobs if you're constantly worried about frivolous and junk lawsuits. We need to worry about the cost of medical care. You see, it's the cost of medical care that makes it awfully hard for this country to remain competitive. As the costs go up, it's harder for small businesses to provide employment, and it's very difficult for American families as well. We need what's called association health care plans that allow small businesses to pool risk so as to better control the cost of health care. We need to expand and market health savings accounts, which will make it easier for small business to provide affordable health care to their employees. We need medical liability reform, national medical liability reform. The cost of frivolous and junk lawsuits is high on our society. It makes it harder for people to be able to employ people because it increases the cost of medicine.

We need good trade policies. It's easy to trade into America; it makes sense for us to be able to trade in other countries easily as well. Listen, we're good. We're good at growing things. We're good at manufacturing things. We ought to be selling those into—not only here at home but into other markets as well.

There needs to be less regulation out of Washington. And frankly, Governor, there needs to be less regulation out of the State level as well, so small businesses can spend time becoming more productive and employing people as opposed to spending time filling out paperwork that, in some cases, probably isn't even read.

We need to do a series of things to make sure the economy grows. And one thing for certain we need to do is make sure there is stable, reliable tax policy. See, as I mentioned to you, the tax relief exists today, but it is going to change unless Congress acts. The child credit will go down unless Congress acts. The marriage penalty will go back up unless Congress acts. The 10 percent bracket will be affected unless Congress acts. In other words, all the tax relief that we passed is set to expire. And unless Congress acts, they will be raising taxes on the American people at a time when we shouldn't be raising taxes on the American people.

In 2005, the child credit goes down, which is a tax on the families. In 2005, the marriage penalty goes up, which is a tax on people who are married. In 2005, the 10 percent bracket is altered, which is a tax on people. We don't need to be raising taxes right now as the economy is beginning to recover. We've got plenty of money in Washington, DC, by the way. We've got to be wise about how we spend it. And by the way, in 2006, many of the small-business deductions go away, which would be a tax on small businesses.

And so I'm calling on Congress to make the tax cuts that are set to expire permanent. I would like Congress to make all tax cuts permanent. But the very minimum—at the very minimum, they need to listen to the stories up here on the stage and make those set to expire in 2005 permanent. For the sake of our economy, for the sake of American families, for the sake of small-business owners, and for the sake of job creation, the tax cuts need to be permanent.

Finally, one other thing I do want to say, and that is that we are in a changing economy. And these are exciting times, but change creates the need for government

at all levels to act in a way that takes advantage of the changing times. We need to make sure our job training programs work. We need to make sure that the community college system is capable of training people for the new jobs of the 21st century, higher paying jobs, better jobs.

I saw the mayor nodding his head. He understands that a good, viable community college system which is flexible, which matches up employer demands with curriculum to make sure there are employees available for those jobs, is really good at making sure Louisville, Kentucky, remains a viable place for people to live and to work. It's a good way to attract industry, if you've got a viable and real job training program system.

I appreciate Elaine's hard work on this. This is a major initiative of our administration, is to provide the opportunity for people to retrain so that their skills—they've got the skills necessary for the new jobs being created in this economy and, I emphasize, better paying jobs being created in this new economy.

So these are the things we're working on in Washington. But you'll be happy to hear I'm about to turn the program over to people who are actually on the frontlines of creating jobs and providing employment, and they're treating people with dignity in the workplace.

Jim is an entrepreneur. He is a risktaker. He takes risks in order to make sure his company can compete. He takes risks in order to make sure the people behind us can work. And so I appreciate being invited into a successful family-owned business that does so much good for the people that you employ and, really, so much good for the economy, because there are thousands of companies all across America who base their hopes and aspirations on dreams and success and on being a responsible citizen by providing good work for people. So, Jim, thanks for having me. Tell us your story.

[*At this point, Mr. Kirchdorfer, chairman, ISCO Industries, made brief remarks.*]

The President. Let me just ask you a question. When you made investments, what did you do? What did you buy? Investment means somebody—you went out and purchased something. So when you hear—when people hear the word "made an investment," it means you went out and purchased. What did you buy?

Mr. Kirchdorfer. Well, to put our pipe together, it takes expensive equipment. And we do have McElroy Manufacturing here, which is where we purchased about $3 million last year of equipment. They're in Tulsa, Oklahoma, a USA company. And this equipment—when we open a new location, we need equipment to put the pipe together at those locations, so we buy more equipment. We need people to operate the equipment, so we employ more people. So the expansion has created growth in investment and jobs.

The President. See, the tax bill we passed encouraged this company to invest. It made it easier to make the decision to spend $3 million, called bonus depreciation. That's fancy words for, we're trying to encourage Jim to make the decision to expand his business by buying new equipment. And when he buys new equipment, somebody has got to manufacture the equipment. And when somebody manufactures the equipment, it means they're working, right? And so the tax relief we passed had the effect of encouraging investment at the small-business level. And that's important because most new jobs—70 percent of new jobs, more or less, are created by small businesses like Jim's.

The second thing I want to point out is he started his business behind his dad's store. Is that right?

Mr. Kirchdorfer. Hardware store.

The President. Hardware store. You know, it's like,"I started my business in my garage." You know how many times this happens in America? It is—think about a

country that has got an environment that encourages people to start their business behind their dad's store. It's a really exciting part of our country, isn't it? And Government must not thwart this entrepreneurial spirit by bad tax policy, by bad medical policy, by bad regulatory policy. We need to encourage the entrepreneurial spirit. It's so hopeful to have a country where people can start their own business with a good idea.

Now, we can't guarantee success. But we can have an environment so if somebody decides to take the risk, that they can succeed and, therefore, end up employing people. I love the—are you going to employ anybody next year, you think?

Mr. Kirchdorfer. Oh, sure. We're going to add probably 30 or 40 jobs again next year—or this year.

The President. Which is good. Thirty jobs here, thirty jobs there; all around the country, small businesses are expanding because there's a sense of optimism about the future of this country. And that's how people are able to find work. And that's how we're able to provide stability in the workplace.

Speaking about that, we've got Rich Gimmel with us. He's the president—there's nothing wrong with being Mr. President—[*laughter*]—of Atlas Machine and Supply. Rich, thanks for coming.

[*Rich Gimmel made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

Mr. Gimmel. When my father took over the company in the late '50s, we had about 35 employees. When my brother Rob and I began to run the company together—Rob is in the front row here. He's our CEO.

The President. He's the pretty one.

Mr. Gimmel. That's right. He's the little brother with the gray hair, but he's been there longer than I have.

The President. I see. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Gimmel. But we had about 75 employees at that time. Now we have almost 170 employees at Atlas Machine. We are a very capital-intensive company. We provide——

The President. Explain what that means, "capital-intensive."

Mr. Gimmel. Well, we have to reinvest. We have to reinvest a lot in our company every year to keep it productive. We have to buy machine tools. We have to expand plant. We have to expand our facilities. We have to expand our workforce. And all of this is extremely demanding of capital.

We provide plant maintenance services in the Ohio Valley, and also, we're the compressed air and pump provider for industry in the Ohio Valley. Compressed air is vital to an industry. It's like another utility. It's as important as their electricity. If they lose their air, they're out of business, so we're the air people. We're kind of an industrial——

The President. It kind of sounds like Washington.

Mr. Gimmel. That's right. We're the air people. [*Laughter*]

The President. Is it hot air? [*Laughter*]

Mr. Gimmel. Yes, it can be.

The President. You need to tap into the Nation's Capital. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Gimmel. Maybe you guys could be supplying us. How about that?

The President. That's what I—that was my point. [*Laughter*]

[*Mr. Gimmel made additional remarks.*]

The President. Good. If somebody's listening out there, here's a shot to find work—[*laughter*]—if you're willing to work hard. Thanks for coming.

Jeannie Unruh is with us. One of the exciting things about our country is that there's a lot of companies run by very skilled women. Women-owned business is, I think, a very hopeful part of the future of this country. And I want to thank Jeannie for coming. By the way, she's a Subchapter S corporation. So when you hear the people rail on taxes and this, that, and the other—when you reduce all taxes, it affects her business. She pays taxes. Don't

tax the rich—well, the so-called rich happen to be, in many cases, small businesses that are out providing opportunities for people.

Anyway, Jeannie is the head of MAC Construction & Excavating, Inc. Thanks for coming.

[*Jeannie Unruh, chief executive officer, MAC Construction & Excavating, Inc., made brief remarks.*]

The President. The country grows because people who run small businesses are confident about the future. And what I've come away with here is that these three businessowners are confident, and that's important. It bodes well for the people who are working for these companies and for those who they're going to hire.

The other thing about the tax relief plan—obviously, it affected people's lives. And I want to talk to two people whose lives were affected. I do want to remind you, however, that this year, if the Congress doesn't act on making the tax cuts that expire in '05 permanent, they're raising taxes on people. You'll hear, "Let's get rid of Bush's tax plan." That's code word for, "I'm going to raise your taxes." That's what that is.

Just to give you a sense of what that means, a married couple with two children with an income of $40,000 would face a $915 tax increase in 2005 if the Congress does not act. Remember the child credit—the benefits of the child credit go away, which is like a tax increase. The marriage penalty goes back up, which is like a tax increase. And the 10 percent bracket is affected, which is a tax increase.

With us is Libby McKinney. She's got a husband and two children. She works here as a collections specialist. Libby, thank you for coming. Tell us what's on your mind.

[*Elizabeth McKinney, credit and collections specialist, ISCO Industries, made brief remarks.*]

The President. Well, that's great. Congratulations. Doing her duty, by the way. Some people spend the money; some people save the money. But it all has a positive effect on the economy. And, by the way, you can't have investment unless there's savings. And so I appreciate your story. The family saved about $1,700 because of the tax relief. We throw a lot of numbers around in Washington. That may not sound like a lot in Washington-speak; it's a lot for the family, $1,700 tax relief this year.

And by the way, I just, again, want to remind the people listening that if Congress does not act, this family will have a $725 tax increase, if Congress doesn't make the tax relief permanent. You see, they've got two children, and they're married, and the 10 percent bracket affects them. There will be a tax increase on Libby and her family. I don't think that makes sense to be raising taxes on hard-working people who are trying to get ahead and do their duty as a mom and a dad to raise their children. So, Libby, thanks for coming.

Big Rob is with us, accounting specialist Rob Hansen. Thanks for coming, Rob.

[*Robert Hansen, accounting specialist, ISCO Industries, made brief remarks.*]

The President. Good. See, he made a decision with the extra money to go out and purchase a good, and that just helps the economy. There are millions of these decisions being made on a daily basis, which is how the economy works.

I often have to argue that the tax relief was better spent than Government could have spent the money. It's a—it affected—[*applause*]. I appreciate the checks finally arriving. I was a little nervous when we said we were going to put checks in the mail. [*Laughter*] You've heard it before. [*Laughter*] It actually made it. [*Laughter*]

But if the Congress doesn't act, this family will pay $1,000 in taxes—increase. It's a tax increase. They don't make—if they don't make the child credit permanent or the marriage penalty permanent or the 10

percent bracket permanent, they pay $1,000 next year. We're running up taxes on this family, and it affects their ability to make decisions. It affects their future. It's just—it doesn't make any sense for Congress not to make the tax relief permanent. And the best way that I can possibly tell the story—they're used to me—is all they've got to do is listen to what tax relief meant for people in their lives and what tax increases would do. And so I call upon Congress to listen to the voices of the people out here struggling to get ahead in America, people who are making good decisions, people who are doing their duty as responsible citizens to love their children with all their heart, people who are putting food on the table.

I want to repeat to you what I said before. This country has overcome a lot, and we're moving forward with optimism and confidence. You know why? Because we've got great people. And I'm proud to be the leader of such a strong nation.

Thank you all for coming. God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:52 a.m. at ISCO Industries. In his remarks, he referred to Senator Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, husband of Secretary of Labor Elaine L. Chao; Gov. Ernie Fletcher and Lt. Gov. Steve Pence of Kentucky; and Mayor Jerry E. Abramson of Louisville, KY.

Remarks at a Bush-Cheney Luncheon in Louisville
February 26, 2004

Thank you all for coming. Thanks for your support. Thanks for your friendship. Thanks for your warm welcome. I'm proud to be back here in the great Commonwealth of Kentucky. I'm pleased to be with so many friends.

I appreciate my friend Darrell Waltrip being here. I was at NASCAR the other day. Man, I can see why he likes that so much. [*Laughter*] It's an amazing environment. He has a lot to be proud of. He had a fabulous career. I know one of his proudest moments came when his little brother won the big race in Florida. I went through the same experience. [*Laughter*]

We're ready to go here in Kentucky. We've got a great organization. I want to thank the people who are going to man the phones and put up the signs and get the people to the polls. The Vice President and I appreciate all you did for us last time. We appreciate all you're going to do for us this time. We intend to win the State of Kentucky.

Vice President Cheney is a great Vice President. He's done a heck of a good job for our country. Our country has had no finer Vice President, although Mother may have a second opinion. No, I'm proud to have him by my side, proud to be campaigning with him.

I'm also proud of the job Laura is doing. She's a fabulous First Lady for this country. She sends her best, her best wishes and her love to our friends here in Kentucky.

I want to thank Cathy Bailey for taking on a tough job and doing such a good job.

I want to thank Elaine Chao, who is with us today, a member of my Cabinet. I think when people start to analyze an administration's effectiveness, they need to look at the people in the Cabinet. When people surround themselves with excellence—they should surround themselves with excellence, and I have. I've attracted a really good team of people from all walks of life to come to the Nation's Capital and to

serve something greater than their self-interest: their country. And Elaine is part of the fabulous Cabinet I put together, and I want to thank you for being here, Elaine. And I understand why your husband is not here—he's voting. But Mitch has done a really good job for the people of Kentucky, and I'm proud to call him friend.

You need to send Jim Bunning back to Washington, DC, as well. I flew down with Anne Northup today on the plane. We had a great visit about Kentucky and the issues down here. She's a really competent, good person. I know Woody is with us; Anne had to go back and cast an important vote. I gave her permission to do so. [*Laughter*] But she really is a fine, fine Representative of the people of Louisville, Kentucky. You need to send her back too.

And I appreciate my friend the Governor being here. He's got the—I used to say the Governor was the best job in America. I'm not so sure, because you don't have much foreign policy. [*Laughter*] But it's important to have somebody who is willing to make decisions, and Ernie is that kind of person. He'll do a fine job as a Governor of this State, and I'm proud—proud, Ernie, that you ran. I appreciate you coming.

And I'm glad Steve Pence is with us, the Lieutenant Governor. And Secretary of State Trey Grayson is here as well. Senate President David Williams—he and I were just laughing about the time we campaigned in southern Kentucky in a mobile home, eating Kentucky barbecue. [*Laughter*] Gosh, I hope I get some on the plane going back. But good to see David. And Dick Roeding is with us as well. I appreciate the local and State officials who have come today.

I want to thank Mike Duncan and Ellen Williams, great friends of mine who are helping steer this party to victory. I want to thank my friend Mercer Reynolds, who is the national finance chairman—he's from Cincinnati, Ohio—who has taken time out of his busy life to help make sure that we're ready to go, that when the bell rings, this campaign is fully funded and ready to take our message across the country.

You know, we meet here during the Presidential primary season. We're witnessing a clear trend. It looks like we have a winner in the Republican primaries. [*Laughter*] The other party's nomination battle is still playing out. They're an interesting group with a lot of strong differences of opinion. They're for tax cuts and against them, for NAFTA and against NAFTA, for the PATRIOT Act, against the PATRIOT Act, in favor of liberating Iraq and opposed to it. And that's just one Senator from Massachusetts.

They haven't—they're not finished selecting their nominee. Yet this much is certain: Come November, the voters are going to have a very clear choice. It's a choice between keeping the tax relief that is moving the economy forward or putting the burden of higher taxes back on the American people. It is a choice between an America that leads the world with strength and confidence or an America that is uncertain in the face of danger. I look forward to setting these alternatives squarely before the American people. I look forward to the campaign.

We have a record of historic achievement. And most importantly, we have a positive vision for the years ahead, for winning the war against terror, for extending peace and freedom throughout our world, and for creating jobs and opportunity here at home. We will leave no doubt where we stand, and we will win on the 2d of November.

The last 3 years have brought serious challenges, and we have given serious answers. We came to office with an economy heading into recession. We delivered historic tax relief, and now our economy is the fastest growing of any major industrialized nation. We had to confront corporate crimes that cost people their jobs and their savings, so we passed strong corporate reforms and we made it abundantly clear we

will not tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America.

We saw war and grief arrive on a quiet September morning, so we have pursued the terrorist enemy across the world and have captured or killed many key leaders of the Al Qaida network. And the rest of them will learn there is no cave or hole deep enough to hide from American justice.

We confronted the dangers of state-sponsored terror and the spread of weapons of mass destruction, so we ended two of the most violent and dangerous regimes on Earth. We freed more than 50 million people in those two countries. Once again, America is proud to lead the armies of liberation.

When Dick Cheney and I came to Washington, we found a military that was underfunded and underappreciated, so we gave our military the resources and respect they deserve. And today, no one in the world can question the skill and the strength and the spirit of the United States military.

When we came to office, people had gotten used to gridlock and old problems were used to score points. Old problems were politicized and debated and just—then just passed on from year to year. But we didn't come to Washington to do things the Washington way. We came to get some things done. We passed major reforms to raise standards in public schools all across America. We passed reforms in Medicare to get prescription drugs and choice to senior citizens. We chose to lead, and we have delivered results for the American people.

Here's what I believe: It is the President's job to confront problems, not to pass them on to future Presidents and future generations. A President needs to step up, make the hard decisions, and keep his commitments. And that is how I will continue to lead our country.

Great events will turn on this election. The man who sits in the Oval Office will set the course of the war on terror and the direction of our economy. The security and prosperity of America are at stake. Our opponents have not offered much in the way of strategies to win the war or policies to expand the economy. So far, all we hear is a lot of old bitterness and partisan anger. Anger is not an agenda for the future of America. We will take on the big issues with optimism and resolve and determination. We stand ready to lead our country for the next 4 years.

A big issue for every family in America is the Federal tax burden. With the largest tax relief since Ronald Reagan was the President, we have left more money in the hands of those who earned it. By spending and investing, people have helped to move this economy forward. More people are finding work. The American people have used their money far better than the Government would have.

Our opponents have their own plan for the tax cuts. They plan to take them away. They will use that money to expand the Federal Government. I have a better idea. To keep the economy growing, we must have fiscal discipline in Washington, DC. To keep the economy growing, the tax cuts must be permanent.

We must do more. We need to protect small-business owners and employees from frivolous lawsuits and needless regulation. We need to control the costs of health care by passing medical liability reform. We need to pass sound energy legislation to modernize our electricity system and to make America less dependent on foreign sources of energy. Our opponents talk about job creation, but they're against every one of these job-creating measures. Empty talk about jobs won't get anybody hired. The way to create jobs is through our pro-growth, pro-entrepreneurial economic agenda.

This economy of ours is going through a time of challenge and change, and we're helping people to gain the skills and security to make a good living and to look forward to a good retirement. All skills start

with education. That's why I was so insistent that Congress pass the No Child Left Behind Act. It is a good law, a sound piece of legislation, historic reform that brings high standards and accountability to every classroom in America.

There's more to do. We have a plan to help high school students who fall behind in reading and math. We have plans to make sure our community colleges train workers for the industries that are creating the most new jobs. Education is the gateway to a hopeful future, and that gate must be open to all Americans.

This administration is also working toward an ownership society in which more people own their own homes to build their own savings. We want more people owning their own small businesses. We want people owning and managing their health care plans. We want younger workers to own and manage their retirement under Social Security. When people have solid assets, they gain independence and security and dignity and more control over their future. I believe so strongly in private property, I want every American to own some.

On issue after issue, the American people have a clear choice. Our opponents are against personal retirement accounts. They're against putting patients in charge of Medicare. They're against tax relief. They seem to be against every idea that gives Americans more authority and more choices and more control over our own lives. It's the same old Washington mindset. They'll give the orders, and you will pay the bills. I've got news for them. America has gone beyond that way of thinking, and we're not going back. Inherent in all our policies is this theme, this belief: We trust the people, not Washington politicians, to make the best decisions for their own money, their own health, their own retirement, and their own lives.

Our future also depends on America's leadership in the world. The momentum of freedom in our time is strong, but we still face serious dangers. Al Qaida is wounded but not broken. Terrorists are testing our will in Afghanistan and Iraq. Regimes in North Korea and Iran are challenging the peace. If America shows weakness and uncertainty in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This will not happen on my watch.

No friend or enemy today doubts the word of the United States. This Nation is strong. We are steadfast. We are confident in the cause of freedom. America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Afghanistan. The Taliban chose defiance. The Taliban are no longer in power. America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Iraq. The dictator chose defiance. The dictator now sits in a prison cell.

September the 11th, 2001, taught a lesson I have not forgotten. America must confront threats before they fully materialize. In Iraq, my administration looked at the intelligence, and we saw a danger. Members of Congress looked at the intelligence, and they saw danger. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence; it saw a danger. The previous administration and Congress looked at the intelligence and made regime change in Iraq the policy of our country.

In 2002, the United Nations Security Council yet again demanded a full accounting of Saddam Hussein's weapons programs. And as he had for over a decade, Saddam Hussein refused to comply. So we had a choice to make, either to take the word of a madman or take action to defend America and the world. Faced with that choice, I will defend America every time.

Others would have chosen differently. They now agree that the world is better off with Saddam removed from power. They just didn't support removing him from power. [*Laughter*] Maybe they were hoping he would lose the next Iraqi election. [*Laughter*]

We showed the dictator and the watching world that America means what it says. Because our coalition acted, Saddam's torture

chambers are closed. Because we acted, Iraq's weapons programs are ended forever. Because we acted, nations like Libya have gotten the message and renounced their own weapons programs. Because we acted, an example of democracy is rising at the very heart of the Middle East. Because we acted, the world is more free and America is more secure.

We still face thugs and terrorists in Iraq who would rather go on killing the innocent than accept the advance of liberty. They know that a free Iraq will be a major defeat for the cause of terror. This collection of killers is trying to shake the will of America. America will never be intimidated by thugs and assassins.

We're aggressively striking the terrorists in Iraq, defeating them there so we don't have to face them in our own country. We're calling on other nations to help Iraq build a free society, which makes all of us more safe. We're standing with the Iraqi people as they assume more of their own defense and move toward self-government. These aren't easy tasks, but they are essential tasks. We will finish what we have begun, and we will win this essential victory in the war on terror.

On national security, Americans have the clearest possible choice. Opponents say they approve of bold action in the world, but only if no other government disagrees. I'm all for united action, and so are the 34 coalition partners we have in Iraq right now. Yet America must never outsource America's national security decision to leaders of other governments.

Some of our opponents are skeptical that the war on terror is really a war at all. They view terrorism more as a crime, a problem to be solved with law enforcement and indictments. Our Nation followed that approach after the World Trade Center was bombed in 1993. The matter was handled in the courts and thought by some to be settled. Terrorists were still training in Afghanistan, still plotting in other nations, and drawing up more ambitious plans. After the chaos and carnage of September the 11th, it is not enough to serve our enemies with legal papers. With those attacks, the terrorists and supporters declared war on the United States of America, and war is what they got.

At bases across our country and the world, I've had the privilege of meeting with the men and women of our military who are defending this country, who are sacrificing for our security. I've seen their great decency, their unselfish courage. And I can assure you, ladies and gentlemen, the cause of freedom is in good hands.

Our Nation is prosperous and we are strong, yet we need to remember that our greatest strength is in the hearts and souls of our citizens. We're strong because of the values we try to live by, courage and compassion, reverence and integrity. We're strong because of the institutions that help to give us direction and purpose, families and schools and religious congregations. These values and institutions are fundamental to our lives, and they deserve the respect of our Government.

We stand for fair treatment of faith-based groups so they can receive Federal support for their works of compassion and healing. We will not stand for Government discrimination against people of faith. We stand for welfare reforms that require work and strengthen marriage, which have helped millions of Americans find independence and dignity. We will not stand for any attempt to weaken those reforms and to send people back into the lives of dependence.

We stand for a culture of life in which every person counts and every person matters. We will not stand for the treatment of any life as a commodity to be experimented upon or exploited or cloned. We stand for the confirmation of judges who strictly and faithfully interpret the law. We will not stand for judges who undermine democracy by legislating from the bench or try to remake the culture of America by court order.

We stand for a culture of responsibility in America. We're changing the culture in this country from one that has said, "If it feels good, do it," and, "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each of us understands we're responsible for the decisions we make in life. If you are fortunate enough to be a mother or a father, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart. If you're worried about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you're responsible for doing something about it. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you're responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And in this new responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourself.

For all Americans, these years in our history will always stand apart. There are quiet times in the life of the Nation when little is expected of our leaders. This is not one of those times. You and I are living in a period when the stakes are high, the challenges are difficult, the choices are clear, a time where resolve is needed. None of us will ever forget that week when one era ended and another began.

On September the 14th, 2001, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers. I remember a lot about that day. Workers in hardhats were shouting, "Whatever it takes." I remember a guy pointing at me and saying, "Don't let me down." As we did all—as we all did that day, the men and women who were searching through the rubble took it personally. I took it personally. I have a great responsibility that goes on. I will never relent in bringing justice to our enemies. I will defend the security of America, whatever it takes.

In these times, I've also been a witness to the character of this Nation. Not long ago, some had their doubts about the American character, a capacity to meet serious challenges, capacity to serve a cause greater than self-interest. Americans have given their answer. I've seen the unselfish courage of our troops. I've seen the heroism of Americans in the face of danger. I've seen the spirit of service and compassion renewed in our country. We all have seen our Nation unite in common purpose when it mattered most.

We will need all of these qualities for the work ahead. We have a war to win. And the world is counting on us to lead the cause of freedom and peace. We have a duty to spread opportunity to every part of America. This is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it. And we know that for our country, the best days lie ahead.

May God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:35 p.m. at the Galt House Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to NASCAR drivers Darrell and Michael Waltrip; Cathy Bailey, national committeewoman, Mike Duncan, national committeeman, and Ellen Williams, chairperson, Republican Party of Kentucky; Senator Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, husband of Secretary of Labor Elaine L. Chao; Robert W. "Woody" Northup, husband of Representative Anne M. Northup; Gov. Ernie Fletcher and Lt. Gov. Steve Pence of Kentucky; Kentucky Secretary of State Trey Grayson; David Williams, president, and Richard L. Roeding, president pro tem, Kentucky State Senate; and Mercer Reynolds, national finance chairman, Bush-Cheney '04, Inc.

Statement on House of Representatives Passage of Legislation To Protect Unborn Victims of Violence
February 26, 2004

I applaud the House for passing the "Unborn Victims of Violence Act" today by a strong bipartisan vote. We must continue to build a culture of life in our country, a compassionate society in which every child is born into a loving family and protected by law.

Pregnant women who have been harmed by violence, and their families, know that there are two victims—the mother and the unborn child—and both victims should be protected by Federal law.

I urge the Senate to pass this bill so that I can sign it into law.

NOTE: The statement referred to H.R. 1997.

Message to the Congress on Continuation and Expansion of the National Emergency With Respect to Cuba
February 26, 2004

To the Congress of the United States:

Pursuant to section 1 of title I of Public Law 65–24, ch. 30, 50 U.S.C. 191, and sections 201 and 301 of the National Emergencies Act, 50 U.S.C. 1601 *et seq.,* I hereby report that I have exercised my statutory authority to continue the national emergency declared in Proclamation 6867 of March 1, 1996, in response to the Cuban government's destruction of two unarmed U.S.-registered civilian aircraft in international airspace north of Cuba. Additionally, I have exercised my authority to expand the scope of the national emergency as, over the last year, the Cuban government, which is a designated state-sponsor of terrorism, has taken a series of steps to destabilize relations with the United States, including threatening to abrogate the Migration Accords with the United States and to close the U.S. Interests Section. This conduct has caused a sudden and worsening disturbance of U.S. international relations.

In my proclamation (copy attached), I have authorized and directed the Secretary of Homeland Security to make and issue such rules and regulations that the Secretary may find appropriate to prevent unauthorized U.S. vessels from entering Cuban territorial waters.

I have authorized these rules and regulations as a result of the Cuban government's demonstrated willingness to use reckless force, including deadly force, in the ostensible enforcement of its sovereignty. I have also authorized these rules and regulations in an effort to deny resources to the repressive Cuban government that may be used by that government to support terrorist activities and carry out excessive use of force against innocent victims, including U.S. citizens and other persons residing in the United States, and threaten a disturbance of international relations. Accordingly, I have continued and expanded the national emergency in response to these threats.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
February 26, 2004.

NOTE: The proclamation and the notice on continuation are listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks Following Discussions With Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder of Germany and an Exchange With Reporters
February 27, 2004

President Bush. There will be opening statements. We'll take two questions per side, alternating.

Mr. Chancellor, welcome back. It's good to see you. We've just had a really constructive dialog about our mutual interests, our mutual desires to work together. When Germany and America work together, the world is a better place. We're both committed to freedom. We're both committed to peace. We're both committed to the prosperity of our respective people. And this is an important visit, and I'm glad you're here. And I appreciate our ability to work together on a lot of fronts.

I told the Chancellor I was particularly grateful for German presence in Afghanistan. They're making a very constructive—playing a constructive role and making sure that country is able to survive in a—as a free nation. And it's important that Afghanistan succeed, and we really appreciate it.

We talked about Iraq, and we talked about the Middle East, and we talked about North Korea. We discussed a lot of subjects.

And so, Mr. Chancellor, welcome back.

Chancellor Schroeder. Thank you, Mr. President. Indeed, I'm very pleased to be here once again. And indeed, we talked about—not about the past; we very much agreed on that. We have to talk about the present and the future now. We both have a great interest in seeing a stable and democratic Iraq develop.

And you're right; you mentioned the important part that Germany is playing in Afghanistan. It is a contribution that we make. It is a contribution that we also make in the fight against international terrorism, and we intend to continue to make that contribution.

We also talked about international issues, especially a settlement of the Middle East problems and the conflicts there. We very much agreed on that. Whenever one pursues a broader outline and a broader approach here, one has not to lose sight of the fact that a settlement of the conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians is necessary if one wants to bring peace to this region.

It was indeed a very good meeting, Mr. President, and we very much agreed on that we now have to face up to the challenges of the 21st century.

Constitutional Amendment on Marriage

President Bush. Jennifer [Jennifer Loven, Associated Press].

Q. Thank you, sir. I'd like to ask you about gay marriage. What do you believe same-sex weddings—how do they actually threaten the institution of marriage in general? And also, are you concerned at all about being considered on the wrong side of the civil rights issue?

President Bush. This is a—yes, this is a difficult issue here for a lot of people in America. I believed it was important to act because the institution of marriage was being changed by courts. And it's an issue that's very sensitive. And the voice of the people need to be heard, and the constitutional process was the best way to do such.

I believe that marriage has served society well, and I believe it is important to affirm that, that marriage between a man and a woman is the ideal. And the job of the President is to drive policy toward the ideal. This is a sensitive debate, and it is important that people hold true to their beliefs without condemning anybody else. And so therefore, I call upon all sides in the debate to conduct themselves with dignity and honor and respect. But this is a debate that the Nation must have. And the people's voice must be heard in the debate.

Germany-U.S. Relations

Q. Mr. President, your father mentioned Germany as partner in leadership. Is this still the case? And how would you describe the personal relationship between Chancellor Schroeder and yourself?

President Bush. The Chancellor has got a good sense of humor and, therefore, he is able to make me laugh. And a person that can make me laugh is a person who is easy to be with. And a person who is easy to be with means I've got a comfortable relationship with him. We have differences in the past. But there's nothing wrong with friends having differences. And we have both committed to put the differences behind us and move forward. Germany is an important nation, and Germany occupies an important place in Europe. And it's essential that America have good relations with Europe. Not only do we share values; we share economic interests. We have the capacity to help keep the peace. And so I would say our relations are good.

Q. Partner in leadership?

President Bush. Partner in leadership, that's right. We're partnering in leadership in Afghanistan. We're partnering when it comes to dealing with disease——

Chancellor Schroeder. The Balkans.

President Bush. The Balkans. There's no question we differed on Iraq; we don't differ on whether Iraq ought to be free and peaceful. And so, no, I look forward to good relations—continued good relations with Germany and Gerhard Schroeder.

Steve [Steve Holland, Reuters].

Situation in Haiti

Q. Mr. President, would it help settle things in Haiti if President Aristide were to resign?

President Bush. The Secretary of State has made some comments. Let me follow up on those by saying that we're interested in achieving a political settlement, and we're still working to that effect. We're also, at the same time, planning for a multinational force that would go in and make sure that if aid needed to be delivered or there needed to be some stability, that it could go in, dependent upon a political settlement.

Freedom and Democracy in the Middle East

Q. Mr. President, what do you expect Germany's cooperative role to be in the Middle East initiative that you plan to do at the G–8 summit?

President Bush. I think it's—the Chancellor and I were talking about the need to help promote the institutions for free societies to develop. We both understand that the office we hold is always bigger than the occupant. And whether it be in the Palestinian territories or elsewhere in the Middle East, it is essential, first and foremost, to put institutions in place that survive the whims of men and women.

And so we share this common belief that it's important to get the structure right in order for free societies to develop. That's why the Bonn Conference, for example, relating to Afghanistan, was so important, because it began the process of putting the institutions in place for a free Afghanistan to exist. And the Chancellor understands that.

There's a lot of work we can do. There's some skepticism as to whether or not people in the Middle East can self-govern. I strongly reject that skepticism, and I might call it criticism if people hold that attitude, because I believe that freedom is inherently a part of every soul and that if given the proper structure and proper institutions, people can self-govern. And a self-governing Middle East, one based upon freedom and democracy, will make the world more peaceful. It's a legacy that we need to work on in order to help change the habits of violence and fear and frustration that had spawned terror in the Middle East.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:55 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. Chancellor Schroeder spoke in German, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. A reporter referred to President Jean-Bertrand Aristide of Haiti. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

The German-American Alliance for the 21st Century: Joint Statement by President George W. Bush and Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder
February 27, 2004

Today, we pay tribute to the deep friendship between the German and American people. The sacrifices of two generations, and the visionary leadership of our forebears, created the conditions for a Europe whole, free, and at peace at the dawn of the 21st century.

We renew our determination to work together, and with our friends and allies in Europe and beyond, to achieve a more secure, prosperous, and just world. We are committed to strengthen transatlantic relations, and act in common purpose to address the challenges before us.

The foundation of German and American relations remains our shared commitment to the values of freedom, democracy, and the rule of law, and to economic opportunity and prosperity through free and open markets. These are fundamental to our own societies, and to our common efforts in meeting the great challenges of a new era: the nexus of threats posed by terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, tyranny, poverty, the lack of opportunity, and violent extremism.

In this spirit, we commit our nations to an ambitious goal, rooted in our shared values and experience: to promote freedom, democracy, human dignity, the rule of law, economic opportunity, and security in the Greater Middle East. Fear and resentment must be replaced with freedom and hope.

We must build a genuine partnership, connecting Europe and America with the wider Middle East, aimed at cooperating with the countries and peoples of that region to achieve these just objectives, and to live side by side in peace. Together with our friends and allies in Europe and the Greater Middle East, we will coordinate our efforts closely to respond to calls for reform in the region, and to develop specific proposals to put before the G8, U.S.-EU, and NATO Summit meetings, which will be held in June 2004.

At the same time, we reaffirm our commitment to the vision of two states—Israel and Palestine—living side by side in peace and security, and renew our commitment to the "Roadmap" as the best means of moving forward toward that goal.

We pledge to enhance the international effort to help the people of Afghanistan restore peace and security in their nation, including by the further expansion of NATO's International Security Assistance Force. We will also work together to achieve success at the upcoming international conference on Afghanistan, hosted by Germany. We welcome the agreement on a new constitution for Afghanistan, and place particular emphasis on creating the conditions for free, fair and peaceful elections in Afghanistan later this year.

We are united in support of a free Iraq: a secure, unified, democratic, and fully sovereign nation, at peace with itself and its neighbors that will contribute to world peace and stability. We welcome and support the vital and growing role of the United Nations in Iraq, and look forward to the transfer of sovereignty to a new Iraqi government on July 1, 2004.

We are resolved to strengthen our economic relations by increasing opportunities for trade and investment between the European Union and the United States, and by promoting trade liberalization and economic development for all countries through the Doha Development Agenda negotiations. In the framework of the G8, we will cooperate to help the poorest countries benefit more fully from the global economy. We remain committed to our joint fight against poverty in the world, and we also undertake to tackle the scourge of HIV/AIDS and to cooperate to improve the world environment.

We reaffirm our commitment to NATO as the anchor of our collective defense and an essential forum for transatlantic consultations. We underscore our support for the continuing process of European integration and stress the importance of Europe and America working together as partners in a community of shared values. We welcome the historic enlargement of both NATO and the European Union, which takes place this spring, advancing our goal to erase decades of division in Europe.

With a common agenda of action, the German-American alliance will prove as critical to the advance of freedom, security, and prosperity in the 21st Century as it was in the second half of the 20th Century.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Statement on the Death of President Boris Trajkovski of Macedonia
February 27, 2004

Laura and I are saddened by the death of President Boris Trajkovski of Macedonia, a distinguished leader and a great friend of the United States. On behalf of the American people, I extend condolences to President Trajkovski's family and to the people of Macedonia.

President Trajkovski showed extraordinary courage in leading his country from the brink of civil conflict to peace by signing the Ohrid Framework Agreement. The United States strongly supports President Trajkovski's vision of a multi-ethnic, democratic Macedonia at peace with itself and its neighbors and on the path to full membership in the transatlantic community.

The President's Radio Address
February 28, 2004

Good morning. For many years, illegal drug use has been a serious problem facing our country. Drugs cost people their savings and their health and rob children of their promise. My administration has taken action to confront this danger. We have pursued an ambitious, focused strategy to cut demand for drugs at home, interdict supplies of drugs abroad, and treat more addicts who seek help.

In 2002, I set a goal to reduce illegal drug use by 10 percent over 2 years and by 25 percent over 5 years. This Monday we will release the annual National Drug Control Strategy, which shows the impressive progress we have made. Youth drug use declined 11 percent between 2001 and

2003, meaning 400,000 fewer young people used drugs. These results exceeded our goal and proved that our hard work is paying off.

This year, we will expand our strategy so that we can make even greater progress in the fight against drugs. The best way to cut drug use is to cut demand for drugs at the ground level. So my budget includes a $10-million increase for drug-free communities, a commonsense prevention program that supports local coalitions working to stop young people from using drugs.

Research shows that teenagers who abstain from drugs are unlikely to start using them later in life. So I have asked Congress to provide an additional $23 million for high schools who want to develop and carry out drug testing programs. Random drug testing gives students a strong answer to the social pressure to try drugs. It helps schools identify those using drugs so they can intervene with counseling and treatment before experiments turn into addictions.

We've seen the positive results of drug testing across the country. Just 2 years after Hunterdon Central Regional High School in New Jersey began its testing program, drug use had declined significantly throughout the school. Hunterdon's principal described the program's effect this way: "We have never seen a prevention curriculum that affected the numbers this substantially. We finally had a tool that was making a large difference."

As we reduce demand for drugs, we're also preventing drug supplies from entering our country. Our military and law enforcement personnel are targeting the world's most dangerous drug trafficking networks. We are dismantling these organizations and putting their leaders in jail. And by working with governments across our hemisphere, we are drying up the world's supply of illegal drugs at its source.

Finally, we are taking steps to help those who have fallen into the destructive cycle of addiction. Drug dependence undermines productivity as well as moral conviction and devastates millions of families each year. Some addicts recognize their problem and want to change but cannot afford access to professional care. To help men and women like these, I launched an initiative called Access to Recovery. This program will help thousands of Americans get the treatment they need. And because I know a good way to change a person's behavior is to change their heart, faith-based treatment programs will always be an option. Congress has provided $100 million for this lifesaving program, and this year, I have asked it to double that amount.

The progress reported in this year's Drug Control Strategy is encouraging. Our goals are ambitious, and we have seen they can be achieved. Now we will build on the improvement of the past 2 years, and we will continue working toward a society in which all citizens can lead a life of independence and purpose, free from the devastating influence of drugs.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 10:30 a.m. on February 27 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on February 28. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 27 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. In his address, the President referred to Lisa Brady, principal, Hunterdon Central Regional High School, Flemington, NJ. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks on the Resignation of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide of Haiti
February 29, 2004

President Aristide resigned. He has left his country. The Constitution of Haiti is working. There is an interim President, as per the Constitution, in place.

I have ordered the deployment of marines, as the leading element of an interim international force, to help bring order and stability to Haiti. I have done so in working with the international community.

This Government believes it essential that Haiti have a hopeful future. This is the beginning of a new chapter in the country's history. I would urge the people of Haiti to reject violence, to give this break from the past a chance to work. And the United States is prepared to help.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:05 p.m. on the South Grounds at the White House.

Statement Calling for Congressional Action on Foreign Sales Corporations/ Extraterritorial Income Legislation
March 1, 2004

I urge Congress to take up and pass FSC/ETI legislation that reforms the Tax Code, removes the underlying reason for the tariffs that have been imposed today on American exports, and further advances the competitiveness of American manufacturers and job creators. Over the past 3 years, my administration has worked with Congress to further increase the ability of American companies to succeed in the worldwide economy, laying the foundation for increased growth and job creation. If we don't act to replace the current FSC/ETI provisions in the Tax Code, the tariffs that have been imposed today will, over the next year, impose an increasing burden on American exporters, their workers, and the overall economy. To support the continued strengthening of our economy and to create more jobs, the Congress should act now to end the threat of these tariffs and promote the competitiveness of American manufacturers and other job-creating sectors of the U.S. economy.

Message to the Congress on Extending Generalized System of Preferences Benefits to Algeria and Terminating Benefits of Certain Other Countries
March 1, 2004

To the Congress of the United States:

Consistent with section 502(f) of the Trade Act of 1974, as amended (the "Act"), I am writing to inform you of my intent to designate Algeria as a beneficiary developing country and to terminate the designation of Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Bahrain, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Slovakia as beneficiary developing countries for purposes of the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP).

I have considered the criteria set forth in sections 501 and 502 of the Act. In light of these criteria, I have determined that it is appropriate to extend GSP benefits to Algeria. I have also determined that Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, and Bahrain have become "high income" countries, and I therefore terminate their designation as beneficiary developing countries effective January 1, 2006. Furthermore, consistent with the Act's prohibition on designation of European Union member states as beneficiary developing countries, I am terminating such designation for the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Slovakia when they become European Union member states.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
March 1, 2004.

NOTE: The related proclamation of March 1 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting a Report on International Agreements
March 1, 2004

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. Chairman:)

Consistent with subsection (b) of the Case-Zablocki Act, (1 U.S.C. 112b), I hereby transmit a report prepared by the Department of State concerning international agreements.

Sincerely,

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Richard G. Lugar, chairman, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations.

Message to the Congress Transmitting the National Drug Control Strategy
March 1, 2004

To the Congress of the United States:

I am transmitting the 2004 National Drug Control Strategy, consistent with the Office of National Drug Control Policy Reauthorization Act of 1998 (21 U.S.C. 1705).

Two years ago, my Administration issued its National Drug Control Strategy setting forth a balanced approach to reducing drug use among teenagers and adults. The Strategy set ambitious two- and five-year performance-based goals: (i) to lower the rate of drug use by 10 percent over two years; and (ii) to lower the rate by 25 percent over five years. The success of the Strategy can be measured by its results.

I am pleased to report that we have exceeded our two-year goal of reducing drug use among young people. The most recent survey shows an 11 percent drop between 2001 and 2003 in the use of illicit drugs by teenagers. Among teens, some drugs—such as LSD—have dropped to record low levels of use. For others, we are seeing the lowest levels of use in almost a decade.

Despite this good news, drug addiction continues to challenge far too many

Americans. Addiction to drugs destroys ties of trust, family, and friendship, and reduces all the richness of life to a single destructive desire. Almost every American has known someone who has followed the self-destructive path of addiction. Too many Americans want to change a family member's behavior, but are afraid of causing division and, perhaps, estrangement.

Our Strategy proposes a remarkable and unprecedented array of drug control programs, treatment initiatives, and media campaign efforts. But more than any program, it seeks to engage the desire of all Americans to make this a better Nation, facing down the lie of addiction, and offering the hope of recovery.

My Administration will continue to place a high priority on reducing drug addition in America. I ask for your continued support in this critical endeavor.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
March 1, 2004.

Remarks on the Anniversary of the United States Department of Homeland Security
March 2, 2004

Thank you all. Please be seated. Please be seated—unless, of course, you don't have a seat. [*Laughter*] Thanks for the warm welcome. I'm honored to join the proud men and women of the Department of Homeland Security in celebrating this agency's first anniversary.

Many of you were here from day one. Others have come aboard in the days since. Yet, from the President to the Secretary to the newest employee, all of us here are tasked with a single, vital mission, to secure the American homeland and to protect the American people. There is no duty more important. We're meeting that duty together, and on behalf of a grateful nation, I thank you all for what you do to defend our country.

I appreciate Secretary Ridge's leadership. I plucked him out of the ranks of the Governors because I knew he knew how to manage and to set an agenda. He has not let me down. Along with the other leaders here, he and the team are doing a fantastic job of leading this Department. I appreciate Deputy Secretary Jim Loy as well for his outstanding leadership. I want to thank all the officials who are here.

I appreciate the Members of the United States Congress who have come. Two Texans, Mac Thornberry and Jim Turner, I appreciate you all being here. I appreciate Jennifer Dunn from the great State of Washington and Chris Cox from the State of California. Thanks for taking time to honor these employees today.

I appreciate all the employees who are here. I appreciate you working hard for the American people. I'm sure people don't thank you enough. Well, I'm here to thank you as much as an individual possibly can, for working the long hours, for taking the risks on behalf of the security of this country.

Today I had the honor of meeting the family of Agent Jimmy Epling. Jimmy was the first Department of Homeland Security employee to be killed in the line of duty. He did so rescuing an individual. He risked his life to save a life. And on behalf of our Nation, Monica and Seth and Shaine and Sean and James, and his loving parents, Ken and Amy, thank you for raising such a good son and thank you for having such a good husband. Boys, you need to be proud of your daddy. Thanks for coming.

Two-and-a-half years ago, our Nation saw war and grief arrive on a quiet September morning. From that day to this, we have pursued a clear strategy. We are taking the offensive against the terrorists abroad. We're taking unprecedented measures to protect the American people here at home. The goal of the terrorists is to kill our citizens—that's their goal—and to make Americans live in fear. This Nation refuses to live in fear. We will stand together until this threat to our Nation and to the civilized world is ended.

We have been called to service. We've been called to action, and we accept that responsibility. With fine allies, we are winning the war against the terrorists. We're disrupting terrorist operations. We're cutting off their funding. We are chasing down their leaders one person at a time. We are relentless. We are strong. We refuse to yield. Some two-thirds of Al Qaida's key leaders have been captured or killed. The rest of them hear us breathing down their neck. We're after them. We will not relent. We will bring these killers to justice.

It is vital our Nation speak with a clear voice, and when we speak, we mean what we say. It's essential that this Nation not be a nation of empty words but a nation that is determined to do our duty. I laid out a doctrine a while ago, and it said, "If you harbor a terrorist, if you feed a terrorist, you're just as guilty as the terrorists." I meant what I said, and so did our Nation. And the Taliban, the brutal dictators, the barbarians that ran Afghanistan now fully understand, America will keep its commitments and means what it says.

We delivered an ultimatum to Mr. Saddam Hussein that he listen to the world, disclose and disarm his weapons and weapons programs. It's what the world had said time and time again. The United States said the same thing. We saw a threat. It was time to deal with that threat. Mr. Saddam Hussein had the choice to make. He chose defiance. He now sits in a prison cell, and the Iraqi people are free and America is more secure.

We have said we will deal with weapons of mass destruction. We have shown the world we mean what we say. With our allies, we're taking action to stop the spread of chemical and biological, radiological or nuclear weapons. We're working together with our friends to prevent terror networks from gaining the means to match their hatred. We're confronting states that develop deadly weapons. We're shutting down networks that trade in the means to produce the technologies of mass murder.

Nations like Libya have gotten the message and renounced their weapons programs. The proliferation network of A.Q. Khan, which sold nuclear secrets to Iran and North Korea, is being dismantled. Its top leaders are out of business forever. America will not allow terrorists and outlaw regimes to threaten our Nation and the world with the world's most dangerous technologies.

As we work to make this Nation more secure, we're also working with a broad coalition of nations to spread freedom. America believes that freedom is the Almighty's gift to each and every person who lives in this world. That's what we believe. We have liberated more than 50 million people in Iraq and Afghanistan. Those people have our help and the help of many nations to build free and democratic nations.

We seek to spread the benefits of democracy and tolerance and freedom throughout the greater Middle East. By opposing the stagnation and bitterness that feed terror, this great Nation and our friends are bringing hope to millions, thereby strengthening the long-term security of America and making the world a more peaceful place.

We will stay on the offensive. We will not relent, and as we wage this war abroad, we must remember where it began, here in our homeland. Life in America, in many ways, has returned to normal, and that's

positive. It means we're doing our jobs. But life will really never return to normal so long as there's an enemy that lurks in the shadows, that aims to destroy and kill. The enemies are wounded, but they're not broken. They still have desires to strike America again. That's the reality with which we live. The reality is, vast oceans can no longer protect us, and therefore we must have—and we do have—a clear strategy to defend our homeland. Oh, we'll do everything we can to prevent attacks on America. As we do so, we'll reduce our vulnerabilities and prepare for any attack that might come. That's our duty. That is our collective mission.

To meet the goals, we have tripled Federal funding for homeland security since 2001, to some $30.5 billion. I want to thank the Congress for working with the administration to make sure these good folks have got the ability to implement the strategy to protect our country.

We've undertaken the most sweeping reorganization of the Federal Government since the beginning of the cold war. The FBI has transformed itself into an agency dedicated primarily to the prevention of future terrorist attacks. The Department of Defense has established a new top level command whose priority is to protect the American homeland. We established the Terrorist Threat Integration Center to merge and analyze in a single place all vital intelligence on global terror. We created the Homeland Security Council within the White House—John Gordon is here with us today—to help coordinate all homeland security activities across our Government.

We'll face the terrorist threat for years to come. Our Government is prepared to meet that threat. One of the most important steps we've taken is creating the Department of Homeland Security, combining under one roof, with a clear chain of command, many agencies responsible for protecting our Nation. All of you go to work every day with a single, overriding responsibility, to make this Nation more secure.

Creating the newest Department of our Federal Government was a tough task. It required a lot of hard work, changing some old habits, in order to merge into a new strategy and a new Department. You've accomplished an historic task. In just 12 months, under the leadership of your President, you have made air travel safer; you've strengthened the security of our borders and infrastructure; you've taken steps to protect the American people from dangerous weapons; and you helped prepare our first-responders for any emergency. You faced the challenge in standing up this new Department, and you get a—and a gold star for a job well done.

Since September the 11th attacks, we've taken significant steps to ensure the safety of air travel. DHS is completing a massive overhaul of security at our Nation's airports. Federal air marshals are flying on hundreds of commercial flights every day. We are determined to protect Americans who travel by plane. We're determined to prevent those planes from being used as weapons against us.

The Department of Homeland Security is strengthening control of all our borders and ports of entry, to keep out terrorists and criminals and dangerous materials. We're using technology to allow law-abiding travelers to cross the border quickly and easily, while our officials concentrate on stopping possible threats. We've increased the number of border inspectors and improved access to sophisticated databases.

DHS personnel are checking ships and analyzing manifests to prevent high risk cargo from entering our Nation by sea. DHS officials are also posted at foreign ports, working with other governments to inspect shipments before they're loaded and shipped to America. America welcomes tourists and students and businesspeople, legitimate cargo. Yet, we're working hard—you're working hard—to make sure our border is closed to terrorists and criminals and weapons and illegal drugs.

Third, we've worked with State and local governments and the private sector to strengthen the defenses of our key infrastructure, communication systems and power grids and transportation networks. DHS is helping the operators of chemical facilities improve security.

We're working with Congress on new legislation that establishes uniform standards for security at chemical sites and gives DHS the power to enforce those standards. We've established the National Cyber Security Division to examine cybersecurity incidents and track attacks and coordinate nationwide responses. America's infrastructure drives our economy and serves our people. We're determined to provide the infrastructure with the best possible protection.

Fourth, we're bringing the best technologies to bear against the threat of chemical and biological weapons. We've placed sophisticated equipment to detect biological agents in many metropolitan areas. We've greatly expanded the strategic national stockpile for drugs and vaccines and medical supplies. We now have on hand, for instance, enough smallpox vaccine to immunize every American in the case of an emergency.

Last year, I proposed Project BioShield, which will speed the development of new vaccines and treatments for biological agents that could be used in a terrorist attack. Congress needs to send this vital legislation to my desk. Attacks from a chemical or biological weapon is one of the gravest threats our country has ever faced. We're doing what is necessary to protect this country.

Even with all these measures, there's no such thing as perfect security in a vast and free country, so as a fifth step, we've worked to improve the ability of State and local authorities to respond quickly and effectively to emergencies. My administration has provided over $13 billion to equip and train local officials, such as firefighters and police officers and EMS workers and health professionals. I thank the Congress for their work on this important measure.

The new budget proposes additional money, $5 billion, to continue to help the first-responders. We're focusing more of our resources on the areas of greatest risk. It's essential we set priorities with the taxpayers' money, to better protect the American people. And so DHS is creating a national incident management plan, a strategy to make sure taxpayers' money is wisely spent. Under this plan, first-responders at all levels of government will know their responsibilities, will follow a clear chain of command, and will be able to work with each other effectively in a time of crisis.

Your hard work is already paying off. The system has proven its worth in coordinating responses to such emergencies as Hurricane Isabel and the California wildfires. America's first-responders are the first on the scene of danger. They need a strategy. They need coordination. They need training, and they will get our help.

This administration has also worked to ensure that those charged with defending America from the threat of terror have all the tools necessary to fight the terrorists. One of those essential tools is the PATRIOT Act, which enables Federal law enforcement officials to track terrorists, to disrupt their cells, and to seize their assets. For years, we've used similar provisions to catch embezzlers or drug traffickers. My attitude is pretty simple on this matter: If these methods are good enough for hunting criminals, they're even more important for hunting terrorists.

The PATRIOT Act made other important changes official to the success of this new Department. It tore down the walls that blocked the FBI and the CIA from sharing intelligence. It's hard to track terrorists if we can't share information. It was essential that all elements of law enforcement be able to work together to secure this homeland. The PATRIOT Act imposed tough new penalties on terrorists and those who support them. We want to make it

abundantly clear to anybody who wants to hurt America: There will be significant penalty. These are responsible measures, fully consistent with the United States Constitution.

Key provisions of the PATRIOT Act are set to expire next year. The terrorist threat will not expire on that schedule. You and others in law enforcement need this vital legislation to protect our citizens. We cannot afford to let down our guard. Congress must renew the PATRIOT Act.

For the men and women of the Department of Homeland Security, the past year has been one of progress and achievement. You have risen to confront a new threat and to meet unprecedented challenges. You have responded to hurricanes and tornadoes and wildfires with incredible skill and speed. You've worked hard to protect our borders. You've saved lives. You're prepared for greater dangers. You've passed every single test. You should be proud of all you've accomplished, and you need to know America is proud of you.

You have done a lot in a year. It's been an incredible year of accomplishment, but none of us charged with defending this Nation can rest. We must never forget the day when the terrorists left their mark of murder on our Nation. We must never forget that day. We will remember the sorrow and the anger. We'll also remember the resolve we felt that day. All of us have a responsibility that goes on. We will protect this country, whatever it takes.

God bless your work, and may God continue to bless our country.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:06 a.m. at the Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center. In his remarks, he referred to former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; A.Q. Khan, former head of Pakistan's nuclear weapons program; and Gen. John A. Gordon, USAF (Ret.), Assistant to the President and Homeland Security Adviser. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on the Further Deployment of United States Military Forces in Haiti

March 2, 2004

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

In my report to the Congress of February 25, 2004, I provided information on the deployment of combat-equipped U.S. Armed Forces to Haiti. I am providing this additional report, consistent with the War Powers Resolution, to help ensure that the Congress is kept fully informed on U.S. military activities in Haiti.

On February 29, 2004, approximately 200 additional U.S. combat-equipped, military personnel from the U.S. Joint Forces Command deployed to Port-au-Prince, Haiti, to secure key facilities, to facilitate the continued repatriation of Haitian migrants, to help create conditions in the capital for the anticipated arrival of the Multinational Interim Force, to protect American citizens as may be required, and for other purposes consistent with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1529 (2004). I anticipate additional combat-equipped military personnel will be deployed to Haiti until the situation in Haiti stabilizes. The forces that the United States deployed and continues to deploy will be part of the Multinational Interim Force.

The United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1529 on February 29, 2004. It authorized the deployment of a Multinational Interim Force to contribute to a more secure and more

stable environment in the Haitian capital and elsewhere, to facilitate the provision of humanitarian assistance and the access of humanitarian aid workers to the Haitian people, and for other purposes.

It is anticipated U.S. forces will redeploy when the Multinational Interim Force has transitioned to a follow-on United Nations stabilization force.

I have taken this action pursuant to my constitutional authority to conduct U.S. foreign relations and as Commander in Chief and Chief Executive. I am providing this report as part of my efforts to keep the Congress informed, consistent with the War Powers Resolution.

Sincerely,

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Ted Stevens, President pro tempore of the Senate.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency Blocking Property of Persons Undermining Democratic Processes or Institutions in Zimbabwe

March 2, 2004

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent the enclosed notice to the *Federal Register* for publication. It states that the national emergency blocking the property of persons undermining democratic processes or institutions in Zimbabwe is to continue in effect beyond March 6, 2004.

The crisis caused by the actions and policies of certain members of the Government of Zimbabwe and other persons to undermine Zimbabwe's democratic processes or institutions has not been resolved. These actions and policies pose a continuing, unusual, and extraordinary threat to the foreign policy of the United States. For these reasons, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared on March 6, 2003, blocking the property of persons undermining democratic processes or institutions in Zimbabwe and to maintain in force the sanctions to respond to this threat.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
March 2, 2004.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 3. An original was not available for verification of the content of this message. The notice of March 2 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks at the White House Conference on Faith-Based and Community Initiatives in Los Angeles, California
March 3, 2004

Thank you all for coming. Thanks for coming. Let's see, you've been here since 8:30—[*laughter*]—all you need is another speech. [*Laughter*]

I'm honored that here in the City of Angels, Mr. Mayor, in the City of Angels there are so many people doing God's work. And let me put your mind at ease. We're talking about healing our Nation; we're not talking politics. We're all here to do everything in our power to save lives. And by saving a life, we improve our community. And as we improve communities, we improve our Nation.

I'm here to thank you for hearing that call. Actually, I shouldn't be thanking you; I should be thanking a higher power for giving you the call. You're what we call social entrepreneurs. An entrepreneur is somebody who is willing to take risk, take a risk for a reward. And I just met with some social entrepreneurs. I'll be sharing some of the stories in a minute.

These stories really always lift my soul because it reminds me of the true strength of America, the fact that there are people from all walks of life, all faiths willing to take time out of their lives to make somebody else's life better. That's the true strength of the country. We talk about our military might or we talk about our wallets, but the true strength of the country is the fact that there are decent, honorable citizens who would like to love their neighbor just like they'd like to be loved themselves.

And so here we are at the Conference on Faith-Based and Community Initiatives. That's a pretty fancy word for our Government trying to tell you that we're trying to change the culture in Washington, DC, to welcome people of faith in helping meet social objectives. That's what this means. That's a long title for, the hope and healing of faith-based services are an integral part of working together to make America a more hopeful place for all. And it is essential for those of us in Government to recognize the vital work that faith-based programs are able to do.

I always—"always"—sometimes say Government can hand out money—and I'm going to talk about some of the money we're trying to hand out—but Government can't put hope in a person's heart or a sense of purpose in a person's life. That is done by loving individuals who spread their love. That's what happens. And it seems like to me it makes sense for those of us who are honored to hold office to gather that strength, rally that strength, call upon that strength, and, most importantly, support that strength from the halls of Government.

And so there's a practical aspect to this conference, and that is for members of my administration and others to come and explain how you can access the Federal monies. There is a—hopefully, you walk away from here hearing a commitment from the Government. And that is, if you decide to interface with taxpayers' money, you won't have to change your mission. See, I believe this: It's hard to be a faith-based program if you can't practice your faith.

And I fully recognize there are a lot of social entrepreneurs who are nervous about interfacing with Government. What we're working on is to change the culture, to recognize that there are results, fantastic results being achieved, and that those of us who are policymakers must welcome those who are achieving the good results of the work of faith.

And so thanks for coming. I'm honored that Alphonso is with me. He is the Acting Secretary of HUD. It means he hasn't—I knew him in Dallas; he was running the housing authority there in Dallas. He's a

very capable citizen. He's "Acting" because the Senate hasn't approved him yet. I'm sure they will. But he's going to do a fine job. I'll talk about some of the record of HUD here in a minute, about making sure that Federal money coming out of HUD is—that faith-based programs can access that money.

John Walters is here with me. He's the Director of the National Drug Control Policy. Where are you, John? Somewhere. There he is. Thanks for coming, John. His job is to work on the demand side of the equation, to work with people to encourage kids not to use drugs. No better place to do that, by the way, than faith-based programs. His job is to work as well on interdicting drugs, to disrupt the supply. His job as well—and we're going to talk a little bit about it later on—is to work with those whose bodies and souls are consumed by drug and alcohol, to save those lives as well.

I appreciate Charlie Curie here. He's the administration of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services of the Department of Health and Human Services. The Department of Health and Human Services spends a lot of Federal money, and a lot of that Federal money needs to be accessed by the faith community as you work to achieve social objectives.

I want to thank the mayor. Mr. Mayor—the fact that he has taken time out of his day to come and see little old me—[*laughter*]—more importantly, to see you is a testimony to his understanding that the faith community in Los Angeles can help him do his job better; that people of all walks of life—thank you, Mayor, for coming. And he brought his son, Jackson. Jackson is known as "Mr. President." He just won the class election. It's a pretty good title, Jackson. [*Laughter*]

I know there's a lot of mayors here and county supervisors. I want to thank the mayors for coming. I want to thank the county supervisors for coming. It is really essential that local officials tap into the great strength of the faith community, doesn't matter what faith, by the way—all faiths. All faiths have heard a universal call, and the idea of capturing this strength to help your communities become better places for all citizens is good public policy. It makes a lot of sense. I see the mayors shaking their heads. Thanks for coming.

I'm proud of my friend Bishop Charles Blake, is with us. Thank you for coming. Reverend Chip Murray as well, Reverend Murray. You know, thinking of these two great pastors reminds me of the story about the guy who's giving the sermon, about halfway through, and a person pops up in the first pew and he screams, "Use me, Lord, use me." And the reverend keeps on preaching. The next Sunday he gets up there again, another stemwinder. The guy screams, "Use me, Lord, use me." So finally, he comes to him and he says, "Fine, we'll be glad to use you. Why don't you scrape and paint all the pews?" The next Sunday he's preaching, the guy pops up and says, "Use me, Lord, use me—but only in an advisory capacity." [*Laughter*] These two guys—these two men are not advisers; they're doers. They're running vibrant churches that are changing lives.

I'm proud that John Bryant, the CEO of Operation Hope, is with us. Cecelia, thanks for being here as well. Thank you, John.

Bishop Zavala is with us—Bishop, thank you for coming—from the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. There's a lot of great faiths in our country. Faith-based programs were initiated by a lot of faiths, but the Catholic Church has always been on the forefront of faith-based programs. The Catholic Church is—when you think about whether Government shouldn't interface with faith, I mean, the Catholic Church has been providing hospitals and schools, and they've been making a big difference in neighborhoods. I'm honored you're here.

I appreciate Robert Schuller coming—I'm honored you're here—from the Crystal Cathedral. They even beamed his program

into Midland, Texas. [*Laughter*] Thanks for coming, sir. You made a huge difference.

I appreciate the Hillel Hebrew Academy Choir. Thank you all for coming.

When I landed at Air Force One, one of the things I try to do is to pick out a local hero and to herald, in this case, her achievement toward making this country a better place. Charlotte Van Fleet is with us. Charlotte is probably humiliated I introduced her in front of so many people. She's a mentor. She mentors young children. She heard a call. Oh, it probably doesn't sound like much, except it does to the child she mentors. And she is—her spirit is strong. She's saving a life. You teach a child to read, you've saved a life. The new civil right, by the way, in the 21st century, is teaching somebody to read. You can't accomplish much in America unless you can read. And here's a soul who is willing to take time out of her life to mentor a child.

The reason I introduced Charlotte is not only to hold her up as an example but to call upon others in this community of Los Angeles and across the State of California to listen to your heart and to realize you can make a significant difference in our society by teaching one child to read. She teaches a lot of child to—she mentors a lot of children. But all you've got to do is, if you want to be a part of this world, an active part of the world, is to do what Charlotte Van Fleet has done and to make a difference in people's lives in a positive way. I'm honored you came out to the airport. Thanks for coming, appreciate you being here.

The reason the Faith-Based Initiative is so important is because, in spite of our plenty, there are a lot of people in our society with shattered lives. In spite of the fact that we've got large bankrolls and wealth, beyond imagination for many people in the world, in our own society there's darkness and loneliness and addiction and wonder—wonder whether their life is worth anything. And that's the reality of the society in which we live today.

And all of us who have got a responsibility in our society must work to do something about it, must work to address those seemingly intractable problems. But those problems can be solved. They can be helped. But sometimes we have to try a different route. Sometimes the old way hasn't worked. Sometimes the prison system needs a little different look to it. Sometimes the drug and alcohol programs need a different curriculum. Sometimes the probation offices, which do fine work in our communities, need a little boost, need a little help in their mission. And that's what we're here to talk about.

We're really here to talk about miracles. And they happen in all kinds of ways in our society, if you really step back and take a look. I talked to—I heard some people who I think would say, "My life has changed because of a miracle. God loves you, and I love you. And you can count on both of us." This is a powerful message that people who wonder about their future can hear—powerful message. And it's a message that a lot of people can spread.

The sample of folks I talked to today is—I'm confident represented the crowd here, and there's some really powerful stories. Ralph Plumb—he is the president of the Union Rescue Mission. He described what it's like to provide a place of love in the midst of such despair. And he said it's dark in the neighborhood in which the Rescue Mission exists. On the other hand, I could tell from how he talked, inside the building, there is a radiance that was changing people's lives. I appreciate Ralph. Ralph talked about wandering the world as a missionary, I guess is the right way to describe, and here he is in inner-city Los Angeles providing shelter for the homeless and hope for the addicted and love for the lonely.

And then there's Pastor John Baker, the founder of Celebrate Recovery. Big John

is with us. He is a—he and I shared something in common along with somebody else I'm going to introduce. We used to drink too much. And our hearts changed, and then we quit. That is a tried and true formula. [*Laughter*] The problem is, Government is not good at changing hearts. But people like John Baker is—been good about it and successful doing that.

Reverend Carmen Warner-Robbins is with us, who formed Welcome Home Ministries. She formed it. It's a ministry. She's a social entrepreneur. When I said she formed it, that's what an entrepreneur does; they found things. She's a founder. She decided she wanted to make a difference in somebody's life, so she started a program to welcome women from the prison systems and then convinced women to go back into the prison systems to change hearts. And it's a powerful lesson of what one person can do.

I'm sure I'm looking at hundreds of social entrepreneurs here as well, people who have started ministries because they heard a calling. I met with Mark Borovitz and Harold Rothstein and Harriet Rossetto. Harriet is married to Mark. Mark is now a rabbi. He was in prison. He was addicted. He told me the story about how the rabbi in the prison got a hold of Mark and said, "I'm never going to forget you. I love you. I want to help you." And so Mark runs into Harriet, his wife, who has started a—she, too, is a social entrepreneur, by the way, at Beit T'Shuvah, program for addicts. She sees him in the prison. He's kind of a—probably feeling his oats pretty good about that time. [*Laughter*] She says, "Fine, why don't you—if you want to do something constructive, why don't you just show up at our program?" So he did, 3 years later. And now he's the rabbi of the program. She's the CEO.

And they helped save Harold's life. I can't properly put into words what he said. I'm just telling you, the guy was lost, and now he is found, thanks to these two good souls. Harold said, "I cannot say enough about the program and what I continue to learn here." That's what he said. And he said, "How can I repay someone for saving my life?" You know what he's done? He saved somebody else's life, is how you repay someone for saving your life. He's a part of the program too. I want to thank you all for coming.

Finally, I met Leticia Chavez-Paulette. Leticia was a drug addict in prison. She was a single mom. She lost custody of her child because of her addiction. And she got involved with Celebrate Recovery, and it changed her life. And she has rebuilt her life. She said, "to see how God forgives me, and therefore I could forgive myself." That's what she said, powerful experience for her, "knowing that it was His grace that kept me alive for such a time as this." That's Leticia's words. This is a person who was lost in prison, a drug addict who lost her family, and now she's here with the ability to say those words with clarity. And where's little Isaac? There he is. And Isaac, her son, is back with his mama.

These stories are being written every day in America. Every single day this is happening. We never hear half of them or any—I never, but—I barely hear any of them, but I just know they're happening. You know they're happening because you're on the frontline of making them happen.

When you hear these kind of stories and you're in a position like I'm in or the mayor's in or somebody else is in, in elected office, you say, "Well, gosh, how can we spread—how can we help make this happen more?" It's really a practical application, it seems to me, of taxpayers' money to try to encourage this to happen more.

And there's been a big debate about this, of course, because we never want—we want to make sure there's a separation of church and state The state should never be the church, and the church should never be the state. That's clear—that's clear. But if we have a social objective and you've

got people of faith helping achieve that objective, doesn't it make sense for the Government to not fear faith but to welcome faith in meeting common goals?

And there's a resource issue. We talked to the good folks that I just introduced, and I think if you ask them their biggest problem they'd say, "Well, we need to expand. There's more souls to be saved. We need a little extra space for our rescue mission." And the Government has got resources. We spend a lot of money on social welfare programs. And so what I'm here to talk to you today is to—how to make sure that you have a chance to access that money. You can access that money without losing your mission.

Now, there are some rules. You can't use Federal money to proselytize. We want to make sure the church and the state stay separate. But you can use Federal money to help a person quit drinking. You can use Federal money to help a person find housing. You can't, if you're a faith-based organization, say, "only Methodists allowed." You know, you can say, "All drunks are welcome." [*Laughter*] But you can't pick and choose a person's religion. In other words, there are some certain guidelines necessary to make sure that we don't violate the rules of church and state.

But it is essential that when it comes to grantmaking, we asked a simple question: Can you achieve the objective? What are the results? Too often in Government it is, you know, what is the religion you practice, and if you practice, you can't access the money. That's not the right question. The right question is, can you save lives? And if you can, in my judgment, you ought to be able to access Federal money through the grantmaking process.

And so I got a little frustrated in Washington because I couldn't get the bill passed out of the Congress. They were arguing process. I kept saying, "Wait a minute, there are entrepreneurs all over our country who are making a huge difference in somebody's life; they're helping us meet a social objective." Congress wouldn't act, so I signed an Executive order—that means I did it on my own. It says we're going to open up billions of dollars in grant money competition to faith-based charities. And that's what's happening, and that's what we're here to talk about today. That's why we're having these conferences. We've had 11 conferences so far. I spoke to the second one and now the 11th one. And this is a way for those of us in the administration that are focused on this to come and explain to people how best to access this money, how best to reach out for it.

I'm a person who believes in results; I think you can hear that in my voice. So the other day I called together Cabinet Ministers—Alphonso was one—I said, "Well, show me what you've done thus far. Have you been able to get Federal grant money out the door? If there's an issue, I need to know about it."

You see, I set up a faith-based office in the White House. You're about to hear from Jim Towey who's the—runs the faith-based office. He's an incredible guy. By the way, Towey was Mother Teresa's lawyer. [*Laughter*] And that's a pretty litigious society when Mother Teresa needs a lawyer, isn't it? [*Laughter*] But his job is to make sure these conferences get set up and to have an office to answer people's questions about how to get involved in the grantmaking process. My job is to get the initiative going, is to stay on it, not yield, and then to ask the questions to the people responsible for getting the money out the door, how are we doing.

And so I'm going to give you some of the results. In a year, there was $144-million increase in the amount that HUD and HHS grant dollars were granted to faith-based organizations. So from last year to this year, there's a $144-million increase; the two agencies granted $1.1 billion to faith-based groups in 2003. That's a measurable number. It's not bad. It's a pretty good start. There's just a lot of—there's

just a lot more money there. And so I keep talking to these—to Alphonso and Tommy and others in my administration—that would be Tommy Thompson. I said, "We're going to watch you carefully. Make sure your faith-based offices that you have set up in your cabinet move the money out in a way that is—that honors the Executive order I signed."

There are some issues with the money moving out, by the way. Some of the grant money is what they call formula-based money, and so it immediately goes to the State. And it's essential that all States have faith-based offices so that money that comes from the State to the city. For example, Mayor Hahn will have the flexibility to use it to empower faith-based programs to help him and the city of Los Angeles meet objectives. The State of California, in my judgment, should have a very viable, strong faith-based office so that all Federal money becomes more available to the faith programs.

Last year at HUD, more than half of the Section 202 funding for elderly housing went to faith-based programs. That's a great idea, if you think about it, that if a church or a synagogue or a mosque is able to take elderly housing money and help meet the needs of parishioners or people in their congregations.

We've seen an increase in the number of first-time recipients. That's one of the things I wanted to make sure that was happening at the Federal level. It's important to measure and to make sure that objectives are being met. And what—really what we don't want is all the money going to two or three organizations. That doesn't make any sense. If part of the objective is to—part of the objective is to encourage startups, to use an economic term, is to encourage people who have got an idea and they think they can make a difference in somebody's life to feel confident and bold about their vision.

And again, for Alphonso—I guess he's the reason she introduced me; she seems to be doing quite well—that over $113 million in grants out of HUD went to first-time recipients, small amounts of money to small programs to help them get started.

Once this program—to give you a sense of the new grant money, to hopefully inspire those of you there who are wondering whether this makes sense for you or not—it's called the Fishing School in DC. I went there as the President when I was first elected. It's a little school in the heart of a tough neighborhood. It's really an old house. And a fellow got inspired and said, "I want to provide a safe haven, a place of love for children who don't have anywhere to go after school." And it is a faith-based program. It is based upon God's love. As one of the teachers told me, kids need prayer. Faith teaches them that God can do anything. That's kind of the motto for the program, in a way. It's their operating credo. And they're now recipients of Federal money.

In other words, it's a—what I'm telling you is you don't have to be a mega church or a monster synagogue or a massive—you just don't have to be—big helps, but what we really want to make sure as well—and I hope this seminar helps you understand that, and if it's not, I need to know—is whether or not the money is actually going to help startups as well and smaller organizations that really do feel like they're lost out there in trying to access grant money.

Again, I want to reiterate one point. I'm sure there's some reticence, and I would be reticent too, if I were you, at first. Why do I want to be involved with the Federal Government, is the question you're asking. [*Laughter*] No, really, really, when you think about it, sometimes with that sort of money comes all kinds of restrictions, some of it having to do with whether you can practice your faith or not, some of it having to do with the size of your building or whatever, the temperature of the room in which you're supposed to be doing your work. [*Laughter*]

And as I told you, we're changing the culture. It's hard in Washington. This is a fairly heavy lift for a lot of people who are used to bureaucracies, as you can imagine. But one of the things that I can assure you, our intention is to make sure that you're able to practice your faith as you fulfill your mission. I told you earlier, you can't be faith-based if you can't practice your faith. That's pretty practical.

But we are going to work. The offices we've set up in these different Departments, Labor, Agriculture, HHS, and HUD—as a matter of fact, agriculture secretaries from California came in the other day. I said, "What do you need a faith-based office for?" If you happen to live in rural California, there's a lot of housing money coming out of the Agriculture Department, by the way. It started off probably from migrant worker programs. There's nothing better, by the way, than to have a faith-based organization be involved with housing. It's a natural extension of a ministry from any faith, it seems like to me.

But we're working hard to change the culture. We're working hard to make sure the regulations are not onerous. We're working hard to encourage the entrepreneurial spirit as opposed to discourage it.

I do want to talk about a couple of special initiatives, and then I'm sure you're spoken out. [*Laughter*] I guess that means you listen to too many speeches. But one of the special initiatives I'm working with Congress on, I think we're making pretty good—I know we're making good progress, is addiction. A few people use a lot of drugs in our society, and therefore, it seems to make sense to focus resources on the few.

And this is a program that the Congress has responded to, with about $100 million in the appropriations process, starting today, as a matter of fact. Money is now available to fund patients who then can take their funding to the program that meets their needs. It's a little different approach, when you think about it. A lot of times in the past, we've funded the program. Now we've decided to fund the addict and let the addict choose his or her best place to find what works. And so for those of you who are in the drug counseling, alcohol treatment programs, there's some new opportunities to go help find people to help you save lives.

Mentoring programs—I've always felt that the toughest, toughest pull for a citizen of our country is to have your mom and dad in prison. And we need mentoring programs that will mentor young children whose mom or dad is in prison. No better place to mentor a child than in a faith-based program, by the way; no better place where the word "love" actually rings true. And there's mentoring program available there.

In my State of the Union, I talked about 600,000 inmates that will be released from prison. I really think we need to think differently about how we help save lives of people in prison and coming out of prison. It seems like to me that—listen, the probation officers of your community work hard, and many of them are really good at what they do. But it seems to me that a wise approach to prisoner reentry is through a faith-based program, where the prisoner is able to be welcomed by a person of faith as a—as part of the probation experience or parole experience, and that the faith-based program have the ability, for example, to access worker trainer money. And so you can have a person come, be loved, be welcomed, be nourished, and then they—practical application of Federal dollars to help that person gain a skill to work. It's what the faith initiative is meant to do. It's meant to take the true strength of this country and help save lives.

And I want to thank you. I'm really here to thank you for what you're doing for setting such a good example. You're soldiers in the armies of compassion. You're people who have put on the mighty, mighty armor

of the Almighty in order to save lives, one person at a time—one person at a time.

See, the society we live in can be changed. I've seen it change. I've heard the stories of those who have been changed and are changing it. And it's that—it is that massive effort by people of concern and people of love to save lives which will change our Nation for the better. In the midst of our plenty, there's darkness, but there's always hope. In the midst of plenty, there is sadness and loneliness, but there's always a soul to put your arm around you and say, "I love you."

I'm here to call—to thank you for what you do. I'm here to spell out a practical strategy by those of us who are involved with the dispensing of taxpayers' money to help nourish the armies of compassion and to make sure this great country of ours, the greatest on the face of the Earth, holds out hope for every single citizen who is a citizen of our land.

Thank you for what you do. May God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:06 p.m. at the Los Angeles Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor James K. Hahn of Los Angeles, CA; Alphonso R. Jackson, Acting Secretary, Department of Housing and Urban Development; Bishop Charles E. Blake, West Angeles Church of God in Christ; Rev. Cecil L. "Chip" Murray, senior minister, First A.M.E. Church, Los Angeles; Rev. Dr. Cecelia Williams Bryant, wife of Rev. John Richard Bryant; Bishop Gabino Zavala, Auxiliary Bishop, Archdiocese of Los Angeles; Dr. Robert H. Schuller, pastor, Crystal Cathedral; and Tom Lewis, founder, the Fishing School.

Remarks at a Bush-Cheney Reception in Los Angeles
March 3, 2004

Thank you all very much. Thanks for coming. Thank you all for coming. Appreciate you coming. Please be seated. Thanks for the warm welcome. It is great to be back in Los Angeles. I'm thankful you all are here.

I'm aware that they handed out the Oscars last Sunday night. "Terminator 3" didn't win any. [*Laughter*] But the star of the movie had a pretty good year. I know he's new to politics, but he is getting used to all the lights and the cameras. I used to think my brother Jeb was the coolest Governor. By electing Arnold Schwarzenegger, the voters of California have shown that no party can take this State for granted.

The Vice President and I are going to be spending some quality time in the State of California. With your help, we're going to make California part of a nationwide victory in November of '04. Speaking of the Vice President, he's doing a fine job. The country has had no finer Vice President than Dick Cheney. Mother may have a second opinion. [*Laughter*]

It's good to see the Desert Moms here. Those are the ones who didn't go through the background check. [*Laughter*] But recently, Laura was in the desert with the Moms. And she sends her best to not only the Moms but all the folks here. I'm really proud of Laura. She is a fabulous First Lady and a great wife.

I want to thank my friend Brad Freeman, who has been a loyal friend. He's the State finance chairman here in California. I want to thank my friend Gerry Parsky, who's the State campaign general chairman. I want to thank my friend Mercer Reynolds from Cincinnati, Ohio, who is the chairman of the Bush-Cheney reelect

campaign. I appreciate the fact that Bill Simon is here and his wife, Cindy. I want to thank them for having served.

I want to thank all the grassroots activists who are here. [*Applause*] There you go. I appreciate my friend Rabbi Marvin Hier, who gave the blessing. He has a wonderful heart. It sets an incredibly important tone for the country. I want to thank Art Yoon, who's the mayor pro tem of Hermosa Beach, for leading the pledge.

But most of all, I want to thank you all for being our friend. Thank you for helping us. Thank you for getting ready for this campaign.

Last night, I placed a call to Senator Kerry. I told him I was looking forward to a spirited campaign. I congratulated him on his victory. This should be an interesting debate on the issues. He spent two decades in Congress; he's built up quite a record. [*Laughter*] In fact, Senator Kerry has been in Washington long enough to take both sides on just about every issue.

The voters will have a very clear choice this year between keeping the tax relief that is moving this economy forward or putting the burden of higher taxes back on the American people. It's a choice between an America that leads the world with strength and confidence or an America that is uncertain in the face of danger. I'm ready for this campaign. I look forward to setting the alternative squarely before the American people.

We've achieved great things the past 3 years. But most importantly, we have a positive vision for the years ahead, a positive vision for winning the war against terror and extending peace and freedom, a positive vision for creating jobs and promoting opportunity, a positive vision for compassion here at home. We'll leave no doubt where we stand, and we will win on the 2d of November.

The last 3 years have brought serious challenges, and we have given serious answers. We came to office with a stock market in decline, an economy heading into recession. We delivered historic tax relief, and now our economy is the fastest growing of any industrialized nation.

We confronted corporate criminals that cost people their jobs and their savings, so we passed strong corporate reforms and made it clear we will not tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America.

We saw war and grief arrive on a quiet September morning, so we pursued the terrorist enemy across the world. We captured or killed many of the key leaders of the Al Qaida network. And the rest of them will learn there is no cave or hole deep enough to hide from American justice.

We confronted the dangers of state-sponsored terror and the spread of weapons of mass destruction, so we ended the two most violent and dangerous regimes on Earth. We freed over 50 million people. And once again, America is proud to lead the armies of liberation.

When Dick Cheney and I came to Washington, we found a military that was underfunded and underappreciated, so we gave our military the resources and respect they deserve. And today, no one in the world can question the skill and the strength and the spirit of the United States military.

When we came to office, people had gotten used to gridlock, and old problems were used to score political points. Old problems were politicized and debated and then just passed on from year to year. But we came to Washington to get things done. We passed major reforms to raise the standards in our public schools. We passed reforms in Medicare to get prescription drugs and choices to our seniors. We have chosen to lead, and we have delivered results for the American people.

It is the President's job to confront problems, not to pass them on to future Presidents and future generations. A President needs to step up, make the hard decisions, keep his commitments, and that is exactly how I will continue to lead our country.

Great events will turn on this election. The man who sits in the Oval Office will

set the course of the war on terror and the direction of our economy. The security and prosperity of America are at stake. My opponent hasn't offered much in the way of strategies to win the war or policies to expand our economy. So far, all we hear from that side is a lot of old bitterness and partisan anger. Anger is not an agenda for the future of America. My administration has taken on the big issues with optimism and resolve and determination, and we stand ready to lead this Nation for 4 more years.

A big issue for every family in America is the Federal tax burden. With the largest tax relief since Ronald Reagan was President, we've left more money in the hands that earned it. By spending and investing and helping create new jobs, the American people have used their money far better than the Government would have.

Because we acted, our economy is growing stronger. The economy grew in the second half of 2003 at the fastest rate in nearly 20 years. Productivity is high. Business investment is rising. Interest rates and inflation are low. Homeownership is the highest rate ever. Manufacturing is increasing. We've added 336,000 new jobs over the last 5 months. The tax relief we passed is working.

My opponent has plans for those tax cuts. He wants to take them away, and he would use that money to expand the Federal Government. I have a better idea: To keep this economy growing and to create jobs, the tax cuts must be permanent.

And we must do more to keep the economy growing. We need to maintain fiscal discipline in Washington, DC. We need to protect small-business owners and employees from frivolous lawsuits and needless regulation. We need to help control the costs of health care by passing Federal medical liability reform. We need to continue to open up markets for America's farmers and ranchers and entrepreneurs and manufacturers. We need to pass sound energy legislation to modernize the electricity system and make our country less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

My opponent talks about job creation too, but he's against every one of these job-creating measures. Empty talk about jobs and economic isolation won't get anyone hired. The way to create jobs is our pro-growth, pro-entrepreneur agenda.

This economy of ours is going through a time of change, and we're helping people to gain the skills and security to make a good living. All skills start with education, so I worked with Congress to pass the No Child Left Behind Act. This is a good law that is challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations. It's a law that is bringing higher standards and accountability to every public school so that not one single child is left behind.

And there's more to do. We have a plan to help high school students who fall behind in reading and math. We have a plan to help community colleges train workers for the industries that are creating the most new jobs. You see, this administration understands clearly that education is the gateway to a hopeful future, and that gate must be open to all Americans.

We're also working to promote an ownership society in America in which more people own their own homes and build their own savings. We want more people owning their own small businesses. We want people to own and manage their own health care plans. We want younger workers to be able to own and manage their own retirement under Social Security. I understand this, that when people have solid assets, they gain independence and security and dignity and more control over their own future. I believe in private property so much, I want everybody to have some in America.

On issue after issue, the American people have a clear choice. My opponent is against personal retirement accounts. He's against putting patients in charge of Medicare. He's against tax relief. He seems to be against every idea that gives Americans more authority, more choices, and more

control over our own lives. It's the same old Washington mindset: They'll give the orders, and you will pay the bills. I've got news for the Washington crowd. America has gone beyond that way of thinking, and we're not going back. I trust the people of this country. I trust the people to make the best decisions for their own money, for their own health, for their own retirement.

Our future also depends on America's leadership in this world. The momentum of freedom in our time is strong, but we still face serious dangers. Al Qaida is wounded but not broken. Terrorists are testing our will in Afghanistan and Iraq. Regimes of North Korea and Iran are challenging the peace. If America shows weakness and uncertainty in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This will not happen on my watch. This Nation is strong and confident in the cause of freedom. And today, no friend or enemy doubts the word of the United States of America.

America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Afghanistan. The Taliban chose defiance, and the Taliban are no longer in power. America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Iraq. The dictator chose defiance; the dictator now sits in a prison cell. September the 11th, 2001, taught a lesson I will never forget: America must confront threats before they fully materialize.

In Iraq, my administration looked at the intelligence information, and we saw a threat. Members of Congress looked at the intelligence, and they saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence, and it saw a threat. The previous administration and Congress looked at the intelligence and made regime change in Iraq the policy of our country. In 2002, the United Nations Security Council yet again demanded a full accounting of Saddam Hussein's weapons programs. As he had for over a decade, Saddam Hussein refused to comply. So we had a choice to make, either to take the word of a madman or take action to defend America and the world. Faced with that choice, I will defend America every time. [*Applause*] Thank you.

My opponent admits that Saddam Hussein was a threat. He just didn't support my decision to remove Saddam from power. Maybe he was hoping Saddam would lose the election in Iraq. [*Laughter*] We showed the dictator and a watching world that America means what it says. Because our coalition acted, Saddam's torture chambers are closed. Because we acted, Saddam's weapons programs are ended forever. Because we acted, nations like Libya have gotten the message and renounced their own weapons programs. Because we acted, an example of democracy is rising at the very heart of the Middle East. Because we acted, the world is more free, and America is more secure.

We still face thugs and terrorists in Iraq who would rather go on killing the innocent than accept the advance of liberty. They know that a free Iraq will be a major defeat in the cause of terror. This coalition of killers is trying to shake our will. They don't understand America. America will never be intimidated by thugs and assassins. We are aggressively striking the terrorists in Iraq. We're on the offensive. We'll defeat them there so we don't have to face them in our own country.

We're calling on other nations to help Iraq to build a free society. A free Iraq will make us all more safe. We're standing with the Iraqi people as they assume more of their own defense and move toward self-government. These are not easy tasks, but they are essential tasks. We will finish what we have begun. We will win this essential victory in the war on terror.

On national security, Americans have the clearest possible choice. My opponent says he approves of bold action in the world, but only if other countries don't object. [*Laughter*] I'm all for united action, and so are the 34 coalition partners in Iraq right now. Yet America must never outsource

America's national security decisions to leaders of other countries.

Some are skeptical that the war on terror is really a war at all. My opponent said the war on terror is far less of a military operation and far more of an intelligence-gathering, law enforcement operation. I disagree. Our Nation followed this approach after the World Trade Center was bombed in 1993. The matter was handled in the courts and thought by some to be settled. But the terrorists were still training in Afghanistan, plotting in other nations, and drawing up more ambitious plans. After the chaos and carnage of September the 11th, it is not enough to serve our enemies with legal papers. With those attacks, the terrorists and their supporters declared war on the United States of America, and war is what they got.

At bases across our country and the world, I've had the privilege of meeting with the men and women of our military. These good folks are defending our country. They're sacrificing for our security. I've seen their great decency and their unselfish courage. I can assure you, ladies and gentlemen, the cause of freedom is in good hands.

This Nation is prosperous and strong, yet we need to remember that our greatest strength is in the hearts and souls of our citizens. We're strong because of the values we try to live by, courage and compassion, reverence and integrity. We're strong because of the institutions that help give us direction and purpose, families and schools and religious congregations. These values and institutions are fundamental to our lives, and they deserve the respect of our Government. We stand for the fair treatment of faith-based groups so they can receive Federal support for the works of compassion and healing. We will not stand for Government discrimination against people of faith.

We stand for welfare reforms that require work and strengthen marriage, which have helped millions of Americans find independence and dignity. We will not stand for any attempt to weaken those reforms and to send people back into lives of dependence. We stand for a culture of life in which every person counts and every person matters. We will not stand for the treatment of any life as a commodity to be experimented upon, exploited, or cloned.

We stand for the confirmation of judges who strictly and faithfully interpret the law. We will not stand for judges who undermine democracy by legislating from the bench and try to remake the culture of America by court order.

We stand for a culture of responsibility in America. We're changing the culture of America from one that has said, "If it feels good, do it," and, "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each of us understands we are responsible for the decisions we make in life. If you are fortunate enough to be a mother or a father, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart. If you're worried about the quality of the education in which you live, you're responsible for doing something about it. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you have a responsibility to tell the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And in this new responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we would like to be loved ourselves.

For all Americans, these years in our history will always stand apart. There are quiet times in the life of a nation when little is expected of its leaders. This is not one of those times. You and I are living in a period when the stakes are high and the challenges are difficult, a time when resolve is needed.

None of us will ever forget that week when one era ended and another began. On September the 14th, 2001, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers. I remember a lot about that day. I remember the workers in hardhats who were shouting, "Whatever it takes." I remember the guy who

pointed at me and said, "Don't let me down." As we all did that day, these men and women searching through the rubble took it personally. I took it personally. I have a responsibility that goes on. I will never relent in bringing justice to our enemies. I will defend the security of America, whatever it takes.

In these times, I've also been a witness to the character of this Nation. Not so long ago, some had their doubts about the American character, our capacity to meet serious challenges, our capacity to serve a cause greater than self-interest. But Americans have given their answer. I've seen the unselfish courage of our troops. I've seen the heroism of Americans in the face of danger. I've seen the spirit of service and compassion renewed in our country. We've all seen our Nation unite in common purpose when it mattered most.

We will need all of these qualities for the work ahead. We have a war to win, and the world is counting on us to lead the cause of freedom and peace. We have a duty to spread opportunity to every part of America. This is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it. And we know that for our country, the best days lie ahead.

God bless you all. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:52 p.m. at the Shrine Auditorium. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida; Brad Freeman, California State finance chairman, Gerald L. Parsky, California State chairman, and Mercer Reynolds, national finance chairman, Bush-Cheney '04, Inc.; and Bill Simon, former California gubernatorial candidate, and his wife, Cindy.

Statement on Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell's Decision Not To Seek Reelection

March 3, 2004

For 17 years, Ben Nighthorse Campbell has been a strong advocate in the Congress for the people of Colorado. He has been a leader in seeking the protection of our public lands and natural resources and a tireless champion for Native Americans. Ben is a patriot who has served his country in Congress, as an airman in Korea, and as a competitor in the 1964 Summer Olympics in Tokyo.

Laura and I send our best to Ben, his wife, Linda, and their family.

Remarks in a Discussion on the National Economy in Bakersfield, California

March 4, 2004

The President. John, thanks. Thanks for having me. First, I want to thank your employees for putting up with my entourage. [*Laughter*] It's kind of grown since the last time I was here in Bakersfield. [*Laughter*]

We are here to talk about the economy. I want to—I'm going to have some help here in talking about the economy, people on the frontlines of job creation, people on the frontline of raising their families. Before I do so, I do want to thank you,

John, and your family for kind of setting such a great example of what it means to be close family and heralding the entrepreneurial spirit. One of the things I love about America is the entrepreneurial spirit, the fact that people can own their own assets, can start their own business, can realize such a hopeful future, because they own something. We're here at what we call a family-owned business. It's an integral part of America.

When I heard I was coming for Rain for Rent—[*laughter*]—I was thinking about my days in west Texas. [*Laughter*] We were always looking for a little rain and were willing to rent it. [*Laughter*] But I do want to thank your mom and dad, Jerry and Mary, for welcoming me here, and I want to thank your whole family for turning out.

I've spent some quality time in Bakersfield—1949. I don't remember much about it. [*Laughter*] But I was talking to old Number 41—that would be my dad—2 nights ago, and I told him I was going out to Bakersfield. And he said, "Tell the folks out there that Barbara and I have got fond memories of our days living here." Good, decent, honorable, hard-working people in Bakersfield—that's the way it was then, and that's the way it is today. And we're glad to be here.

I want to thank Sharon Thomas, the wife of a guy I call the Chairman; that would be Congressman Bill Thomas. Sharon, thanks for coming today. Bill Thomas is doing a really good job for the people of California and Bakersfield. He's doing a great job for the country. He is a strong leader. We've done a lot working together, some of which I'm about to discuss with you.

I want to thank the mayor, Harvey Hall. He met me at the airport. He drove over in the limousine. Harvey, thanks. He said, "Have you got any advice?" I said, "Yes, fill the potholes." [*Laughter*]

We've got members of the State senate. Roy Ashburn is with us. I've known Roy for a while. He's a good fellow. State assembly—Bill Maze is with us. I thank Bill for being here. I want to thank all the local officials and all the citizens who have taken time out of your day to come by and to listen to what I hope is an educational dialog.

I want to thank a lady named Dana Karcher, who came out to the airport. I don't know if you know Dana or not; you probably don't. But she is a volunteer in your community. You know what she's done? She's decided—she's involved with Keep Bakersfield Beautiful. She understands that if you're interested in the quality of life in the community in which you live, it starts at the grassroots level, that people have got to take responsibility for the lives and, in this case, the beauty of a place you love and call home. She's a volunteer.

A lot of times we talk about the strength of the country in terms of our military. Make no mistake about it, we're going to keep our military strong in order to keep the peace. And we're going to talk here today about people working and people being able to have savings and wealth. But the true strength of the country lies in the hearts and souls of our citizens. That's what makes America really strong, the fact that we've got loving and decent and honorable citizens willing to help out at the local level, willing to take responsibility, willing to love a neighbor just like you'd like to be loved yourself.

If you're a member of the army of compassion here in Bakersfield, California, I thank you from the bottom of my heart. If you're interested in serving your community, find a way to make somebody's life better, make a neighbor's life more hopeful, and you'll be making a great contribution to our Nation. So Dana, thanks for coming. Appreciate the example you've set. Keep doing what you're doing.

This economy of ours is strengthening, and that's positive. See, we want people working here in America. We not only want people working in America, we want people

who are working to be comfortable that their job is going to be here tomorrow.

I'm an optimistic fellow about our economy because I've seen what we've been through. And I want to remind you right quick what this country has been through and the challenges this economy had faced over the last 3 years. First, we went through a recession. That means we were going backwards. We weren't growing. That means there was a lot of uncertainty for planners and small-business people. That meant people were losing their jobs.

And we started to come out of that recession, and the enemy hit us on September the 11th, 2001. And the attack hurt us. The attack hurt our economy. The attack also changed our psychology in a way. See, we used to think oceans could protect us from harm, but we learned a tough lesson that day, which means whoever has the honor of holding the Oval Office must take every threat seriously, must deal with threats before they become imminent, must be firm with our resolve to keep America secure, must never relent to the enemies that would harm us because of what we love. And we began to recover from the attacks on September the 11th because we're a strong people, we're resilient, because there's an ownership society, a culture of ownership in America.

And then we had to deal with another problem here in America, and that is, we had some of our fellow citizens forgot what it meant to be a responsible citizen. Corporate CEOs didn't tell the truth to their shareholders and their employees. And that began to affect the psychology of the country. People think—people who invest began to say, "Well, I'm not so sure I believe these numbers," people who work beginning to wonder whether or not in big corporate America, that what they're being told is right. But we acted. We passed tough new laws. You're beginning to see the consequences of people making irresponsible decisions. They need to pay a price for their irresponsibility, and they will, in order to set a clear example. In America, we're not going to tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of our country.

And then I made a tough decision to deal with Mr. Saddam Hussein. I saw—[*applause*]—I just want to, right quick, remind you that I looked at the intelligence and saw a threat. The Congress looked at the same intelligence, and they saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at that intelligence, and it saw a threat.

I took my message to the United Nations. I said, "This is a world problem. Let's deal with it. You've given him resolution after resolution after resolution to disarm for a reason, because you saw a threat." And after September the 11th, it was time to disarm him so the threat wouldn't materialize. He said, "Forget it." He chose defiance. Then I had a choice: Do I trust the word of a madman, or do I make the decision to defend America? I'll defend America every time.

Laura reminded me one time about, on the TV screens, you started to see the banner "March to War" in the summer of 2002. That's not very conducive for investing capital. If you're an employer, if you're a small-business owner and all of a sudden you're thinking about marching to war, it doesn't inspire a lot of confidence in the economy. We overcame that. Now we're marching to peace, by the way. The world is more peaceful.

But we've overcome all that. And the economy is getting stronger. Inflation is low. Interest rates are low. Manufacturing is up. Homeownership is strong. The entrepreneurial spirit in America is alive and well, and one of the reasons why I think we're doing so good here in America is because of the tax relief we passed. It's because people have more money in their pockets.

See, if you're interested in somebody finding work, you've got to put forth policies that encourage economic expansion, progrowth policies, progrowth in the private

sector, not policies that grow the Federal Government but policies that grow the small-business sector of our economy. Most new jobs in America are created by small businesses.

And so the plans that Chairman Thomas and I worked on all had in mind helping our individuals as well as helping small-business owners. See, we cut the taxes on everybody. We said, "If you're going to have tax relief, everybody who pays taxes ought to get relief." We're not going to have people in Washington say, "Okay, you get tax relief, and you don't." We had tax relief that was fair because everybody got it. And what's interesting about the tax relief, not only did it help families—and we're about to hear from some families who it helped—but it really helped small businesses. See, most small businesses are either sole proprietorships or Subchapter S corporations, which means they pay tax at the individual income-tax level. And so when you cut taxes on the individuals, in many cases you're cutting taxes on the small businesses as well. And we want our small businesses to be strong. We want them to have more money to invest. We want them to have more money to expand. And the tax relief we passed is working because it invigorated the small-business sector of America.

A couple other things I want to tell you, and then we're going to hear from others. I'm not filibustering. [*Laughter*] It's a long Washington word, isn't it? [*Laughter*] We did some other positive things.

If you're raising a family in America, it's hard to do, and so we increased the child credit to $1,000 per child. We doubled the child credit to help families.

We reduced the marriage penalty. It seems like to me you want the Tax Code to encourage marriage and not penalize it.

We reduced taxes on capital gains and dividends. That's important for savers, particularly important for our seniors, many of whom rely upon income from their investment portfolio.

We put the death tax on its way to extinction. Listen, the death tax is bad. It's bad for small businesses. It's bad for farmers. It is bad for ranchers. It makes no sense to tax a family's assets twice, once while you're making money and the next time after you die.

So we've overcome a lot, and the policy we've passed is good policy. There's more to do. I want to share some thoughts with you right quick about what we need to do to make sure people can find a job or are comfortable about the job they have. We need an energy policy in America. We need to make sure our electricity systems are modern, and we need to become less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

We need to make sure we don't become isolated from the world. We don't need economic isolation. We need to have trade policy that treats America fairly. People can sell their products here. We want to be able to sell our products there. If you're good at something, you want to open up markets. Listen, we're really good at growing things. We want to sell our food overseas; we want to sell our beef overseas. We want to have a trade policy that is fair. We must fight off economic isolationism for the sake of American consumers, American entrepreneurs, and American workers.

We need less regulation. These small-business owners will tell you, many times they fill out too much paperwork. They ought to be focused on helping people find work instead of spending hours on paperwork that probably is never read.

We need tort reform in America. We need to make sure that—frivolous lawsuits make it hard for people to hire; they just do.

Health care costs are rising. We need to do something about health care costs. We need what we call associated health care plans that allow small businesses to pool risk so their employees get reasonably priced health care. We need to expand health savings accounts, which is a fantastic

opportunity, by the way, for small-business owners and employees to be able to have health care at affordable price—health insurance at affordable prices.

We need national medical liability reform. Frivolous lawsuits drive up the cost of health care. The Congress passed a good bill. It is stuck in the Senate. The most powerful lobby in Washington, DC, in some estimates, are the trial lawyers. We need to make sure that doctors don't get run out of business and health care costs don't get run up because of these frivolous and junk lawsuits. Congress has got to pass medical liability reform.

And finally, we need to make sure the tax cuts are permanent. See, the tax cuts are set to expire. That's what a lot of people don't understand. This is an important part of the dialog in Washington, DC, now, is how to make sure the economy continues to grow. These job creators need certainty in the Tax Code. You can't have taxes go down one year and up the next. They need certainty when it comes to planning. They need to be able to have certainty when it comes to their investment deductibility. That's what they need.

And yet aspects of the Tax Code are set to expire. Interesting enough, in the year '05, the child credit is going to go back down unless Congress acts. That means a tax increase on these hard-working people. If Congress doesn't step up and act, the child credit is going to go down, which means these good folks are going to pay greater taxes next year. The marriage penalty relief, it goes up, which means if you're married, you're going to pay higher taxes in '05. The expansion of the 10-percent bracket no longer will exist. It's going to be changed, which means people are going to pay higher taxes.

It doesn't make any sense to be paying higher taxes in 2005. This economy is strengthening. It will weaken our economy unless Congress acts. Members of Congress must hear this message loud and clear: We need tax permanency. At the very least, they must make permanent the tax—child credit, the tax relief from the marriage penalty, the tax relief from the expanded 10-percent bracket. For the sake of American families, for the sake of jobs, Congress must not raise the taxes on the hard-working people of America.

And so we're here to talk about the economy. And I'm pretty well talked out—[*laughter*]—much to your pleasure. [*Laughter*] John, why don't you tell us what it's like to run a family-owned business. Obviously, it is capital-intensive. By "capital-intensive," I mean it costs a lot to have one of those pumps there. He has to buy it, and then he goes out and rents it. And so it's a business that—obviously, you've got good, hard-working people you rely upon. But it's a business that requires, you know, some strong asset management. And so, why don't you tell us what it's like to run your own business. Somebody may be out there listening that wants to start their own business. And it's an opportunity for people to learn the great joy and the frustrations and the responsibility of being an entrepreneur here in America.

John W. Lake. Well, I'll give it a shot.

The President. I'm not worried about you. [*Laughter*]

[*At this point, Mr. Lake, president, Rain for Rent, made brief remarks.*]

The President. How much are you going to spend next year, do you think?

Mr. Lake. About $30 million buying capital assets for rent.

The President. Yes. See, when he says he's going to spend $30 million, that means somebody or a group of people are going to go out there and manufacture $30 million worth of products, which means somebody is going to find work. See, if we increase demand through tax policy—in other words, demand means I want an additional good or a service. In this case, he's saying he wants $30 million worth of goods. The way our economy works is that in response to that demand, somebody is going to

produce something. And when they produce it, it means somebody is going to work.

So when you hear about economic policy and you hear about investment and you hear people say investment equals jobs, think about John. John is buying $30 million worth of equipment, which means somebody in Ardmore and Wichita Falls, Texas, is more likely to have a job. And that's how this economy works.

And I appreciate that very much, you explaining that. Let me ask you something, are you going to hire anybody this year? [*Laughter*]

Mr. Lake. Yes, sir. Right now we're looking for 46 more people. And actually, we've grown 24 percent since 9/11.

The President. Well, that's fantastic. That's great.

[*Mr. Lake made further remarks.*]

The President. Let me tell you something about what we need to do to make sure people are employable, is to get people educated in the first place, make sure the Bakersfield school systems teach people how to read and write and add and subtract, make sure there is job training for the jobs which actually exist. We've got some really good people who want to work; they just need the skills. That's why the community college system here in California, all around the country, is an important part of job training, so that you can match desire to work with the skills necessary to work.

And so John is looking for 34. There's a lot of Johns around this country who are looking for workers. See, 34 workers here, 50 there, 2 or 3 here, and this job base is beginning to expand. The economy is strengthening because of the decisionmaking that is taking place. Part of those decisions that he made was the result of tax policy. He's what you call a Subchapter S corporation. When we cut the taxes on individuals, it helps this. You heard him say he didn't have dividends for a while. You know what he's doing? He's putting the money back in the company for the sake of the workers.

That's one of the wonderful things about the entrepreneurial spirit here in America. These owners understand that they've got to have good workers and take care of their workers. And I suspect working here for this great company is a pleasure.

All right. You did a good job. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Lake. Thank you, sir.

The President. Les, tell us about yourself. Victory Circle company.

[*Les DenHerder, president, Victory Circle, Inc., made brief remarks.*]

The President. You are a Subchapter S corporation.

Mr. DenHerder. Yes, we're a Subchapter S.

The President. Okay, if I can just remind everybody, that means he pays taxes at the individual income-tax rate at the corporate level. In other words—I shouldn't say "the corporate level." The taxes paid at the corporate level flow through to the individual income tax—to the individual, so therefore individual income taxes affect his small business, a better way to put it.

Mr. DenHerder. Absolutely. And not only that, with capital investment, we're able to make use of some of the tax credits there. This year we're planning on spending probably around $50,000 for additional equipment, and that will probably save us, like, 7,000 because of the tax laws.

The President. Yes. See, the new tax laws said if he invests, he saves $7,000. So it encourages people to invest. What are you going to buy? Do you know yet?

Mr. DenHerder. Some more welders and pipe-bending equipment.

The President. Yes, so somebody has got to make it. That's how the economy works. He makes a decision. It affects a lot of people, the decision you make. So when you hear "tax relief," I hope people connect tax relief with decisionmaking and decisionmaking to jobs. That's what we're talking

about. That's why the tax relief was important for job creation.

Okay, I'm going to be looking for your product the next time I start a NASCAR race. [*Laughter*]

Mr. DenHerder. That's good.

The President. It was unbelievable. Thanks for coming. How many—any chances of hiring anybody this year?

Mr. DenHerder. We're probably going to hire two to three people this year.

The President. That's good, see. And you've got how many now?

Mr. DenHerder. We've got 14 now.

The President. There are a lot of companies, a lot in America, with 20 or fewer employees. And when he says he's going to hire two more, that's really good news. A lot of people are feeling confident and optimistic about our future, so they can say, "I'm going to hire two more." They can sit here and tell the President in front of all the cameras, "I'm going to hire two more people." [*Laughter*] That's confidence.

All right, Chris, tell us your business.

[*Chris DiSalvo, president, GMC Roofing and Building Paper Products, Inc., made brief remarks, mentioning his wife, Wilma, and concluding as follows.*]

Mr. DiSalvo. So in February——

The President. I got a good wife too. [*Laughter*]

[*Mr. DiSalvo made further remarks, mentioning his operations manager, Leo Martin, and concluding as follows.*]

Mr. DiSalvo. He's watching the plant.

The President. He's working. [*Laughter*]

Mr. DiSalvo. Exactly.

The President. Leo is doing the right thing.

[*Mr. DiSalvo made further remarks.*]

The President. How did the tax relief help you?

[*Mr. DiSalvo made further remarks.*]

The President. Isn't it a fabulous story? Forty-nine, were you?

Mr. DiSalvo. Yes, sir.

The President. Forty-nine, yes, really young-sounding. [*Laughter*] He starts his own business. He has a desire to own something. The job of Government is to create an environment that encourages and enhances the entrepreneurial spirit. The job of Government is not to create jobs but to create an environment in which people feel comfortable about taking risk to realize their dreams.

I love the stories about your granddad working his way through the Depression and feeling confident enough to start this business and that you and your dad have had the great privilege of growing it and modernizing it and diversifying it to meet the new challenges of our economy.

I love the idea of a guy buying his company and turning it into something. And I love the idea of somebody saying, "I want to own my own company. I want to start it." It's such an important part of our American story. And I intend to keep the entrepreneurial spirit as strong as possible because I understand that when the small-business sector of our economy is vibrant and confident and optimistic, people are more likely to find a job. Now—good job, guys, really good job.

Okay, Ismael Diaz is with us. He is a manager. Ismael, tell us about yourself.

Ismael Diaz. Well, I'm—technically, I just work in the engineering department. [*Laughter*] I'll let my boss know I got a promotion.

The President. Well, I just made you a manager. Yes. Congratulations, you got a promotion. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Lake. Congratulations, Ismael. [*Laughter*]

The President. Yes.

[*Mr. Diaz, engineer/project manager, Rain for Rent, made brief remarks.*]

The President. How many of your—how many in your family had ever been to college prior to you?

Mr. Diaz. None.

The President. Yes.

Mr. Diaz. So we're the first generation to go.

[*Mr. Diaz made further remarks, concluding as follows.*]

Mr. Diaz. I never particularly paid attention to taxes until I had kids, was married, had a mortgage payment.

The President. 'Til you started to pay some.

Mr. Diaz. Exactly. [*Laughter*]

[*Mr. Diaz made further remarks, concluding as follows.*]

Mr. Diaz. I have a 3-year-old and a 1-year-old with my wife, America, who is out in the audience. And—she's out there.

The President. Can you imagine if my name were America? [*Laughter*]

Mr. Diaz. It makes for some interesting conversation.

The President. That's right, yes.

Mr. Diaz. It's an icebreaker.

The President. It is. [*Laughter*]

[*Mr. Diaz made further remarks, concluding as follows.*]

Mr. Diaz. When you go in one year paying a thousand bucks to the next year getting a $3,000 refund, that's a pretty quick flip-flop from one year to the next.

The President. Yes.

Mr. Diaz. And what it allowed us to do was have my wife start working full-time. She's a schoolteacher, and I understand you're fond of schoolteachers.

The President. Thank you. Appreciate you doing that.

[*Mr. Diaz made further remarks, concluding as follows.*]

Mr. Diaz. And we'd take the refund money, invest it in college funds for our two little kids.

The President. Fantastic.

Mr. Diaz. If we have any more, we'll do the same for them.

The President. That's good.

Mr. Diaz. It's up to her. [*Laughter*]

The President. I don't think we want to go there, Ismael. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Diaz. So I know it's—if taxes do go up, we'll feel that impact immediately.

The President. Yes. Listen, here's—what he's saying is—and it's a fundamental argument about taxes—obviously, we got to meet priorities. We got a war to win. We got things to do in Washington. But I always felt that with the economy slowing down, we want the Ismaels of the world to have more money to make their life easier, to increase demand. And I would argue with people that this good man can spend his money far more wisely than the Federal Government can spend his money.

He said he had $3,150 in tax savings. That's a lot of money for a young family. That's a lot of security. Notice what he said, he said, "We're beginning to set money aside for our kids." I oftentimes say it's important for us to have a culture of personal responsibility, and it starts with moms and dads loving their children with all their heart and all their soul. And that's what Ismael has signaled to us.

If Congress doesn't act, his taxes go up by $2,000. It's a $2,000 tax increase. Congress must listen to the voices of people like Ismael. Two thousand less dollars in his pocket is going to make a difference to his family. So when you hear, "Oh, I don't want to make the tax cuts permanent," you translate to that, "We're to raise Ismael's taxes." That's what they're saying.

Now, we got with us as well Theresa—oh, let me say something about Ismael's dad. Where is his dad? Is he here? There he is. Thanks for coming, sir. He came here and worked hard, and he stood in line and became a citizen. And that's what needs to happen with immigration policy. Look, we need to—we don't need blanket amnesty here in America. What we need

is, we need to help people find work in a legal way.

Your dad did it the legal way. He came and worked because he wanted to be a good dad, and he earned a living. And he stood in line in a legal way and then became a citizen of this country. I put forth a plan—we were talking to these employers; they don't know whether they're hiring somebody here who's legally or not. We need a temporary-worker plan. That is not an amnesty plan; it's a worker plan to make sure the employers here in America are able to find the laborers that other Americans won't do, in a legal way. We need to make sure we treat people humanely in this country. And I want to thank you for the example. Think about that, how American is that: The guy works all his life so his son can go to college.

Theresa is with us. Theresa Avila is the sales representative.

Theresa Avila. Yes.

The President. Is that an accurate assessment?

Ms. Avila. That's correct, Mr. President.

The President. Would you like to—would you like a promotion? [*Laughter*]

Ms. Avila. Yes, sir, I would.

The President. The tax cuts weren't big enough for all—[*laughter*]. Thank you, Theresa. Please.

[*Ms. Avila, sales representative, Rain for Rent, made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

Ms. Avila. My daughter Amanda, she's 16. She goes to Liberty High School.

The President. Does she have her driver's license?

Ms. Avila. Almost. She's begging for it.

The President. Yes. [*Laughter*] I've been through that before. [*Laughter*]

Ms. Avila. And my daughter Alexandra, who is 9, she's a fourth grader. She's over there. She's in——

The President. I see her. Hi, Alexandra.

Ms. Avila. ——elementary.

The President. She's a beautiful girl.

Ms. Avila. Thank you.

The President. She has a great smile.

Ms. Avila. Thank you.

[*Ms. Avila made further remarks, concluding as follows.*]

Ms. Avila. And I hope that with your help and your continued support, that we will be a successful family, a successful American family.

The President. Yes, well, you are successful already. And I can tell that, listening to you.

Ms. Avila. Thank you.

The President. You're really successful, successful because you love your kids more than anything else, successful because you—you set education as priority for your family. This good family saved about $3,400 because of the tax relief. If Congress doesn't go up—act, their taxes are going up by $3,100, see?

What's happening, by the way, is that people all of a sudden are going to be thrust into the alternative minimum tax bracket. Those are long words, but just trust me, it means you got a tax increase coming unless Congress acts. They need to make the child credit permanent. They need to make the marriage penalty relief permanent. They need to make sure the 10-percent bracket stays permanent. And they need to deal with the alternative minimum tax so these good, hard-working people don't pay more taxes in the year 2005.

Is there anything else you want to say? Okay, well, listen, thank you all for coming. I hope this has been helpful in understanding how the economy works, how people make decisions, how families make decisions.

You just heard Theresa say they helped—they did some work on their home. Well, somebody had to come and do it. When she took the tax relief, she had to go get somebody to come and do it. And the person who came to do it had to buy more supplies in order to make sure

the house got fixed. That's how the economy works. There's a lot of decisionmaking that goes on. It's the millions of decisions by consumers and producers to meet the demand of those consumers that really makes a marketplace economy function. And Government can have a good role in encouraging the vitality of economy. And that's what the tax relief plan did. And that's why we've got to make sure that the benefits of tax relief don't go away. That's why we got to make sure that we're not raising the taxes on the people of this country.

I'm optimistic about America because I understand the character of our people. We're people who work hard, dream big dreams, people who are responsible for the decisions we make, people who love our families. It's a fabulous country. We've overcome a lot, and the reason we have is because of the character of the American people.

It's my honor to be here in the great city of Bakersfield, California. Thank you all for coming. May God bless you all. May God continue to bless our country.

Good job, John.

Mr. Lake. Thank you.

The President. Good job.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:40 a.m. at Rain for Rent. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Harvey L. Hall of Bakersfield, CA; Roy Ashburn, California State senator; Bill Maze, California State assemblyman; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Remarks at a Bush-Cheney Luncheon in Santa Clara, California
March 4, 2004

Thanks a lot. Thanks for coming. Thanks for the warm welcome. It is great to be back. I appreciate it. Thanks. Be seated, please. Thanks for the warm welcome. It is great to be back in Santa Clara. Such a beautiful part of our country, isn't it? It's a wonderful day.

I have had a great trip here to California. I was in Los Angeles yesterday and Bakersfield this morning. I don't know if you know that, but in 1949 we called that home. I was quick to remind the people in Bakersfield I'd called it home. [*Laughter*]

Had a chance to spend some quality time with your Governor yesterday. I know you were a little disappointed, like I was, that "Terminator 3" didn't win any Oscars. [*Laughter*] But Arnold has had a pretty good year. By electing Governor Schwarzenegger, the voters of California have shown that no party can take California for granted.

The Vice President and I are going to be spending some quality time here this coming year. With your continued help, California is going to be an important part of a nationwide victory in November 2004. Speaking about the Vice President, I made a really good pick when I asked Dick Cheney to serve by my side. He is a fabulous Vice President for our country. Mother may have a second opinion. [*Laughter*]

I'm sorry Laura is not with me. She is in Texas. She was visiting her mother in Midland, Texas, where both of us were raised. She's on her way to Crawford. After I give this speech, I'm on my way to Crawford. She sends her best greetings to our friends here in the Bay Area. I tell you, Laura is a great First Lady. I'm a fortunate man that she is—agreed to marry me, and I love her dearly.

I want to thank Brad for his friendship and leadership here in the State of California, and my friend Gerry Parsky, who

is the State campaign chairman. I too want to thank Katie Boyd and Gregory Slayton for their hard work, and thank my friend Mercer Reynolds from Cincinnati, Ohio, who is the national finance chairman of Bush-Cheney '04—good people working hard to make sure that we're well-funded. And we will be.

I appreciate Bill Jones, the next United States Senator from the State of California, with us today. The next United States Senator from the State of South Dakota is with us today, Congressman John Thune. Thank you for coming, John.

I want to thank all the grassroots activists who are here, the people who are going to make the phone calls and put up the signs and turn out the vote. I want to thank you in advance for what you're going to do. It's important.

Last Tuesday night I placed a call to Senator Kerry. I told him I was looking forward to a spirited campaign, and I congratulated him on his victory. It's going to be an interesting debate on the issues. My opponent has spent two decades in Washington, and he's built up quite a record. In fact, Senator Kerry has been in Washington long enough to take both sides on just about every issue. [*Laughter*]

Voters have a clear choice between keeping the tax relief that is moving this economy forward or putting the burden of higher taxes back on the American people. They have a clear choice between an America that leads the world with strength and confidence or an America that is uncertain in the face of danger.

I look forward to setting these alternatives squarely before the American people. I look forward to this campaign. We have a great record. We've achieved a lot during the last 3 years. And most important, we have a positive vision for the years ahead, a positive vision for winning the war against terror and extending peace and freedom throughout the world, a positive vision for creating jobs and promoting opportunity and compassion here at home. I will leave no doubt where I stand. We look forward to winning on the 2d of November.

The last 3 years have brought serious challenges, and we have given serious answers. We came to office with the stock market in decline and an economy headed into recession, delivered historic tax relief, and now our economy is the fastest growing of any major industrialized nation.

We had to confront corporate crimes that cost people their jobs and their savings, so we passed strong corporate reforms and made it abundantly clear that we will not tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America.

We saw war and grief arrive on a quiet September morning, so we pursued the terrorist enemy across the world, captured or killed many of the key leaders of the Al Qaida network. And the rest of them will learn there is no cave or hole deep enough to hide from American justice.

We confronted the dangers of state-sponsored terror and the spread of weapons of mass destruction, so we ended two of the most violent and dangerous regimes on Earth. We freed over 50 million people. And once again, America is proud to lead the armies of liberation.

When Dick Cheney and I came to Washington, we found a military that was underfunded and underappreciated, so we gave our military the resources and respect they deserve. And today, no one can question the skill and the strength and the spirit of the United States military.

We came to office, and people in Washington were used to gridlock, and old problems were used to score points. Old problems were politicized and debated and then just passed on from year to year. But we came for a purpose. We came to get some things done for the people. We passed major reforms to raise the standards in public schools. We passed reforms for Medicare to give prescription drugs and choices to senior citizens. We chose to lead,

and we produced results for the American people.

It is the President's job to confront problems, not to pass them on to future Presidents and future generations. A President needs to step up and make the hard decisions and keep his commitments, and that is how I will continue to lead our country.

Great events will turn on this election. The man who sits in the Oval Office will set the course of the war on terror and the direction of our economy. The security and prosperity of America are at stake. My opponent has not offered much in the way of strategies to win the war or policies to expand our economy. So far all we hear from that side is a lot of old bitterness and partisan anger. Anger is not an agenda for the future of America. We're taking on the big issues with optimism and resolve and determination. I stand ready to lead this Nation for 4 more years.

The big issue for every family in America is the Federal tax burden. With the largest tax relief since Ronald Reagan was President, we have left more money in the hands that earned it. By spending and investing and helping to create new jobs, the American people have used their money far better than the Government would have.

Because we acted, our economy is growing stronger. The economy grew in the second half of 2003 at one of the fastest rates in nearly 20 years. Productivity is high. Business investment is rising. Interest rates and inflation are low. Homeownership is at the highest rate ever. Manufacturing is increasing. We've added 366,000 new jobs over the past 5 months. The tax relief we passed is working.

My opponent has plans for those tax cuts. He wants to take them away. He would use that money to expand the Federal Government. I have a better idea: To keep this economy growing and to create jobs, the tax cuts must be permanent.

We must do more to keep the economy growing. We need to maintain fiscal discipline in our Nation's Capital. We need to protect businessowners and employees from frivolous lawsuits and needless regulation. We need to control the health—the cost of health care by passing medical liability reform at the national level. We need to open up markets for California's entrepreneurs and farmers and ranchers and manufacturers. We need to pass sound energy legislation to modernize the electricity system and to make America less dependent on foreign sources of energy. My opponent has talked about job creation, but he's against every one of these job-creating measures. Empty talk about jobs and economic isolationism won't get anyone hired.

This economy of ours is going through a time of change and challenge. We're helping people to gain the skills and the security to make a good living and to look forward to a good retirement. All skills start with education. I worked with Congress to pass a really good piece of legislation, the No Child Left Behind Act. This good law is challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations. In return for increased Federal dollars, particularly for Title I students, we demanded that every public school in America show us whether or not each child is learning to read and write and add and subtract. We have done so because we refuse to accept mediocrity. We expect the best so that not one single child is left behind in America.

We're doing more. We have plans to help high school students who fall behind in reading and math. We've got a sound strategy to help our community colleges to train workers for the industries that are creating the new jobs for our economy. Education is the gateway to a hopeful future; this administration understands the gate must be open to all Americans.

We're also working to promote an ownership society in America in which more people own their own homes and build their own savings. We want more people owning their own small businesses. We want people

to own and manage their own health care plans. We want younger workers to own and manage their own retirement under Social Security. When people have solid assets, this administration understands they gain independence and security and dignity. I believe in private property so much, I want everybody to have some.

On issue after issue, the American people have a clear choice. My opponent is against personal retirement accounts, against putting patients in charge of Medicare, and against tax relief. He seems to be against every idea that gives Americans more authority and more choices and more control over their own lives. The same old Washington mindset: They'll give the orders, and you'll pay the bills. I've got news for the Washington crowd. America has gone beyond that way of thinking, and we're not going back. The policy that this administration is promoting trusts the people of America, to trust the people to make the best decisions with their own money, to trust the people to manage their own health care and their own retirement and their own lives.

Our future also depends on America's leadership in this world. The momentum of freedom in our time is strong, but we still face serious challenges. Al Qaida is wounded but not broken. Terrorists are testing our will in Afghanistan and Iraq. Regimes in North Korea and Iran are challenging the peace. If America shows weakness and uncertainty in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. That is not going to happen on my watch.

This Nation is strong and confident in the cause of freedom. No friend or enemy today doubts the word of America. America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Afghanistan. The Taliban chose defiance. The Taliban are no longer in power. America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Iraq. The dictator chose defiance. Now the dictator sits in a prison cell.

September the 11th, 2001, taught a lesson I have not forgotten. America must confront threats before they fully materialize. In Iraq, my administration looked at the intelligence information, and we saw a threat. The Congress looked at the intelligence information, and they saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence information, and it saw a threat. The previous administration and Congress looked at the intelligence and made regime change in Iraq the policy of our country. In 2002, the U.N. Security Council yet again demanded a full accounting of Saddam Hussein's weapons programs. As he had for over a decade, Saddam Hussein refused to comply. So I had a choice to make, either to take the word of a madman or take action to defend America. Faced with that choice, I will defend our country every time.

My opponent admits that Saddam Hussein was a threat. He just didn't support my decision to remove Saddam from power. Perhaps he was hoping Saddam would lose the next Iraqi election. [*Laughter*] We showed the dictator and a watching world that America means what it says.

Because our coalition acted, Saddam's torture chambers are closed. Because we acted, Iraq's weapons programs are ended forever. Because we acted, nations like Libya have gotten the message and renounced their own weapons programs. Because we acted, an example of democracy is rising at the very heart of the Middle East. Because we acted, the world is more free, and America is more secure.

We still face thugs and terrorists in Iraq who would rather go on killing the innocent than accept the advance of liberty. They know that a free Iraq will be a major defeat in the cause of terror. This collection of killers is trying to shake our will. They don't understand America. America will never be intimidated by thugs or assassins.

We're aggressively striking the terrorists in Iraq, defeating them there so we won't have to face them in our own country.

We're calling on other nations to help Iraq to build a free society, which will make the whole world more peaceful and secure. We're standing with the Iraqi people as they assume more of their own defense and move toward self-government. These aren't easy tasks, but they're essential tasks. We'll finish what we have begun. We will win this essential victory in the war on terror.

On national security, Americans have the clearest possible choice. My opponent says he approves of bold action in the world, but only if other countries don't object. I'm all for united action, and so are the 34 coalition partners we have in Iraq right now. Yet America must never outsource America's national security decisions to leaders of other countries.

Some are skeptical that the war on terror is really a war at all. Here's what my opponent said. He said the war on terror is far less of a military operation and far more of an intelligence-gathering, law enforcement operation. I disagree. Our Nation followed this approach after the World Trade Center was bombed in 1993. The matter was handled in the courts and thought by some to be settled. But the terrorists were still training in Afghanistan. They were still plotting in other nations. They were drawing up more ambitious plans. After the chaos and carnage of September the 11th, it's not enough to serve our enemies with legal papers. With those attacks, the terrorists and their supporters declared war on the United States of America, and war is what they got.

At bases across our country and the world, I have had the privilege, the high privilege of meeting with the men and women of our military who are defending our country and sacrificing for our security. I've seen their great decency and unselfish courage. I can assure you, ladies and gentlemen, the cause of freedom is in good hands.

The Nation is prosperous and strong. Yet we need to remember that our greatest strength is in the hearts and souls of our citizens. We're strong because of the values we try to live by, courage, compassion, reverence, and integrity. We're strong because of the institutions that help give us direction and purpose, families and schools and religious congregations.

These values and institutions are fundamental to our lives, and they deserve the respect of our Government. We stand for the fair treatment of faith-based groups so they can receive Federal support for their works of compassion and healing. We will not stand for Government discrimination against people of faith.

We stand for welfare reforms that require work and strengthen marriage, which have helped millions of Americans find independence and dignity. We will not stand for any attempt to weaken those reforms and to send people back into lives of dependence. We stand for a culture of life in which every person counts and every person matters. We will not stand for the treatment of any life as a commodity to be experimented upon or exploited or cloned. We stand for the confirmation of judges who strictly and faithfully interpret the law. We will not stand for judges who undermine democracy by legislating from the bench or try to remake the culture of America by court order.

We stand for a culture of responsibility in America. We're changing the culture of this country from one that has said, "If it feels good, do it," and, "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each of us understands we're responsible for the decisions we make in life. If you're fortunate enough to be a mother or father, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart. If you're worried about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you're responsible for doing something about it. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you have the responsibility to tell the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And in the responsibility society, each of us is

responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourself.

For all Americans, these years in our history will always stand apart. There are quiet times in the life of a nation, when little is expected of the leaders. This is not one of those times. You and I are living in a period when the stakes are high, the challenge is difficult, and resolve is needed. None of us will ever forget that week when one era ended and another began.

On September the 14th, 2001, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers. I'll never forget that day. I remember the workers and the hardhats who were shouting, "Whatever it takes." I remember the guy who pointed his finger at me and said, "Don't let me down." As we all did that day, these men and women searching through the rubble took it personally. I took it personally. I have a responsibility that goes on. I will never relent in bringing justice to our enemies. I will defend our country, whatever it takes.

In these times, I've also been a witness to the character of this Nation. Not so long ago, some had their doubts about the American character, about our capacity to meet serious challenges or to serve a cause greater than self-interest. But Americans have given their answer. I've seen the unselfish courage of our troops. I've seen the heroism of Americans in the face of danger. I've seen the spirit of service and compassion renewed in our country. We've all seen our Nation unite in common purpose when it mattered most.

We'll need all these qualities for the work ahead. We have a war to win, and the world is counting on us to lead the cause of freedom and peace. We have a duty to spread opportunity and hope to every part of America. This is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it. And we know that for our country, the best days lie ahead.

May God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1 p.m. at the Santa Clara Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger of California; Brad Freeman, California State finance chairman, Gerald L. Parsky, California State chairman, and Mercer Reynolds, national finance chairman, Bush-Cheney '04, Inc.; Bill Jones, senatorial candidate in California; and former Representative John R. Thune, senatorial candidate in South Dakota.

Message to the Congress Transmitting a Protocol to the Indonesia-United States Agreement on the Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy
March 4, 2004

To the Congress of the United States:

I am pleased to transmit to the Congress, consistent with sections 123 b. and 123 d. of the Atomic Energy Act of 1954, as amended (42 U.S.C. 2153(b), (d)) (the "Act"), the text of a proposed Protocol Amending the Agreement for Cooperation Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Republic of Indonesia Concerning Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy, signed at Washington on June 30, 1980. I also transmit my written approval, authorization, and determination concerning the Protocol, and an unclassified Nuclear Proliferation Assessment Statement (NPAS) concerning the Protocol. (Consistent with section 123 of the Act, as amended by title XII of the Foreign Affairs Reform and Restructuring Act of 1998 (Public Law 105–277), a classified Annex to the NPAS, prepared by the Secretary of State in consultation with the

Director of Central Intelligence, summarizing relevant classified information, will be submitted to the Congress separately.) The joint memorandum submitted to me by the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Energy and a letter from the Chairman of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission stating the views of the Commission are also enclosed.

I am advised that the proposed Protocol has been negotiated consistent with the Act and other applicable law and that it meets all statutory requirements. This Protocol will advance the nonproliferation and other foreign policy interests of the United States.

The Protocol amends the Agreement for Cooperation Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Republic of Indonesia Concerning Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy in two respects:

1. It extends the Agreement, which expired by its terms on December 30, 2001, until December 30, 2031, with effect from the former date; and

2. It updates certain provisions of the Agreement relating to the physical protection of nuclear material subject to the Agreement.

As amended by the proposed Protocol, the Agreement will continue to meet all requirements of U.S. law.

Indonesia is a party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and has an agreement with the IAEA for the application of full-scope safeguards to its nuclear program. It was also among the early sponsors of, and is a current party to, the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapons Free Zone. The United States and Indonesia have had a long and positive history of cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, with our earliest agreement for this purpose dating back to 1960.

I have considered the views and recommendations of the interested agencies in reviewing the proposed Protocol and have determined that its performance will promote, and will not constitute an unreasonable risk to, the common defense and security. Accordingly, I have approved the Protocol and authorized its execution and urge that the Congress give it favorable consideration.

This transmission shall constitute a submittal for purposes of both sections 123 b. and 123 d. of the Atomic Energy Act. My Administration is prepared to begin immediately the consultations with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and House International Relations Committee consistent with section 123 b. Upon completion of the 30-day continuous session period provided for in section 123 b., the 60-day continuous session period provided for in section 123 d. shall commence.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
March 4, 2004.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 5. An original was not available for verification of the content of this message.

Letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives Transmitting Fiscal Year 2005 Budget Amendments
March 5, 2004

Dear Mr. Speaker:

I ask the Congress to consider the enclosed FY 2005 budget amendments for the Department of Defense reflecting the Army's recommendation not to proceed further with funding for the Comanche

helicopter program. Overall, the discretionary budget authority proposed in the FY 2005 Budget would not be affected by these amendments.

The details of these proposals are set forth in the enclosed letter from the Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

Sincerely,

GEORGE W. BUSH

The President's Radio Address
March 6, 2004

Good morning. This week terrorists launched a series of attacks in Iraq, targeting religious sites in Baghdad and Karbala during commemorations marking the Shi'a holy day of Ashoura. Laura and I and the American people were filled with grief and anger at these terrible acts of murder, which took the lives of dozens of innocent Iraqis.

Some of these killers behind these attacks are supporters of Saddam's former regime. Others are foreign terrorists. All of them are determined to halt and reverse all progress toward freedom in Iraq. One of the terrorist leaders, a killer named Zarqawi, recently wrote to a senior Al Qaida terrorist of his plan to tear Iraq apart with ethnic violence, to undermine Iraqi security forces, to demoralize our coalition, and to prevent the rise of a sovereign, democratic government. The killer's strategy will fail.

Immediately after the attacks, the world saw members of Iraq's Governing Council and other Iraqis quickly condemn the bombings and voice their determination that their country will be peaceful and free. The Iraqi people refuse to live in fear, and so do the members of our coalition. Fighting alongside the people of Iraq, we will defeat the terrorists who seek to plunge Iraq into chaos and violence, and we will stand with the people of Iraq for as long as necessary to build a stable, peaceful, and successful democracy.

The Iraqi people are making excellent progress. Members of the Governing Council are having a free and open and spirited debate as they complete a new framework for governing their nation. This Transitional Administrative Law will result in protecting the rights of all Iraqis and will move the country toward a democratic future.

A year ago, Iraq's only law was the whim of one brutal man. When the new law takes effect, Iraqis will, for the first time in decades, live under the clear protections of a written bill of rights. Under this law, all Iraqis will be treated equally. No religious or ethnic groups will be favored, and none will suffer discrimination at the hands of the state.

The law will protect the rights of free speech and peaceful assembly, the right to organize political parties, the right to vote in fair elections, and the right to worship according to one's own conscience. The law also will guarantee the right to a speedy, fair, and open trial. No Iraqi will ever again have to fear the midnight knock of the secret police.

The Transitional Administrative Law will establish a clear path for the transition to full Iraqi sovereignty on June 30th of this year. Our coalition of 34 countries and the United Nations will continue to work closely with the Iraqi people as they progress toward this goal. The law calls for the election of a transitional national assembly by January 31, 2005. Later that year, this assembly will draft a new constitution to be

ratified by the Iraqi people. And by the end of next year, the Iraqi people will elect a parliament and establish a Government that is fully representative and truly free.

Difficult work in creating a new Iraqi Government remains. Yet Iraqis are equal to the tasks before them. The Iraqi people have shown the world that they are fully capable of living in freedom.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 3:51 p.m. on March 4 at the Bush Ranch in Crawford, TX, for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on March 6. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 5 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. In his address, the President referred to senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

The President's News Conference With President Vicente Fox of Mexico in Crawford, Texas
March 6, 2004

President Bush. Hola. Que tal? Bienvenidos.

President Fox. Gracias.

President Bush. Mr. President, Laura and I are pleased to welcome you and Marta to Crawford. I was honored as my first trip abroad as President to accept your invitation to your home in San Cristobal. We've met many times since. Today I'm pleased to host you here at our ranch.

Mexico and the United States are more than neighbors. We are partners in building a safer, more democratic, and more prosperous hemisphere. In this age of terror, the security of our borders is more important than ever, and the cooperation between Mexico and American border and law enforcement is stronger than ever.

Through the Border Partnership Agreement, our two nations are improving the infrastructure at ports of entry along our common border. We're using technology to allow law-abiding travelers to cross the border quickly and easily, while officials concentrate on stopping possible threats. Our Mexican and American officials are working together to arrest dangerous criminals, including drug smugglers and those who traffic in human beings. President Fox and I are determined to protect the safety of American people and the Mexican people.

President Fox and I are continuing our efforts to support democracy in the region. I support the President's help in bringing order and stability to Haiti. As our efforts move forward, I welcome Mexico's further support.

Our two nations will continue to cochair the Bolivia Support Group to protect the institutions of democracy in that country. We will work with the Organization of American States to help ensure the integrity of the Presidential recall and referendum process underway in Venezuela.

I am committed to working with President Fox to expand free and fair trade between our nations. We've seen trade lift both our nations and both our economies. Over the past decade, trade between the United States and Mexico has nearly tripled to about $230 billion. Today, Mexico is America's second-largest trading partner, and we are Mexico's largest.

We will continue to work together and with Canada to enhance our common prosperity. Selling American goods and services in foreign markets is vital to the American

economy. Selling our products abroad creates jobs for America. We must reject economic isolationism. There is no future in walling America off from the rest of the world. American workers and families, no less than the people of Mexico and the people of all nations, benefit from free and fair trade.

We will work to ensure a system of safe and orderly migration. Earlier this year, I proposed a temporary-worker program, not an amnesty program, that will offer legal status as temporary workers to undocumented men and women who were employed in the United States when I announced this proposal.

Under this program, America will also welcome workers from foreign countries who have been offered jobs by American employers that no American has filled. I oppose amnesty, placing undocumented workers on the automatic path to citizenship. This program will match willing workers with willing employers without disadvantaging those who have followed the law and waited in line to achieve American citizenship.

This new temporary-worker program will strengthen both the American and Mexican economies. The United States will benefit from the labor of hard-working immigrants. Mexico will benefit as productive citizens are able to return home with money to invest and spend in their Nation's economy.

This system will be more humane to workers, who will be protected by labor laws and able to establish their identities. It will live up to the highest ideals of free nations.

Mr. President, thank you for the excellent dialog we had today. Thank you for the leadership you provide for our neighbor and friend. And thank you for being a friend to Laura and me. *Bienvenidos.*

President Fox. Good morning. I would like to thank the President and his wife, Mrs. Laura Bush, for inviting us here to spend some time with them here at the ranch at Crawford, some time for friendship and some time for hard work.

We have a long tradition of relationships and meetings with Presidents Bush and Fox, starting with the meeting in the ranch at San Cristobal, where we developed a work agenda. We spoke—both Presidents continue to review, looking forward to what lies ahead.

We know the value of the open relationship, commercial relationship, and the impact that it has had on both these nations and the unprecedented levels of prosperity that it brings to our people. It's a two-way street, a two-way commercial street. It's a buying and selling operation.

I would like to point out that Mexico buys from U.S., the United States, in volumes that equal the volumes of Germany, Spain, Italy, and France. All of this creates employment. And that's why we continue to revise the commercial agenda, and we can see that things are going well in this direction.

Immigration is a subject that is of shared responsibility between both our nations. But we have a shared definition about immigration. We have to work together to develop a legal system that is orderly and safe and respects the dignity of those involved. It is clear to us that the people who come to this country make a significant contribution to the American economy. And I underline the fact that I refer to those who are working to contribute to the economy.

And that is why we welcome President Bush's proposal that he made in January. And that is why, in our meetings, we worked to advance this proposal, and that's what we have been doing today. We welcome the news that was confirmed today with regard to visitors to the U.S. from Mexico. We recognize the value to those who come to the United States to work, to study, to contribute. And we appreciate what this will do to the flow of visitors now that they will not have to be photographed or fingerprinted at the frontier for

short visits to the United States. We appreciate what that will do to the flow of people coming to this country.

The other good news this year is the—about the NAFTA visa for professionals, that allows professionals to come and work in either country and contribute to both.

We also appreciate the recent visit of Secretary Ridge, talking about the cooperation in security between our countries. And we understand that this is progressing well and we have a solid and good basis to move forward, always respecting the security issues that are essential to both countries. We have spoken about competition and productivity and jobs. In order to allow the initiative of the United States, together with Canada, this will allow us to protect jobs in the region and, through the North American Initiative, contribute to the economies and to the workforce on both sides of the border.

In the fields of energy and industrial products, food products, sanitation systems, and systems for the protection of food products, the contributing opportunities for businesses, these are all subjects which are moving forward well. And we look forward to agreements with Canada in the near future that will contribute to the North American Initiative, which will benefit the three nations in this region.

Then in the area of the international relations, specifically in the Caribbean, we have been revising our joint efforts in that area. And we will continue to work in the areas of Haiti and Venezuela, Bolivia, and others in the region to promote democracy and human development and sustainable economic systems.

Thank you.

President Bush. How many questions, Scott? Two questions? *Dos preguntas por cado lado.*

Jennifer [Jennifer Loven, Associated Press].

National Economy

Q. Thank you, sir. Senator Kerry has been hitting you pretty hard on job growth. And yesterday's report gave his arguments a little bit more traction. Can you tell the American people why they shouldn't listen to his arguments and vote for you?

President Bush. The economy is getting stronger. We've overcome a lot. We've been through a recession. We've been through an attack. We've been through corporate scandals. We've been through war. And yet our economy is getting stronger. And the question is, who brings forth the best progrowth policies? You've heard us talk about the advantages of trade. This Nation must reject economic isolationism. We need less regulation. We need tort reform. We need to make sure the tax cuts are permanent. Raising taxes will make it harder for people to find work. We've got a pro-growth, pro-entrepreneur, pro-small-business agenda that is making this economy stronger.

Do you want to translate that? Okay. You don't have to. [*Laughter*]

[*At this point, a translation was provided.*]

President Bush. Make sure you tell them: Don't raise taxes. [*Laughter*]

[*A translation was provided.*]

President Bush. Like some others want to do.

[*A translation was provided.*]

President Bush. Okay, thank you. [*Laughter*]

[*President Fox spoke in Spanish, and no translation was provided.*]

President Bush. Blame it on me. [*Laughter*]

Corporate Responsibility

[*A question was asked in Spanish, and no translation was provided.*]

President Bush. Si, si. I understand. *Comprendo.*

First of all, President Fox has made it very clear that democracy and transparency and rule of law are integral values of Mexico. And where there is corruption, there will be law and justice, no matter who is responsible. And that is a commitment of this President, and it's a commitment I share because in our own country we've had corporate scandals. And what's important in both countries is to deal with these issues through rule of law and to hold people to account when they're guilty of betraying the trust.

Who do you want, Scott? Okay, how are you?

Q. Hi.

President Bush. Welcome. *Pelo roja.* [*Laughter*]

September 11

Q. Mr. President, some firefighters and families of the 9/11 victims—of the 9/11 victims want you to pull your campaign ad focusing on the tragedy. Are you prepared to honor their wishes?

President Bush. First of all, I will continue to speak about the effects of 9/11 on our country and my Presidency. I will continue to mourn the loss of life on that day, but I'll never forget the lessons. The terrorists declared war on us on that day, and I will continue to pursue this war. I have an obligation to those who died. I have an obligation to those who were heroic in their attempts to rescue, and I won't forget that obligation.

How this administration handled that day as well as the war on terror is worthy of discussion. And I look forward to discussing that with the American people. And I look forward to the debate about who best to lead this country in the war on terror.

Por fin.

Immigration Policy

[*A question was asked in Spanish.*]

President Bush. Vamos a ver. Vamos a ver. Go ahead, want to translate? To make sure I got all of it.

Interpreter. The question is on the immigration policy. The Government of Mexico wanted to know what the date certain would be for this new program or what proposals you have for temporary immigrants, and how do you believe it will affect the upcoming election process?

President Bush. Well, we just—the President just discussed the border crossing cards, the issue of the border crossing cards, and he discussed the professional visas. And so we're making progress.

I put forth what I think is a very reasonable proposal and a humane proposal, one that is not amnesty but in fact recognizes that there are good, honorable, hard-working people here doing jobs Americans won't do. And I certainly hope the Congress takes this issue up. But there's no telling what's going to happen in an election year, so it's very difficult to give a date. The date that matters to me is the date in which I laid out what I think is a reasonable plan, which was in January.

Mr. President, thank you.

President Fox. Gracias.

President Bush. Thank you all. Enjoy the rest of your day.

Attorney General Ashcroft

Q. Any word on John Ashcroft?

President Bush. I talked to him last night.

Q. How is he?

President Bush. He sounded groggy but optimistic that they'd get the pancreas settled down.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 11 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to White House Press Secretary Scott McClellan. President Fox and some reporters spoke in Spanish, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks at a Bush-Cheney Luncheon in Dallas, Texas
March 8, 2004

Thank you all very much. Thanks for coming. I told Louis I like a short introduction. [*Laughter*] He didn't let me down. I'm glad you all are here. Nothing like spending the weekend in Texas, and there's nothing better than being with a bunch of friends. I'm so pleased that you all came. Thanks for being here. If you can't count on your home State in politics, you're in deep trouble.

Texas is going to be the cornerstone of the victory that Dick Cheney and I are going to achieve in November of 2004. And I appreciate so very much your loyal friendship. It just means a lot to Laura and me. Speaking about Laura, she is in New Orleans. She's eating lunch at Galatoire's, and you're stuck with me. [*Laughter*] But she's doing great. She's a fabulous First Lady.

And Dick Cheney is a great Vice President. I'm proud to have him standing by my side. I oftentimes say Dick Cheney is the country's greatest Vice President ever. Mother says, "Wait a second." [*Laughter*]

I appreciate my friend Louis Beecherl. He's been a longtime friend, and you can count on Louis. And Louis, I want to thank you for being the Dallas regional finance chair.

I'm honored to be on the stage with a man who's doing a fabulous job as the Governor of the great State of Texas, Rick Perry.

Texas is blessed to have two really good, fantastic United States Senators in Kay Bailey Hutchison and John Cornyn. I'm proud to call them friends. Thank you all for coming.

I want to thank Fred Meyer and Jeanne Johnson Phillips and Roger Williams and all the regional chairs and all the people who worked hard to fill up this hall. Thank you for your hard work. I want to thank my friend Mercer Reynolds from Cincinnati, Ohio, who is the national chairman for Bush-Cheney '04. He's doing a really good job.

I want to thank the Members of the United States Congress who are here, starting with Ralph Hall. Ralph, I'm for you in tomorrow's primary. I wish you all the very best. Thank you. Glad you're here.

Chairman Joe Barton is with us. Joe, thanks for coming. I'm proud you're here. Appreciate you coming. Sam Johnson is with us today. Sam, thanks for coming. Good to see Shirley. I appreciate Pete Sessions. I'm glad you're here, Pete. Pete has got a big race. I'm pulling for him. Got to make sure you turn out to vote for this good Congressman.

I appreciate Michael Burgess being here as well. Michael, thank you for coming. Finally, a man who is making a mark as a good freshman Congressman, Jeb Hensarling. I appreciate you coming, Jeb.

I saw my friend Agricultural Commissioner Susan Combs. Thank you for being here. I know Victor Carrillo is with us today, railroad commissioner. Good to see you, Victor. Michael Williams is with us. Mike, good to see you. One time I was Michael's campaign chairman in the Republican primary in Midland County and helped him come in third. [*Laughter*] He got rid of me as his campaign chairman, and now he's doing big things statewide in the State of Texas. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank very much the speaker of the house who is with us today, Tommy Craddick from Midland. Where are you, Tommy? Thanks for coming. You're doing a fine job. All the members of the house and senate who are here, local officials.

But most importantly, I want to thank the grassroots activists. I want to thank you for what you're fixing to do, which is man those phones, put up the signs, and turn out a huge vote. We're counting on you.

Finally, it's good to see my friend Jack Graham, who is with us, the pastor of Prestonwood Baptist Church. I want to thank Jack for delivering the invocation. I want to thank you all for your prayers. It means a lot to Laura and me. It's a fantastic gift to give to anybody in public office, and for that, we're really grateful.

Last Tuesday, I placed a call to Senator Kerry. I congratulated him on his victory, and I told him I was looking forward to a spirited campaign. It's going to be an interesting debate on the issues. My opponent spent two decades in Congress. He spent a long time in Washington, and he's built up quite a record. Senator Kerry has been in Washington so long that he's taken both sides on just about every issue. [*Laughter*] Senator Kerry voted for the PATRIOT Act, for NAFTA, for the No Child Left Behind Act, and for the use of force in Iraq. Now he opposes the PATRIOT Act, NAFTA, the No Child Left Behind Act, and the liberation of Iraq. My opponent clearly has strong beliefs. They just don't last very long. [*Laughter*]

The voters have a very clear choice in this election between keeping the tax relief that is moving this economy forward or putting the burden of higher taxes back on the American people, a clear choice between an America that leads the world with strength and confidence or an America that is uncertain in the face of danger.

I look forward to setting the alternative squarely before the American people. I look forward to this campaign. I look forward to make my case to the great people of this land. We've achieved great things in the past 3 years. Most important, we have a positive vision, an optimistic vision for the years ahead, a positive vision for winning the war against terror and extending peace and freedom throughout our world, a positive vision for creating jobs and promoting opportunity and compassion at home. I will leave no doubt where we stand, and we will win on the 2d of November.

The last 3 years have brought serious challenges, and we've given serious answers. We came to office with a stock market in decline and an economy heading into recession. We delivered historic tax relief, and now our economy is the fastest growing of any major industrialized nation.

We had to confront corporate crimes that cost people their jobs and their savings, so we passed strong corporate reforms and made it clear we will not tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America.

We saw war and grief arrive on a quiet September morning, so we pursue the terrorist enemy across the world. We've captured or killed many key leaders of the Al Qaida network, and the rest of them will learn there is no cave or hole deep enough to hide from American justice.

We confronted the dangers of state-sponsored terror and the spread of weapons of mass destruction, so we ended two of the most violent and dangerous regimes on Earth. We freed over 50 million people. And once again, America is proud to lead the armies of liberation.

When Dick Cheney and I came to Washington, we found a military that was underfunded and underappreciated, so we gave our military the resources and respect they deserve. And today, no one in the world can question the skill and the strength and the spirit of the United States military.

When we came to office, people had gotten used to gridlock, and old problems were used to score points. Old problems were politicized and debated and then just passed on from year to year. We came to Washington to get some things done for the people. We passed major reforms to raise the standards in public schools. We passed reforms in Medicare to get prescription drugs and choices to our seniors. We chose to lead, and we have delivered results for the American people.

It is the President's job to confront problems, not to pass them on to future Presidents and future generations. The President

needs to step up and make the hard decisions and keep his commitments. And that is how I will continue to lead our country.

Great events will turn on this election. The man who sits in the Oval Office will set the course of the war on terror and the direction of our economy. The security and prosperity of America are at stake. My opponent hasn't offered much in the way of strategies to win the war or policies to expand our economy. So far all we hear from that side is a lot of old bitterness and partisan anger. Soon he'll learn anger is not an agenda for America. I will confront the big issues with optimism and resolve and determination, and Dick Cheney and I stand ready to lead this Nation for 4 more years.

A big issue for every family in America is the Federal tax burden. With the largest tax relief since Ronald Reagan was the President, we have left more money in the hands that earned it. By spending and investing and helping to create new jobs, the American people have used their money far better than the Government would have.

Because we acted, our economy is growing stronger. The economy grew in the second half of 2003 at the fastest rate in nearly 20 years. Productivity is high. Business investment is rising. Interest rates and inflation are low. Homeownership is at the highest rate ever. Manufacturing is increasing. We've added more than 350,000 new jobs over the last 6 months. The tax relief we passed is working.

My opponent has plans for those tax cuts. He wants to take them away. He would use that money to expand the size and the reach of the Federal Government. I've got a better idea: To keep the economy growing and to create jobs, the tax cuts must be permanent.

We must do more to keep this economy growing so people can find work. We need to maintain fiscal discipline in Washington, DC. We need to protect small-business owners and employees from the frivolous and junk lawsuits that make it expensive to do business. We need to help control the cost of health care by association health care plans, health savings accounts. And this Congress must pass national medical liability reform. We need to open up markets for Texas farmers and ranchers and entrepreneurs and manufacturers. We need to pass sound energy legislation to modernize our electricity system and to make this country less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

My opponent talks about job creation, but he is against every one of these job-creating measures. Empty talk about jobs and economic isolationism won't get anyone hired. The way to create jobs is our pro-growth, pro-entrepreneur economic agenda.

This economy of ours is going through a time of challenge and change. We're helping people to gain the skills and security to make a good living, to look forward to a good retirement. All skills start with education. That's why I worked so hard with Congress to pass the No Child Left Behind Act. This good law is challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations. We've raised the standards. We're demanding accountability in every public school in America. We expect every child in this country to learn to read and write and add and subtract so not one single child gets left behind.

There's more to do. I look forward to working with Congress. We must help high school students who fall behind in reading and math. We've got plans to help our community colleges train workers for the industries that are creating most new jobs. Education is the gateway to a hopeful future, and this administration clearly understands that gate must be open to all Americans.

We're working toward an ownership society in this administration in which more people own their own homes and build their own savings. That's what we want. We want more people owning their own small businesses. We want people to own

and manage their health care plans. We want younger workers to own and manage their retirement under Social Security. When people have solid assets, they gain independence and security and more control over their future. I believe in private property so much, I want everyone in America to have some.

On issue after issue, there is a clear choice. My opponent is against personal retirement accounts, against putting patients in charge of Medicare, against tax relief. He seems to be against every idea that gives Americans more authority, more choices, and more control over our own lives. It's the same old Washington mindset: They'll give you the orders, and you will pay the bills. I've got news for the Washington crowd. America has gone beyond that way of thinking, and we're not going back.

Our future also depends on America's leadership in the world. The momentum of freedom in our time is strong, but we still face serious challenges. Al Qaida is wounded but not broken. Terrorists are testing our will in Afghanistan and Iraq. Regimes in North Korea and Iran are challenging the peace. If America shows weakness and uncertainty in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This will not happen on my watch.

This Nation is strong and confident in the cause of freedom. And today, no friend or enemy doubts the word of the United States. America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Afghanistan. The Taliban chose defiance, and the Taliban are no longer in power. America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Iraq. The dictator chose defiance, and now the dictator sits in a prison cell.

September the 11th, 2001, taught a lesson I will never forget: America must confront threats before they fully materialize. In Iraq, my administration looked at the intelligence information, and we saw a threat. The Congress looked at the intelligence, and they saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence, and it saw a threat. The previous administration and Congress looked at the intelligence and made regime change in Iraq the policy of our country.

In 2002, the United Nations Security Council yet again demanded a full accounting of Saddam Hussein's weapons programs. As he had for over a decade, Saddam Hussein refused to comply. So we had a choice to make—I had a choice to make—either to take the word of a madman or take action to defend our country. Faced with that choice, I will defend America every time.

My opponent admits that Saddam Hussein was a threat, he just didn't support my decision to remove Saddam from power. Maybe he was hoping Saddam would lose the next Iraqi election. [*Laughter*] We showed the dictator and a watching world that America means what it says. Because our coalition acted, Saddam's torture chambers are closed. Because we acted, Iraq's weapons programs are ended forever. Because we acted, nations like Libya have gotten the message and renounced their own weapons programs. Because we acted, an example of democracy is rising in the very heart of the Middle East. Because we acted, the world is more safe and America is more secure.

We still face thugs and terrorists in Iraq who would rather go on killing the innocent than accept the advance of liberty. They know that a free Iraq will be a major defeat for the cause of terror. A collection of killers is trying to shake our will. They don't understand America. America will never be intimidated by thugs and assassins.

We are aggressively striking the terrorists in Iraq, defeating them there so we will not have to face them in our own country. We're calling on other nations to help Iraq to build a free society, which will make the world more secure. We're standing with the Iraqi people as they assume more of their own defense and move towards self-

government. These aren't easy tasks, but they are essential tasks. We will finish what we have begun, and we will win this essential victory in the war on terror.

On national security, Americans have the clearest possible choice. My opponent says he approves of bold action in the world but only if other countries don't object. I'm for all—I'm all for united action, and so are the 34 coalition partners we have in Iraq right now. America must never outsource America's national security decisions to the leaders of other countries.

Some are skeptical that the war on terror is really a war at all. Just days ago, my opponent indicated he's not comfortable using the word "war" to describe the struggle we're in. He said, "I don't want to use that terminology." He also said the war on terror is far less of a military operation and far more of an intelligence gathering, law enforcement operation. I disagree. Our Nation followed that approach after the World Trade Center was bombed in 1993. The matter was handled in the courts and thought by some to be settled. But the terrorists were still training in Afghanistan, plotting in other nations, and drawing up more ambitious plans. And after the chaos and carnage of September the 11th, it is not enough to serve our enemies with legal papers. With those attacks, the terrorists and their supporters declared war on the United States of America, and war is what they got.

One very important part of this war is intelligence gathering, as Senator Kerry noted. Yet in 1995, 2 years after the attack on the World Trade Center, my opponent introduced a bill to cut the overall intelligence budget by $1½ billion. His bill was so deeply irresponsible that he didn't have a single co-sponsor in the United States Senate. Once again, Senator Kerry is trying to have it both ways. He's for good intelligence, yet he was willing to gut the intelligence services. And that is no way to lead a nation in a time of war.

Our intelligence professionals are taking great risks and doing a great job. And so are the men and women of the United States military. At bases across our country and the world, I have had the privilege of meeting with those who defend our country and sacrifice for our security. I've seen the great decency and their unselfish courage. I assure you, ladies and gentlemen, the cause of freedom is in good hands.

This Nation is prosperous and strong, yet we need to remember that our greatest strength is in the hearts and souls of our citizens. We're strong because of the values we try to live by, courage and compassion, reverence and integrity. We're strong because of the institutions that help give us direction and purpose, families and schools and religious congregations. These values and institutions are fundamental to our lives. They deserve the respect of our Government. We stand for fair treatment of faith-based groups so they can receive Federal support for their works of compassion and healing. We will not stand for Government discrimination of people of faith.

We stand for welfare reforms that require work and strengthen marriage, reforms which have helped millions of Americans find independence and dignity. We will not stand for any attempt to weaken those reforms and to send people back into lives of dependence.

We stand for a culture of life in which every person counts and every person matters. We will not stand for the treatment of any life as a commodity to be experimented upon, exploited, or cloned.

We stand for the confirmation of judges who strictly and faithfully interpret the law. We will not stand for judges who undermine democracy by legislating from the bench and try to remake the culture of America by court order.

We stand for a culture of responsibility in America. We're changing the culture of this country from one that has said, "If it feels good, do it," and, "If you've got

a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each of us understands we are responsible for the decisions we make. If you're fortunate enough to be a mother or a father, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart. If you're worried about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you're responsible for doing something about it. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you're responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And in this new responsibility culture, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourself.

For all Americans, these years in our history will always stand apart. There are quiet times in the life of a nation when little is expected of leaders. This is not one of those times. You and I are living in a period when the stakes are high, when the challenges are difficult, when the choices are clear, a time when resolve is needed.

None of us will ever forget that week when one era ended and another began. September the 14th, 2001, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers. I'll never forget that day. Workers in hardhats were shouting, "Whatever it takes." One man pointed at me and said, "Don't let me down." As we all did that day, these men and women searching through the rubble took it personally. I took it personally. I have a responsibility that goes on. I will never relent in bringing justice to our enemies. I will defend the security of America, whatever it takes.

In these times, I've also been a witness to the character of this Nation. Not so long ago, some had their doubts about the American character, our capacity to meet serious challenges or to serve a cause greater than self-interest. But Americans have given their answer. I've seen the unselfish courage of our troops. I've seen the heroism of Americans in the face of danger. I've seen the spirit of service and compassion renewed in our country. We've all seen our Nation unite in common purpose when it mattered most.

We will need all these qualities for the work ahead. We have a war to win, and the world is counting on us to lead the cause of freedom and peace. We have a duty to spread opportunity to every corner of America. This is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it, and we know for our country, the best days lie ahead.

May God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:03 p.m. at the Fairmont Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Louis A. Beecherl, Jr., Dallas regional finance chairman, Jeanne Johnson Phillips, Texas State finance vice chairman, J. Roger Williams, north Texas regional finance chairman, and Mercer Reynolds, national finance chairman, Bush-Cheney '04, Inc.; Gov. Rick Perry of Texas; Fred Meyer, chairman, Republican National Committee Presidential Victory Team; Shirley L. Johnson, wife of Representative Sam Johnson of Texas; Susan Combs, commissioner, Texas Department of Agriculture; Victor G. Carrillo, chairman, and Michael L. Williams, commissioner, Railroad Commission of Texas; Tom Craddick, speaker, Texas State House of Representatives; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Remarks at a Bush-Cheney Reception in Houston, Texas
March 8, 2004

Thank you all. Go ahead and be seated—[*laughter*]—unless you don't have a seat. Thanks for a great Houston welcome. I'm so glad to be back home. Nothing like a

weekend in Texas to kind of refresh the soul. By the way, if you see 41, tell him I was asking about him—[*laughter*]—or Mother, over there at the Rice Epicurean. [*Laughter*] I do want to thank you all for being so kind to Mother and Dad. They love Houston. They love the citizens of Houston. They're proud to call this place home, just like I'm proud to call Texas home.

I'm feeling pretty good about my chances in Texas. [*Laughter*] But I'm not going to take anything for granted. With your help, Texas is going to be the cornerstone for a national victory in November of this year. Vice President Cheney and I are looking forward to working here in Texas to get as many votes as we can get. If you think about the Vice President, I picked the right man. Dick Cheney is doing a great job. I like to tell people, Vice President Cheney is the greatest Vice President the country has ever had. One time Mother said, "Wait a minute." [*Laughter*]

I married the greatest First Lady the country has ever had—Mother included. [*Laughter*] Laura sends her love. I'm really proud of her. She is steady and strong, decent and compassionate. I'm lucky she said, yes when I said, "Will you marry me?"

I'm proud to be here with Rich Kinder and Nancy. I want to thank them for their loyal friendship. He said, 4 years ago he introduced me. He's been introducing me for years and years and years, and I'm grateful for that.

I'm proud to be here with the great Governor of the State of Texas, Rick Perry. He's doing a fine job for the people of Texas, all the people of Texas.

We're blessed to have a great congressional delegation in Washington. I take great comfort in knowing that Kay Bailey Hutchison represents the State of Texas. She's a leader on the Senate floor. If you need to get anything done in the Senate, you give Kay Bailey a holler. [*Laughter*] I'm also proud that John Cornyn is representing our State so well in the United States Senate.

Tom DeLay can deliver the vote. We've had a great record of accomplishment, working together. But make no mistake about it, this guy can deliver the vote in the House of Representatives, and the country is better off for it.

Joe Barton is with us tonight. I want to thank Joe for coming. He's a Congressman from up north—that is, north of Texas. [*Laughter*] Kevin Brady is with us. Congressman Brady, thank you for coming. Congressman Culberson is here from the great city of Houston. I'm honored you're here, John. Congressman Neugebauer from Lubbock is with us today too. Randy, thank you for coming. You're probably wondering why the Congressman from Lubbock came all the way over to Houston to hear me speak. He heard Air Force One is flying back to Washington after the speech. [*Laughter*] I think you'll like the accommodations. [*Laughter*]

I'm proud of my friend Fred Meyer for being the State finance chairman for the State of Texas. Thank you, Fred, and Jeanne Johnson Phillips. My friend Mercer Reynolds, the national finance chairman—he's from Cincinnati, Ohio. We let him come into Texas anyway. [*Laughter*] And he's doing a great job. I'm proud of Mercer and proud of you all, for all of you have worked hard, particularly this cast of characters sitting on the stage. I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for being good friends and for helping us prepare for what's going to be a good, strong campaign.

I finally got an opponent. [*Laughter*] And I called him last Tuesday to congratulate him, and I told him I'm looking forward to a spirited campaign. It's going to be an interesting debate on the issues. He spent two decades in Washington, and he's built up quite a record. Senator Kerry has been in Washington long enough to take both sides on just about every issue.

[*Laughter*] Senator Kerry voted for the PATRIOT Act, for NAFTA, for the No Child Left Behind Act, and for the use of force in Iraq. Now he opposes the PATRIOT Act, NAFTA, the No Child Left Behind Act, and the liberation of Iraq. My opponent clearly has strong beliefs. They just don't last very long. [*Laughter*]

The voters have a very clear choice between keeping the tax relief that is moving this economy forward or putting the burden of higher taxes back on the American people. They have a clear choice between an America that leads the world with strength and confidence or an America that is uncertain in the face of danger. I look forward to putting these alternatives squarely before the American people. I look forward to this campaign.

We've achieved great things the last 3 years, and I look forward to telling the American people that. But most importantly, we have a positive vision for the years ahead, a positive vision for winning the war against terror and for extending peace and freedom throughout our world, a positive vision for creating jobs and promoting opportunity and compassion here at home. We'll leave no doubt where we stand, and come November, we'll be reelected for 4 more years.

The last 3 years have brought serious challenges, and we have given serious answers. We came to office with the stock market in decline, and our economy was heading into recession. But we acted. We delivered historic tax relief for the American people, and now our economy is the fastest growing of any major industrialized nation.

We had to confront corporate crimes that cost people their jobs and their savings, so we passed strong corporate reforms and made it very clear, we will not tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America.

We saw war and grief arrive on a quiet September morning, so we pursued the enemy across the world. We've captured or killed many of the key leaders of the Al Qaida network, and the rest will learn there is no cave or hole deep enough to hide from American justice.

We confronted the dangers of state-sponsored terror and the spread of weapons of mass destruction, so we ended two of the most violent and dangerous regimes on Earth. We freed over 50 million people. And once again, America is proud to lead the armies of liberation.

When Dick Cheney and I came to office, we found a military that was underfunded and underappreciated. We gave our military the resources and respect they deserve. And today, no one in the world can doubt the strength and the skill and the spirit of the United States military.

When we came to office, people had gotten used to gridlock, and old problems were used to score points. Old problems were politicized and debated and then just passed on from year to year. We came to the Nation's Capital to get some things done for the people. We passed major reforms to raise the standards in public schools. We passed reforms in Medicare to give prescription drugs and choices to seniors. We chose to lead, and we have delivered for the American people.

It is the President's job to confront problems, not to pass them on to future Presidents or future generations. A President must stand up, make tough decisions, and keep his commitments. And that is how I will continue to lead our great Nation. Great events will turn on this election. The man who sits in the Oval Office will set the course of the war on terror and the direction of our economy. The security and prosperity of America are at stake.

My opponent hasn't offered much in the way of strategies to win the war or policies to expand our economy. So far all we hear from the other side is a lot of old bitterness and partisan anger. Anger is not an agenda for the future of America. I'll take on the big issues with optimism and resolve and determination. Dick Cheney and I will

make it clear to this country, we are ready to lead our Nation for 4 more years.

A big issue for every family in America is the Federal tax burden. With the biggest—with the largest tax relief since Ronald Reagan was the President, we've left more money in the hands that earned it. By spending and investing and helping create new jobs, the American people have used their money far better than the Federal Government could have.

Because we acted, the economy is growing stronger. The economy grew in the second half of 2003 at the fastest rate in nearly 20 years. Productivity is high. Business investment is rising. Interest rates and inflation are low. Homeownership is at its highest rate ever. Manufacturing is increasing. We've added more than 350,000 new jobs over the last 6 months. The tax relief is working.

My opponent has plans for those tax cuts. [*Laughter*] He wants to take them away. He will use that money to expand the Federal Government. I have a better idea: To keep this economy growing and to create jobs, the tax cuts must be permanent.

We must do more to keep this economy growing. We need fiscal discipline in Washington, DC. We need to protect small-business owners and employees from frivolous lawsuits. We need to control needless regulation. We need to help control the cost of health care by association health care plans, by health savings accounts. We need medical liability reform at the Federal level. This country ought to be opening up markets, new markets, for our farmers and ranchers and entrepreneurs and manufacturers. We need to pass sound energy legislation to modernize our electricity system and make this country less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

My opponent talks about job creation, but he's against every one of these job-creating measures. Empty talk about jobs and economic isolationism won't get anyone hired. The way to create jobs is our pro-growth, pro-entrepreneur, small business-owner economic agenda.

This economy is changing, and people need skills. All skills start with education, so I worked with Congress to pass the No Child Left Behind Act. It's a good law. We're challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations. We've raised the bar for every single child. We've demanded accountability in our public school system. We expect the schools to teach our children how to read and write and add and subtract, so not one single child is left behind in this country.

We have a plan to help our high school students who fall behind in reading and math. We've got an aggressive plan to help our community colleges to train the workers for the industries, the new jobs being created for the 21st century. Education is the gateway to a hopeful future, and this administration understands the gate must be open to all Americans.

We're also working hard to make sure America promotes ownership. We promoted an ownership society in this administration. We want more people to own their own homes. We want people to own their own savings. We want more people owning their own small businesses. We want people to own and manage their health care plans. We want younger workers to own and manage their retirement under the Social Security system. We understand that when people have assets of their own, they gain independence and security and dignity and more control over their future. I believe in private property so much, I want every American to have some.

On issue after issue, the American people have a clear choice. My opponent is against personal retirement accounts. He's against putting patients in charge of Medicare. He's against the tax relief. He seems to be against every idea that gives Americans more authority and more choices and more control over our own lives. It's the same old Washington mindset: They'll give

the orders, and you pay the bills. [*Laughter*] I got news for the Washington crowd. America has gone beyond that way of thinking, and we're not going back.

Our future also depends on America's leadership in the world. The momentum of freedom in our time is strong, but we still face serious challenges. Al Qaida is wounded but not broken. Terrorists are testing our will in Afghanistan and Iraq. Regimes in North Korea and Iran are challenging the peace. If America shows weakness and uncertainty in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This will not happen on my watch.

This Nation is strong and confident in the cause of freedom. And today, no friend or enemy doubts the word of the United States. America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Afghanistan. The Taliban chose defiance; the Taliban are no longer in power. America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Iraq. The dictator chose defiance; the dictator now sits in a prison cell.

September the 11th, 2001, taught a lesson I will never forget. America must confront threats before they fully materialize. In Iraq, my administration looked at the intelligence information, and we saw a threat. Members of Congress looked at the intelligence, and they saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence, and it saw a threat. The previous administration and Congress looked at the intelligence and made regime change in Iraq the policy of our Government, of our country. In 2002, the United Nations Security Council yet again demanded a full accounting of Saddam Hussein's weapons programs. As he had for over a decade, he chose defiance. And so I had a choice to make: Either take the word of a madman or take action to defend America. Faced with that choice, I will defend our country every time.

My opponent admits that Saddam Hussein was a threat. He just didn't support my decision to remove him from power. [*Laughter*] Maybe he was hoping Saddam would lose the next Iraqi election. [*Laughter*] We showed the dictator and a watching world that America means what it says. Because our coalition acted, Saddam Hussein's torture chambers are closed. Because we acted, Iraq's weapons programs are ended forever. Because we acted, nations like Libya have gotten the message and renounced their own weapons programs. Because we acted, an example of democracy is rising at the very heart of the Middle East. Because we acted, the world is more free and America is more secure.

We still face thugs and terrorists in Iraq who would rather go on killing the innocent than accept the advance of liberty. You see, they know that a free Iraq would be a major defeat in the cause for terror. That's what they know, and they're right. This collection of killers is trying to shake the will of America. They don't really understand our country. America will never be intimidated by thugs or assassins.

We are aggressively striking the terrorists in Iraq, defeating them there so we do not have to face them in our own country. We're calling on other nations to help Iraq to build a free society, which will make the whole world more secure. We're standing with the Iraqi people as they assume more of their own defense and move towards self-government. These are not easy tasks, but they are essential tasks. We will finish what we have begun, and we will win this essential victory in the war on terror.

On national security, Americans have the clearest possible choice. My opponent says he approves of bold action in the world but only if other countries don't object. [*Laughter*] I'm for united action, and so are 34 coalition partners in Iraq right now. America must never outsource America's national security decisions to leaders of other countries.

Some are skeptical that the war on terror is really a war at all. Just the other day,

my opponent indicated that he's not comfortable using the word "war" to describe the struggle we're in. He said, "I don't want to use that terminology." He also said the war on terror is far less of a military operation and far more of an intelligence gathering, law enforcement operation. I strongly disagree. Our Nation followed that approach after the World Trade Center was bombed in 1993. The matter was handled in the courts and thought by some to be settled. But the terrorists were still training in Afghanistan, plotting in other nations, and drawing up more ambitious plans. After the chaos and carnage of September the 11th, it is not enough to serve our enemies with legal papers. With those attacks, the terrorists and their supporters declared war on the United States of America, and war is what they got.

One very important part of this war is intelligence gathering, as Senator Kerry says. Yet in 1995, 2 years after the first attack on the World Trade Center, my opponent introduced a bill to cut the overall intelligence budget by $1.5 billion. His bill was so deeply irresponsible that he didn't have a single cosponsor in the United States Senate. [*Laughter*] Once again, Senator Kerry is trying to have it both ways. He's for good intelligence, yet he was willing to gut the intelligence services. And that is no way to lead our Nation in a time of war.

Our intelligence professionals are taking great risks, and they're doing great work. And so are the men and women of the United States military. At bases across our country and the world, I have had the privilege—the high privilege—of meeting with those who defend our country and sacrifice for our security. I've seen their great decency and unselfish courage, and I can assure you, ladies and gentlemen, the cause of freedom is in good hands.

This Nation is prosperous and strong, yet we need to remember that our greatest strength is in the hearts and souls of our citizens. We're strong because of the values we try to live by, courage and compassion, reverence and integrity. We are strong because of the institutions that help give us direction and purpose, families and schools and religious congregations. These values and institutions are fundamental to our lives, and they deserve the respect of our Government.

We stand for the fair treatment of faith-based groups from all faiths, so they can receive Federal support for their works of compassion and healing. We will not stand for Government discrimination against people of faith.

We stand for welfare reforms that require work and strengthen marriage, which have helped millions of Americans find independence and dignity. We will not stand for any attempt to weaken those reforms and to send people back into lives of dependence.

We stand for a culture of life in which each person counts and every person matters. We will not stand for the treatment of any life as a commodity to be experimented upon or exploited or cloned.

We stand for the confirmation of judges who strictly and faithfully interpret the law. We will not stand for judges who undermine democracy by legislating from the bench and try to remake the culture of America by court order.

We stand for a culture of responsibility in America. We're changing the culture of America from one that has said, "If it feels good, do it," and, "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a new culture in which each of us understands we are responsible for the decisions we make in life. If you are a mom or a dad, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart. If you're worried about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you're responsible for doing something about it. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you are responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders

and your employees. And in this new responsibility culture, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourselves.

For all Americans, these years in our history will always stand apart. There are quiet times in the life of a nation when little is expected of the leaders. This isn't one of those times. You and I are living in a period where the stakes are high, the challenges are difficult, the choices are clear, a time when resolve is needed. None of us will ever forget that week when one era ended and another began.

On September the 14th, 2001, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers. I'll never forget that day. Workers in hardhats were shouting, "Whatever it takes." I remember a guy pointing at me and said, "Don't let me down." As we all did that day, these men and women searching through the rubble took it personally. I took it personally. I have a responsibility that goes on. I will never relent in bringing justice to our enemies. I will defend the security of America, whatever it takes.

In these times, I've also been a witness to the character of this country. Not long ago, some had their doubts about the American character, our capacity to meet serious challenges or our ability to serve a cause greater than self-interest. But Americans have given their answer. I've seen the unselfish courage of our troops. I've seen the heroism of Americans in the face of danger. I've seen the spirit of service and compassion renewed in our country. We've all seen our Nation unite in common purpose when it mattered most.

We'll need all these qualities for the work ahead. We have a war to win. And the world is counting on us to lead the cause of freedom and peace. We have a duty to spread opportunity to every part of this country. This is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it, and we know that for our country, the best days lie ahead.

May God bless you all. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:55 p.m. at the Hilton Americas. In his remarks, he referred to Rich and Nancy Kinder, fundraisers, Jeanne Johnson Phillips, Texas State finance vice chairman, and Mercer Reynolds, national finance chairman, Bush-Cheney '04, Inc.; Gov. Rick Perry of Texas; Fred Meyer, chairman, Republican National Committee Presidential Victory Team; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Statement on the Completion of the Transitional Administrative Law in Iraq

March 8, 2004

I congratulate the Iraqi Governing Council and the Iraqi people on completing the Transitional Administrative Law for Iraq. This document is an important step toward the establishment of a sovereign government on June 30. It lays the foundation for democratic elections and for a new constitution, which will be written by an elected Iraqi assembly and approved by the Iraqi people.

This law provides a framework for continued cooperation among Iraq, members of the international Coalition, and the United Nations as the Iraqi people make progress towards democracy. And it provides the essential freedoms and rights to all Iraqis regardless of gender, religion, or ethnic origin—including freedom of religion, freedom of speech and assembly, the right to a fair trial, and the right to choose their own representatives.

The adoption of this law marks a historic milestone in the Iraqi people's long journey from tyranny and violence to liberty and peace. While difficult work remains to establish democracy in Iraq, today's signing is a critical step in that direction.

Statement on International Women's Day
March 8, 2004

Today, in observance of International Women's Day, the United States reaffirms the principle that freedom is the right of every woman and man and the future of every nation. The United States continues to work to advance and support the dignity of all people, regardless of gender, race, religion, or ethnic origin.

The best guarantor of the rights of women is freedom and democracy. Free societies allow for free elections, free markets, free press, and free labor unions. They guarantee religious liberty, protect property rights, and educate their people. They protect their freedoms with the consistent and impartial rule of law.

Over the past 2 years, the advent of democracy in Iraq and Afghanistan has freed millions of people from brutal tyranny. We celebrate that they are now assuming the basic human rights too long denied them. Much remains to be done to consolidate and protect these new rights, but the United States and our international partners are determined to continue this progress.

On this day, women like Aung San Suu Kyi, who remains under house arrest for her efforts to bring democracy to Burma, and Shirin Ebadi, who has spent a lifetime championing human rights, receive recognition. The United States pledges to promote democracy and human rights around the globe and to help those who struggle to see the same light of liberty now dawning on the people of Iraq and Afghanistan.

NOTE: The statement referred to Aung San Suu Kyi, leader of the National League for Democracy in Burma; and 2003 Nobel Peace Prize winner Shirin Ebadi.

Message to the Congress Transmitting a Notice of Intention To Enter Into a Free Trade Agreement With Morocco
March 8, 2004

To the Congress of the United States:

Consistent with section 2105(a)(1)(A) of the Trade Act of 2002 (Public Law 107–210; the "Trade Act"), I am pleased to notify the Congress of my intent to enter into a free trade agreement (FTA) with the Kingdom of Morocco.

This agreement will create new opportunities for America's workers, farmers, businesses, and consumers by eliminating barriers in trade with Morocco. Morocco is one of the United States strongest friends in the Middle East. Increased trade will benefit Americans and help strengthen a tolerant, open, and more prosperous Morocco. Entering into an FTA with Morocco will not only strengthen our bilateral ties with this important ally, it will also advance my goal of a Middle East free trade area (MEFTA) within a decade.

Consistent with the Trade Act, I am sending this notification at least 90 days in advance of signing the United States-Morocco FTA. My Administration looks forward to working with the Congress in developing appropriate legislation to approve and implement this free trade agreement.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
March 8, 2004.

NOTE: The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Message to the Congress Transmitting a Report on Implementation of the Debt Reduction Authority
March 8, 2004

To the Congress of the United States:

Consistent with section 1321 of the Foreign Relations Authorization Act, Fiscal Year 2003 (Public Law 107–228), I transmit herewith a report prepared by my Administration on implementation of the debt reduction authority conferred by title XIII, subtitle B of Public Law 107–228.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
March 8, 2004.

Remarks at the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo in Houston
March 8, 2004

It's really good to be here. I thought there's a lot of bull in Washington, DC. [*Laughter*] But I'm really glad to be here at the livestock show. It's—somebody said, "What's it like when you come here?" It's like being in a place with people who are willing to stand up to values that are important in this country.

So it's great to be here. I want to congratulate the winners, congratulate the—congratulate the young who are here who are working outdoors with the animals and practicing important—important values that will take them through the rest of their life.

I worked the ropeline, worked the fenceline coming out. I can't tell you how many people said, "Mr. President, we're praying for you in Iraq." On behalf of a grateful world, I want to thank you for that very much. And I want to thank you for your hospitality. May God bless you all, and may God continue to bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:25 p.m. at Reliant Arena. The Office of the Press Secretary released the transcript of these remarks on March 9. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at the Presentation of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Awards in Arlington, Virginia
March 9, 2004

Congratulations. Good job. Thank you all. Go ahead and be seated. Thank you all very much. Welcome. I'm really glad to be invited back to this annual event to recognize excellence and to bestow an honor named for a great American.

This year, the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award goes to seven outstanding recipients. Each set ambitious goals. Each organization worked hard to achieve them. You're setting such a good example as a beacon of excellence. You represent the great strength and the entrepreneurial spirit of the American economy. I congratulate you for a job well done.

And I appreciate Secretaries Evans and Paige for joining me here. I thank them for their service to our country. I thank Dr. John White, the University of Arkansas chancellor. I appreciate the fact that he didn't bring up the Arkansas-Texas football score. [*Laughter*] I thank Letitia Baldrige for being here, Mac's favorite sister—only sister? Yes. [*Laughter*] I want to thank those of you involved with the Baldrige Awards. I want to thank you for keeping the spirit alive. I want to thank you for focusing on quality; thank the judges and the foundation members.

I appreciate the Members of Congress who are here today. I'm glad you all have taken time to come to honor the recipients. I want to thank the U.S. Army Band for providing quality music.

Malcolm Baldrige served as the Commerce Secretary in the eighties, at a time when many questioned whether America could remain the world's strongest economy. He was an optimistic guy. He dedicated himself to proving the skeptics wrong. That kind of confidence in America's economic strength was justified in his day, and it is justified in our day.

Think about what this economy has been through the last several years. In 2000, the stock market began a steady decline. By early 2001, the Nation was in a recession. Then we got attacked on September the 11th. We had to face the consequences of that attack. We saw scandals in corporate boardrooms in which the trust of workers and investors was violated. We took action to face all these challenges. Today, our economy is strong, and it is getting stronger.

Think about the economic environment of 2003. Inflation is low. Interest rates are low. Manufacturing is up. Homeownership is at an alltime high. Stock prices are up. The stock market wealth has risen by more than $3 trillion since the beginning of 2003. The unemployment rate today is lower than the average rate in the 1970s, in the 1980s, and the 1990s. Thanks to our productive workers and the entrepreneurial spirit of this country, the fastest growing major industrialized economy in the world is the United States of America.

As our economy moves forward and new jobs are added, some are questioning whether American companies and American workers are up to the challenge of foreign competition. There are economic isolationists in our country who believe we should separate ourselves from the rest of the world by raising up barriers and closing off markets. They're wrong. If we are to continue growing this economy and creating new jobs, America must remain confident and strong about our ability to trade in the world. Given a level playing field, America will outperform the competition, and America will continue to be a world leader.

We've got great advantages here in this country. We've got the world's hardest

working people. We've got the most productive workforce in the world. We have an attractive climate for our businesses to expand. We have innovative, dynamic companies which are producing world-class products and services. America's best companies are emphasizing quality and service and developing world-class methods for production. By selling good ideas and good products in markets not only here but across the world, we're creating jobs, good, high-paying jobs for the American citizens.

Each recipient of today's award earned it. When I say we need to be confident about our future, I'm confident because I just heard the stories of great success. They got their best ideas from all kinds of places, whether it be from their workers or their customers. They listened.

In the health care category, we have two winners: Baptist Hospitals in Pensacola, Florida—I was wondering whether if we called it Pentecostal Hospitals, we'd be—[*laughter*]—Saint Luke's Hospital in Kansas City, Missouri. These hospitals have focused on serving patients and their families better. That's what they focused on. They got their employees fully involved in measuring performance. Because of their excellence, both of these winners are saving lives. It must make you feel good to work in an industry in which you save somebody's life.

In manufacturing, we have Medrad Incorporated, of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. A maker of medical imaging devices, Medrad's commitment to excellence runs from the top, from the CEO, John Friel, who, by the way, said we—I put my knee under one of his devices. [*Laughter*] I said, "I appreciate the diagnosis. You just hadn't figured out the cure for old age." [*Laughter*]

I'll tell you what I like about John's style. He spends a day each month on a frontline job. Here's a fellow who is the CEO who mops the floors, who's taken phone calls, who's heard customer complaints, who works on the assembly line. He's built a culture where everyone at the company has a voice in the way things are done.

Caterpillar Financial Services of Nashville, Tennessee, as well as Boeing Aerospace Support of St. Louis, provides maintenance and other services. These are good companies. Both companies have set up teams of employees to focus on quality. And as a result, both have a lot more happy customers.

In the case of Boeing Aerospace Support, one of their happy customers happens to be the Nation's Armed Forces. And if the Nation's Armed Forces are happy, I'm happy. [*Laughter*]

I love the fact that we're honoring the smallest business ever to win the Baldrige Award, Stoner, Incorporated. Today is vacation day. [*Laughter*] The whole company is here. [*Laughter*] This company, which is in Quarryville, Pennsylvania, makes specialized cleaners, lubricants, and coatings. They have an interesting goal, an easy goal to understand—I like clear speakers—[*laughter*]—never lose a customer. And that focus has translated to company-wide quality.

And then we've got educational excellence. It's an amazing story you just heard. The Community Consolidated School District 15, Palatine, Illinois, faces challenges common to many of the school districts across America, but it achieves uncommon results. These people don't make excuses for failure, see? They do what I call "challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations." They expect the best. They believe every child can learn.

It's easy to say, "We can't achieve excellence because one-third of our students come from low-income homes." It's easy to say, "We can't achieve excellence because English is not the primary language in the homes of another third of our students." Yet, because of rigorous testing and evaluation and a commitment to high standards, the belief that every child can learn, 84 percent of the second-graders read at or above grade level. It's a fantastic

accomplishment. The teachers are great in that school. I'm told that from the classroom to the cafeteria, every employee is committed to a single goal: No child should be left behind.

I appreciate the example this school district has set. I appreciate the example all the companies here have set as well. You're now what we call quality experts, which means you're going to get calls from other companies or organizations to find out how you won, what you did to achieve such good success, and I hope you share your knowledge. The country is better off when you're willing to share how you achieved excellence with those who will want to accomplish the same goals.

Anyone looking for an easy answer, though, is going to be disappointed. It may sound easy in the speeches. It's hard to win this award. [*Laughter*] This isn't one of these deals where everybody gets a blue ribbon. [*Laughter*] You have to work hard. You have to be totally focused and committed to excellence. It has to be a part of your culture, your very being.

A good product, of course, is essential. It's hard to be successful if you don't make something somebody doesn't want to buy. You've got to have a good business plan. But the most important ingredient is a great workforce, people who live and work by the principles of excellence and fairness and team work and personal responsibility.

That's really what we're honoring today, isn't it, great workforces, people who are willing to strive for something greater than themselves. The Baldrige Award winners are showing one of the greatest strengths of this Nation and our economy. Whether the challenge comes from a competitor across town or from a competitor across the ocean, American workers are up to the job. Just listening to these speeches here confirms what I know: This country can meet any challenge.

I want to congratulate the award winners, congratulate the companies. May God bless you and your families. May God continue to bless this great Nation. Thank you for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11 a.m. at the Crystal Gateway Marriott Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to former Secretary of Commerce Malcolm Baldrige's sister, Letitia Baldrige.

Remarks to the Women's Entrepreneurship in the 21st Century Forum in Cleveland, Ohio

March 10, 2004

Thanks for the warm welcome. I appreciate so very much the invitation to come today. I'm really glad to be back in the great city of Cleveland, Ohio. It's good to be in a room full of accomplished women. As the husband of Laura—[*laughter*]—and the son of Barbara, I feel right at home.

I enjoy being in the company of entrepreneurs, risktakers, dreamers, and doers. You all share a lot of common experiences. You've met challenges of starting a business, and that's hard. It required more time than you had in a day, more money than you kept in your bank, and more energy than you thought you had. But you chose an interesting life. You chose to lead. You chose to follow your dreams. And I appreciate your spirit. You're making the country a better place by working as hard as you do.

As the Governor said, nearly half of all small businesses are owned by women. That's powerful. That's a beautiful statement. Firms owned by women are being

started at more than twice the national rate. The entrepreneurial spirit is alive and well.

This is a land of great wealth and it's a land of great opportunity, and you're seizing the opportunity. Through the hard work of our people, the innovation of our businesses, and the good policies now in place, we have put a recession behind us. Thanks in large part to your hard work, our economy is expanding. Productivity is strong. Unemployment has been falling. Incomes are rising, and we're going to stay on this path of growth and prosperity in this country.

This economy has challenges, and we know how to meet them. We'll continue making the finest products and selling those products, not only here at home but across the world. We'll make sure that American workers have the education and the skills to succeed in the jobs of the future. And we'll remain the leading economy in the world, because America will remain the best place to do business in the world.

I want to thank Jennette Bradley, the Lieutenant Governor, for her hospitality. And I want to thank the other officials from the State of Ohio who are with us.

I appreciate Elaine Chao, a member of my Cabinet, for joining us today. Elaine is doing a great job for the United States. *Es un placer* to be here with Hector Barreto, the head of the SBA.

I traveled today with Steve LaTourette, the Congressman from this area. Steve, I'm honored you're here. He's a progrowth guy. [*Laughter*] He knows the role of Government is not to try to create wealth but to create an environment in which the entrepreneurial spirit can flourish. I appreciate you being here. He's a great Congressman from this part of the world.

I appreciate the sponsors. Thanks for putting up with me and the entourage. [*Laughter*] Most of all, thank you for being here.

Today when I landed at the airport, I met Judi Firestone. Some of you may know Judi. She's owned her own computer business since 1986. She's an entrepreneur. She's a visionary. She works hard. As well she is the northeast Ohio chairman for the Race For The Cure, Komen Foundation Race For The Cure. She is a breast cancer survivor.

The reason I bring her up is, the true strength of America is the hearts and souls of our citizens. The true strength of this country is the fact there are people like Judi Firestone who are willing to volunteer their time to make the community in which she lives a better place. It's really the strength, isn't it? I mean, the truth of the matter is we can change this country one heart and one soul at a time when citizens like Judi take time out of her life, her busy life, to help somebody who hurts.

And so the reason I herald Judi Firestone is to really talk about the strength of the country. I know many of you here heard the call to love a neighbor like you'd like to be loved yourself. I want to thank you for what you do to make your community a loving place. I want to thank you for what you do to heal the souls that hurt. I want to thank you for what you do to be a part of the incredibly important fabric of America, that it saves lives not because of government but because people are volunteering their time. And if you're not volunteering, please do so. The country needs you. But Judi, thanks for coming.

This economy of ours has faced challenges over the last 3 years. Think back about what we have been through. Not long before I took office in January of 2001, I invited business leaders from around our country to come to Austin. They told me that factories and workers were seeing the first signs of recession. That's what they said. They said that the economy was troubled, that things weren't feeling too good, and they were right. In fact, the manufacturing sector had started losing jobs in August of 2000. By January of 2001, orders for equipment and software were falling, the stock market had been declining for several months.

And as we started to come out of the recession and the economy, because of the entrepreneurial spirit and the fact that we got great workers, started to recover, the enemy hit us on September the 11th, 2001. It was a day of terrible loss, deep mourning. It was also a serious blow to our economy. The attacks closed the New York Stock Exchange for nearly a week. Remember back to what it was like after September the 11th. U.S. airspace was entirely closed for the first time. In the 3 months after September the 11th, the economy lost nearly one million jobs.

The enemy hurt us. But we're plenty tough and determined as a nation. And as a result of the American people's resolution and determination, we began to recover. And then we learned about fraud and wrongdoing in corporate America. And that hurt our economy as well. There were scandals that were in the—years in making, shook the energy industry. It affected the telecommunications industry. It hurt the accounting profession and other key sectors of our economy. A lot of innocent workers and investors lost their jobs and their savings.

Those scandals hurt. But we acted, and we passed the strongest corporate reforms since Franklin Roosevelt held the office that I'm honored to hold. Federal prosecutors are holding corporate executives to account. We have made it clear, we will not tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America.

This economy of ours had been through recession, had been through emergency, had been through corporate scandals, and then I made the necessary decision to deal with Saddam Hussein. September the 11th taught a lesson I will never forget and our country must never forget. America must confront threats before they fully materialize. That's the lesson of that fateful day.

In Iraq, this administration looked at the intelligence, and we saw a threat to the American people. The Congress looked at the same intelligence, and they saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence, and it saw a threat. And then the United Nations Security Council, in 2002, gave Saddam Hussein a final chance to comply with U.N. resolutions and disarm. We all saw a threat, and we put out, through resolutions, the demand that he disclose and disarm. And once again, he chose defiance. He made the choice. I had a choice as well: Either to trust the word of a madman or to defend the American people. Faced with that choice, I will defend America every time.

And therefore, in 2002 and early 2003, the television screens across America had banners saying, "March to War." And as business leaders, you understand that's not very conducive to investing capital. Marching to war is not a positive thought, but we overcame that challenge. Thanks to hard-working people and leaders, entrepreneurs, we overcame that challenge, and now we're marching to peace.

This week, the Iraqi Governing Council approved the new fundamental law, which will be the basis for a free constitutional democracy in the heart of the Middle East. Because we acted, because we did the right thing, the world is becoming more peaceful, and America is more secure.

My point is this: We faced challenge after challenge during the past 3 years, and we're overcoming them all. Inflation is low. Interest rates are low. Manufacturing activity is up. Homeownership is at an alltime high. The unemployment rate today is lower than the average rate in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. Thanks to our productive workers, thanks to business leaders such as yourself, the United States of America is the fastest growing major industrialized economy in the world.

One of the main reasons the recession was one of the shortest in modern history is because we acted. The tax relief I signed left money in the pockets of families and job creators at just the right time. We cut the taxes on our families. We lowered tax rates on everybody who paid taxes. We

didn't play the old political game of winners and losers in the Tax Code. We increased the child credit, and we reduced the marriage penalty. This helped to lift after-tax incomes in America by 8.4 percent since 2001, and the spending and investing of Americans is driving this economy forward. That's what's happening.

Most of the new jobs in America are created by small businesses. I understand that. And so that is why we focused a lot of our tax relief on small businesses. The majority of small businesses are either sole proprietorships or Subchapter S corporations, which means many of you pay business taxes at the individual rates. And so therefore, when you lower rates on individuals, you lower rates on small businesses. You allow small-business owners to keep more of their own money to invest and therefore create more jobs.

As well to encourage investment, we increased the annual deduction for equipment purchases by small businesses from $25,000 to $100,000. You see, I understand you can't have a healthy economy without a healthy small-business sector, and the tax relief we passed is reinvigorating small businesses all across this country.

We did something else that will help the entrepreneurial spirit in this country. We're phasing out the death tax. Small-business owners and ranchers and farmers shouldn't have their assets taxed twice. The death tax is unfair. You ought to be able to pass your assets on to whoever you want.

Progrowth policies are working. They're helping this economy—the economic recovery to turn into lasting prosperity. That's what I want, and that's what's happening. Yet, the jobs report last week shows that while the economy is dynamic and growing, it's experiencing some fundamental change. Productivity has grown faster over the last 2 years than at any time in more than 50 years, in part because technology is changing the way we do things. You know what I'm talking about. You're more productive in your companies.

In some fields, one person can do the work that used to be done by many. That's what being more productive means. At one semiconductor plant in New Mexico, new technology is allowing the same number of workers to produce 20 times as many computer chips as they used to.

Higher productivity is a good thing. It's good for our workers. It is good for our economy. If you're more productive, you're better able to compete and survive and expand and grow. People think—when they think about productivity, you think of it this way: Operating heavy equipment every day is hard work, but operating a shovel every day is harder work. I don't think many people here want to trade in your laptop for one of those old hunt-and-peck typewriters. [*Laughter*]

Advances in productivity lead to higher wages. That is a fact. The more productive a worker becomes, the better wages that person will receive. A more productive society means lower prices for consumers. A more productive society is one that generates greater national wealth. And small businesses are leading the way in this productivity revolution, and for that, I'm grateful.

Higher productivity also presents us a challenge, and here's the challenge: Many companies fill new orders and expand operations without needing to hire new workers. Because we're a productive workforce, the economy can expand, and in some cases, they don't need to add additional workers to meet that expansion, to meet the additional demand. Manufacturing output, for instance, increased sixfold between 1950 and 2000—a sixfold increase. Yet because of high productivity, all this manufacturing is done by about the same number of workers. And because of the new technologies throughout the economy, another challenge is the fact that we've got to make sure people have got the skills necessary to become productive workers.

In Ohio, you know firsthand the effects of economic change. Manufacturers are

more productive, so they aren't creating as many jobs as they used to. Ohio's unemployment rate is higher than the national average. Manufacturing communities like Youngstown and Cleveland have been hit especially hard. I understand that. I know there are workers here concerned about their jobs going overseas. I share that concern. I know they're wondering whether they'll ever be able to find new skills necessary to fill the new jobs of the 21st century. I understand that. There are those with good jobs who worry about their health care and their retirement benefits. There are a lot of moms and dads who wonder whether or not their child will be able to find a job in the community in which they were raised. There are legitimate concerns amongst people here in Ohio and elsewhere around the country.

And one reason why there's concern is because, as the economists say, "This is a time of transition. It's a time of change." And if you're one going through transition, it's not an easy experience. But then we have a responsibility to help. We have a responsibility to help with more than just unemployment insurance. We have a responsibility in Government to create an environment that increases more jobs and helps people find the skills to fill those jobs. That's a responsibility that we must do in Government.

Some politicians in Washington see this new challenge, and yet they want to respond in old ways. Their agenda is to increase Federal taxes, to build a wall around this country and to isolate America from the rest of the world. They never get around to explaining how higher taxes would help create a single job in America, except maybe at the IRS. They don't explain how closing off markets abroad would help the millions of Americans who produce goods for export or work for foreign companies right here in the United States.

That old policy of tax and spend is the enemy of job creation. The old policy of economic isolationism is a recipe for economic disaster. America has moved beyond that tired, defeatist mindset, and we're not going back. There's a better way, and that's what I want to talk about today. To expand the creation of new jobs and to see our workers through our transition, Government must meet basic responsibilities.

First, instead of building barriers to trade, we must break down those barriers so that good products, American products, are welcomed and sold on every continent. Look at it this way: America has got 5 percent of the world's population. That means 95 percent of potential customers are in other countries. We cannot expect to sell our goods and services and create jobs if America and our partners, trading partners, start raising barriers and closing off markets.

Millions of American jobs are supported by exports. That's a fact. One in five factory jobs in this country directly depends on trade. The surest way to threaten those jobs is a policy of economic isolation. The surest way to add more jobs is a confident policy, a confident economic policy that trades with the world.

The economic isolationists have a pessimistic outlook. They don't show much faith in the American worker or the American entrepreneur. They don't think we can compete. But here in Ohio, you're proving them wrong. People all over the world are buying products from Ohio, cars and tires and batteries and jet engines and ball bearings and electronics and crops from your farms. Since 1996, under NAFTA, Ohio's exports to Mexico have tripled and last year came to more than $2 billion. Two billion dollars of exports means it's more likely somebody will have a job in the State of Ohio. Since the end of 2000, Ohio's exports have increased more than any State in the country. And why is that? Because this State has got great entrepreneurs who are making high-quality products that the world wants to buy. And another reason why is because you've got great workers, who, if

given a level playing field, can out-produce any worker, anywhere on the Earth.

Foreign companies recognize the quality of American workers, and that is one of the reasons why so many have chosen to locate plants in our country. More than 900 foreign facilities employ people here in the State of Ohio, including major companies like Honda. Ten percent of Honda's international workforce lives in this State. About 16,000 Ohioans work for Honda, with good, high-paying jobs. That's a lot of your fellow citizens employed by a company that has chosen to do business in America. And that's not counting the people who work at 165 different Ohio companies that supply Honda with parts and material.

When politicians in Washington attack trade for political reasons, they don't mention these workers or the 6.4 million other Americans who draw their paychecks from foreign companies. Economic isolationism would lead to retaliation from abroad and put many of those jobs at risk. Those who play on fear and criticize trade are not serving the interests of our workers. Across America, from Marysville, Ohio, to Seattle, Washington, workers are better off—better off—because this country is an optimistic, successful trading nation.

My administration is committed to creating the jobs that trade brings. It's a commitment of my administration. Remember this: Presidents of both parties since World War II have made the decision to open up our markets for the good of American workers and for the good of American consumers. If we're opening up our markets, it makes sense to get others to open up theirs, and so we're dedicated to making sure that other nations treat us fairly. That's why I pressed for free trade agreements with Singapore and Chile. We want them to open up their markets to America's goods and services. We've recently completed negotiations with Morocco and Central America.

I just completed a negotiation with Australia. I want you to understand this important aspect of the trade agreement. Almost all manufacturing exports to that country will be duty-free immediately. That means this could help America's manufacturers sell another $2 billion worth of goods to Australia every year. If we're going to let people sell here, we ought to be encouraging them to let—open up their markets as well. That's good for jobs, and it's good for America.

I want the world to "Buy America." The best products are those—listen, the best product on any shelf anywhere in the world says, "Made in the USA."

To create more jobs, Government must meet a second basic responsibility. If we want to continue to outperform the world, if we want to be able to compete, America must remain the best place in the world to do business. If we want to be competitive with other places, we've got to be a good place for people to invest capital. We've got to make sure that people who invest capital are not penalized by lousy Government policy. Tax cuts were vital to creating the environment for growth and innovation, and there are more steps that need to be done.

There needs to be fewer regulations on businessowners in America. I bet you spend a lot of time filling out paperwork. [*Laughter*] I bet not much of your paperwork is ever read. [*Laughter*] The Government needs to let you focus on your business, on developing goods and services. It needs to let you focus on hiring people, rather than spending hours filling out paperwork. In order for us to keep jobs here at home and expand the job base, we need better regulatory policy at the Federal, State, and local level.

In order to make sure that we're able to create jobs here at home and to prevent jobs from going overseas, this country must have tort reform. Frivolous lawsuits or the threat of a frivolous lawsuit create an environment that is not conducive to job creation and job expansion. There's a role at the Federal level for tort reform. The trial

lawyers are tough up there, though. [*Laughter*] Members of the Senate need to hear from you. The House has passed good tort legislation, but the Senate has got to hear from you. Tort reform will help make it easier to keep jobs here at home.

We need to do something about the high cost of health care as well. I'm a strong proponent of association health plans to allow small businesses to pool risk so you can better afford health care plans for your employees. We've introduced a new concept called health savings accounts, which will make a big difference for small-business owners and employees as well. And the market has taken hold. We ought to—listen, frivolous lawsuits are running up the cost of health care in America. Frivolous lawsuits against docs and hospitals are making it harder for you to be able to afford health care. We need medical liability reform at the Federal level—now.

We're interested in making sure our jobs don't go overseas and that there's jobs available for citizens all across our country. We need affordable and reliable supplies of energy. Here in Ohio, you know what I'm talking about. [*Laughter*] You've experienced the disruption and high cost when factories and cities lose power. It's time for our Nation to modernize the electricity systems. We need to promote clean coal technology so we've got abundant supplies of energy. We need to explore for more natural gas. We need to promote conservation. There's a lot of things we need to do. One thing is for certain: In order to expand our job base, we need to become less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

Finally, to make sure this economy grows, to make sure the entrepreneurial spirit is strong, we must have certainty in the Tax Code. It's important for elected officials to understand that if you're a business leader, if you're the CEO of a corporation, and you're uncertain about your taxes from year to year, because of—because the tax policy is haphazard, it's hard for you to plan. It's hard for you to think ahead. It's hard for you to be confident in your investment strategy.

Part of the issues we face here in the future of this country is the fact that the tax relief we passed is going to expire. The marriage penalty will go back up. By the way, it doesn't make any sense to have a marriage penalty in the Tax Code when you're trying to encourage marriage in the country. The child credit will go back down if Congress doesn't act. The death tax will eventually come back to life. Imagine what it's going to be like in 2011, when it's supposed to come back to life. There's going to be a lot of people maybe trying to die a little earlier to avoid the—[*laughter*]—it's unbelievable, when you think about it. Think about public policy that says your taxes are going to be down this year but not. We may have increased expensing allowances or not. Uncertainty in the Tax Code makes it hard for the job base to continue to expand. For the sake of job creation, Congress needs to make the tax cuts permanent.

The third basic responsibility is to make sure American workers are prepared for successful careers in the new economy. Some sectors are producing fewer jobs, but in other areas, jobs are growing. They're multiplying. There's a lot of opportunity in a changing economy. Here in Ohio, there's a shortage of nurses and pharmacists and other skilled professionals. And so any viable economic strategy, progrowth strategy, must be to help people find new skills, to gain new skills, to be able to fill the new jobs of the 21st century. If you're in a period of transition, you must help people make that transition.

All skills start with education. I'm a strong proponent of the legislation we passed in Washington called the No Child Left Behind Act. This is a good piece of legislation which is challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations. We've raised the bar. See, we believe every child can learn to read and write and add and subtract.

That's what we believe. And therefore, we expect every child to achieve those skills. And therefore, we're expecting, in return for Federal money, the school districts to measure, because if you don't measure, how do you know. We've just got to stop this practice of shuffling kids through the school as if they don't matter. What matters is every child gets a basic education. And if you can't read, you're not going to be able to take advantage of the new jobs of the 21st century. And that's why we're focused on secondary schools, and that's why we've got plans to help high school students who've fallen behind in reading and math to gain the skills necessary to be able to work in this new economy.

We've got programs to help workers who've been displaced by the effects of trade by giving them assistance in job training and health care and relocation. I proposed what's called personal reemployment accounts for people who need extra help so they can pay for child care and transportation and other costs of finding work. In other words, we're trying to help people.

But we've got a plan as well. It's an important plan that's going to make a big difference, and that is to help the community colleges train workers for jobs which actually exist. Community colleges need to listen to the business community and the community in which they live. They need to ask the question, what do we need to do to train workers? What are you looking for? What kind of skill set is necessary for you to hire this person? They need to be flexible. The curriculums must be willing to change. The community college system has got a fantastic opportunity to make sure workers gain the skills necessary to become employable in this changing economy.

I was in Toledo recently and talked with a guy named Mike Potter. He lost a manufacturing job. He went back to the community college to get retrained. He got help. The Government paid. And he got retrained, and he found a new job because he was willing to go back to school and the community college listened to the employers in the community in which he lived.

I was in Northern Virginia and went to a community college system. I met Connie Mitchell. She heard there was jobs available in the health industry. And by the way, there's a lot of jobs being created in the health industry. And so she went to the community college, and they gave her the skills necessary to become a nurse. And now she's employed.

In Mesa, Arizona, I met Stacey Leedom, who's a single mom—which, by the way, is the hardest job in America, being a single mom. She was a graphic artist. She had worked for a company, I think, for 12 or 13 years. She got help to go back to Mesa Community College. She learned a new skill in the computer industry. And in her first year of a new job, she made more than she did after 12 years as a graphic artist.

You see, if you become a more productive citizen, you'll make more money. Better productivity, better skills means higher pay. And our country must focus our education system on helping workers learn the new skills of the 21st century so we can increase the job base of this country.

You know, it wasn't all that long ago that some people said that America was not up to global competition. I don't know if you remember back in the seventies and eighties—that's what we heard, though, wasn't it, that we couldn't compete with the Japanese, that they were too good at being automobile makers, that foreign companies would soon overtake our own, that we just weren't up to it. That's what a lot of people said in that period. We were told that American companies weren't flexible enough, American workers were not disciplined enough, and American products weren't good enough.

Well, the pessimists were wrong. American companies remade themselves to beat the competition. Great ideas for improvement came from our workforce, workers who are on the line. And the leaders of

those companies listened. The entrepreneurial spirit was strong in America, and it was the American entrepreneur that invented new technologies, technologies that have made this country the most productive in the world. Our economy performed like never before, and today, no one doubts what nation's economy leads this world.

Our Nation in 2004 is vibrant. As opposed to retreating like the pessimists thought, we're selling computer chips to Japan. We're producing BMWs in Greer, South Carolina, for export to Germany. We're even exporting California wine to France.

There are people who doubt our ability to compete. There are economic isolationists who surrender and wall us off. It's bad for the country, bad for consumers. It's bad for workers. We'll prove the pessimists wrong again. We'll continue to open up untapped markets for American workers and businesses. We'll keep this Government on the side of growth and job creation, so American businesses can compete and prosper. We'll focus on job training and education, so Americans can improve their skills and improve their lives. We'll get the policies right, and the American people will do the rest. You will show, once again, that this Nation has the energy and the confidence and the creativity to meet every challenge.

I want to thank you for your leadership. I want to thank you for your spirit. I want to thank you for working hard to realize the American Dream and own your own business. I want to thank you for employing people. I want to thank you for the faith of your country.

May God bless you, and may God continue to bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:15 p.m. at the Cleveland Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Lt. Gov. Jennette Bradley of Ohio; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Iran

March 10, 2004

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent the enclosed notice, stating that the Iran emergency is to continue in effect beyond March 15, 2004, to the *Federal Register* for publication. The most recent notice continuing this emergency was published in the *Federal Register* on March 14, 2003 (68 Fed. Reg. 12563).

The crisis between the United States and Iran constituted by the actions and policies of the Government of Iran, including its support for international terrorism, efforts to undermine Middle East peace, and acquisition of weapons of mass destruction and the means to deliver them, that led to the declaration of a national emergency on March 15, 1995, has not been resolved. These actions and policies are contrary to the interests of the United States in the region and pose a continuing unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States. For these reasons, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared with respect

to Iran and maintain in force comprehensive sanctions against Iran to respond to this threat.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
March 10, 2004.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 11. The notice of March 10 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Satellite Remarks to the National Association of Evangelicals Convention
March 11, 2004

Good morning, Ted. I want to thank you for your kind introduction. Thank you all very much. Thank you all. Ted, I think I need to invite you to Crawford so you can drive my pickup truck and learn the joys of that truck.

I want to thank you for the invitation. It's such a pleasure to speak to all of you in Colorado Springs. The National Association of Evangelicals was founded 62 years ago with the highest of calling, to proclaim the kingdom of God. Today, your organization includes 51 denominations representing some 30 million people. You're doing God's work with conviction and kindness, and on behalf of our country, I thank you.

America is a nation with a mission. We're called to fight terrorism around the world, and we're waging that fight. As freedom's home and freedom's defender, we are called to expand the realm of human liberty. And by our actions in Afghanistan and Iraq, more than 50 million people have been liberated from tyranny, and they are reclaiming their dignity as free people. Our Nation can take great pride in these achievements. Yet I know that liberty is not America's gift to the world. Liberty and freedom are God's gift to every man and woman who lives in this world.

I'm fortunate enough to be President during a time in which our country holds great influence in the world, and I feel that we must use that influence for great purpose. When we see disease and starvation and hopeless poverty, we must not turn away. And that is why, on the continent of Africa, we're bringing the healing power of medicine to millions of people now suffering with AIDS. From Southeast Asia to Eastern Europe, we're working to end the modern-day slavery of sex trafficking. And throughout the Middle East, we're standing with the men and women who work and sacrifice for freedom.

Here at home, we're pursuing an agenda to help more citizens realize the promise of this country. That's why we've passed major tax relief to help our Nation's families and to create new jobs for American workers. We've passed education reform that gives parents more choices and makes sure every single child has the opportunity to learn.

My administration is firmly committed to rallying the armies of compassion in America to help our fellow citizens in need. All of you know the power of faith to transform lives. You're answering the call to love and to serve your neighbor. Our laws should welcome and encourage your good works. We should never discriminate against faith-based charities.

My administration is also committed to defending the most basic institutions and values of this country. We're working to build a culture of life. We took an important step last November when I signed a law to end the brutal practice of partial-birth abortion. We will vigorously defend this law against any attempt to overturn

it in the courts. I will also continue to support crisis pregnancy centers and adoption and parental notification laws. I proposed doubling Federal funding for abstinence programs in schools and community-based programs.

In the past 2 years, I have been proud to sign the Born-Alive Infants Protection Act and legislation supporting maternity group homes. I strongly support the "Unborn Victims of Violence Act," and call upon the United States Congress to send it to my desk. I oppose the use of Federal funds for the destruction of human embryos for stem cell research. I will work with Congress to pass a comprehensive and effective ban on human cloning. Human life is a creation of God, not a commodity to be exploited by man.

I will defend the sanctity of marriage against activist courts and local officials who want to redefine marriage. The union of a man and woman is the most enduring human institution, honored and encouraged in cultures and by every religious faith. Ages of experience have taught humanity that the commitment of a husband and wife to love and to serve one another promotes the welfare of children and the stability of society. And Government, by recognizing and protecting marriage, serves the interests of all. It is for that reason I support a constitutional amendment to protect marriage as the union of a man and a woman.

It is my responsibility as the President to make sure the judicial system runs well, and I've met that duty. I've nominated superb men and women for the Federal courts, people who will interpret the law and not legislate from the bench. Yet some Members of the United States Senate are using unprecedented tactics to block up-or-down votes. Every nominee deserves a fair hearing and a timely vote on the Senate floor. It is time for some Members of the Senate to stop playing politics with American justice.

All of us are living in historic times. We've been called to meet serious challenges. I have great confidence in America because I know the strength of our people. The world saw that strength on a September morning exactly 30 months ago and in the countless acts of courage and kindness that have followed. Together, Americans are moving forward with confidence and faith. We do not know God's plan, but we know His ways are right and just. And we pray He will always watch over this great country of ours.

I want to thank you for the chance to speak to this distinguished convention. May God bless you all, and may God continue to bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke by satellite at 10:42 a.m. from the Map Room at the White House to the convention meeting in Colorado Springs, CO. In his remarks, he referred to Ted Haggard, president, National Association of Evangelicals.

Remarks on the Terrorist Attacks in Madrid, Spain
March 11, 2004

Today I spoke to His Majesty the King of Spain—Jose Maria Aznar as well—about our country's deepest sympathies toward those who lost their life as a result of terrorist bombings in Spain. I told him we weep with the families. We stand strongly with the people of Spain. I appreciate so very much the Spanish Government's fight against terror, their resolute stand against terrorist organizations like the ETA. The United States stands with them. Today we

ask God's blessings on those who suffer in the great country of Spain.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:51 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House prior to his departure for Bay Shore, NY. In his remarks, he referred to King Juan Carlos I and President Jose Maria Aznar of Spain; and the Basque Fatherland and Liberty (ETA) separatist group.

Remarks in a Discussion on the National Economy in Bay Shore, New York

March 11, 2004

The President. Thanks for having me.

Vincent Trapani. Any time, any time. You can make the call; we're here.

The President. I've been looking for some auto parts.

Mr. Trapani. I can hook you up real easy.

The President. That's good, yes.

Mr. Trapani. I know a guy. [*Laughter*]

The President. You know a guy? Here's what we're—we're here to talk about how the economy works and how people can find work. We've got some challenges to face. And Vince, I want to thank you for giving me the chance to come and visit with people involved in this community. We've got some entrepreneurs, and we've got some hard workers, and we've got some educators and people helping people get education. And that's what we're going to talk about.

First, I want to thank you, Vince, and your family for greeting me. Nothing like being in the presence of an entrepreneur, somebody who dreams big dreams, works hard, and ends up employing good, hard-working people to provide a product somebody wants to buy.

Mr. Trapani. That's the American Dream.

The President. That is the American Dream. I said, "Did you buy this company?" He said, "No, I started it on a shoestring." And it's one of the most fantastic aspects about our society, and frankly, it's the entrepreneurial spirit that we're heralding today that is enabling us to overcome a lot of obstacles.

Before I talk about the obstacles, I do want to say thanks to my friend Governor George Pataki, the great Governor of this State. He's a great buddy of mine, and he and Libby are great friends of Laura and me as well. And he's doing a good job. He's a solid, solid, smart, capable public servant.

I also flew down on the airplane today with two fine Members of the United States Congress—Peter King, from this part of the world. Peter, thank you for coming. If he looks different, he just had some cataract surgery so he doesn't wear his glasses anymore. I said, "You're looking more beautiful than ever, Congressman." [*Laughter*] And I appreciate my friend Vito Fossella is with us today. Where are you, Vito? Glad you're here. These are two strong leaders. They care deeply about the citizens of the communities which they represent. They were talking New York the entire way from Washington, DC, to here, and I appreciate calling them friends.

I'm also proud that Jim Garner, the mayor of Hempstead—thank you for coming, big Jim. Jim, he's the president of the U.S. Conference of Mayors. That's a big deal. And I want to thank you for working with the administration on urban policy.

I appreciate very much all the local and State officials who are here. I know there's

a lot of members of the statehouse and the senate and the local governments. I appreciate you coming out to say hello. It's an honor that you would show up and say hi to the President.

I'm also very proud of the fact that John DiGiano is here. Where are you, John? He's a buddy of mine. There you are. Hi, John. Is Mama with you—is your wife with you? There she is, oh, yes. John is just a good buddy. I had to say hello to him. He's a friend. He's one of the great Americans, and he's the dad of a great American family. And I'm proud you came, John. Thank you all for being here.

Today at the airport, I met Rich McKeon. You probably never heard of Rich. Rich is a volunteer. He's a mentor. He's involved with Operation Hope, teaches youngsters about the—financial math, about how the economy works. He's been a member of Big Brothers and Big Sisters. The reason I bring up Rich is because a lot of times we talk about the strength of our country. One of the strengths, of course, is our military, and by the way, I'm going to keep it strong. Another strength is the fact that we've got—that we're a wealthy nation compared to others, and we intend to keep it that way. But the true strength is the hearts and souls of our citizens. That's really the strength of America.

The strength of this country—you know, we can change the country one heart at a time when somebody takes time out of their lives to love a neighbor like you'd like to be loved yourself. And that happens. That happens in every neighborhood in America. It happens whether Government says, "Do it," or not. People follow their heart because they hear a higher calling.

Here's old Rich. He's working to make a living, and yet he's taking time out of his life to surround a child with love and to give a child a little extra knowledge. Where are you, Rich? Thank you for coming. I appreciate your service.

My call is if you want to serve your country like Rich is, find a way to help somebody in need. Many of you probably are, and if you are, thanks a lot from the bottom of this Nation's collective heart.

Listen, we've overcome a lot. See, I'm sitting here next to Vince, and he's optimistic about the future. He just told me he was. And I don't think you were faking——

Mr. Trapani. There's no question about that.

The President. See——

Mr. Trapani. We live in a great country.

The President. Well, that too. And—but I want you to remember what we've been through, just to keep this conversation in perspective, about why we should be optimistic about what this—the future of this country.

First of all, we went through a recession. That means things were going backwards. The stock market started to decline—that affects people who had savings—in March of 2000. And then we had negative growth. And during negative growth, people who work for a living begin to wonder whether or not there's going to be a job. That's what that means. There's uncertainty. Business leaders and planners wonder whether or not the markets are going to be available for them to sell a product.

And we started to recover, and then the enemy hit us. And you know what it meant to have the enemy hit us, particularly in neighborhoods like these. John knows what it meant to have the enemy hit us. It was a devastating blow. It was a blow to our psychology. It was a blow to our economy.

By the way, this Nation rallied. It rallied, in large part, thanks to the citizens of the great State of New York, because they refused to be intimidated by terrorists and killers. It rallied because of the courage of the firefighters and police officers that people all around the country got to know via their television set. That's—it rallied. We're a strong nation.

And yet, that attack hurt us. It hurt us economically. They say over a million jobs were lost because of that attack. And then we started to recover, because we're a strong nation full of strong people. And then we found out some of the corporate citizens of America forgot what it meant to be a responsible citizen. In other words, they didn't tell the truth. They didn't tell the truth to their shareholders. They didn't tell the truth to their employees. But we passed tough laws. And by the way, that hurt the economy. If you can't have trust in the business leaders of an economy, the economy will suffer. It hurt. And so we passed tough laws. And so we're running them—these people are being held to account, let me put it to you that way. Justice is being delivered. We will not tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America.

And then I made a tough but necessary decision. The lesson of September 11th is this: We must deal with threats before they fully materialize. If you think there's a threat, you must deal with it early, before it is too late. That's the lesson of September the 11th. It's a lesson people must never forget.

I looked at the intelligence in Iraq and saw a threat. The United States Congress looked at the same intelligence; they saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council, right up the road there, looked at the intelligence, and it saw a threat. And so I went to the U.N. and said, "Look, let's deal with the man. He needs to reveal, disclose, and destroy weapons programs. That's what he needs to do." The world spoke, not just the United States of America. We spoke. He chose defiance. I had a choice to make at that point in time: Either trust the word of somebody who had deceived the world and had used weapons of mass destruction on his own people, or defend America. And given that choice, I will defend our country every time.

The march to war hurt the economy. Laura reminded me a while ago that—she said, "Remember what was on the TV screens"—she calls me George W.—"George W." I call her First Lady. No, anyway—[*laughter*]. She said, "We said 'March to War' on our TV screens." It's hard to run a business if you're marching to war. It's not conducive to capital investment. Marching to war is a negative thought, and if you're in the business world and you're trying to hire people or you're looking for work, it's not a conducive time to do so. Now we're marching to peace. We took the tough decision, but now we're marching to peace. We've overcome a lot, and our economy is growing.

We've got robust growth in the last half of 2003. Inflation is low. Interest rates are low. Manufacturing activity is up. Homeownership is at the highest rate ever. Unemployment rate is at 5.6 percent. There's still more to do; don't get me wrong. There's still people looking for work. There's still people worried about the job they now hold. And I'm going to talk a little bit about that before we get to some of our participants.

But let me remind you why I think we were able to overcome all we did. One, the entrepreneurial spirit is strong in America, and we intend to keep it that way. Two, the workers of America are the best in the world, the most productive, best, hardest working people on the face of the Earth. And three, we cut the taxes. If a family has more money to spend, it means they're going to demand an additional good or a service. And when they do, somebody is going to produce the good or a service. And when somebody produces it, somebody is going to work. That's what that means. When somebody goes and buys a car because of the extra money they've got in their pocket, they just might be buying a part for that car right from this shop right here. At least Vince wants them to.

Mr. Trapani. That's okay by me.

The President. And if they buy a part for the car manufactured here, it means

that this workforce is more stable. That's what that means. Tax relief worked.

And you hear a lot of talk in Washington about tax relief and taxing the rich and all that business. Let me tell you something. First, good policy says you cut the taxes on everybody who pays taxes, not try to pick and choose. Secondly, we increased the child credit to $1,000 per child to help families, and you're going to hear about some families who have been helped by this. The other thing we did is we reduced the marriage penalty. I mean, it doesn't seem to make much sense to penalize marriage when you're trying to encourage marriage in our society, yet the Tax Code did. And we made that better.

But you know what else we did—and this is important for people to understand when you hear this talk about the Tax Code. When you cut the taxes on individuals, you really reduce the taxes on small businesses as well, because most small businesses are sole proprietorships and Subchapter S corporations. And you see, when you cut the taxes on a small business, it gives that small-business owner more money to invest. And when that person invests, it means somebody is more likely to keep a job. Make no mistake about this: That tax cut was good for the small businesses of the United States of America, and that's one of the reasons why this economy is so strong.

A couple of other things, if you don't mind.

Mr. Trapani. Any time. [*Laughter*]

The President. Thank you, sir.

I told you there's more work to do. Let me tell you some of the things that we need to do. These tax cuts expire, which means taxes are going up on people. That's what that means. When you hear, "We're going to repeal the tax cuts," that's Washington, DC, code for "I'm fixing to raise your taxes." That's what that means. It doesn't make any sense to raise taxes on people who are beginning to employ people. If you're a small business, we shouldn't be raising the taxes on the small-business owners. We shouldn't be raising taxes on the hard-working families. It makes no sense to take money out of the pockets of the people that are driving this economy forward, and so we need to make the tax cuts permanent. Congress needs to listen to the voices of the people.

There's too many junk lawsuits in our society. We need tort reform in order for people to be—expand their businesses. You hear talk about outsourcing; I'm as concerned about outsourcing as the next person. But the way to deal with outsourcing is to make America a better place to do business, not a worse place. Raising taxes will make it harder to create jobs. Lawsuits make it harder to create jobs. We need an energy policy so people can plan their businesses around a solid supply of energy. We need to be less dependent on foreign sources of energy if we want to make sure jobs stay here.

You know how else you make sure that jobs stay home, is you have a health care policy that's reasonable and the prices are—and we do something about the high cost of health care for employees and employers. There's three things, the practical things we can do: one, associated health care plans to allow small businesses to pool risk in order to be able to have affordable health care for their employees; health savings accounts, which will help employees and employers better afford health care; and national medical liability reform to stop the junk lawsuits which are running up the cost of health care for these businesses.

One other thing we need to make sure of, we need to make sure we don't become isolated from the world. It's what I call economic isolationism. It's beginning to creep into the dialog. People are saying, "Well, we'll stop jobs from going overseas by making sure we put up walls and barriers between the United States and the rest of the world." That's lousy policy. You're about to hear a businessowner that relies upon exports. People work for him

because he's able to export. One in five factory jobs in America exist because they're selling products somewhere else. Six million people in this country work as a result of somebody saying, "This workforce of ours is so good, I'm going to build a plant"—like Honda right outside of Cleveland, Ohio, for example. Consumer prices will go up if we wall ourselves from the rest of the world. Economic isolationism is bad economic policy, and it will cost people jobs. It will make it harder for you to keep your work.

So what I want to do is, I want to take a different tack. You see, our markets are pretty open for other people. And what we're going to do is tell other people, "If our markets are open for you, you open yours for us." You see, we want to have trade, but trade that is fair. Level—we want a level playing field. We can outcompete with anybody. See, pessimistic people say, "America can't compete." An optimistic person says, "We can compete with anybody, just let's make sure the rules are fair and the playing field is level."

No, this plan of ours is a plan that says we're not going to have outsourcing because we want to make sure we've got better jobs right here at home—better, high-paying, high-quality jobs. And the way to do that is have an optimistic, progrowth economic policy. And that's what I intend to put forth to the United States Congress.

You ready to go? I've been talking too much. And if there appears to be a lot of hot air in here, it's probably because of me. [*Laughter*]

Robert Silverstein is with us today. Let me just say, Robert does not make a living by talking too much, like I do. Robert is an entrepreneur. He's got a very interesting little business. And Robert, do you mind telling us what you do?

[*At this point, Robert Silverstein, president, Orelube Corp., made brief remarks.*]

The President. Yes. Let me ask you, how many employees have you got?

Mr. Silverstein. We've got 13 employees right now.

The President. So first of all, we're talking to a small-business owner. You know how many businesses like Robert's are around the country? We're talking thousands and thousands and thousands of people who employ 20 people or less. It's really the backbone of the economy, when you think about it, isn't it? Small businesses, vibrant small businesses all over.

Did you hire anybody recently?

Mr. Silverstein. We just hired somebody this past November, and we just hired somebody this past February. That's two in the last 4 months, 5 months. And we plan this year to hire—a technology hire to boost the technology base of our company so we could expand our sales even further as well into these new countries that we're selling to now, as well as new countries.

The President. So he's gone from, like, 12 to 15. I heard the other day somebody kind of belittling that, that—oh, they were talking about a small business that only increased their employees by two or three people. You see, a country is vibrant when you've got small businesses who are optimistic and excited and are willing to take on additional employees. It's not the three—just three employees of Robert. There are thousands of Roberts who are hiring people. Most new jobs in America are created by small-business owners. And good Government policy, good tax policy rewards entrepreneurs like Robert.

So, Robert, I want to thank you for coming. I want to thank you for employing people. I want to tell you something: If we fall prey to economic isolationism, the jobs that he now has in his company are going to be vulnerable. If he can't export, if there's trade wars, if people throw up barriers, his people won't be working. We need to be confident in this country. We need to say, "If you're going to accept—if we're going to accept your product, you

make sure you accept ours." We can compete with anybody. Robert's showing you he can do that.

And I want to thank you for being a good business leader, Robert, and thanks for coming.

All right, Vince. I met your dad. Yes, I've got a good one too—and mother, by the way. Are you still telling him what to do? Yes. Bar is still telling me what to do too. [*Laughter*]

Listen, so Vince started his own business. By the way, Robert's grandfather started his. It's pretty neat, isn't it, to be talking to the grandson of an entrepreneur who had enough faith to leave it to the dad, and the dad passed it on to Robert.

One of the problems we have, in order for families to leave businesses, is the death tax. The death tax is a bad tax. The death tax means we're going to tax a person's assets twice, once when they're living and the second time after they're not. And it is a bad tax. It makes it hard for entrepreneurs to build up their companies and leave their assets to whom they want to leave them to. The Congress started passing that—getting rid of the death tax, and we just got—one of the reasons why we need to make the tax cuts permanent is so the death tax is gone, so dreamers can leave their assets to whomever they want.

Mr. Trapani. Fine by me.

The President. Yes, I'm ready. Tell us about how you started. I mean, here you are, a good-looking guy, wondering what you're going to do with yourself.

[*Mr. Trapani, president, U.S.A. Industries, Inc., made brief remarks.*]

The President. First of all, you're getting it a little backwards. Government doesn't create wealth. All Government does is create an environment for you who has got a good idea and willing to work to succeed. That's the difference between different visions of Government.

Okay, he's a Subchapter S corporation, which means he pays tax at the individual income-tax rate. And so when you hear him talking tax for the rich, here he is. He's a small-business owner. They're trying to run his taxes up as a businessowner. It doesn't make any sense to be raising taxes on small businesses.

Are you hiring anybody?

Mr. Trapani. Well, let's put it this way: Last year we were fortunate enough to have 208 great employees. Now we're fortunate enough to have 221 employees. We're looking at the possibility—and we're out here discussing things with our real estate agent—about the possibility of another 30,000 square feet of manufacturing potential, which would possibly create another 20 to 25 new jobs and, pray to God, more.

The President. See, he's hiring people. Why do we want to take money out of his pocket when he's hiring people? We don't.

Now, let me tell you another thing. Part of the Tax Code said that if you make an investment, you get a tax incentive to make the investment. In other words, we accelerated depreciation. That's a long word for saying we're trying to encourage the Vinces of the world to go out and buy some equipment. That was part of the tax plan. Some businesses need additional equipment—additional computers, additional software, and there was an incentive to go out and purchase them.

Did you buy any equipment?

Mr. Trapani. Oh, yes. [*Laughter*]

The President. Could you share with us what it was? [*Laughter*]

Mr. Trapani. It would be my pleasure. We spent a lot of our money basically in technology. It's technology, where we've spent our money in machinery and things like that—enable us to compete. We compete against——

The President. What kind of machine?

Mr. Trapani. We went out and we bought some heavy-duty air conditioning compressors, things like—not air conditioning—air compressors. And the reality of our air compressors, they're enabling us

basically to do things more efficient. So besides the fact that the benefit of what the proposal in the tax plan was, we were able to save money on our utility costs. Now we're even more energy efficient.

The President. See, there's a lot of talk about productivity increases. It means his workers are more productive. They can make more products in the same amount of time as before. That means they're more productive. And the reason they're more productive is because he bought some equipment. And one of the reasons why he bought some more equipment is because the Tax Code encouraged him to do so. Congress will take that away unless they make the tax cuts permanent, by the way.

Let me tell you something else that's interesting, so that everybody understands. When he goes out and buys an air compressor, somebody has to make the air compressor. And when somebody makes the air compressor, it means somebody is more likely to find a job. The economy works when you stimulate small-business owners and consumers. It works as the result of people meeting demand. And that's what we tried to do. We tried to create more demand. We wanted Vince to say, "I need a new compressor," and encourage him to buy it, and he did. His workers are more productive, he's more competitive, and somebody had to make the compressor. And that's the way the U.S. economy works with good Government policy.

The problem is, is that when you're raising people's taxes and you're increasing their regulations and you're walling off America, you make it more difficult for Vince to be aggressive in creating more jobs. And that's why I'm glad you invited me here. Keep hiring people.

Mr. Trapani. We intend to keep hiring people. But you have also created the environment. We have interest rates that enable us to go out and borrow, that—my parents don't remember how successful this here situation has become. So with the situation and the opportunities of lower interest rates, and more than anything, the tax savings—the tax savings that come back to people, that come back to America. My accountants are in the audience. They're happy.

The President. Yes, good. I'm glad they're happy. Wait until you get their bill. [*Laughter*] Then you won't be happy.

Okay. Pedro Ramos. *Como esta, Pedro?*

Pedro Ramos. Bien.

The President. Pedro works here. He's—how many children you got? *Cuantos ninos?*

Mr. Ramos. I've got two children. I've got a wife. I've got a house. I own a house. I've been working for him almost 14 years. I've been doing—he's been doing great for me. He's the best boss that I could have in this country. I think that I live in a very good country. We have such good opportunities in this country. I want to focus to get a better future for my children. My refund taxes, I always use it in my house, to fix my house. I invest all the money, my refund, in my house.

The President. Pedro, where were you born?

Mr. Ramos. I born in El Salvador.

The President. El Salvador. Got a great President, by the way. Paco Flores is one of my good friends.

Mr. Ramos. He said that you're good friends.

The President. Yes, he's a good fellow. [*Laughter*] You worked here *catorce años?*

Mr. Ramos. Yes.

The President. Fourteen years he's worked here?

Mr. Ramos. Fourteen years, yes.

The President. How old are your children?

Mr. Ramos. The older one is 9.

The President. Donde? Oh, there.

Mr. Ramos. They're sitting right there. My wife is right there, also.

The President. Oh, thanks.

Mr. Ramos. The second one is 6 years old.

The President. Six years old.

Mr. Ramos. Yes. I'm so proud of my children and my wife and my boys.

The President. I want you to listen to what he said. He said, "I took the tax relief and worked on my house." There's two things I want to share with you on that. One, there's nothing better than a society which encourages people to own something, isn't there? Either to own your own business—how about the fact that this is a fellow who was born in El Salvador, comes here to our country, and now owns his own home. Isn't that one of the spectacular aspects?

The tax relief we passed—his family saved $1,900 in taxes. Now, that doesn't sound like a lot to people in Washington, probably. I know it sounds a lot to the Congressmen who are here. But that's a lot to Pedro. Think about that $1,900, what that can mean. That's, by the way, because of the child credit and the marriage penalty and reducing the 10-percent tax bracket. His family has 1,900 more dollars of their own to spend.

And so he made a decision. He said, "I'm going to fix up my house." Well, you can't fix it up out of air. He's got to go buy things to fix it up with. I bet you bought some paint.

Mr. Ramos. That's correct, yes.

The President. Paint?

Mr. Ramos. Yes, paint.

The President. So somebody had to make the paint.

Mr. Ramos. And this year I plan to use my refund to do my fence. I want to do all my—the outside of my house.

The President. So that's good. That's how the economy works. Pedro takes the extra money in his pocket, and he goes—Home Depot? Where did you go?

Mr. Ramos. I go to Home Depot. Right, yes. [*Laughter*]

The President. See? Now you do. [*Laughter*] So he goes to Home Depot, and he buys something. Somebody had to make the product. The economy works when people demand things, and we increased demand. Let me tell you the problem: Congress needs to make the child credit and the marriage and the 10-percent bracket reductions permanent. Right now these are the parts of the Tax Code that begin to expire. They need to make all taxes permanent, and they need to start with these three. Otherwise, this good fellow pays $913 more in taxes next year. If they don't make the tax cuts permanent, it's a tax increase on Pedro. He pays more taxes. It makes no sense to be taxing this good family, right now, more money. It makes no sense. Congress needs to make the child credit and the marriage penalty and the 10-percent bracket, as a beginning, make them permanent this year, so Pedro has got more money to spend.

Good job. Good job.

Okay, Maureen White is with us. This is a really interesting story here that we're about to hear. It is a—it is innovative and compassionate. Maureen is senior vice president-chief nurse—chief nurse executive—even better—[*laughter*]—of the North Shore Long Island Jewish Health System. She is here with Maria Rais. What? Yes, exactly—Maira Rais. [*Laughter*] As I was saying, Maira Rais, yes. But why don't you tell us about your program, about your vision, and maybe introduce Maira? Thanks.

[*Maureen White made brief remarks.*]

The President. Yes, you're doing great. Thank you. Very good job. Unbelievably articulate.

Yes, Maureen was—first of all, is really well-spoken. [*Laughter*] I could take a lesson or two from you. [*Laughter*]

A couple of points that I think are important: One, there are jobs. There are jobs that need workers. They need nurses. Oftentimes people don't have the skills necessary to be a nurse. This hospital, an incredibly responsible group of people, said, "We'll train. We'll help. We'll pay for the training." And then the Nassau Community

College stepped up and provided the curriculum, provided the trainers.

We've got an issue in front of Congress, by the way, that will boost job training through the community college system. You hear people talking about—worrying about outsourcing and jobs moving overseas, and one reason why is because they don't have the skills necessary to take the jobs of the 21st century. We have an obligation in society to help train the people for the jobs which exist. And so job training has got to focus in smart, practical ways.

Maureen talked about a really practical job training program. I want to thank the Nassau Community College people, if any are here, for being flexible and available to work with the hospital system to help people train to become nurses, to help them become skilled in the jobs which actually exist.

I'll tell you one quick story, and then we're going to go to Maira. I was out in Arizona at a community college, and a woman who worked for a graphic artist—as a graphic design artist for 15 years, I believe it was, 12 or 15 years—a lot—and she went back to Mesa Community College and took a program to give her some additional skills in technology. And she stayed there for 6 months—got paid by, by the way, worker displacement money that Congress has provided as the result of trade policies. If somebody loses a job because of trade, you can get money necessary to learn the skills for a new job. And she made more money in her first year of her new job, having gone to get new skills and to be more productive, than she did after 15 years of being a graphic artist. So not only does getting new skills help you find a job, it helps you find a higher paying job.

And that's why, Maureen, I want to thank you for sharing your story. I want you to tell your hospital people thanks. I know my friend Fred Wilpon is on the board. I wish him all the best for the Mets this year—[*laughter*]—but tell him, as importantly, he's done a good job in the hospital.

Maira, tell us about your story.

[*Maira Rais, nurse assistant, North Shore Long Island Jewish Health System, made brief remarks.*]

The President. You know something, the story you just heard from Maira is—it's a hard story. There's a lot of people that say, "Well, I can't possibly go back to school and learn skills for the new jobs." But this economy of ours is in transition. There's fantastic opportunities. In some cases, however, people are going to need to go learn new skills in order to take advantage of the situation.

And it's hard, I fully understand, if you're a mom and you're kind of wondering whether or not it makes sense. But I want anybody out there listening to listen to Maira's story, that you can improve yourself, that you can go back to school, and it can make a huge difference in your life. I would—am I putting words in your mouth to say it's making a big difference in your life?

Ms. Rais. No, no, no, it's the truth. And I'm hoping when I graduate, work for North Shore, and I know my salary is going to be twice as much. So I'm looking forward for that. [*Laughter*]

The President. Yes, she's got the chance to have three times her current salary as a result of having gone to school, paid for by her potential employer. And it's an amazing opportunity. And the reason why I'm so thrilled you all are here is that there are opportunities like that all over New York and the country. There's fantastic opportunities to gain new skills and become more productive, to take advantage of the new jobs of the 21st century.

It's unsettling when the economy changes. I fully recognize that. But in the midst of a changing economy, there are fantastic opportunities. And here is a great story of Maira Rais, newly arrived to America—well, not newly arrived, been here

since 1980—but nevertheless is seizing the moment, is taking advantage of the opportunity. And her salary is going to go up three times—and this good lady is going to have a better employee as a result of the training.

By the way, their family saved $1,200 in tax relief. So when Congress starts thinking about whether or not to let those taxes go back up on the people, think about Maira. I'm not worried about the two Congressmen over here, by the way. [*Laughter*] They're solid. But I want people to think about Maira. That $1,200 means a lot to Maira and her family. I know it doesn't sound like a lot in Washington, DC, terms, but it's a lot to her.

Ms. Rais. I can tell you what I did with those $1,200.

The President. Well, why don't you tell us then.

Ms. Rais. I really—because I have my son who is in college. He's graduating this May.

The President. You don't look old enough to have a son in college.

Ms. Rais. Yes.

The President. He's graduating in May? Fantastic.

Ms. Rais. Yes, but he's going to transfer—he's looking forward to transfer to another college to complete his degree in business administration.

The President. Fantastic.

Ms. Rais. My daughter—two excellent students, honor students, so I'm proud of them and my whole family.

The President. And so you're going to use the money to help your son?

Ms. Rais. Well, I really did, because when I got the tax refund money, I used it for his books, my books that I had to pay for. It helped a great deal.

The President. Now, see, the tax relief helped her go back to school so she can make three times the amount of money, possibly, than she was making. The tax relief helps average Americans. Congress needs to make the tax relief permanent; otherwise, she's going to be paying more taxes. It makes no sense to raise the taxes on Maira or Pedro or any of the entrepreneurs up here. We're doing good things with the—the people are doing good things with their own money. They're making this economy grow.

Listen, I want to thank them for coming, and I want to thank you all for coming. I hope you get a—share the same sense of optimism I do about the future of our country. When you hear about the entrepreneurial stories, you've got to be optimistic. These guys are hiring people. They believe the future is going to be better. When you hear the story of compassion coming out of the local hospital, it's got to make you optimistic about the decency of the people of this country. And then when you hear about the stories of these hard-working citizens of our country who have got big dreams for their families, and willing to achieve those big dreams, it's got to make you optimistic. I really am.

Listen, the strength of this country is in the hearts and souls of our citizens. I want to thank the citizens up here today for sharing your hearts and for sharing your souls. May God bless you all, and may God continue to bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:32 p.m. at U.S.A. Industries, Inc. In his remarks, he referred to Libby Pataki, wife of Gov. George E. Pataki of New York; President Francisco Flores Perez of El Salvador; and Fred Wilpon, owner, New York Mets.

Remarks at a Bush-Cheney Reception in East Meadow, New York
March 11, 2004

The President. Thanks for coming. Thanks for the warm welcome. It's great——

Audience member. New York loves you!

The President. Thank you, sir.

Audience member. We need you!

The President. Let me get started. [*Laughter*] Thanks for coming. Thanks for your friendship. Thanks for your support. It is great to be back in New York. We have had a fantastic day here today. And it's topped off by what is a successful effort to make sure that my campaign is properly fueled—[*laughter*]—for the charge ahead.

We're going to compete here in New York, and we're going to compete here hard. I'm counting on you. I'm counting on you to help us. The Vice President and I look forward to bringing our message to this great State. New York is going to be a part of what is going to be a great national victory in November of this year. Speaking about our Vice President, I made a really good pick when I asked Dick Cheney to join me. He's the finest Vice President our country has ever had.

Audience member. Your dad was! [*Laughter*]

The President. You know something, you sounded exactly like my mother. [*Laughter*]

Speaking about marrying well—[*laughter*]—that is precisely what I did. Laura is a fabulous First Lady. She's really a comforting soul who loves our family and loves our country. I'm really proud of the job she's done.

I'm also proud of the job that Governor George Pataki has done for the State of New York. He is a great Governor. I'm proud to call Pataki friend. I really am. It's comforting to know that he's out there on the stump defending his buddy George W. And he does a good job of it. He really does. I'm proud—thank you, George, for being here. I also want to thank my friend Rudy Giuliani for being here as well. He too is out there defending his buddy. And both these men have got a lot of credibility because they've done such a great job in their—one as Governor and one as mayor during difficult times. And I'm proud to call them friends.

I'm also pleased that Peter King traveled with me today from Washington, DC, to his district here in New York. I want to thank Peter for his service. He's a fine United States Congressman, as is Vito Fossella. Vito is a New York Congressman as well.

I want to thank all the grassroots activists who are here. I want to thank Sandy Treadwell and Mike Long. I want to thank Joe Mondello. Pat Acampora is with us today. These are all people who are willing to spend time energizing the grassroots. Those are the people who are willing to put up the signs and make the phone calls and turn out the vote. I'm counting on you. You can't run a campaign alone. You need people from all neighborhoods around this country willing to work. And for those of you who are going to work on our behalf, I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart. We're counting on you. We're not going to let you down. And I'm looking forward to the contest.

I finally got an opponent. [*Laughter*] It was my honor to call Senator Kerry and to welcome him to the race and to congratulate him on running a good campaign. I look forward to the debate, a debate on the issues. And it's going to be an interesting debate because he's built up quite a record. [*Laughter*] Senator Kerry—he's been in Washington long enough to take both sides of every issue. [*Laughter*] Senator Kerry voted for the PATRIOT Act, voted for NAFTA, voted for the No Child Left Behind Act, and for the use of force in Iraq. Now he opposes the PATRIOT

Act, NAFTA, the No Child Left Behind Act, and the liberation of Iraq. He clearly has strong beliefs. [*Laughter*] They just don't last very long. [*Laughter*]

There will be a very clear choice in this election, the choice between keeping the tax relief that is moving the economy forward or putting the burden of higher taxes back on the American people, a choice between an America that leads the world with strength and confidence or an America that is uncertain in the face of danger. I look forward to laying these alternatives squarely before the people.

I'm glad the campaign has begun. I have something I want to tell the people. The first thing I'm going to tell them is we've achieved great things during the last 3 years. We've accomplished a lot. But most importantly, we have a positive vision, an optimistic vision for the years ahead, a plan to win the war on terror, a plan to extend freedom and peace throughout the world, a plan to make sure prosperity continues, and a plan to encourage compassion at home. There's no doubt where we stand. I will speak clearly and confidently about our positions, and there's no doubt we'll win 4 more years on the 2d of November.

The last 3 years have brought serious challenges, and we've given serious answers. We came to office with the stock market in decline and the economy headed into recession, delivered historic tax relief, and now our economy is the fastest growing of any major industrialized nation.

We had to confront corporate crimes that cost people their jobs and their savings, so we passed strong corporate reforms and made it very clear that we will not tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America.

We saw war and grief on a quiet September morning. But we pursued the terrorist enemy across the world. We've captured or killed many of the key leaders of the Al Qaida network, and the rest of them will learn there is no cave or hole deep enough to hide from the justice of the United States.

We confronted the dangers of state-sponsored terror and the spread of weapons of mass destruction, so we ended two of the most violent and dangerous regimes on Earth. We freed over 50 million people, and once again, America is proud to lead the armies of liberation.

When we came to Washington, we found a military that was underfunded and underappreciated, so we gave our military the resources and respect they deserve. And today, no one in the world can question the skill and the strength and the spirit of the United States military.

When we came to office, people had gotten used to what they call gridlock. Old problems were used to score points. Old problems were just politicized and debated and then just passed on from year to year. But we came to Washington for a different reason. We came to solve problems. That's why we passed major reforms to raise the standards in every public school in America. That's why we passed reforms of Medicare to give patients prescription drugs and give seniors choices. No, we came to lead, and we have delivered results for the American people.

It's a President's job to confront problems, not to pass them on to future Presidents and future generations. A President needs to step up to make tough decisions and keep commitments. And that's how I'm going to continue to lead this country. Great events will turn on this election. The man who sits in the Oval Office will set the course in the war on terror and the direction of our economy. The security and prosperity of America are at stake.

My opponent hasn't offered much in the way of strategies to win the war or policies to expand our economy. So far, all we hear from that side is a lot of bitterness and anger. But he's going to find out what I know: Anger is not an agenda for the future of America.

I'm going to talk about the big issues confronting our country with a sense of optimism because I believe so much in what

our country stands for, a sense of resolve and determination. My administration stands ready to lead this Nation for 4 more years. We have a reason. We can see clearly where we need to go.

The big issue for every family in America is the Federal tax burden. It's the largest tax relief since Ronald Reagan was the President. We have left more money in the hands that earned it. By spending and investing and helping to create new jobs, the American people have used their money far better than the Federal Government would have. Because we acted, our economy is growing stronger. The economy grew in the second half of 2003 at the fastest rate in nearly 20 years. Productivity is high, and business investment is rising. Interest rates and inflation rates are low. Homeownership is at the highest rate ever. Manufacturing is increasing. We've added 355,000 new jobs over the past 6 months. The tax relief we passed is working.

We have a difference of opinion on taxes. My opponent's plan for those tax cuts is to take them away. He would use that money to expand the Federal Government. I have a better idea: To keep this economy growing and to create jobs, the tax cuts must be permanent.

We need to do more to keep our economy growing. To create jobs, we need to maintain fiscal discipline in the Nation's Capital. We need to protect small-business owners and employees from the frivolous and junk lawsuits that make it hard to expand their businesses. We need to stop overregulation at the State and Federal level. We need to control the costs of health care by association health plans or health saving accounts, and this country must have national medical liability reform. We need to open up markets for New York's farmers and entrepreneurs and manufacturers. We need to pass sound energy legislation that will encourage conservation, that will enable us to modernize our electricity system, and that will make us less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

We've got a difference on how to create jobs. My opponent talks about job creation, but he's against every one of those job-creating measures. Empty talk about jobs and economic isolationism won't get anybody hired. The best way to create jobs is through a pro-growth, pro-entrepreneur economic agenda.

Our economy is changing. It's a time of transition. And so we must help people get the skills necessary so they can find good work. All skills start with education. That's why I was so strong on the No Child Left Behind Act. This administration is challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations. In return for Federal money, we now expect every child to learn to read and write and add and subtract. And we want every school district in America to show us whether or not every child is learning to read and write and add and subtract, to make sure that not one single child gets left behind in our country.

We're doing more. We have special programs for high school students to make sure they can catch up in reading and math. We've got to focus on our community college system. Today I heard the great story about Nassau Community College and their nursing program, as they're paying for people to become nurses in our society. Education is the gateway to a hopeful future, and this administration is making sure the gate is open to all Americans.

We're also working toward making sure this society encourages ownership. We want more people owning a home. We want more people owning their own small business. We want people owning and managing their own health care accounts. We want younger workers to own and manage personal savings accounts under Social Security. I believe in private property so much, I want everybody to have some. [*Laughter*]

On issue after issue, the American people have a very clear choice. My opponent is against personal retirement accounts. He's against putting patients in charge of

Medicare. He's against the tax relief. He seems to be against every idea that gives Americans more authority, more choices, and more control over our own lives. It's the same old Washington mindset: They'll give you the orders, and you'll pay the bills. I've got news for the Washington crowd, the Washington insiders. America has gone beyond that way of thinking, and we are not going back.

Our future also depends on America's leadership in the world. The momentum of freedom in our time is strong, but we still face serious challenges. Al Qaida is wounded but not broken. Terrorists are testing our will in Afghanistan and in Iraq. Regimes in North Korea and Iran are challenging the peace. If America shows weakness and uncertainty in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. That is not going to happen on my watch.

This Nation is strong and confident in the cause of freedom, and today, no one doubts the word of the United States. America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Afghanistan. The Taliban chose defiance, and for the good of the world and for the good of the suffering people in Afghanistan, the Taliban are no longer in power. America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Iraq. The dictator chose defiance; the dictator now sits in a prison cell.

September the 11th, 2001, taught a lesson I will never forget: America must confront threats before they fully materialize. In Iraq, my administration looked at the intelligence, and we saw a threat. The Congress looked at the same intelligence, and they saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence, and it saw a threat. The previous administration and Congress looked at the intelligence and made regime change in Iraq the policy of our country. In 2002, the United Nations Security Council yet again demanded a full accounting of Saddam Hussein's weapons programs. As he had for over a decade, Saddam Hussein refused to comply. So I had a choice to make: Either take the word of a madman, or take action to defend America. Given that choice, I will defend America.

My opponent admits that Saddam Hussein was a threat. He just didn't support my decision to remove Saddam from power. Perhaps he was hoping Saddam would lose the next election in Iraq. [*Laughter*]

We showed the dictator and a watching world that America means what it says. Because our coalition acted, Saddam's torture chambers are closed. Because we acted, Iraq's weapons programs are ended forever. Because we acted, nations like Libya have gotten the message and renounced their own weapons programs. Because we acted, an example of democracy is rising at the heart of the Middle East. Because we acted, the world is more free and America is more secure.

We still face thugs and terrorists in Iraq who would rather go on killing the innocent than accept the advance of liberty. See, they know that a free Iraq would be a major defeat in the cause of terror. This collection of killers is trying to shake our will, to shake the will of America. You know, they really don't understand our country. America will never be intimidated by thugs and assassins.

We are aggressively striking the terrorists in Iraq, defeating them there so we do not have to face them in our own country. We're calling on other nations to help Iraq build a free society. A free Iraq makes America and the world more secure. We're standing with the Iraqi people as they assume more of their own defense and move toward self-government. These are not easy tasks, but they are essential tasks. America will finish what we have begun, and we will win this essential victory in the war on terror.

On national security, Americans have the clearest possible choice. My opponent says he approves of bold action in the world, but only if other countries don't object. I'm

all for united action, and so are our 34 coalition partners in Iraq right now. This country must never outsource America's security decisions to leaders of other nations.

Some are skeptical that the war on terror is really a war at all. Just days ago, my opponent indicated that he's not comfortable using the word "war" to describe the struggle we're in. He said, "I don't want to use that terminology." Senator Kerry has also said the war on terror is far less of a military operation and far more of an intelligence gathering, law enforcement operation. I disagree. Our Nation followed this approach after the World Trade Center was bombed in 1993. The matter was handled in the courts and thought by some to be settled. But the terrorists were still training in Afghanistan. They were still plotting in other nations. They were drawing up more ambitious plans. After the chaos and carnage of September the 11th, it is not enough to serve our enemies with legal papers.

With those attacks, the terrorists and their supporters declared war on the United States of America. And war is what they got. One very important issue of this war is intelligence gathering, as Senator Kerry says. Yet in 1995, 2 years after the first attack on the World Trade Center, my opponent offered legislation to cut the overall intelligence budget by $1½ billion. When he introduced that bill on the floor of the Senate, Senator Kerry said he was cutting spending that was, in his words, pointless, wasteful, antiquated, and just plain silly. Well, his colleagues must have had their own ideas about what was pointless and silly, because not one of them signed on as a cosponsor to Senator Kerry's idea. Intelligence spending is necessary, not wasteful. It is important. It is a serious duty of our Government and vital to the defense of this country.

Our intelligence professionals are taking great risks, and they're doing great work. And so are the men and women of the United States military. At bases across our country and the world, I've had the privilege, the high privilege, of meeting with those who defend our country and sacrifice for our security. I've seen their great decency and their unselfish courage. And I assure you, ladies and gentlemen, the cause of freedom is in very good hands.

This Nation is prosperous and strong, yet we need to remember that our greatest strength is in the hearts and souls of our citizens. We're strong because of the values we try to live by, courage and compassion and reverence and integrity. We're strong because of the institutions that give us direction and purpose, families and schools and religious congregations. These values and institutions are fundamental to our lives, and they deserve the respect of the Government.

We stand for the fair treatment of faith-based groups so they can receive Federal support for their works of compassion and help. We will not stand for Government discrimination against people of faith.

We stand for welfare reforms that require work and strengthen marriage, which have helped millions of Americans find independence and dignity. We will not stand for any attempt to weaken those reforms and to send people back into lives of dependence.

We stand for a culture of life in which every person counts and every person matters. We will not stand for the treatment of any life as a commodity to be experimented upon or exploited or cloned.

We stand for the confirmation of judges who strictly and faithfully interpret the law. We will not stand for judges who undermine democracy by legislating from the bench and try to remake the culture of America by court order.

We stand for the culture of responsibility in America. We're changing the culture of America from one that says, "If it feels good, do it," and, "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each of us understands we are responsible for the decisions we make in life.

If you're fortunate enough to be a mother or a father, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart. If you're worried about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you're responsible for doing something about it. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you're responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And in a new responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourself.

For all Americans, these years in our history will always stand apart. There are quiet times in the life of a nation when little is expected of our leaders. This isn't one of those times. You and I are living in a period when the stakes are high and the challenges are difficult, a period of time when American resolve is needed.

None of us will ever forget that week when one era ended and another began. On September the 14th, 2001, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers. I stood with George and Rudy. I'll never forget that day. There were workers in hardhats shouting at the top of their lungs, "Whatever it takes." I remember a fellow pointed at me and said, "Mr. President, never let me down." As we all did that day, the men and women searching through the rubble took it personally. I took it personally. I have a responsibility that goes on. I will never relent in bringing justice to our enemies. I will defend the security of America, whatever it takes.

In these times, I have also been witness to the character of this Nation. Not so long ago, some had their doubts about the American character, whether we could meet a serious challenge or whether we had the capacity to serve a cause greater than self-interest. But Americans have given their answer. I've seen the unselfish courage of our troops. I've seen the heroism of Americans in the face of danger. I've seen the spirit of service and compassion renewed in our country. We've all seen our Nation unite in common purpose when it mattered most.

We will need all of these qualities for the work ahead. We have a war to win, and the world is counting on us to lead in the cause of freedom and peace. We have a duty to spread opportunity to every part of this country. This is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it. And we know that for our country, the best days lie ahead.

God bless you all. Thanks for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:25 p.m. at the Carltun. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. George E. Pataki of New York; Rudolph W. Giuliani, former mayor of New York City; Alexander F. "Sandy" Treadwell, chairman, New York Republican State Committee; Mike Long, chairman, Conservative Party of New York State; Joseph Mondello, chairman, Nassau County Republican Party; and Patricia L. Acampora, New York State assemblywoman.

Remarks Following a Wreath-Laying Ceremony for Victims of the March 11 Terrorist Attacks in Madrid, Spain

March 12, 2004

Mr. Ambassador, thank you for having Laura and me here during this solemn occasion. The United States of America sends our prayers and sympathies to the Spanish people, who mourn the loss of life, who today weep for their loved ones, who wonder about their future now that there's been such tragedy.

The bombings in Spain are a grim reminder that there are evil people in the

world who are willing to kill innocent life. I appreciate so very much your Government's strong stand against terrorism and terrorist organizations like ETA. The United States of America stands firmly with you as we work to make the world more peaceful and more free.

Killers try to shake our will. They try to shake our confidence in the future. Spanish people will stand firm against this type of killing, and they'll have a friend with the American people. So Mr. Ambassador, we ask for God's blessings for the people of your great country.

Thank you very much for having Laura and me here.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:08 p.m. at the Embassy of Spain in Washington, DC. In his remarks, he referred to Francisco Javier Ruperez Rubio, Spain's Ambassador to the U.S.; and Basque Fatherland and Liberty (ETA).

Interview of the President and the First Lady by Television of Spain (TVE) *March 12, 2004*

Reaction to March 11 Terrorist Attacks in Madrid, Spain

Q. First of all, I would like to thank you very much on behalf of the Spanish people for being able to send a message. And I'd like to ask your feelings about this horrifying thing that happened yesterday in Madrid. First question: What are your feelings?

The President. Well, I can remember when our citizens lost life. I remember the horror, the outrage, the anger, and the incredible sadness. So I guess my—I feel the same way today. My first reaction is, my heart breaks for those who are mourning the loss of their loved one. It must be a sense of emptiness and a sense of real—their hearts are broken. And we send our prayers to those who are so sad——

The First Lady. Grieving, who are grieving today. We all are thinking about them. And I want all the people who lost somebody yesterday in Spain to know that the American people are sending our love and our condolences. And we know what it feels like, and we know how tough it is.

Q. That would be the second question. The message for the people of Spain is that of solidarity and love?

The President. Of course. I think the people of Spain are going to rally around those who have lost life. It's amazing what happens when something like this happens to a society. There's an outpouring of love and concern. There's an outpouring of love here in America from people that the families in Spain will never know. There's just a lot of people who care deeply about the fact of the lost life. Neighbors will help neighbors.

I think you're going to find as well that the people of Spain—or we'll find as well—the people of Spain will refuse to be intimidated, that they're not going to allow killers, coldblooded killers, to intimidate the country. And these people kill because they hate freedom and they hate what Spain stands for. Spain is a great culture and a great people, with great traditions of democracy. And the killers hate freedom, and they're trying to intimidate. And the Spanish people will not be intimidated.

Q. As you know, the royal family is working hard, as is the Spanish Government, trying to heal, if it's possible. Any message for the many women, many families who now feel really lost?

The First Lady. I want to encourage women and men, and mothers and fathers particularly, to put their arms around their children. These are very frightening times

for adults, so we can imagine how frightening they are for children. And it's a time for adults, mothers and dads and grandparents, to protect their children and reassure their children, put their arms around them and let them know they're going to be okay and the country is going to be okay and things will work out, as we grieve for these people who lost the person they love best in the bombings.

Cooperation With Spanish Government

Q. Mr. President, you've been dealing with this situation for 4 years. I'm sure it's been very hard. What could you say to the Spanish Government now dealing with a hard thing?

The President. My first reaction is that the people of Spain are lucky to have Jose Maria Aznar as the President during these times. He is a man who understands the war on terror, clearly knows the stakes, and knows that we must never give an inch to the terrorists. He will be able to be a strong voice, a compassionate voice and a strong voice during these times.

The Government must stay strong. But the Spanish Government has been fighting terrorist organizations for a while. Jose Maria has been strong against terrorist organizations like ETA. He knows what the stakes are. We don't know who did this yet. I wouldn't rule anybody out. You'll hear all kinds of rumors, and it will take a while to find out the facts. And the United States Government will help the Spanish Government find out the facts, if they so desire.

People will find there's going to be a lot of speculation here, and that's all it's going to be. People will claim credit or not claim credit. People will say, "We didn't do it," or "We did do it," to create a sense of confusion. But the facts will become known after a while. It takes a while. It took us a while to find out exactly who ordered the attacks on America. And once the facts are known and once we find out who did it, America will join the Spanish Government to hunt the terrorists down and bring them to justice.

Q. Would it make any difference if it's ETA or Al Qaida or any radical——

The President. Well, it's hard to speculate. We've seen claims already—"No, we didn't do this." Sometimes when somebody says, "No, we didn't do it," it means they did do it. And sometimes these people want to deceive. But we don't know yet. And all I can assure the people of Spain is that, to the extent that the Government wants, we will help find out the facts, and if these terrorists are overseas or plotting from overseas or anywhere in Europe, we will lend our expertise, our intelligence gathering to help the Spanish authorities bring these people to justice. That's what the Spanish people expect. These people need to be brought to justice. And we will help any way we can.

Responsibility for Attack/Spanish Election

Q. Let's talk a bit about the future. As you know, we have elections in a couple of days, the day after tomorrow. And some people say that if it's Al Qaida, that could mean that somebody is trying to punish the Spanish Government for backing the war. What do you think about it?

The President. I think that's a feeble excuse. Killers kill. And I think we shouldn't give them any great credit. All they're trying to do is shake the will of the free world. They hate freedom, and they're willing to try to create—intimidate people to change. And the Spanish Government will never change its love for freedom. It's one of the great things about Spain, is its embrace of liberty.

But people shouldn't speculate right now as to who did it. It's going to take a while. It just is. These were very coordinated bombings, and it's going to take some good forensic work to get the facts.

And so I hope the people of Spain just go about their business—and participate in the elections, of course; after all, Spain is a democracy—and not let the speculation

decide how to vote. They ought to vote for who they think is going to be the best government.

Q. But it's almost inevitable. I mean, the whole world is watching who is behind the attacks——

The President. Sure. We want to help—we want to find—we want to help find out. But I don't think you can know immediately. Again, people will—this happened in our country. And there was all kinds of speculation as to who attacked, who started the attacks. And it took a while to make sure we knew. But over time, our intelligence services got worked up and law enforcement got involved, and I think you'll find the case to be in Spain as well. The facts will become known. And then that makes it easier for the Government to make the decision as to how to proceed.

Q. Thank you very much. As I said, on behalf of the Spanish people, thank you for sending a message and for being close to us.

The President. Yes. Well, we care deeply about our friends, and the people of Spain are friends. May God bless them.

Q. Thank you.

The First Lady. Thank you.

NOTE: The interview began at 1:25 p.m. at the Embassy of Spain. In his remarks, the President referred to Basque Fatherland and Liberty (ETA). A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Remarks on Efforts To Globally Promote Women's Human Rights
March 12, 2004

Thank you all very much. It takes me 45 seconds to walk to work, and sometimes I get introduced by my wife. [*Laughter*] It's a heck of a job. Thanks, Laura.

Laura is—you know, one of the interesting moments in our family came when she gave a radio address. She used the President's time to give a radio address, to speak to the women of Afghanistan. And it made a big difference in people's lives. And it was from that moment forward that she, personally, has dedicated time to make sure that people who have been enslaved are free, particularly women. And I'm proud of Laura's leadership.

In the last 2½ years, we have seen remarkable and hopeful development in world history. Just think about it: More than 50 million men, women, and children have been liberated from two of the most brutal tyrannies on Earth—50 million people are free. All these people are now learning the blessings of freedom.

And for 25 million women and girls, liberation has a special significance. Some of these girls are attending school for the first time. It's hard for people in America to imagine. A lot of young girls now get to go to school. Some of the women are preparing to vote in free elections for the very first time.

The public whippings by Taliban officials have ended. The systematic use of rape by Saddam's regime to dishonor families has ended. He sits in the prison cell.

The advance of freedom in the greater Middle East has given new rights and new hopes to women. And America will do its part to continue the spread of liberty.

I want to thank a man who is working hard to continue the spread of liberty, and that's the Secretary of State, Colin Powell. I appreciate three members of my Cabinet who are here: Secretary Gale Norton, Secretary Ann Veneman, and Secretary Elaine Chao. I put together, in all due humility, the greatest Cabinet ever. And one of the

reasons why is these three ladies have agreed to serve. The President has got to get pretty good advice—I mean really good advice, frankly, from people other than his wife. [*Laughter*] I get great foreign policy advice from Condoleezza Rice, who is with us today.

I want to thank other members of my administration who are here for this very important occasion to end what has been a very important dialog. Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz is with us; Andrew Natsios, who runs USAID. Paula Dobriansky of the Department of State—and I want to thank you for going to Afghanistan recently with Joyce Rumsfeld, Secretary Rumsfeld's better half, who also went to Afghanistan recently to spread the word that America will stay the course, that when we say something, we mean it, and that we say we're going to—[*applause*].

I just named a distinguished American to be a U.S. delegate to the U.N. Commission on the Status of Women, my sister, Dorothy. Thank you for being here, Doro. And I took the recommendation of Vice President Cheney for another member of the same delegation. He suggested that America would be well served by his eldest daughter, Liz. And he's right. Good to see you, Liz.

I want to thank Rend al-Rahim, who is with us today. Rend, thank you for coming. She's the senior Iraqi representative to the United States. That is a forerunner to ambassadorial status, I guess. Certainly I'm not speaking for what is going to be the sovereign Government of Iraq. She's good at what she does, I'm telling you.

There's a lot of ambassadors who are here. I want to thank you all for coming. It's good to see you. I appreciate you taking time to be here. This is an important conference. The message of the United States about freedom and liberty in the Middle East is a serious message. And I thank the Governments for being here to listen and to help us advance this vital cause for what's good for the world. And so thanks for coming. There's a lot of countries represented here, particularly Middle Eastern countries.

As I told you, Joyce went to—and Paula went to Afghanistan. There are other members of the U.S. Afghan Women's Council that went to Kabul. I want to thank you all for going. I hear it's—one of the travelers, Karen Hughes, reported back, and Margaret did as well—Margaret Spellings, who is my Domestic Policy Adviser. They said it's unbelievable what's taking place there. The country is transitioning from despair to hope. And it's easy to see now. It's changing and changing for the better. The people of Afghanistan have just got to know that we'll stand with them for however long it takes to be free.

I appreciate the Iraqi women who attended the Commission on the Status of Women in New York this week. I want to thank you all for coming. I appreciate you being here.

I want to thank my friend Dr. Raja Khuzai, who's with us today. This is the third time we have met. The first time we met, she walked into the Oval Office—let's see, was it the first time? It was the first time. The door opened up. She said, "My liberator," and burst out in tears. And so did I.

Dr. Khuzai also was there to have Thanksgiving dinner with our troops. And it turned out to be me as well. Of course, I didn't tell her I was coming. [*Laughter*] But I appreciate that, and now she's here again. I want to thank you, Doctor, for your hard work on the writing of the basic law for your people. You have stood fast. You have stood strong. Like me, you've got liberty etched in your heart, and you're not going to yield. And you are doing a great job, and we're proud to have you back. Thanks for coming.

Ambassador Ssempala is with us as well, from Uganda. It's great to see you again, Ambassador. Thanks. She made our trip to Uganda so special that time. She paved the way for what was a special trip. I'm going

to talk a little bit about HIV/AIDS. I want to thank you and your country's leadership on that important issue.

Shamim Jawad is with us, Ambassador Said Jawad's better half. I want to thank you very much for being here, Shamim. Thanks for coming. I appreciate your coming.

The Director of the Anti-Trafficking Operations for International Justice Mission is Sharon Cohn. She's with us. Let me tell what that means. That means she's working to end sex slavery. She is a noble soul who cares deeply about the plight of every woman. And I'm honored that you're up here, Sharon. I want thank you very much for your strong commitment. This Government stands with you, and our country stands with you. We abhor—we abhor—the practice of sex slavery. We will do all we can to help you.

Support for human rights is the cornerstone of American foreign policy. As a matter of national conviction, we believe that every person in every culture is meant by God to live in freedom. As a matter of national interest, we know that the spread of liberty and hope is essential to the defeat of despair and bitterness and terror. The policy of the American Government is to stand for the nonnegotiable demands of human dignity: the rule of law, the limits on the power of the state, free speech, freedom of worship, equal justice, respect for women, religious and ethnic tolerance, and protections for private property. That is what we believe, and we're not going to change.

We have transformed this belief in human rights into action. Last year, our Government devoted nearly $75 million to combat the worldwide trafficking in human beings. It's a brutal trade, inhumane trade, by sick people that targets many women and girls. I spoke out against this practice at the United Nations. I called upon the world to join us. This country is determined to fight and end this modern form of slavery.

HIV/AIDS has orphaned millions of children worldwide. And in some African countries, nearly 60 percent of adults carrying the virus are women. In 2002, we created the Mother and Child HIV Prevention Initiative to prevent viral transmission of the virus between generations. It's an important initiative by this Government, but it wasn't enough.

Last year, I announced an Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, a $15 billion commitment over 5 years to fight this deadly disease. This country is determined to turn the tide against this modern plague. When we see disease and suffering, we will not turn our back.

The economic empowerment of women is one effective way to improve lives and to protect rights. Each year for the past 5 years, the United States Government has provided an average of $155 million in small loans, microloans. About 70 percent of those benefit women. It turns out the world is learning what we know in America: The best entrepreneurs in the country are women. In America, most new small businesses are started by women. With the right help, that will be the case around the world as well.

We're determined to help women to find the independence and dignity that comes from ownership. These are necessary responses to urgent problems. Yet, in the end, the rights of women and all human beings can be assured only within the framework of freedom and democracy. If people aren't free, it is likely that women will be suppressed.

Human rights are defined by a constitution. They're defended by an impartial rule of law. They're secured in a pluralistic society. The advance of women's rights and the advance of liberty are ultimately inseparable. America stands with the world's oppressed peoples. We've got to speak clearly for freedom, and we will, in places like Cuba or North Korea or Zimbabwe or Burma.

We stand with courageous reformers. Aung San Suu Kyi is a courageous reformer and a remarkable woman who remains under house arrest for her efforts to bring democracy to her nation. Earlier today, the Libyan Government released Fathi Jahmi. She's a local government official who was imprisoned in 2002 for advocating free speech and democracy. It's an encouraging step toward reform in Libya. You probably have heard, Libya is beginning to change her attitude about a lot of things. We hope that more such steps will follow in Libya and around the world.

The advance of freedom cannot be held back forever. And America is working to hasten the day when freedom comes to every single nation. We understand a free world is more likely to be a peaceful world.

When Iran's Shirin Ebadi accepted the Nobel for peace—Nobel Prize for Peace last year, here's what she said: "If the 21st century wishes to free itself from the cycle of violence and acts of terror and war and avoid repetition of the experience of the 20th century, there is no other way except by understanding and putting into practice every human right for all mankind, irrespective of race and gender, faith, nationality, or social status." That's a powerful statement coming from Iran. No wonder she won the Nobel Prize. She's a proud Iranian. She is a devout Muslim. She believes that democracy is consistent with Islamic teachings. And we share in this belief. That's what we believe in America. A religion that demands individual moral accountability and encourages the encounter of the individual with God is fully compatible with the rights and responsibilities of self-government. Promotion of democracy in the greater Middle East is important. It's a priority of ours. And it will be a long and difficult road. But we're on the way.

Three years ago, the nation of Afghanistan was the primary training ground for Al Qaida. You heard Laura talk about the movie "Osama." See it. It'll help enrich the words I'm about to say: The Taliban were incredibly barbaric. It's hard for the American mind to understand "barbaric." Watch the movie. Women were forbidden from appearing in public unescorted. That's barbaric. Women were prohibited from holding jobs. It's impossible for young girls to get an education. That's barbaric. It's not right.

Today, the Taliban regime is gone, thank goodness. Girls are back in class. The amazing accomplishment, though, is that Afghanistan has a new constitution that guarantees full participation by women. The constitution is a milestone in Afghanistan's history. It's really a milestone in world history, when you think about it. All Afghan citizens, regardless of gender, now have equal rights before the law.

The new lower house of Parliament will guarantee places for women. Women voters in Afghanistan, as Laura said, are registering at a faster rate than men for the June election. What's new? [*Laughter*] Afghanistan still has challenges ahead, no doubt about it. But now the women of that country, instead of living in silence and fear, are a part of the future of the country. They're a part of a hopeful tomorrow.

Iraq has a different history and yet a different set of challenges. Only one year ago—only one year after being liberated from an incredibly ruthless person and a ruthless regime, Iraqi women are playing an essential part in rebuilding the nation. They're part of the future of the country.

Every woman in Iraq is better off because the rape rooms and torture chambers of Saddam Hussein are forever closed. He is a barbaric person. He violated people in such a brutal way that some never thought that the spirit of Iraq could arise again. We never felt that way here in this administration. We felt that people innately love freedom and, if just given a chance, if given an opportunity, they will rise to the challenge.

Three women now serve on the Iraqi Governing Council. You just heard me

praise one. The historic document that was written recently guarantees the basic rights of all Iraqis, men and women, including freedoms of worship, expression, and association. The document protects unions and political parties and outlaws discrimination based on gender, ethnic class, and religion. It's an amazing document that's been written.

Iraqi women are already using their new political powers to guard against extremism and intolerance in any form, whether it be religious or secular. The women leaders of Afghanistan and Iraq have shown incredible courage. When you think about what life was like months ago for many women, the fact that they have risen up is a testament to their souls, to their very being, their bravery. Some have paid for their new freedoms with their lives, but in so doing, their sons and daughters will be forever grateful. These leaders have sent a message throughout the Middle East and throughout the world: Every man and woman in every culture was born to live in freedom.

The momentum of liberty is building in the Middle East. Just think about what's taken place recently. In 2002, Bahrain elected its own parliament for the first time in nearly three decades. Liberty is marching. Oman has extended the vote to all adult citizens. On Monday, its Sultan appointed the nation's first female cabinet minister. We're making progress on the road to freedom. Qatar has a new constitution. Yemen has a multiparty political system. Kuwait has a directly elected national assembly. Jordan held historic elections last summer. Times are changing.

America is taking the side of those reformers who are committed to democratic change. It is our calling to do so. It is our duty to do so. I proposed doubling the budget for the National Endowment for Democracy to $80 million. We will focus its new work on bringing free elections and free markets and free speech and free labor unions to the Middle East.

By radio and television, we're broadcasting the message of tolerance and truth in Arabic and Persian to tens of millions of people. And our Middle East Partnership Initiative supports economic and political and educational reform throughout the region. We're building women's centers in Afghanistan and Iraq that will offer job training and provide loans for small businesses and teach women about their rights as citizens and human beings. We're active. We're strong in the pursuit of freedom. We just don't talk a good game in America, we act.

In Afghanistan, the U.S.-Afghan Women's Council is developing projects to improve the education of women and to train the leaders of tomorrow. You heard Laura talk about her deep desire to help train women to become teachers, not only in the cities but in the rural parts of Afghanistan. We'll succeed. We'll follow through on that initiative. We're pursuing a forward strategy of freedom—that's how I like to describe it, a forward strategy of freedom in the Middle East. And I believe there's no doubt that if America stays the course and we call upon others to stay the course, liberty will arrive and the world will be better off.

The momentum of freedom in the Middle East is beginning to benefit women. That's what's important for this conference. A free society is a society in which women will benefit.

I want to remind you of what King Mohamed of Morocco said when he proposed a series of laws to protect women and their families. It's a remarkable statement. It's like he's put the stake in the ground for women's rights. He said, "How can society achieve progress while women, who represent half the nation, see their rights violated and suffer as a result of injustice and violence and marginalization, notwithstanding the dignity and justice granted to them by our glorious religion." It's a strong statement of freedom. He's right. America stands with His Majesty and

others who share that basic belief. The future of Muslim nations will be better off for all with the full participation of women.

These are extraordinary times, historic times. We've seen the fall of brutal tyrants. We're seeing the rise of democracy in the Middle East. We're seeing women take their rightful place in societies that were once incredibly oppressive and closed. We're seeing the power and appeal of liberty in every single culture. And we're proud once again—this Nation is proud—to advance the cause of human rights and human freedom.

I want to thank you all for serving the cause. The cause is just, the cause is right, and the cause is good. May God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:34 p.m. in the the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Karen Hughes, former Counselor to the President; Raja Habib Khuzai, member, Iraqi Governing Council; Shamim Jawad, wife of Said Tayeb Jawad, Afghanistan's Ambassador to the U.S.; Aung San Suu Kyi, leader of the National League for Democracy of Burma; and Sultan Qaboos bin Said Al Said and Minister of Higher Education Rawya bint Saud Al Busaidi of Oman. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady.

Letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives on Funding for the Commission on the Intelligence Capabilities of the United States Regarding Weapons of Mass Destruction
March 12, 2004

Dear Mr. Speaker:

I am notifying the Congress of my intent to use funds provided in Public Law 107–38, the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act for Recovery from and Response to Terrorist Attacks on the United States, FY 2001, for the Commission on the Intelligence Capabilities of the United States Regarding Weapons of Mass Destruction (the "Commission").

At this time, $4 million will be transferred from the Emergency Response Fund for the Commission. As provided in Public Law 107–38, these funds will be made available to the Commission immediately.

The details of this action are set forth in the enclosed letter from the Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

Sincerely,

GEORGE W. BUSH

Message to the Senate Transmitting the Additional Protocol to the Czech Republic-United States Investment Treaty
March 12, 2004

To the Senate of the United States:

With a view to receiving the advice and consent of the Senate to ratification, I transmit herewith the Additional Protocol Between the United States of America and the Czech Republic to the Treaty Between the United States of America and the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic Concerning the Reciprocal Encouragement and Protection of Investment of October 22,

1991, signed at Brussels on December 10, 2003. I transmit also, for the information of the Senate, the report of the Department of State with respect to this Protocol.

I have already forwarded to the Senate similar Protocols for Romania and Bulgaria and now forward simultaneously to the Senate Protocols for the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and the Slovak Republic. Each of these Protocols is the result of an understanding the United States reached with the European Commission and these six countries that will join the European Union (EU) on May 1, 2004, as well as with Bulgaria and Romania, which are expected to join the EU in 2007.

The understanding is designed to preserve U.S. bilateral investment treaties (BITs) with each of these countries after their accession to the EU by establishing a framework acceptable to the European Commission for avoiding or remedying present and possible future incompatibilities between their BIT obligations and their future obligations of EU membership. It expresses the U.S. intent to amend the U.S. BITs, including the BIT with the Czech Republic, in order to eliminate incompatibilities between certain BIT obligations and EU law. It also establishes a framework for addressing any future incompatibilities that may arise as EU authority in the area of investment expands in the future, and endorses the principle of protecting existing U.S. investments from any future EU measures that may restrict foreign investment in the EU.

The United States has long championed the benefits of an open investment climate, both at home and abroad. It is the policy of the United States to welcome market-driven foreign investment and to permit capital to flow freely to seek its highest return. This Protocol preserves the U.S. BIT with the Czech Republic, with which the United States has an expanding relationship, and the protections it affords U.S. investors even after the Czech Republic joins the EU. Without it, the European Commission would likely require the Czech Republic to terminate its U.S. BIT upon accession because of existing and possible future incompatibilities between our current BIT and EU law.

I recommend that the Senate consider this Protocol as soon as possible, and give its advice and consent to ratification at an early date.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
March 12, 2004.

Message to the Senate Transmitting the Additional Protocol to the Slovak Republic-United States Investment Treaty
March 12, 2004

To the Senate of the United States:

With a view to receiving the advice and consent of the Senate to ratification, I transmit herewith the Additional Protocol Between the United States of America and the Slovak Republic to the Treaty Between the United States of America and the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic Concerning the Reciprocal Encouragement and Protection of Investment of October 22, 1991, signed at Brussels on September 22, 2003. I transmit also, for the information of the Senate, the report of the Department of State with respect to this Protocol.

I have already forwarded to the Senate similar Protocols for Romania and Bulgaria and now forward simultaneously to the Senate Protocols for the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and the Slovak Republic. Each of these Protocols is

the result of an understanding the United States reached with the European Commission and these six countries that will join the European Union (EU) on May 1, 2004, as well as with Bulgaria and Romania, which are expected to join the EU in 2007.

The understanding is designed to preserve U.S. bilateral investment treaties (BITs) with each of these countries after their accession to the EU by establishing a framework acceptable to the European Commission for avoiding or remedying present and possible future incompatibilities between their BIT obligations and their future obligations of EU membership. It expresses the U.S. intent to amend the U.S. BITs, including the BIT with the Slovak Republic, in order to eliminate incompatibilities between certain BIT obligations and EU law. It also establishes a framework for addressing any future incompatibilities that may arise as EU authority in the area of investment expands in the future, and endorses the principle of protecting existing U.S. investments from any future EU measures that may restrict foreign investment in the EU.

The United States has long championed the benefits of an open investment climate, both at home and abroad. It is the policy of the United States to welcome market-driven foreign investment and to permit capital to flow freely to seek its highest return. This Protocol preserves the U.S. BIT with the Slovak Republic, with which the United States has an expanding relationship, and the protections it affords U.S. investors even after the Slovak Republic joins the EU. Without it, the European Commission would likely require the Slovak Republic to terminate its U.S. BIT upon accession because of existing and possible future incompatibilities between our current BIT and EU law.

I recommend that the Senate consider this Protocol as soon as possible, and give its advice and consent to ratification at an early date.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,

March 12, 2004.

Message to the Senate Transmitting the Additional Protocol to the Poland-United States Investment Treaty

March 12, 2004

To the Senate of the United States:

With a view to receiving the advice and consent of the Senate to ratification, I transmit herewith the Additional Protocol Between the United States of America and the Republic of Poland to the Treaty Between the United States of America and the Republic of Poland Concerning Business and Economic Relations of March 21, 1990, signed at Brussels on January 12, 2004. I transmit also, for the information of the Senate, the report of the Department of State with respect to this Protocol.

I have already forwarded to the Senate similar Protocols for Romania and Bulgaria and now forward simultaneously to the Senate Protocols for the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and the Slovak Republic. Each of these Protocols is the result of an understanding the United States reached with the European Commission and these six countries that will join the European Union (EU) on May 1, 2004, as well as with Bulgaria and Romania, which are expected to join the EU in 2007.

The understanding is designed to preserve U.S. bilateral investment treaties

(BITs) with each of these countries after their accession to the EU by establishing a framework acceptable to the European Commission for avoiding or remedying present and possible future incompatibilities between their BIT obligations and their future obligations of EU membership. It expresses the U.S. intent to amend the U.S. BITs, including the BIT with Poland, in order to eliminate incompatibilities between certain BIT obligations and EU law. It also establishes a framework for addressing any future incompatibilities that may arise as EU authority in the area of investment expands in the future, and endorses the principle of protecting existing U.S. investments from any future EU measures that may restrict foreign investment in the EU.

The United States has long championed the benefits of an open investment climate, both at home and abroad. It is the policy of the United States to welcome market-driven foreign investment and to permit capital to flow freely to seek its highest return. This Protocol preserves the U.S. BIT with Poland, with which the United States has an expanding relationship, and the protections it affords U.S. investors even after Poland joins the EU. Without it, the European Commission would likely require Poland to terminate its U.S. BIT upon accession because of existing and possible future incompatibilities between our current BIT and EU law.

I recommend that the Senate consider this Protocol as soon as possible, and give its advice and consent to ratification at an early date.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
March 12, 2004.

Message to the Senate Transmitting the Protocol to the Estonia-United States Investment Treaty
March 12, 2004

To the Senate of the United States:

With a view to receiving the advice and consent of the Senate to ratification, I transmit herewith the Protocol Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Republic of Estonia to the Treaty for the Encouragement and Reciprocal Protection of Investment of April 19, 1994, signed at Brussels on October 24, 2003. I transmit also, for the information of the Senate, the report of the Department of State with respect to this Protocol.

I have already forwarded to the Senate similar Protocols for Romania and Bulgaria and now forward simultaneously to the Senate Protocols for the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and the Slovak Republic. Each of these Protocols is the result of an understanding the United States reached with the European Commission and these six countries that will join the European Union (EU) on May 1, 2004, as well as with Bulgaria and Romania, which are expected to join the EU in 2007.

The understanding is designed to preserve U.S. bilateral investment treaties (BITs) with each of these countries after their accession to the EU by establishing a framework acceptable to the European Commission for avoiding or remedying present and possible future incompatibilities between their BIT obligations and their future obligations of EU membership. It expresses the U.S. intent to amend the U.S. BITs, including the BIT with Estonia, in order to eliminate incompatibilities between certain BIT obligations and EU law.

It also establishes a framework for addressing any future incompatibilities that may arise as EU authority in the area of investment expands in the future, and endorses the principle of protecting existing U.S. investments from any future EU measures that may restrict foreign investment in the EU.

The United States has long championed the benefits of an open investment climate, both at home and abroad. It is the policy of the United States to welcome market-driven foreign investment and to permit capital to flow freely to seek its highest return. This Protocol preserves the U.S. BIT with Estonia, with which the United States has an expanding relationship, and the protections it affords U.S. investors even after Estonia joins the EU. Without it, the European Commission would likely require Estonia to terminate its U.S. BIT upon accession because of existing and possible future incompatibilities between our current BIT and EU law.

I recommend that the Senate consider this Protocol as soon as possible, and give its advice and consent to ratification at an early date.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
March 12, 2004.

Message to the Senate Transmitting the Additional Protocol to the Lithuania-United States Investment Treaty
March 12, 2004

To the Senate of the United States:

With a view to receiving the advice and consent of the Senate to ratification, I transmit herewith the Additional Protocol Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Republic of Lithuania to the Treaty for the Encouragement and Reciprocal Protection of Investment of January 14, 1998, signed at Brussels on September 22, 2003. I transmit also, for the information of the Senate, the report of the Department of State with respect to this Protocol.

I have already forwarded to the Senate similar Protocols for Romania and Bulgaria and now forward simultaneously to the Senate Protocols for the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and the Slovak Republic. Each of these Protocols is the result of an understanding the United States reached with the European Commission and these six countries that will join the European Union (EU) on May 1, 2004, as well as with Bulgaria and Romania, which are expected to join the EU in 2007.

The understanding is designed to preserve U.S. bilateral investment treaties (BITs) with each of these countries after their accession to the EU by establishing a framework acceptable to the European Commission for avoiding or remedying present and possible future incompatibilities between their BIT obligations and their future obligations of EU membership. It expresses the U.S. intent to amend the U.S. BITs, including the BIT with Lithuania, in order to eliminate incompatibilities between certain BIT obligations and EU law. It also establishes a framework for addressing any future incompatibilities that may arise as EU authority in the area of investment expands in the future, and endorses the principle of protecting existing U.S. investments from any future EU measures that may restrict foreign investment in the EU.

The United States has long championed the benefits of an open investment climate, both at home and abroad. It is the policy of the United States to welcome market-

driven foreign investment and to permit capital to flow freely to seek its highest return. This Protocol preserves the U.S. BIT with Lithuania, with which the United States has an expanding relationship, and the protections it affords U.S. investors even after Lithuania joins the EU. Without it, the European Commission would likely require Lithuania to terminate its U.S. BIT upon accession because of existing and possible future incompatibilities between our current BIT and EU law.

I recommend that the Senate consider this Protocol as soon as possible, and give its advice and consent to ratification at an early date.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
March 12, 2004.

Message to the Senate Transmitting the Additional Protocol to the Latvia-United States Investment Treaty
March 12, 2004

To the Senate of the United States:

With a view to receiving the advice and consent of the Senate to ratification, I transmit herewith the Additional Protocol Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Republic of Latvia to the Treaty for the Encouragement and Reciprocal Protection of Investment of January 13, 1995, signed at Brussels on September 22, 2003. I transmit also, for the information of the Senate, the report of the Department of State with respect to this Protocol.

I have already forwarded to the Senate similar Protocols for Romania and Bulgaria and now forward simultaneously to the Senate Protocols for the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and the Slovak Republic. Each of these Protocols is the result of an understanding the United States reached with the European Commission and these six countries that will join the European Union (EU) on May 1, 2004, as well as with Bulgaria and Romania, which are expected to join the EU in 2007.

The understanding is designed to preserve U.S. bilateral investment treaties (BITs) with each of these countries after their accession to the EU by establishing a framework acceptable to the European Commission for avoiding or remedying present and possible future incompatibilities between their BIT obligations and their future obligations of EU membership. It expresses the U.S. intent to amend the U.S. BITs, including the BIT with Latvia, in order to eliminate incompatibilities between certain BIT obligations and EU law. It also establishes a framework for addressing any future incompatibilities that may arise as EU authority in the area of investment expands in the future, and endorses the principle of protecting existing U.S. investments from any future EU measures that may restrict foreign investment in the EU.

The United States has long championed the benefits of an open investment climate, both at home and abroad. It is the policy of the United States to welcome market-driven foreign investment and to permit capital to flow freely to seek its highest return. This Protocol preserves the U.S. BIT with Latvia, with which the United States has an expanding relationship, and the protections it affords U.S. investors even after Latvia joins the EU. Without it, the European Commission would likely require Latvia to terminate its U.S. BIT upon accession because of existing and possible future incompatibilities between our current BIT and EU law.

I recommend that the Senate consider this Protocol as soon as possible, and give its advice and consent to ratification at an early date.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
March 12, 2004.

The President's Radio Address
March 13, 2004

Good morning. This week I met with entrepreneurs and workers in Ohio and New York and talked to them about how we are strengthening America's economy. Over the past 3 years, America's economy has faced a series of challenges: stock market decline, recession, terrorist attacks, corporate scandals, and the uncertainties of war. My administration confronted those challenges squarely and acted boldly. We reduced taxes on families and small businesses. We encouraged new investment, and we're seeing the results.

America has the fastest growing major industrialized economy in the world. American productivity has grown faster over the last 2 years than at any time in more than 50 years. More manufacturers have been reporting rising activity than at any point in the last 20 years. Homeownership rates are the highest ever. Inflation is low, and interest rates and mortgage rates are near historic lows. The unemployment rate of 5.6 percent is below the average unemployment rate in the 1970s, the 1980s, and the 1990s. And last month marked the sixth consecutive month of increased employment in America.

Yet, some industries and some parts of the country are still lagging behind. In Ohio, where many manufacturers are now so productive, they can produce more goods without hiring new workers. In cities like Youngstown and Cleveland, many workers are concerned about their future, about their benefits, and about the opportunities their children will have.

Some politicians in Washington see this new challenge, and they want to respond in old, ineffective ways. They want to increase Federal taxes, yet punishing families and small businesses is not a job-creation strategy. They want to build up trade walls and isolate America from the rest of the world, but economic isolationism would threaten the millions of good American jobs that depend on exports. These tired, old policies of tax and spend and economic isolationism are a recipe for economic disaster. There's a better way to help our workers and help our economy.

First, we must pursue a confident policy of trade. Millions of American jobs depend on our goods being sold overseas, and foreign-owned companies employ millions of Americans here at home. We owe those workers our best efforts to make sure other nations open up their markets and keep them open. We want the entire world to "Buy American," because the best products in the world carry the label "Made in the USA."

Second, we must remain the best place in the world to do business, to start a company and hire workers. We need fewer mandates and unnecessary regulations on small businesses. We need legal reform in America to cut down on junk lawsuits. We need to help companies and their employees confront the rising costs of health care. We need to make sure the tax relief is made permanent to keep our economy on the path to growth and job creation.

Third, we need to make sure American workers are prepared for the higher skilled jobs our economy is creating. I worked with Congress to pass the No Child Left Behind Act, which is bringing higher standards to every public school in America. We have a plan to help our high schools and community colleges train people in the skills they need. We're helping workers who have been displaced by the effects of trade by giving them assistance for job training and health care and relocation expenses.

Again and again, economic pessimists have questioned the skills and creativity and energy of America's workers. The pessimists have always been wrong. America's workers and entrepreneurs will meet every challenge. With the right policies in Washington, we will maintain America's economic leadership; we will create more jobs; and we'll help our workers achieve a better life.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 10:35 a.m. on March 12 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on March 13. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 12 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks in a Discussion on Homeownership in Ardmore, Pennsylvania
March 15, 2004

The President. Thanks for the warm welcome. Thanks for coming today. You're probably wondering what we're doing here. I'll tell you what we're going to do. We're going to talk about one of the most exciting things that can happen to a person, and that is the purchase of a home. That's what we're here to discuss, homeownership and how best to help people buy a home and what is it like to be someone who wonders about homeownership and the struggles of trying to figure out all the fine print and how to get something done. That's what we're really here to talk about.

But before we do, I want to thank Mary Frances Reilly of the YMCA for her—[*applause*]. Mary Frances told me she was a runner. I told her I used to be a runner. [*Laughter*] Turns out, when you get older it's kind of hard to run a lot, isn't it, Mary Frances? But thank you for your hospitality. I'm so grateful you're here.

I want to thank my friend Alphonso Jackson, who is the Acting Secretary of Housing and Urban Development. That means he's waiting for Senate confirmation, which I'm confident the Senate will do soon. Where are you, Alphonso? There he is. Thanks for coming. I'm glad you're here.

Alphonso and I have set a job: We want to close the minority homeownership gap in America; we want more people owning their own home; and we want more of our minorities owning their own home as well. We think it's in the best interests of the country that more people own something. When you own something you call your own, you have a vital stake in the future of our Nation. So we've set this goal, and we'll talk about some ways how to achieve this goal. But Alphonso is the right man for the job. He's run housing authorities before. He knows what he's doing. The Senate needs to get him in there pretty quick.

Speaking about Senators, I'm honored that Senator Arlen Specter is with me today. Arlen, thank you for coming. I consider Arlen Specter an ally and a friend. Oh, he doesn't do everything you ask him

to do all the time, but when you need him, he's there. He's an independent voice for the great State of Pennsylvania, and he's doing a fine job as a United States Senator. I appreciate you coming.

Jim Gerlach is with us as well—Jim, thanks for coming; I'm proud you're here—as is Congressman Jim Greenwood. Jim, thanks for coming. It's good to see both of the Congressmen. Thanks for taking your time out.

I see that Chairman Jim Matthews is with us. Chairman, I'm glad you're here. He is the smart brother. [*Laughter*] Well, it's an inside joke. I appreciate other county commissioners being here, Commissioner Ellis, and State and local officials, and thank you all for coming.

Before we begin a little talk about the economy and homeownership, I do want to make mention of a fellow named Robert Bright. Robert, where are you? There he is. Thank you for coming, Robert. You don't know Robert. I didn't know him until I landed at the airport. He is a mentor. He is what I call a soldier in the army of compassion. You know, a lot of times we talk about the strength of our country being our military—and that is part of the strength of the country, and we intend to keep the military strong—or the fact that we're a wealthy nation, and that's important. But the true strength of the country is the heart and souls of our citizens. It's really the true strength of America, the fact that there are people who are willing to take time out of their life to volunteer, to save a life, or to make sure a child has got a better future.

Robert has been a mentor at Big Brothers and Big Sisters. He knows what I know, that you can change our country one heart and one soul at a time; that Government is not a loving organization, it's an organization of law and justice, but love emanates in our hearts. And the reason I've asked Robert to come to introduce him is because I encourage anybody who wants to serve their country to do—to mentor a child or to be involved with the YMCA or to get involved with the Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts, to make a difference by taking time out of your life to help heal a soul that hurts. Robert, thanks for the example you've set, and thanks for coming today.

I hope you can tell that I'm an optimistic fellow, because—and one reason why is because I've seen what this country has been through. We went through a recession and a stock market decline. We went through an attack. We got attacked by a bunch of coldblooded killers, and the attack hurt. It hurt our psyche because we thought oceans could protect us. It hurt, the fact that we lost a million jobs after September the 11th, but we're a strong nation, and we're a resilient nation. We began to recover.

And then we discovered another thing that was harmful to economic growth and vitality and confidence, and that is we had some people who didn't tell the truth that were running corporations in America. We had some CEOs that weren't honest with their shareholders and their employees. And we passed tough laws that said, "We're not going to tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America." You're now beginning to see on your TV screens what we're talking about. People are being held to account. And that hurt our economy.

And then, as you know, I made a very difficult decision, but the right decision, to secure our country by holding Saddam Hussein to account. But nevertheless, we had the—if you remember, we had on our TV screens the phrase "March to War." Any time a nation is marching to war, it's not conducive for confident thinking. Nobody wants to march to war. It's a negative thought. Now we're marching to peace, by the way. We're on our way to—[*applause*].

But it was tough times, and yet we're growing. The economy is strong and getting stronger. The manufacturing report today was very positive, another indication of the economy strengthening. Unemployment is dropping here in the State of Pennsylvania. There are still people looking for work,

make no mistake about it, but it's getting better. Interest rates are low, which is important if you're a first-time homebuyer. Inflation is down, which is important. We're going to keep working on jobs. One thing we're not going to do is get ourselves isolated from the world. I will fight off economic isolationism, which would be bad for job creation here in the State of Pennsylvania.

But we've overcome a lot, and that's why I'm optimistic. We've overcome a lot because we've got people who refuse to be intimidated by terrorists. We've overcome a lot because of a tax policy that left money—more money in the hands of the people that earned it. And when you've got more money in your pocket, you go out and demand an additional good or a service. And when somebody demands a good or a service, in our economy, somebody produces the good or a service. And when somebody makes that good or a service, it means somebody is likely to keep a job or find work.

The tax policies we passed made a lot of sense, and there's more to do. The first thing that Congress needs to do is not take that tax relief away from the people and not raise the taxes on the people. I don't know if you followed this debate that we're having up there in the Nation's Capital right now—or down there in the Nation's Capital; I'm used to saying up there in the Nation's Capital. If Congress doesn't act, the child credit is going to go down, which is raising taxes on the people with children. If the Congress doesn't act, the marriage penalty is going up. By the way, it doesn't make any sense to penalize marriage in the Tax Code. We ought to be encouraging marriage, not penalizing marriage in our Tax Code. If the Congress doesn't act, they're going to be raising the taxes on people who work, and it makes no sense.

There's other things we need to do as well. We need to worry about the cost of health care. Small businesses need to be able to pool their—be able to pool risk with association health care plans, so their employees can have more affordable health care. We need to expand health savings accounts. We need medical liability reform in Washington, DC. We need an energy bill. It's hard to be a manufacturer in the State of Pennsylvania if you're worried about where your next energy is coming from. And we need a bill.

There's a lot of things we need to do in Washington to make sure that this economy continues to grow and people can find work. And one of the things we need to do is to continue with good housing policy, and that's what we're here to talk about today. Homeownership in America is at the highest rate ever. It's a fantastic statement to say that, isn't it? Homeownership is at the highest rate ever. That means there's more people ever in our history are able to say, "I own something. I own my own home."

I went to Pearl's home, and it was pretty special—really special, wasn't it? She said, "This is my home." When I walked up the stairs, she didn't say this is anybody else's home but her home. She said, "Would you come into my home, please. Would you come in and meet my four children in our home." And it was a fantastic experience to come to a first-time homeowners's home and visit with her family. It made me feel good. It made her feel nervous. She hadn't seen that many automobiles on her street. [*Laughter*]

But she was great, and it was wonderful to see. We're going to talk to Pearl in a minute about how she made the decision to buy a home. See, if somebody is listening to this program, I want you to listen to Pearl's story. Probably in her mind, she never was going to ever own a home until something happened. There are some things we can do in Government policy to help people own a home.

One of the things we can do is to help people with the downpayment. A lot of people say, "I want to own a home," and then they get looking at the downpayment,

and they realize they can't even get beyond the downpayment phase. And so we passed a good law out of the United States Congress to help people with their downpayments. That money will start to be disbursed soon, with a program such as Genesis, to help people with the downpayment.

The other thing we can do—and you're going to hear some stories today about how these housing counselors help people get beyond the fear of signing a contract full of small print. I mean, if you've never owned a home and you're looking at these contracts, it's a little intimidating. If you think that the President coming to your house is intimidating, wait until you look at one of those contracts. Isn't that right? And so we're going to talk about a program that we've instituted through HUD that helps with educating people. And Nikki is going to talk to us about that in a second.

I believe Congress ought to pass tax credits to encourage homebuilding, affordable homes in areas that need affordable homes. We've set a grand goal. We want to close the minority homeownership gap, and there are three practical ways to encourage the construction of a home and to help homebuyers buy a home.

I readily concede there's nothing like low interest rates to stimulate homeownership. And so I suggest that people listening out there, if you're interested in buying a home, take advantage of the low rates. Take advantage of those low rates. Lock in good, low mortgages to make your future so bright.

Nikki Holcroft is with us today. Nikki, tell us what you do. Thank you for coming. Nikki is a sweet soul who cares deeply about the people she's helping.

[*At this point, Nikki Holcroft, housing counselor, Genesis Housing Corp., Norristown, PA, made brief remarks.*]

The President. You might have more than one customer out there, you know? [*Laughter*]

One of the things, as I said, we emphasize is counseling services. It sounds like kind of a simple thing, but it's a profound opportunity for help. And you'll hear from Pearl. Are you about ready? [*Laughter*]

Pearl Cerdan. Yes, sir.

The President. How many kids have you got?

Ms. Cerdan. I have six, but four of them are with me.

The President. Yes, I met them all. How many cats?

Ms. Cerdan. One.

The President. I met it. [*Laughter*] When did you start thinking about buying a home?

Ms. Cerdan. Well, like Nikki said, I had—about 3½ years ago, I had started. I was thinking then, but it was only a thought. And then I came back——

The President. Was it a dream or a thought?

Ms. Cerdan. Well, at first it was a thought, but then it became a dream.

The President. I got you.

Ms. Cerdan. Did I say that right? [*Laughter*]

The President. It's your dream. It's not ours. [*Laughter*] You're doing great.

[*Ms. Cerdan, Genesis housing counseling client and first-time homebuyer, Ardmore, PA, made further remarks.*]

The President. Now, Judy is the cofounder of Genesis. Is that an accurate statement?

Judith Memberg. Yes, it is.

The President. She's a social entrepreneur.

Ms. Memberg. I've never been called that, but okay. [*Laughter*]

The President. It's a plus.

Ms. Memberg. Sounds good. [*Laughter*]

The President. Why don't you tell us how you got the idea and talk about Genesis right quick.

[*Ms. Memberg, executive director, Genesis Housing Corp., made brief remarks.*]

The President. Right. It's interesting, this Ardmore project was on an abandoned filling station.

Ms. Memberg. Yes, it was.

The President. And you got brownfield money.

Ms. Memberg. Yes, there were some environmental problems with gasoline in the soil that had to be cleaned up. And there was some funding that made that available, because anytime you get into environmental problems, it gets very expensive.

The President. Right. And so when did you see the house you're going to buy?

Ms. Cerdan. When did I see it?

The President. Yes, first see it.

Ms. Cerdan. The first time I'd seen it was, I think, like July.

The President. Really?

Ms. Cerdan. Yes, sir.

The President. And you bought it in——

Ms. Cerdan. December the 16th of 2003.

The President. Fantastic—homeowner.

Penny is with us. Penny, you're in the process of buying a home. Is that accurate?

Penny Wolk. That's accurate, Mr. President. [*Laughter*]

The President. All right, let her go. [*Laughter*] Tell us about yourself, please, ma'am.

[*Ms. Wolk, prospective homebuyer, Norristown, PA, made brief remarks.*]

The President. And so where are we in the process? Judy, maybe you can give us a hand here?

Ms. Memberg. Penny is going to be one of the buyers in the second phase of the project, and there's four more houses are going to be built, and she should be signing an agreement of sale in about 2 weeks.

The President. Good. Explain what it's like to be somebody who wants to buy a home, and you're kind of lost, I guess, in the process, is maybe a good way to say it. What does Genesis do? How do they—if somebody is listening out there that probably is in your position——

Ms. Holcroft. What does Genesis do?

The President. Yes, how do you find out how to——

[*Ms. Holcroft made further remarks.*]

The President. You can't live in a home unless you've got somebody who is willing to build them. And Scott Cannon is a homebuilder. He's the president of Cannon Custom Homes.

Scott Cannon. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Did you bring your family with you—I can see. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Cannon. I've got the family here.

The President. Tell us about your business. Tell us about what it's like to be a homebuilder in the Philadelphia area.

[*Mr. Cannon made brief remarks.*]

The President. One of the things we were talking about backstage was the—about how if there is a local forum, that ought to be good enough for the Federal Government, I guess is the country-boy way of summarizing what we're talking about. And that's beginning to happen.

Mr. Cannon. I haven't seen it yet.

The President. Well, it should be happening. I mean, it's supposed to be happening soon, is what I understand. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Cannon. To a theater near you. [*Laughter*]

The President. That's right. How about tort reform? You could use a little tort reform, couldn't you?

Mr. Cannon. Well, we could use tort reform, sure—the class-action lawsuits and things like that that we truly do fear, of course. But again, that's just a cost that we pass on to Pearl and Penny. It's not something that—really you're not coming after me. I just have to pay more for insurance, and I pass it on to the homebuyer.

The President. No, that's exactly right. Are you building any homes these days?

Mr. Cannon. Yes, we're building a few. We've had a challenge the last year or so with the weather, but things are going good.

The President. Well, I might be able to do something with the bureaucracy, but—[*laughter*].

Mr. Cannon. That would be enough. [*Laughter*] We'll deal with the weather.

The President. Judy, you got anything else you want to share with anybody who might be listening out there about buying a home?

Ms. Memberg. I think the thing that's really important is that with housing counseling, anyone can put together a plan on how they can become a homebuyer. Some people, it's a very short process; some people are very familiar with being homeowners or their family has been homeowners. But a lot of people who, if their parents aren't homeowners, really don't know where to start. And a good housing counseling agency can really guide you through that process.

The President. Right. And I presume there's a lot of housing counseling agencies around the area?

Ms. Memberg. There are a few. There are many in Philadelphia. There are a few in Montgomery County. But there's a lot of good counselors out there to find one that matches up with your need.

The President. Good. Well, listen, if somebody's listening, I hope, and are interested in buying a home, there's opportunity here in this part of the world. You've heard two ladies say that they've been able to overcome the fears of homeownership and kind of the mental blocks associated with homeownership, because they were able to receive counseling. And the counseling is available. We want more people owning their home. That's what we want. We want you to feel comfortable about coming—thinking about buying your own home so that when somebody knocks on your door, you open that door and say, "Welcome to my home," just like this good lady did to me today.

Listen, thank you all for coming. It's been a joy to be here. I want to thank you for your stories. May God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:57 p.m. in the gymnasium at the Main Line YMCA. In his remarks, he referred to Mary Frances Reilly, executive director, Main Line YMCA; James R. Matthews, chairman, and Thomas Jay Ellis, commissioner, Montgomery County Commission, Montgomery County, PA; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks Following Discussions With Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende of the Netherlands and an Exchange With Reporters
March 16, 2004

President Bush. Here's what we're going to do. We'll have a couple opening statements. I'll call upon American press; the Prime Minister will call upon somebody from the Dutch press; American press; Dutch press; and that's it. Thank you all for coming.

Mr. Prime Minister, welcome. I'm glad you're back. Thank you for a—your friendship. Thank you for your clear understanding about the need for us to work together to achieve a more free and peaceful world. I appreciate our bilateral relations are strong. We had a wide-ranging discussion, talking about a variety of issues, whether it be foreign policy or the economy. It was a good, frank discussion, and I appreciate my friend being here again. Welcome.

Prime Minister Balkenende. Well, George, thanks again for the hospitality. We had, indeed, a very good discussion. We talked about issues around Iraq, the role of the United Nations, by example. We talked about the cooperation in the economic sphere, developments in Afghanistan. We also talked about the issue of values in society, an important issue. And especially, we talked about terrorism, the fight against terrorism, and it is important that the world society, international community, stands shoulder to shoulder and shows its solidarity to fight against these terrible attacks. And we share that same view, and we will work together, also, in the second half of this year, when the Netherlands is taking over the Presidency of the European Union.

President Bush. Yes.

We'll answer a couple questions here. We'll start with you, Terry Hunt [Associated Press].

Implications of Terrorist Attacks in Spain

Q. Thank you, sir. Mr. President, do you think terrorists have reason to believe that they can influence elections and policy, given the outcome of what happened in Spain?

President Bush. I think terrorists will kill innocent life in order to try to get the world to cower. I think they're—these are coldblooded killers. I mean, they'll kill innocent people to try to shake our will. That's what they want to do, and they'll never shake the will of the United States. We understand the stakes, and we will work with our friends to bring justice to the terrorists. They have not only killed in Spain; they've killed in the United States; they've killed in Turkey; they've killed in Saudi Arabia. They kill wherever they can. And it's essential that the free world remain strong and resolute and determined.

Want to call on somebody from your press?

Iraq

Q. Mr. Prime Minister, Mr. President, according to opinion polls, most Dutch people want to withdraw the Dutch troops from Iraq. Many Dutch people think the war in Iraq has little to do with the war against terrorism and may actually encourage terrorism. How would you respond to those Dutch people who want to withdraw?

President Bush. I would ask them to think about the Iraqi citizens who don't want people to withdraw, because they want to be free. And I would remind the Dutch citizens that Al Qaida has an interest in Iraq for a reason, and that interest is, they realize this is a front in the war on terror, and they fear the spread of freedom and democracy in places like the greater Middle East. They can't stand the thought of free societies springing up in the Middle East, because they understand a free society is against their very wishes. And so it's essential that we remain side by side with the Iraqi people as they begin the process of self-government.

And we're making good progress. The basic law that was written by the Governing Council was a substantial piece of work that talked about freedoms, the very same freedoms that we honor in America or in the Netherlands. And it's essential that we help Iraq—and Afghanistan—develop into free societies, which in itself will start changing the regions in which they exist.

Adam [Adam Entous, Reuters], yes.

Q. Thank you, Mr. President.

President Bush. You're looking fine today, Adam, but the tie—[*laughter*].

2004 Election

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Candidate Kerry has suggested he has support of world leaders. Do you think he should—that should be a factor in the campaign? Was that an appropriate thing for him to say?

President Bush. I think it's—if you're going to make an accusation in the course

of a Presidential campaign, you ought to back it up with facts.

Prime Minister Balkenende. I won't talk about that issue. [*Laughter*]

President Bush. Okay, fine. [*Laughter*]

Prime Minister Balkenende. It has to do with the campaign here in the United States.

Iraq

Q. Mr. President, have you convinced the Prime Minister of the Netherlands to leave the Dutch troops in Iraq?

President Bush. The Prime Minister will make a—the appropriate decision. It's his decision to make. We both agree that a free Iraq is essential to a peaceful world. We both understand the stakes. We both know that Al Qaida is interested in fighting us in Iraq. How do we know? We know because they've said so publicly. Al Qaida understands the stakes. Al Qaida wants us out of Iraq, because Al Qaida wants to use Iraq as an example of defeating freedom and democracy. And so the Prime Minister has got issues at home that he'll deal with, but there's no doubt that he understands the stakes and the historic opportunity with which we're faced.

Prime Minister Balkenende. It's good to add that we did not talk about the situation after the half of July. That is the responsibility of the Dutch Government and Dutch Parliament, and we'll talk about it, as I made it clear already earlier. But I think it's very good to look always to the situation of the Iraq people and the international struggle against terrorism. Therefore, it's so important that countries are working together, and they can draw the same lines. That's very important, but it has nothing to, at this moment, to the decisionmaking as far as the situation after the first of July is concerned.

President Bush. Thanks, good job.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:14 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Remarks in a Discussion on Health Care Access
March 16, 2004

The President. Thanks for coming. Please be seated. Thanks for the warm welcome. What you're about to hear is a discussion about how to make sure America's economy continues to grow and practical ways to help employers and employees to grow the economy, make the right decisions. That's what we're here to discuss. It's an economic lesson. But we're not using Ph.D.'s. Well, we're using Ph.D.'s in the sense that we're talking to entrepreneurs who are on the frontline of making capital decisions every day, and decisions of—big decisions for each person they hire. That's what we're here to discuss.

But before we do, I want to thank the chamber for allowing us to use this fantastic facility. It's a short drive from the White House, and it's a beautiful place. So thank you very much for letting us be here.

I noticed I've got some of my friends from the Congress here. Sam Johnson from the great State of Texas, I appreciate you coming, Sam. Congresswoman Katherine Harris from Florida, thank you for coming, Katherine.

Yesterday, I had the fortune of being in Ardmore, Pennsylvania, to talk about homeownership. It turns out that one of the fantastic statistics and one of the realities of our society today is more people own homes than ever before. And Congressman Jim Greenwood traveled with me yesterday. He is here today. He is here not because he particularly likes to hear his President talk; he is here because he

is the author of the national medical liability reform law. And I appreciate you coming, Jim, and thank you for being here.

I want to thank all the small-business owners who are here. Thank you for being dreamers and doers and employers. Thank you for taking risk, and thank you for following your heart. I mean, I love the entrepreneurial spirit of America. It's an incredibly important part of our country and our future. You see, the role of Government is not to create wealth; the role of Government is to create an environment in which the entrepreneurial spirit can flourish. And we've got a lot of small-business owners here today, and I want to thank you for following your dreams.

I want to thank the local community leaders who are here. I hope you're as optimistic as I am about the future of this country. The reason I am is because I know what we've overcome. We've overcome a lot. We've overcome a recession. We've overcome an attack on our country, an attack which, by the way, not only affected our spirit; it affected our economy. They estimate over a million jobs were lost after the attacks of September the 11th. We overcame that, those attacks, because of the resolve of the American people. The American people refused to be intimidated by coldblooded killers. We refused then to be intimidated. We refuse now to ever be intimidated by coldblooded killers.

And then we had a problem in our society in that we've had some people that were in positions of responsibility didn't tell the truth. You might remember the corporate scandals. That affected the psychology of the country. A capitalist system requires trust. If you're going to invest, you need to trust the numbers. If you're an employee, you need to trust your employers. And yet, unfortunately, there was some citizenry that forgot what it meant to be a responsible citizen, and they didn't tell the truth.

But we passed tough laws. I want to thank the people from the Congress here to help pass those laws. It is now clear we were not going to tolerate any dishonesty in the boardrooms of our country. People will be held to account. And we overcame that.

And then, as you know, I made a tough decision about keeping our word and about making this country secure and the world more peaceful, and we went to war. And I committed, along with other nations, brave sons and daughters of our respective countries to deal with the tyrant who refused to yield to the demands of the world. And now he sits in a jail cell, and Iraq is free.

We marched to war, which affected the economy. It's hard to be confident about the future when you look on your TV screens and you see the banner "March to War." As decisionmakers and entrepreneurs, it had to be an unsettling time to plan for the future, when you've got a country marching to war. Now we're marching to peace. We're marching to peace. A free Iraq is going to help change the world. A free Afghanistan is changing the world. The world is becoming more peaceful.

In other words, we've overcome a lot, and the statistics show it. We're growing. Our economy is the strongest of all the major industrialized nations. It's a growing economy. I just mentioned homeownership. We've got more people owning their home than ever before. We're closing the—there's more minority homeownership in America. And that's what we want. We want people owning something. We not only want them owning their own business; we want people owning their own home and owning and managing their own health care accounts as well. We're going to discuss that in a second.

The interest rates are low, and inflation is low. We had a great report yesterday on the manufacturing sector. Things are looking up, but there is more to do—there's more to do.

I think one of the reasons why we're doing so well is because we cut the taxes right at the right time. I went to Congress and said, "Look, we've got a problem. We've got some hurdles we've got to overcome. We've got to overcome a recession. We've got to overcome attacks. We've got to overcome all the things you heard about." And Congress responded, thankfully, and passed robust tax relief. We cut the taxes on everybody who pays taxes. We increased the child care—the child credit to help people with families. We reduced the marriage penalty. By the way, it doesn't make any sense to penalize marriage in the Tax Code. We ought to be encouraging marriage, not penalizing marriage.

And we put the death tax on the road to extinction, which is good for entrepreneurs and farmers and ranchers. People say, "Why did you do that?" Well listen, if you're a small-business owner, you ought to be able to leave your assets to whomever you choose. You've worked all your life to realize a dream. You build up your asset base. You build up your company. You pay taxes when you're successful, and then you have to pay taxes again when you die. That doesn't make any sense. We want these owners of businesses to be able to pass them on to whoever they choose to pass them on to, without the Government getting in the way again.

And so we've worked hard on good, smart economic policy. And the entrepreneurial spirit is strong, and one of the reasons why is because the tax cuts pertained directly to small-business owners. Most small businesses are Subchapter S corporations or sole proprietorships. And when you're a Subchapter S or a sole proprietorship, you pay tax at the individual income-tax level. So when you hear people say we cut individual income taxes or tax on the rich, really what you ought to put in your mind is these were taxes to help the entrepreneurial class of America. Small businesses benefit. And since most new jobs are created by small businesses, it makes sense to have economic policy directed at the small-business sector. And the entrepreneurial class is expanding, and it's strong, and we're adding new jobs. And there's more to do.

And here's some things we need to do. First, we need to make the tax cuts permanent. If you're a mother or a dad who received tax relief as a result of the child credit and you're beginning to plan for your future, it is unsettling to know that Congress hasn't resolved this issue yet. If they don't make the tax cuts permanent, they're raising the taxes on the hard-working people in America. We need tax relief. And at the very minimum, Congress needs to make sure that the child credit and the marriage penalty relief and the 10-percent bracket are made permanent. And I'm calling upon them to do so.

Business leaders need permanency in the Tax Code. They don't need to be worried about whether the taxes are going to go up this year or next year. They don't need to be worried about whether or not the deductibility aspect of the tax relief remains steady or not. We need permanence in order to make sure that jobs don't go overseas, for example. We need Tax Code permanence to make sure that job growth is strong here at home.

We need an energy bill. If you're a manufacturer, it's hard to plan if you're worried about your—either your energy costs or whether you're going to have energy at all. Congress needs to get us an energy bill. If they're interested in jobs staying here at home, if they're interested in creating an environment in which we're competitive, we need an energy bill, one that encourages reliability for electricity and one that encourages conservation and helps us become less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

We need less regulations. I suspect—we met with a homeowner—homebuilder yesterday, Congressman. Remember the guy? He was upset that he had to fill out forms at the Federal, State, and local level in

order to build a house. But he also made a pretty valid point. He pointed to one of the new homeowners there and said, "By the way, every form I fill out costs me money, and you have to pay." We need regulatory relief. I suspect these businessowners, if they were honest with you, say they spend too much time filling out the forms. And I, frankly, can't assure them that anybody has ever read the form here at the Federal level.

We need to open up markets for U.S. products. See, our markets are pretty well open. Both Republican and Democrat Presidents in the past have said let's keep our markets relatively open for the consumers of the country. Now we've got to make sure that if our markets are relatively open, then others need to open up theirs. It's only fair. So when you hear me talking about trade, really what I'm talking about is let's make sure we're treated fairly. Let's make sure the playing field is level.

We can compete with anybody. At least, I think so. That's why the economic isolationists have it wrong. That's why the people here in Washington—see, that's the message the pessimists send. They say, "We better put up walls and barriers between America and the world, because we can't compete." That's not what I think. I think we can compete with anybody.

My job is to make sure that playing field is level and let the American workers outproduce anybody in the world and let our farmers outplow anybody in the world. We're good at a lot of things, and we ought to be selling our products. Heck, we're 5 percent of the world's population, which means there's 95 percent of the people ready for products that say, "Made in the USA." This administration will reject economic isolationism, for the good of our workers.

And finally, to the point we're here to discuss. In order to make sure America remains a competitive place, in order to make sure that we can expand the job base where people can find work, in order to make sure the entrepreneurial spirit remains strong, we need to address the issue of the cost of health care. The rising cost of health care affects these good folks' ability to hire workers, and we need to address that. I want to talk about some practical ways to address the rising costs of health care.

But first, it's important to understand we have a struggle here in Washington. It's a philosophical struggle. It's the difference between the decisionmakers in health care, who should be the decisionmaker. I believe strongly the decisionmakers ought not to be the Federal Government and Federal bureaucrats. I think the decisionmaker in health care ought to be individuals and employers.

And there's a philosophical divide, and it's part of the debate. The debate is whether or not the marketplace ought to have a function in determining the cost of health care or whether or not the Federal Government ought to make all decisions. I've made my stand. I believe that the best health care policy is one that trusts and empowers consumers and one that understands the market.

Now, there are some things the Federal Government has got to do to make sure health care is reasonable and sound, one of which is to expand what we call community health centers. In other words, we recognize there are people who have trouble getting health care, and we need to address those needs. And to me, an efficient and appropriate way to do so was to expand the number of community health centers, primary care providers for poor people in the country.

And we've done so. We've opened or expanded 600 centers since 2001. There are 3 million more people now serviced by these community health centers. My goal is to expand—open and expand another 600 by 2006. And I appreciate the Congress working on this. This is a smart way to make sure that health care is delivered to people who can't afford health care. And

it's a smart way to get people out of emergency rooms. Many times people go to emergency rooms, which is costly health care, for primary care needs. And community health centers work, and they make a lot of sense.

Secondly, we dealt with Medicare, as you might have heard. This is an issue that had been passed on from Congress to Congress, an issue that people talked about, but nobody wanted to do anything about it. I felt we had an obligation to our seniors, as did Members of the United States Congress, to provide a modern system, a reformed system—a system, frankly, that hadn't been changed much since Lyndon Johnson first introduced Medicare.

And it was high time we put a new system in place, one that said there needs to be prescription drug coverage for our seniors. And after all, if Medicare covers a heart operation that costs a lot of money for the taxpayers, doesn't it make sense to cover the medicine that might prevent the heart operation from having to happen in the first place? And that's a new element involved in Medicare, thanks to the reforms of Congress.

We want our seniors to have choices. There's some people in Washington who resisted that aspect of the Medicare bill because they want the Government making choices for the patients. It's a different way of thinking than our way of thinking. Our way of thinking is, the more choices seniors have, the better the Medicare system will become. And so an inherent part of the Medicare reform was to trust people with their decisions. And so you'll see a much more vibrant private sector involved now with the delivery of services to Medicare patients.

This year we're going to put out a Medicare—a drug discount card for our seniors that will save between 10 to 25 percent off their drugs, which is positive. Next year we're going to have preventive screenings, and the next year the drug benefit will kick in to Medicare. So we've addressed that aspect of medicine.

Thirdly, we passed what's called health savings accounts. You're going to hear an interesting discussion on health savings accounts. Part of the purpose of the discussion is to put meaning behind, like, letters. In Washington you hear, "Oh, we got you HSAs." And the average person out there goes, "Huh? HSA?" So we're going to talk about health savings accounts to explain what they mean.

They basically work this way: You or your employer buys a low-cost insurance policy to cover major medical bills. And what happens, by the way, if you trust the market, if you devolve away from Federal control of health care, then the market begins to respond, and now more insurance companies are beginning to provide policies that provide coverage for major medical.

And then you take that policy and you combine it with an HSA, which means you can contribute money tax-free, that earns interest tax-free, that can be withdrawn tax-free to cover other medical expenses. Now, the advantage of this plan is—the tax-free is an advantage, by the way. If you're putting money in tax-free and it accumulates tax-free and you can take it out tax-free, that's the beginning of a pretty good deal for the individual.

But there's also some other advantages. You're the decisionmaker, not a bureaucrat in an HMO. You get to make the decisions. You get to decide. There's incentive built in to make the right choices in your life. When, all of a sudden, when you see your savings account—it covers your incidental costs, and the major medical, of course, covers the big costs—you begin to make wiser decisions. All of a sudden, it makes sense to start walking five times a week to save money. It's your money, and then it rolls over, and you can build up quite a healthy account.

But the good news as well is this: Inherent in the health savings accounts are savings, savings for employers, savings for employees. In other words, one way to deal with the cost of health care is to push for health savings accounts. You're going to hear an interesting discussion on this today.

Another way to make sure that small businesses can survive and provide care for their employees is through association health plans. These would provide small businesses the same opportunity that big businesses get, and that is the economies of scale, the economies of purchase, the ability to share risk in larger pools, which drives down the cost of health care for small businesses.

These plans are resisted here in Washington by special interests. We're trying to bust through the special interests to make sure that small businesses have got the same advantages of big businesses. And there's some good law passed out of the House of Representatives, stuck in the Senate, like a lot of other things are stuck in the Senate. And they need to get it out, for the sake of controlling health care costs.

You hear a lot of rhetoric in Washington about jobs and job creation and outsourcing. The best way to deal with job creation and outsourcing is to make sure our businesses are competitive here at home. The more competitive we are here at home, the better it is to do business at home, the more likely it is we'll keep jobs here at home. And association health plans is one such way.

And there's another way we can help control the cost of health care. I mentioned Congressman Greenwood. He is fighting the ultimate entrenched interests and special interests, and that is the lawyers who love the fact that you can sue right and left in America. That's what he's fighting. He understands available and affordable health care is affected by frivolous and junk lawsuits. It's an issue—it's a national issue.

When I first came up from the Governor, I said, "We'll just let the States deal with the medical liability reform." And then I saw what the practice of defensive medicine does to our budget. That's—defensive medicine means we're going to practice more medicine than we need to in order to make sure we've got a good case in the court of law when we get sued. See, everybody is getting sued. It's like a giant lottery. "I'm just going to sue and sue and sue, and maybe I'll get lucky and win one of those settlements where I get 40 percent of the take." But it's harming our society. It's harming people who are trying to create jobs, because it's running up the cost of their health care.

And so I took a look at the cost to the Federal Government. Imagine what the Federal Government is paying. We pay Medicaid and Medicare and veterans' health care costs, all of which are affected by the practice of defensive medicine as a result of frivolous lawsuits. And so I said, "Well, let's get to work on this issue. Let's take on the special interests here in Washington, DC."

And Congressman Greenwood stepped up and got a good bill out of the United States Congress. I said, "It's a national problem that desires a—needs a national solution." Congressman Greenwood responded. We basically said, "If you get hurt by a bad doc, you get paid the economic damages." That's fair. That makes sense, but there needs to be a cap on noneconomic damages at $250,000, so the settlements are reasonable, not outrageous. And of course, if there is a need for punitive damages, they've got to be reasonable. And Congressman Greenwood is willing to be reasonable on such an issue.

Medical liability reform will make it easier for people to afford health care, which will make America more competitive a place. It means we're more likely to hire people right here at home. His bill got out of the House. It's stuck in the United States Senate. The trial bar won't let it

out. For the sake of good health care, for the sake of job creation, for the sake of expanding—an expanding economy, we need medical liability reform now.

Okay, you've heard enough from me. Roman is with us. Roman, tell us your business. He's from Knoxville, Tennessee. It doesn't sound like it.

Roman Botcharnikov. Well, yes, I'm from Russia originally.

The President. Are you? Raised in Russia?

Mr. Botcharnikov. Yes.

The President. Born in Russia?

Mr. Botcharnikov. Born and raised there.

The President. Where?

Mr. Botcharnikov. Sochi, it's Black Sea.

The President. Yes, I know Sochi.

Mr. Botcharnikov. It's a resort area. I think you've been there.

The President. No, I haven't been there, but Vladimir Putin called me from there. He's been there. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Botcharnikov. Putin, yes. He's always there.

The President. It's a nice place.

Mr. Botcharnikov. Yes, it is.

The President. So when did you come to the States?

Mr. Botcharnikov. Well, I'm a professional coach, actually, and I coach pole vaulting. And I coach American recordholder and silver medal winner at the Sydney Olympic Games.

The President. Really?

Mr. Botcharnikov. Yes. That's my profession. That's how I end up——

The President. Have you got somebody vaulting in the Olympics this year?

Mr. Botcharnikov. Well, we're getting—we have to upgrade our medal from silver.

The President. Yes.

Mr. Botcharnikov. There's only one way.

The President. That would be gold. [*Laughter*] Okay, so you're a pole vault coach, but you're also a businessman. First of all—let me just—I'm fascinated by knowing this—this is the first I've heard he came from Russia. So what age were you when you came?

Mr. Botcharnikov. Well, I actually went to Australia first when I was 19. Then I lived there for 3 years and then came here in '92.

The President. So at 22 years old.

Mr. Botcharnikov. Yes.

The President. Fantastic. Why did you come here?

Mr. Botcharnikov. Well, it's a land of opportunity. The United States is unbelievable country, unbelievable. People all over the world look up to United States and see what's going on here and have the business. You were just talking about products made in USA. All over the world, people want "Made in USA." They do. And everybody dreams to come in here and test—and everybody is allowed—there's a good environment here where entrepreneurs can succeed. I had my business—several businesses actually, kind of expanding and expanding. And how I got in—why we have a hair design studio, which——

The President. Yes, I was wondering about the hair design thing. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Botcharnikov. Yes, finally. [*Laughter*] Third attempt. My wife——

The President. Is it wigs or—[*laughter*]—what is your business? Tell us your business, how you started it.

[*At this point, Mr. Botcharnikov, business director, Salon Azure, Knoxville, TN, made further remarks.*]

The President. Listen, here's the thing. Here's what people have got to understand. The combination of his premium payments for major medical insurance—major medical means if you have a real expensive problem—plus what he puts into his savings account equals a savings of $200 a month, and yet he gets as good a coverage——

Mr. Botcharnikov. Better.

The President. ——even better coverage. And that's the point. This is a new product. This is a new idea, and people—one of

the reasons we're having this discussion is to encourage employers and individuals and employees to look into what's called health savings accounts. They used to be called MSAs; they're now called HSAs.

And I just—again, I repeat Roman's story. He puts 177 in for his insurance, monthly premium. He puts $100 in a month for his savings account. It goes in tax-free. It accumulates interest tax-free. When he withdraws it to pay for medical bills, it's tax-free. If he doesn't use it all, he rolls it over to the next year. It's a savings account to pay for medicine, and yet, he's saving $2,400 a year.

It's an interesting, interesting opportunity, and I want to thank you for describing it.

Mr. Botcharnikov. It is kind of unbelievable to me.

The President. Yes, it is unbelievable, just like America.

Okay, Sandy Calohan is with us. She is the president of Carolina Paper & Builders Materials, Inc. By the way, when you hear her talk, she is a—first of all, there's a lot of female-run businesses in America, which means the country is better off. There's a—the fastest growing component of the entrepreneurial class is women-owned businesses. They're being created, like, at two times the rate other businesses are, which is a really exciting part about the country. Secondly, she's a Subchapter S corporation. She's part of the rich. You'll hear, "taxing the rich." That means we're going to tax Subchapter S corporations. These are people who are actually hiring people, people who are expanding the job base because they're willing to take risk.

And so—and by the way, just an aside, just to keep everybody's perspective properly focused, when you're running up individual tax rates, you're taxing small businesses just like Sandy.

Welcome.

[*Sandy Calohan made brief remarks.*]

The President. And the—see, what's interesting about how a marketplace works, all of a sudden Sandy bugs her provider, and the provider begins to say, "Well, gosh, maybe there's a demand here for a different kind of product. We'd better get involved. If we want to keep her business, we better come up with a new way to deal with her problems." I think what you're going to find is, is that the more widespread the notion of health savings accounts become, the more carriers will start providing this kind of insurance. That's how a market works. That's in stark contrast to a Government-run policy in which there is no market. It's like, "Here it is, as decided by bureaucracies and/or law."

And I thought it was a very interesting story that you've been bugging the guy for 7 years. A new product becomes available as a result of Government action, which I find pretty interesting, isn't it? I guess it's the tax aspects that required Government action in the first place. But—and all of a sudden, these products are becoming more available, and Sandy has got one. And she is a satisfied customer, but most importantly, so are her employees, I presume?

Ms. Calohan. Yes, we are. It was either—we were going to have to do something because it was—the cost of health insurance was getting prohibitive. We weren't going to be able to have any if we didn't do something.

The President. Yes.

Ms. Calohan. Because I just can't—$100,000 a year is a lot of money for health insurance for 19 people.

The President. For a small business. Yes. The other day—are you going to hire anybody this year? Yes, hope so. Me too. [*Laughter*]

Small businesses are expanding, and one way to help them is so they can control their cost, health care costs. It's a major part of a person's outlook. A small-business owner's outlook is improved when there's a new product available that says, "Gosh,

I'm meeting the needs of my employees and also been able to better control costs."

Dan Schmidt is with us. He's the CEO of Mercury Office Supply, St. Paul, Minnesota. How's the weather up there?

Dan Schmidt. Well, it's beautiful. You've just got to think of the bright side, ice fishing—the positives.

The President. Yes, okay. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Schmidt. That's the key. You've got to be active in winter.

[*Mr. Schmidt made brief remarks.*]

The President. Yes, you see what he's saying is, what's interesting about this, that one of the great elements about health savings accounts is that all of a sudden the consumer starts being more in charge of the decisionmaking process. As he said, the consumer can make choices. And when consumers make choices, it then encourages them to start making healthy choices, particularly when you get to save money, when it's like your money on the line.

And remember, you save money. People say, "Well, why would I want to put money aside when it's being paid for me?" Well, the answer is, because the costs of the HMO plans on a monthly basis far exceed the costs of major medical insurance, plus your own savings. In other words, you're saving money, but you're also watching your money grow if you start making healthy choices. People say, "Will there be gaps in coverage?" No. You get the same amount of health care coverage. I presume your employees are not complaining about the fact that they don't get coverage?

Mr. Schmidt. No. And that was one of the key things. We were actually looking at, can we afford this as a small business? Are we going to have to drop insurance? And morally and ethically, I had to take care of my employees. It's just something that every American should do.

The President. Yes, see, you're part of the responsibility era. You see the responsibility that comes with owning your own small business. I love that sentiment. "I have a moral responsibility to take care of my employees," says Dan. And that's why the country's great, by the way. There's a lot of people who have that great sense of responsibility. That's why it's important to keep the entrepreneurial spirit strong. Small-business owners know that they can't survive without taking care of their employees. It's kind of a necessity, isn't it? Not only do you have a good heart, but there's an economic necessity involved as well.

I want to thank you for coming, Dan. By the way, he's a Subchapter S corporation, which means if Congress doesn't act, they're going to be raising taxes on people like Dan Schmidt. Employers who are looking to expand—he's got 13 employees. I know that's not a lot for some of the people here in Washington, but there are millions of companies that employ 13 people or less. And there's a lot of small businesses. And it's that vibrancy in the private sector that really defines a strong economy. The vibrancy of owning your own business makes people come from Russia with a great dream. And Congress must understand that good policy is necessary to keep these people energized and excited so that the small-business sector is strong. If you've got too much Federal Government intruding into the lives of small business, it's going to make it hard for us to expand the job base.

Now, speaking about people who are interested in expanding the job base, Patty Orzano is with us. Patty, I'm glad you're here. She owns her own business. Isn't that true?

Patricia Orzano. I'm a partner with my husband for over 30 years in 7–11 franchises.

The President. In more ways than one. [*Laughter*]

Ms. Orzano. Now—okay—[*laughter*]—I'm the managing partner. [*Laughter*]

The President. I've got that relationship in my household too. [*Laughter*]

Good job, everybody.

Ms. Orzano. Mr. President, I'd like to thank you for coming back to New York

last week. New York does love you, and we need you back.

The President. Thank you.

[*Ms. Orzano made brief remarks.*]

The President. I appreciate that. Listen, what you're hearing is the call for help. By the way, Patty is a 7–11 franchisee, owner, pays taxes, by the way, business taxes at the individual income-tax rate. So when you hear them talking about, going to run up these—tax the rich, that's who she's talking about, right there.

And she is—wants to stay in business. She wants to expand. She doesn't need the added expenses. She's got huge medical costs already. Perhaps HSAs will help you, but more importantly, AHPs, associated health plans, will, because basically what she's saying is, is that "I need to be able to afford—have a basic health care plan, free of mandates, available to my employees, where I can share risk with other small-business owners." That's not too much to ask, is it, to allow small-business owners to have the same benefits as large businesses in America? That's what she's asking for.

And frankly, that's what I'm asking Congress to do, to provide small businesses with the same opportunity that big businesses have. It's a practical way to deal with the costs of health care. It will allow this good lady to feel comfortable about expanding her business and, at the same time, taking care of her employees. The costs of health care, the rising costs of health care, for a lot of reasons, are affecting the ability of the Pattys to be able to be comfortable in her relationship with her employees and expand her business.

And the option, by the way, is not to say, "The Federal Government ought to take it over, take over the health care industry." That would be the absolute wrong prescription. The right prescription is reasonable policy, one of which is associated health plans.

We've got with us the president of R.W. Murray Company, Bill Fairchild. By the way, Subchapter S corporation—he pays tax at the individual income-tax level. The rhetoric that says, "Oh, we're going to raise the taxes on a certain group of people," that's who they're talking about. They're talking about a lot of others as well—don't get me wrong—but small businesses will pay higher taxes. It doesn't make any sense to be raising the taxes on small businesses as we're starting to recover. Seventy percent of new jobs are started by small-business owners. Why would you penalize those who are creating the new jobs? You don't want to be doing that.

Anyway—Bill, welcome. What do you do?

[*William Fairchild made brief remarks.*]

The President. You understand what he's saying is this, is that if you're able to spread risk, it lowers the cost of buying health care. In other words, if an insurance carrier can spread risk across a variety of people or a variety of firms, it makes it more likely his health care goes down. If he's in the market bidding for a health care plan for 26 people, it's a lot different than if you're in the market bidding along with 260,000 people. And that's—by spreading risk, it reduces the cost of health care to him.

That's all we're asking for, is to give small businesses the opportunity to spread risk, not only within the State of Virginia, but he ought to be able to share risk with small contractors in Crawford, Texas, for that matter. What we're interested in is a market working so that people can hire people. That's what we want. That's the public policy ramifications of good health care insurance.

And the option, again, the other alternative you'll hear in Washington is, "All this stuff doesn't work. Let's block this from happening because we want the Federal Government to make all the decisions. We want the Federal Government to be

the decider. We want the Federal Government to be the consumer and the provider." And in my judgment, that would be a disaster for small businesses and consumers. It would make the health care cost more likely to go up than go down. It would mean the health care wouldn't modernize like it has been lately, and we wouldn't be on the leading edge of innovative change.

And so good health care policy first has to make a philosophical decision. We have to make this decision: Where do we want the decisionmakers to be? We want the decisionmakers to be right—these people right up here. This is the best health care plan, is when the small-business owners are involved in the market, making decisions best for their employees. The best health care plans are those in which people have control over the decisionmaking process. We've got to trust people to manage their own health care plans.

You heard me talk about homeownership. An ownership society is one that not only encourages small-business ownership and homeownership, but it also encourages the ownership of your own health care plans so you're the decisionmaker. And that will help control the costs, which is a major issue as to whether or not our country remains a competitive place to do business and whether or not people who are looking for a job are able to find one.

I want to thank the entrepreneurs who are here. You're a living example of what is great about America, the fact that you are able to dream and work—[*applause*]. Thank you for being such responsible citizens. Thank you for following your dreams. And thank you for setting such a great example.

May God bless you and your families, and may God continue to bless our country. Thank you for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:37 a.m. at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. In his remarks, he referred to former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; and President Vladimir Putin of Russia.

Message on the Observance of Saint Patrick's Day, 2004
March 16, 2004

I send greetings to those celebrating St. Patrick's Day.

On March 17th, we honor the remarkable life of Patrick, patron saint of Ireland. He helped bring Christianity to the Irish people. His generosity and love of liberty shaped Ireland's history and culture, and through generations of immigrants, those values have helped shape America.

We are grateful for the many ways Irish-Americans have blessed our country. They have helped to expand our economy, create our communities, and defend our homeland. Through their public service, they have strengthened our democracy, and their dedication to faith and family has enriched our Nation's character.

Laura joins me in sending our best wishes for a happy St. Patrick's Day.

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this message.

Remarks at a Saint Patrick's Day Shamrock Presentation Ceremony With Prime Minister Bertie Ahern of Ireland
March 17, 2004

Taoiseach, thank you very much. Thanks for the lovely gift of shamrocks. It is a beautiful symbol of a beautiful land. Laura and I welcome you back to the White House. We're honored to have you join us to celebrate Saint Patrick's Day.

This day is always a happy one for Americans. In some places, Americans get a little too happy. [*Laughter*] Today we reaffirm the bonds of friendship between our countries. We remember a courageous man who preached a gospel of peace. We celebrate a heritage that is claimed by millions of my countrymen.

There's an Irish saying that there is luck in sharing. For more than two centuries, your country and mine have shared responsibilities. We've shared aspirations, and we have shared values. From my Nation's earliest days, Americans of Irish descent have helped to establish and define America's most cherished principles. They've helped to defend the liberty of their adopted homeland.

Today, the people of the United States and the people of Ireland continue to share so much. Our economies are more closely linked than ever. Together, we are fighting terrorism, a danger that has brought destruction and grief to Americans and Irish alike and to the world. I join the *Taoiseach* in sending condolences to the people of Spain as they remembered their murdered countrymen. I thank you for your strong support in our common struggle. Our nations are also standing for peace and justice in places like the Balkans and Afghanistan and beyond.

We share a common vision for Northern Ireland. We seek a lasting peace for the people of Northern Ireland, a peace that will allow people to live free of terror and intimidation. We seek a region that is stable and prosperous and tolerant and locally governed. I commend Prime Minister Ahern and Prime Minister Blair and all of those who are working so hard to implement the Good Friday Agreement. I call for a permanent end to all political violence. There's no place for paramilitaries in a democratic society.

The partnership of America and Ireland is close. It is lasting, and it is important to the peace of the world. I look forward this summer to visiting Ireland for the EU and U.S. Summit, to strengthen the essential partnership between the United States and Europe.

Taoiseach, may the friendship between your people and mine prove as strong in the years to come as it has in the centuries past. May all the people of our nations have a happy Saint Patrick's Day. We ask God's blessings on the people of Ireland, and may God continue to bless the United States. Welcome.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:25 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Prime Minister Ahern.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting a Report on Assistance to Azerbaijan
March 17, 2004

Dear _____ *:*

On December 30, 2003, I exercised my authority to extend the waiver of section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act, concerning assistance to Azerbaijan. Consistent with paragraph (g)(6) of the heading "Assistance for the Independent States of the Former Soviet Union" in title II of the Kenneth M. Ludden Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, Fiscal Year 2002 (Public Law 107–115), I am providing the attached report prepared by my Administration concerning assistance provided pursuant to this waiver. The report describes the status of:

- All training and assistance provided to the Government of Azerbaijan pursuant to the extension of the waiver of section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act;
- The military balance between Azerbaijan and Armenia and the impact of U.S. assistance on that balance; and
- Negotiations for a settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and the impact of U.S. assistance on those negotiations.

My Administration remains fully committed to continue working with the Congress and all concerned parties to bolster peace, prosperity, and freedom in the South Caucasus.

Sincerely,

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Ted Stevens, chairman, and Robert C. Byrd, ranking member, Senate Committee on Appropriations, and C.W. Bill Young, chairman, and David R. Obey, ranking member, House Committee on Appropriations. This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 18.

Remarks to Military Personnel at Fort Campbell, Kentucky
March 18, 2004

I'm glad to be back. Thanks for having me. Thanks for inviting Laura. I am proud to be here once again with the Screaming Eagles of the 101st, with the Green Berets of the 5th Special Forces Group, and with the Night Stalkers. Many of you have seen action in the global war on terror. Some of you have just returned to Fort Campbell from your deployments. Thank you for a job well done. Welcome home.

Laura and I are honored to be with all the personnel at Fort Campbell and with all the family members who live here. Each one of you serves our Nation by giving your love and support to our soldiers. Here at one of America's vital military bases, you've built a strong community of people who care about each other and share the challenges and rewards of army life. America is grateful. America is proud of our military families.

All who serve at Fort Campbell and all who wear the uniform of the United States are serving at a crucial hour in the history of freedom. In the first war of the 21st

century, you're defending your fellow citizens against ruthless enemies, and by your sacrifice, you're making our country more secure. You have delivered justice to many terrorists, and you're keeping the rest of them on the run. You've helped to remove two of the most violent regimes on Earth. With daring and skill and honor, you've held true to the Special Forces motto, "To liberate the oppressed."

America is indebted to you. And we're also indebted to the men and women of the National Guard and the Reserves who are serving abroad and those called up for homeland security assignments. Hundreds of Guard and Reserve units across America have been activated in this time of war. These fine citizens and their families and their employers have put duty first, and our Nation is grateful to them as well.

We've got a lot of veterans with us today, veterans who have served our Armed Forces worldwide and who now live near Fort Campbell. Thank you for the great example you've set for today's soldiers. Thank you for your service to our Nation.

I want to thank General Petraeus for being such a strong leader and a good man. I want to thank General Ellis for being with us today—oh, I forgot. I want to thank Holly Petraeus as well. She has done a—she deeply cares about the men and women from this base. It's clear when you talk to her, she's got a lot of love in her heart.

General Ellis is with us, Commanding General of the U.S. Armed Forces Command. General Ellis, thank you for being here. Today I traveled down from Washington with two Members of the United States Congress who care a lot about the people stationed at Fort Campbell and who live around the Fort Campbell area. That would be Congressman Ed Whitfield from Kentucky and Congresswoman Marsha Blackburn from Tennessee. Thank you all for coming.

Laura and I regret the fact we didn't get here in time for the entertainment. We want to thank Lane Brody and Mark Wills and Darryl Worley and Jaci Velasquez, for your work, your care, and your support of the United States military.

I had the privilege of saying hello to a fellow named Billy Colwell. Billy has, by the way, served for 20 years in the 101st. He served our Nation, doing two tours of duty in Vietnam. You're probably wondering why I'm bringing up Billy. I'll tell you why. A lot of times, people say, "Well, America is strong because of our military." And that's one reason we're strong, and by the way, we're going to keep our military strong. Or they say, "Well, we're strong because we've got a great economy." And the economy is strong, and it's getting stronger. But the true reason we're strong is because of the hearts and souls of the American people. That's why we're strong. We're a compassionate, decent country, where neighbors care for neighbors.

Billy volunteers at the Fort Campbell YMCA. He takes time out of his life to help junior enlisted officers or people who are getting deployed. Billy is there to help welcome people home and to wish people well as they leave. Billy takes time out of his life to love a neighbor just like you would like to be loved yourself. No, the strength of this country is the fact that we've got citizens from all walks of life who care deeply about our fellow citizens. Billy, thank you for your service. Thank you for what you do.

Fort Campbell was the first Army post I visited in the weeks after our country was attacked. It was around Thanksgiving. I will never forget eating turkey with the Screaming Eagles. I remember telling you that the men and women of Fort Campbell—that you once again had a rendezvous with destiny. That's what I said when I was here last. And when the orders came, you carried out your missions. You made history once again.

Since we last met, you deployed over 5,000 vehicles, 254 aircraft, and 18,000 soldiers in Kuwait, in the fastest deployment in the history of the 101st. Since we last

met, the 101st liberated the cities of Najaf, Karbala, and Hilla. You secured southern Baghdad and sent 1,600 soldiers by helicopter to Mosul in the longest air assault in military history. Since we last met, the sons of the dictator went into hiding, until they were found and dealt with by the 101st and Special Operations.

Since we last met, soldiers from Fort Campbell have helped to organize the first truly free local election in Iraq in 30 years. Since we last met, you helped to build medical clinics and to rebuild schools. By your decency and compassion, you are helping the Iraqi people to reclaim their country. Because you care, you're helping the Iraqis live as free people.

One year ago tomorrow, the Armed Forces of the United States entered Iraq to end the regime of Saddam Hussein. After his years of defiance, we gave the dictator one final chance. He refused. And so in one year's time, Saddam Hussein has gone from a palace to a bunker to a spider hole to jail.

Because America and our allies acted, one of the most evil, brutal regimes in history is gone forever. The dictator of Iraq committed many atrocities, and he had many more in mind. This was a regime that tortured children in front of their parents. This was a regime that used chemical weapons against whole villages. This was a country in which millions of people lived in fear and many thousands disappeared into mass graves. That was the life in Iraq for more than a generation until the Americans arrived. Because America and our allies acted, a state sponsor of terror was put out of business. The Iraqi regime gave cash rewards to the families of suicide bombers and sheltered terrorist groups. But all that's over. When Saddam Hussein went down, the terrorists lost an ally forever. Because America and our allies acted, an aggressive threat to the security of the Middle East and to the peace of the world is now gone.

September the 11th, 2001, taught a lesson I will never forget. America must confront threats before they fully materialize. In Iraq, my administration looked at the intelligence information, and we saw a threat. Members of Congress looked at the intelligence, and they saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence, and it saw a threat. I had a choice to make: Either take the word of a madman, or take such threats seriously and defend America. Faced with that choice, I will defend America every time.

Because America and our allies acted, it is clear to everyone, when America makes a pledge, we keep our word. By speaking clearly, by speaking consistently, and by meaning what we say, it is more likely the world will be more peaceful. Because America and our allies acted, all the world is now seeing democracy rising in the heart of the Middle East. A year ago, Iraq was ruled by the whims of one cruel man. Today, Iraq has a new interim law that guarantees basic rights for all, freedom of religion, the right to cast a secret ballot, and equality under the law. And these historic changes are sending a message across the region from Damascus to Tehran: Freedom is the future of every nation.

The Iraqi people are achieving great things and serving and sacrificing for their own future. Today, more than 200,000 Iraqis, including 78,000 new police, are protecting their fellow citizens. They're building a country that is strong and free, and America is proud to stand with them. All over Iraq today, as that nation moves closer to self-government, Iraqis can be certain that in the United States of America, they have a faithful friend. And our military—and in our military, they're seeing the good heart of America.

They see people like PFC Amanda Thompson Cummings, who volunteered to serve in Iraq. She's an Army cook who also works on security patrol. She said this to a reporter: "They know I can shoot. I'm one of the best in my battalion. But hey,

I'm a redneck, what do you expect?" [*Laughter*] Those are her words, not mine. [*Laughter*]

This soldier also describes how the children of Iraq look at her, especially the young girls. As Amanda puts it, "When those girls look at a female soldier, they think, 'Maybe I can be something, too.'" PFC Cummings says, "We made a difference in their lives. And their faces, when they looked at us, that made it all worthwhile right there."

Soldiers of Fort Campbell, every one of you is making a difference. You've seen hard duty, and the defense of freedom is always worth it. Because of your service, because of your bravery, because of your dedication, the world is better off, and the American people are more secure.

You have done your duty. America owes those who do their duty—our military—our gratitude. We owe you more than gratitude. We also owe you the material support you need to do your job. As Commander in Chief, I've been proud to sign into law three pay increases for the military. You deserved every one. We've increased support for base housing and schools. We have a duty in Washington, DC, to make sure our families are taken care of.

Our military has had strong supporters in the House and the Senate. I want to thank the Congress for standing up. I want to thank every Member of Congress who voted in favor of the $87 billion supplemental that is meeting the needs of our troops in the field right now. When your Government gives you a mission, we must accept serious responsibility of our own. And here's my pledge: I'll work to make sure you have every resource and every tool you need to fight and win the war on terror.

The war continues. It's a different kind of war, but it goes on. As we saw again yesterday, the terrorists are fighting desperately to undermine Iraq's progress toward freedom. That attack showed once again the cruelty of our enemies. The terrorists and Ba'athist holdouts know that a free and stable Iraq will be a major defeat to the cause of hatred and terror. They can't stand the thought of a free society. They know that the rise of democracy and hope in the Middle East will mean the decline of their appeal and influence. So the terrorists understand that Iraq is the central front in the war on terror. They're testing our will, and day by day they are learning our will is firm. Their cause will fail. We will stay on the offensive. Whatever it takes, we will seek and find and destroy the terrorists so that we do not have to face them in our own country.

Not long ago, we intercepted a planning document being sent to the leaders of Al Qaida by a terrorist named Zarqawi. He's in Iraq. Along with the usual threats, he had a complaint. "Our enemy," said Zarqawi, "is growing stronger, and his intelligence data are increasing day by day. This is suffocation." Zarqawi is getting the idea. For the terrorists in Iraq, we are making sure there is less oxygen every day.

The terrorists hate and target a free Afghanistan and a free Iraq. They also hate and target every country that stands for democracy and tolerance and freedom in the world. The murders in Madrid have revealed once again the agenda and the nature of the terrorist enemy. They kill the innocent. They kill children and their mothers on a commuter train, without conscience, without mercy. They cause suffering and grief, and they rejoice in it. This terrorist enemy will never be appeased, because death is their banner and their cause.

There is no safety for any nation in a world that lives at the mercy of gangsters and mass murderers. Eventually, there's no place to hide from the planted bombs or the far worse weapons that terrorists seek. For the civilized world, there's only one path to safety: We will stay united, and we will fight until this enemy is broken.

The United States is committed to defeating terrorism around the world. It's a solemn commitment. We lead in this cause.

We're fighting in this cause, and we are sacrificing in this cause. The 101st Airborne has known greater losses than any other division-sized unit. Each of these Americans brought pride to our country. We pray for their families. We will honor their names forever.

The 101st Airborne Division has earned its place in the history of our country. Sixty years ago, on the night before D-day, General Eisenhower went down to the airfield where the 101st was loading into C–47s for their flight to Normandy. Eisenhower told the men not to worry because they had the best leaders and equipment. One of them looked at him and said, "Hell, General, we ain't worried. It's Hitler's turn to worry." That spirit carried the American soldier across Europe to help liberate a continent. It's the same spirit that carried you across Iraq to set a nation free.

Like your fathers and grandfathers before you, you have liberated millions from oppression. You've added to the momentum of freedom across the world. You have helped keep America safe. You make us all proud to be Americans, and you have made me proud to be your Commander in Chief.

May God bless you, and may God continue to bless the United States. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:10 a.m. on the 101st Airborne Division Parade Field. In his remarks, he referred to Maj. Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, 101st Airborne Division and Fort Campbell, and his wife, Holly; Gen. Larry R. Ellis, USA, Commanding General, U.S. Army Forces Command; entertainers Lane Brody, Mark Wills, Darryl Worley, and Jaci Velasquez; and senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi.

Remarks on the Anniversary of Operation Iraqi Freedom
March 19, 2004

Good morning, and thanks for coming. Laura and I are pleased to welcome you all to the White House. Mr. Secretary, thank you for being here. Members of my National Security Council are here; members of the administration; members of our Armed Forces; Members of the United States Congress—thank you for being here; ladies and gentlemen. I particularly want to thank the members of the diplomatic corps who are here, thank the ambassadors for coming today.

We are representing 84 countries united against a common danger and joined in a common purpose. We are the nations that have recognized the threat of terrorism, and we are the nations that will defeat that threat. Each of us has pledged before the world: We will never bow to the violence of a few. We will face this mortal danger, and we will overcome it together.

As we meet, violence and death at the hands of terrorists are still fresh in our memory. The people of Spain are burying their innocent dead. These men and women and children began their day in a great and peaceful city, yet lost their lives on a battlefield, murdered at random and without remorse. Americans saw the chaos and the grief and the vigils and the funerals, and we have shared in the sorrow of the Spanish people. Ambassador Ruperez, please accept our deepest sympathy for the great loss that your country has suffered.

The murders in Madrid are a reminder that the civilized world is at war, and in

this new kind of war, civilians find themselves suddenly on the frontlines. In recent years, terrorists have struck from Spain to Russia, to Israel, to East Africa, to Morocco, to the Philippines, and to America. They've targeted Arab States such as Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Yemen. They have attacked Muslims in Indonesia, Turkey, Pakistan, Iraq, and Afghanistan. No nation or region is exempt from the terrorists' campaign of violence.

Each of these attacks on the innocent is a shock and a tragedy and a test of our will. Each attack is designed to demoralize our people and divide us from one another. And each attack must be answered not only with sorrow but with greater determination, deeper resolve, and bolder action against the killers. It is the interest of every country and the duty of every government to fight and destroy this threat to our people.

There is no dividing line—there is a dividing line in our world, not between nations and not between religions or cultures but a dividing line separating two visions of justice and the value of life. On a tape claiming responsibility for the atrocities in Madrid, a man is heard to say, "We choose death, while you choose life." We don't know if this is the voice of the actual killers, but we do know it expresses the creed of the enemy. It is a mindset that rejoices in suicide, incites murder, and celebrates every death we mourn. And we who stand on the other side of the line must be equally clear and certain of our convictions. We do love life, the life given to us and to all. We believe in the values that uphold the dignity of life, tolerance and freedom and the right of conscience. And we know that this way of life is worth defending. There is no neutral ground—no neutral ground—in the fight between civilization and terror, because there is no neutral ground between good and evil, freedom and slavery, and life and death.

The war on terror is not a figure of speech. It is an inescapable calling of our generation. The terrorists are offended not merely by our policies; they are offended by our existence as free nations. No concession will appease their hatred. No accommodation will satisfy their endless demands. Their ultimate ambitions are to control the peoples of the Middle East and to blackmail the rest of the world with weapons of mass terror.

There can be no separate peace with the terrorist enemy. Any sign of weakness or retreat simply validates terrorist violence and invites more violence for all nations. The only certain way to protect our people is by united and decisive action. In this contest of will and purpose, not every nation joins every mission or participates in the same way. Yet, every nation makes a vital contribution, and America is proud to stand with all of you as we pursue a broad strategy in the war against terror.

We are using every tool of finance, intelligence, law enforcement, and military power to break terror networks, to deny them refuge, and to find their leaders. Over the past 30 months, we have frozen or seized nearly $200 million in assets of terror networks. We have captured or killed some two-thirds of Al Qaida's known leaders as well as many of Al Qaida's associates in countries like the United States or Germany or Pakistan or Saudi Arabia or Thailand. We are taking the fight to Al Qaida allies, such as Ansar Al-Islam in Iraq, Jemaah Islamiyah in Indonesia and Southeast Asia. Our coalition is sending an unmistakable message to the terrorists, including those who struck in Madrid: These killers will be tracked down and found; they will face their day of justice.

Our coalition is taking urgent action to stop the transfer of deadly weapons and materials. America and the nations of Australia and France and Germany and Italy and Japan and the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Spain, the United Kingdom, Canada, Singapore, and Norway have joined in the Proliferation Security Initiative, all aimed to bind together to interdict lethal

materials transported by air or sea or land. Many governments have cooperated to expose and dismantle the network of A.Q. Khan, which sold nuclear secrets to Libya, Iran, and North Korea. By all these efforts, we are determined to prevent catastrophic technologies from falling into the hands of an embittered few.

Our coalition is also confronting the dangerous combination of outlaw states, terrorist groups, and weapons of mass destruction. For years, the Taliban made Afghanistan the home base of Al Qaida. And so we gave the Taliban a choice, to abandon forever their support for terror or face the destruction of their regime. Because the Taliban chose defiance, our coalition acted to remove this threat. And now the terror camps are closed, and the Government of a free Afghanistan is represented here today as an active partner in the war on terror.

The people of Afghanistan are a world away from the nightmare of the Taliban. Citizens of Afghanistan have adopted a new constitution guaranteeing free elections and full participation by women. The new Afghan army is becoming a vital force of stability in that country. Businesses are opening, health care centers are being established, and the children of Afghanistan are back in school, boys and girls.

This progress is a tribute to the brave Afghan people and to the efforts of many nations. NATO, including forces from Canada, France, Germany, and other nations, is leading the effort to provide security. Japan and Saudi Arabia have helped to complete the highway from Kabul to Kandahar, which is furthering commerce and unifying the country. Italy is working with Afghans to reform their legal system and strengthening an independent judiciary. Three years ago, the people of Afghanistan were oppressed and isolated from the world by a terrorist regime. Today, that nation has a democratic government and many allies, and all of us are proud to be friends of the Afghan people.

Many countries represented here today also acted to liberate the people of Iraq. One year ago, military forces of a strong coalition entered Iraq to enforce United Nations demands, to defend our security, and to liberate that country from the rule of a tyrant. For Iraq, it was a day of deliverance. For the nations of our coalition, it was the moment when years of demands and pledges turned to decisive action. Today, as Iraqis join the free peoples of the world, we mark a turning point for the Middle East and a crucial advance for human liberty.

There have been disagreements in this matter among old and valued friends. Those differences belong to the past. All of us can now agree that the fall of the Iraqi dictator has removed a source of violence, aggression, and instability in the Middle East. It's a good thing that the demands of the United Nations were enforced, not ignored with impunity. It is a good thing that years of illicit weapons development by the dictator have come to the end. It is a good thing that the Iraqi people are now receiving aid instead of suffering under sanctions. And it is a good thing that the men and women across the Middle East, looking to Iraq, are getting a glimpse of what life in a free country can be like.

There are still violent thugs and murderers in Iraq, and we're dealing with them. But no one can argue that the Iraqi people would be better off with the thugs and murderers back in the palaces. Who would prefer that Saddam's torture chambers still be open? Who would wish that more mass graves were still being filled? Who would begrudge the Iraqi people their long-awaited liberation? One year after the armies of liberation arrived, every soldier who has fought, every aid worker who has served, every Iraqi who has joined in their country's defense can look with pride on a brave and historic achievement. They've served in freedom's cause, and that is a privilege.

Today in Iraq, a British-led division is securing the southern city of Basra. Poland continues to lead a multinational division in south-central Iraq. Japan and the Republic of Korea—of South Korea have made historic commitments of troops to help bring peace to Iraq. Special forces from El Salvador and Macedonia and other nations are helping to find and defeat Ba'athist and terrorist killers. Military engineers from Kazakhstan have cleared more than a half a million explosive devices from Iraq. Turkey is helping to resupply coalition forces. All of these nations and many others are meeting their responsibilities to the people of Iraq.

Whatever their past views, every nation now has an interest in a free, successful, stable Iraq. And the terrorists understand their own interest in the fate of that country. For them, the connection between Iraq's future and the course of the war on terror is very clear. They understand that a free Iraq will be a devastating setback to their ambitions of tyranny over the Middle East. And they have made the failure of democracy in Iraq one of their primary objectives.

By attacking coalition forces, by targeting innocent Iraqis and foreign civilians for murder, the terrorists are trying to weaken our will. Instead of weakness, they're finding resolve. Not long ago, we intercepted a planning document being sent to leaders of Al Qaida by one of their associates, a man named Zarqawi. Along with the usual threats, he had a complaint: "Our enemy," said Zarqawi, "is growing stronger, and his intelligence data are increasing day by day. This is suffocation." Zarqawi is getting the idea. We will never turn over Iraq to terrorists who intend our own destruction. We will not fail the Iraqi people, who have placed their trust in us. Whatever it takes, we will fight and work to assure the success of freedom in Iraq.

Many coalition countries have sacrificed in both Iraq and Afghanistan. Among the fallen soldiers and civilians are sons and daughters of Australia, Bulgaria, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, the Republic of Korea, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Spain, Switzerland, Thailand, Turkey, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, the United Kingdom, and the United States. We honor their courage. We pray for the comfort of their families. We will uphold the cause they served.

The rise of democratic institutions in Afghanistan and Iraq is a great step toward a goal of lasting importance to the world. We have set out to encourage reform and democracy in the greater Middle East as the alternatives to fanaticism, resentment, and terror. We've set out to break the cycle of bitterness and radicalism that has brought stagnation to a vital region and destruction to cities in America and Europe and around the world. This task is historic and difficult. This task is necessary and worthy of our efforts.

In the 1970s, the advance of democracy in Lisbon and Madrid inspired democratic change in Latin America. In the 1980s, the example of Poland ignited a fire of freedom in all of Eastern Europe. With Afghanistan and Iraq showing the way, we are confident that freedom will lift the sights and hopes of millions in the greater Middle East.

One man who believed in our cause was a Japanese diplomat named Katsuhiko Oku. He worked for the Coalition Provision Authority in Iraq. Mr. Oku was killed when his car was ambushed. In his diary he described his pride in the cause he had joined. "The free people of Iraq," he wrote, "are now making steady progress in reconstructing their country while also fighting against the threat of terrorism. We must join hands with the Iraqi people in their effort to prevent Iraq from falling into the hands of terrorists." This good, decent man concluded, "This is also our fight to defend freedom."

Ladies and gentlemen, this good man from Japan was right. The establishment of a free Iraq is our fight. The success of a free Afghanistan is our fight. The war

on terror is our fight. All of us are called to share the blessings of liberty and to be strong and steady in freedom's defense. It will surely be said of our times that we lived with great challenges. Let it also be said of our times that we understood our great duties and met them in full.

May God bless our efforts.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:02 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Javier Ruperez, Spain's Ambassador to the U.S.; A.Q. Khan, former head of Pakistan's nuclear weapons program; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; and senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks After Visiting Wounded Soldiers and Their Families at Walter Reed Army Medical Center
March 19, 2004

It is such an honor to come to a hospital like Walter Reed, for a couple of reasons. One is to meet the wounded who have made a decision to sacrifice for this Nation's security and for freedom in the world. It is an honor to meet their parents or their wives, their children—brave souls who support their loved one with all their heart.

It's an honor to be with the doctors and nurses of this fantastic facility who are doing unbelievable work in helping bring these people back on their feet, back into their communities.

One of the most important things for a Commander in Chief is to be able to say to a loved one, "If your son or daughter or husband or wife gets injured, you'll get the best possible care as quickly as possible." Every time I come to Walter Reed, it confirms that which I know, which is, we're providing the very best—the best care, the best compassion. We're moving these soldiers from the battlefield to hospitals as quickly as we can so they can begin their rehab.

And it's fantastic to go upstairs. The spirit is strong. The attitudes are terrific. Several soldiers told me today—badly injured soldiers—they want to get well quickly and get back on their duty stations in Iraq, want to serve our Nation.

It is so refreshing and great to be here. I want to thank you, General, for your hospitality.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:05 p.m outside the main entrance. In his remarks, he referred to Maj. Gen. Kevin Kiley, USA, commanding general, North Atlantic Regional Medical Command and Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

The President's Radio Address
March 20, 2004

Good morning. One year ago this week, ground forces of a strong coalition entered Iraq to liberate that country from the rule of a tyrant. For the Iraqi people, it was the beginning of their deliverance. For the world, it was the moment when years of

demands and pledges turned to decisive action.

The liberation of Iraq was good for the Iraqi people. It was good for America and good for the world. The fall of the Iraqi dictator has removed a source of violence, aggression, and instability from the Middle East. The worst regime in the region was given way to what will soon be among the best. The demands of the United Nations were enforced, not ignored with impunity. Years of illicit weapons development by the dictator have come to an end. The Iraqi people are now receiving aid instead of suffering under sanctions. And men and women across the Middle East, looking to Iraq, are getting a glimpse of what life in a free country can be like.

Helping Iraq emerge as a free nation is a global responsibility, and the nations of the world are meeting their responsibilities. Troops from Britain and Poland and Japan are securing important areas of the country. Special Forces from El Salvador, Macedonia, and other nations are helping to find and defeat Ba'athist and terrorist killers. In all, more than 50 nations are helping the Iraqi people emerge from decades of tyranny and realize a democratic future.

There are still violent thugs and murderers in Iraq, and our coalition is dealing with them. Not long ago, we intercepted a planning document being sent to leaders of Al Qaida by a terrorist named Zarqawi. Along with the usual threats, he had a complaint: "Our enemy," said Zarqawi, "is growing stronger, and his intelligence data are increasing day by day. This is suffocation!" Zarqawi is getting the idea. The resolve of our coalition is firm. We will never turn over Iraq to terrorists who intend our own destruction. We will not fail the Iraqi people, who have placed their trust in us. Whatever it takes, we will fight and work to assure the success of freedom in Iraq.

The terrorists hate and target a free Iraq. They also hate and target every country that stands for democracy and tolerance and freedom in the world. The murders in Madrid have revealed, once again, the agenda and the nature of the terrorist enemy. They kill the innocent—they kill children and their mothers on a commuter train—without conscience or mercy. They cause suffering and grief and rejoice in it.

The war on terror is not a figure of speech. It is the inescapable calling of our generation. The terrorists are offended not merely by our policies. They are offended by our existence as free nations. No concession will appease their malice. No accommodation will satisfy their endless demands. No course of therapy will cure them of their hatred. There can be no separate peace with the terrorist enemy. Whatever it takes, we will seek and find and destroy the terrorists.

Earlier this week, I traveled to Fort Campbell in Kentucky, where I met with Green Berets and Special Force soldiers and members of the 101st Airborne, the "Screaming Eagles." These men and women are defending their fellow citizens against ruthless enemies. They have liberated millions from oppression and added to the momentum of freedom across the world. Like all of their brothers and sisters in uniform, they are making America safer and more secure. Because of their service and sacrifice, I know that justice and freedom will prevail over terror and tyranny.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 10:36 a.m. on March 19 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on March 20. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 19 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. In his address, the President referred to senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks in Orlando, Florida
March 20, 2004

The President. Thank you all. Thanks for coming. It turns out the crowd is always a little bigger when Laura comes along. America loves her almost as much as I love her. I think she deserves 4 more years as the First Lady.

No, it's great to be back in the great State of Florida again. There's a big election coming up, and I thought I'd come down for a little spring training. It's always a good chance to be with Brother. [*Laughter*] He's a great Governor of this great State. Like me, he married well. [*Laughter*] I appreciate Colu being here as well. I used to say that Jeb was the coolest Governor in the country. That's until Arnold got elected.

Speaking about great leaders, I made a really good choice when I asked Dick Cheney to be my runningmate. He and I are grateful for the many strong supporters we have here in Florida. We're going to be spending some quality time in this State. We're here to earn the vote, and we need your help. I know you're here because you do want to help. One of the most important things you can do is encourage your neighbors to vote. We want a lot of people voting in this country. We want people from all walks of life doing their duty in this country, and that is to show up to the polls. And by the way, when you get them headed to the polls, you might suggest what's good for the country, and that is Bush-Cheney for 4 more years.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. And by the way, we set up a web site, so that you can get on to figure out how to volunteer. We need your help. That's what I'm here to ask for. It's not very complicated. It's georgewbush.com. That's an easy one for me to remember. [*Laughter*] With your help, we're going to make Florida a part of a great nationwide victory this November.

I'm so thankful for you all coming. I'm proud of the fact that two Members of the United States Congress is with us, Ric Keller and Tom Feeney.

Lieutenant Governor Toni Jennings is here. I appreciate the Governor Jennings. Tom Gallagher is a statewide official. I'm proud my friend is here, Tom Gallagher. I want to thank all the statehouse members, all the local officials. The high sheriff is with us today. And thank all the law enforcement people that are with us today.

I want to thank my friend Roberto Candelario for leading the invocation. Roberto, thank you for coming. Thank you, Lisa Faulkner, for leading this great crowd in the national anthem. I got here a little late; I didn't get to hear my friend Billy Ray Cyrus. Thank you, Billy Ray. The Katinas are with us as well. I'm proud they're here. I'm proud to have their support. My friend Lynn Swann is with us. He's welcome to come to Florida. We're a little nervous about inviting him down to Dallas. [*Laughter*] You know what I mean—a lot of Cowboy fans there. I appreciate so very much Footy for being here. Footy, thank you for emceeing this event.

The chairman of Bush-Cheney, Marc Racicot, the former Governor of Montana, is with us today. Marc, thank you for coming. My friend Al Hoffman, who has worked so hard in this State, is with us. Carole Jean Jordan, the chairman of the Florida Republican Party, is with us.

But most importantly, you're with us. I appreciate you coming. I know many of you are getting on buses and vans today for a voter registration drive. Thanks for doing that. The effort is going to help us. It will help our entire ticket. We have a strong slate of candidates. We're coming

into an historic election, and we're going to win an historic victory this November.

The Presidential primary contest is over. I finally got an opponent.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. He's following an interesting strategy. The other day, here in Florida, he claimed some important endorsements from overseas. He won't tell us the name of the foreign admirers. That's okay. Either way, I'm not too worried, because I'm going to keep my campaign right here in America.

Audience members. U.S.A.! U.S.A.! U.S.A.!

The President. He's an experienced Senator, and he's built up quite a record. In fact, Senator Kerry has been in Washington long enough to take both sides on just about every issue. [*Laughter*] Senator Kerry voted for the PATRIOT Act, for NAFTA, for the No Child Left Behind Act, and for the use of force in Iraq. Now he opposes the PATRIOT Act, NAFTA, the No Child Left Behind Act, and the liberation of Iraq. My opponent clearly feels strongly about each of these issues—[*laughter*]—so strongly that one position is never just enough. He demonstrated the technique the other day. Someone asked Senator Kerry why he voted against the $87-billion funding bill to help our troops in Iraq. Here is what he said: "I actually did vote for the 87 billion, before I voted against it." [*Laughter*] End of quote. [*Laughter*] That sure clears things up, doesn't it? [*Laughter*]

His answers aren't always clear, but the voters will have a very clear choice in this campaign. It is the choice between keeping the tax relief that is moving this economy forward or putting the burden of higher taxes back on the American people. It is a choice between an America that leads the world with strength and confidence or an America that is uncertain in the face of danger.

Now, I look forward to this debate. I look forward to this campaign. I'm looking forward to talking about what we've accomplished and what we're going to do. In the past 3 years, we've achieved great things, and most important, we have a positive vision for the years ahead: A positive vision for winning the war against terror; a positive vision for extending peace and freedom throughout our world; a positive vision for creating jobs and promoting opportunity and compassion here at home. We will leave no doubt where we stand. We will win on the 2d of November.

The last 3 years have brought serious challenges, and we've given serious answers. We came to office with a stock market in decline and an economy heading into recession. We delivered historic tax relief. And now, our economy is the fastest growing of any major industrialized nation. We had to confront corporate crimes that cost people their jobs and their savings. We passed strong corporate reforms, and we made it clear, we will not tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America.

We saw war and grief arrive on a quiet September morning, so we pursued the terrorist enemy across the world. We have captured or killed many of the key leaders of the Al Qaida network, and the rest of them will know there is no cave or hole deep enough to hide from American justice.

We confronted the dangers of state-sponsored terror and the spread of weapons of mass destruction, so we ended two of the most violent and dangerous regimes on Earth. We freed over 50 million people. Once again, America is proud to lead the armies of liberation.

When Dick Cheney and I came to Washington, we found a military that was underfunded and underappreciated, so we gave our military the resources and respect they deserve. Today, no one can question the skill and the strength and the spirit of the United States military.

It is the President's job to confront problems, not to pass them on to future Presidents or future generations. It is the President's job to step up and make the tough decisions and to keep his commitments. And that is how I will continue to lead our great Nation.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. Great events will turn on this election. The man who sits in the Oval Office will set the course of the war on terror and the direction of our economy. The security and prosperity of America are at stake. The other side hasn't offered much in the way of strategies to win the war or policies to expand our economy. So far, all we hear from that side is bitterness and partisan anger. Anger is not an agenda for the future of America. We will take on the big issues with optimism and resolve and determination, and we will make it clear to the American people, we stand ready to lead this Nation for 4 more years.

A big issue for every family in America is the Federal tax burden. With the largest tax relief since Ronald Reagan was President, we have left more money in the hands that earned it. By spending and investing and helping to create new jobs, the American people have used their money far better than the Federal Government would have.

Oh, I know there's some economic pessimists who refuse to accept good news about our economy. But I'm optimistic. I'll tell you why. I know what we've overcome. I've seen the spirit of the American people. I've seen Americans overcome economic challenges. Because of good policies and the hard work of the American people, our economy is strong, and it is growing stronger. Economic growth in the second half of 2003 was the fastest in nearly 20 years. Manufacturing activity is increasing. Business investment is rising. Disposable income is rising. Inflation is low. Interest rates are low. Homeownership is at the highest rate ever. Job creation is gaining strength. We've added more than 350,000 new jobs over the last 6 months. The tax relief we passed is working.

My opponent has a different view of tax relief. When we passed an increase in the child credit to help families, he voted against it.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. When we reduced the marriage penalty, he voted against it.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. When we created a lower 10-percent tax rate for working families, he voted against it.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. When we reduced the tax rate on dividends that many seniors depend on, Senator Kerry voted against it.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. When we gave small businesses a tax incentive to expand and to hire, he voted against it.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. We're beginning to see a pattern here. [*Laughter*] Senator Kerry is one of the main opponents of tax relief in the United States Congress. However, when tax increases are proposed, it's a lot easier to get a "yes" vote out of him. [*Laughter*] Over the years, he's voted over 350 times for higher taxes on the American people——

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. ——including the biggest tax increase in American history. He also supported a 50-cent gallon tax on gasoline.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. He wanted you to pay all that money at the pump and wouldn't even throw in a free car wash. [*Laughter*]

Now, Senator Kerry is proposing a lot of new Federal spending in this campaign. He's going to have pay for it somehow. There's a gap between Senator Kerry's spending promises and Senator Kerry's promise of a lower deficit. It's what I call a tax gap. Given Senator Kerry's record of supporting tax increases, it's pretty clear

how he's going to fill the tax gap. He's going to tax all of you.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Fortunately, you're not going to give him that chance.

Higher taxes right now would undermine growth and destroy jobs just as our economy is getting stronger. It's bad policy. To help grow the American economy and create more jobs for American workers, I have a better idea: We should make all the tax cuts permanent.

We must do more to keep this economy growing to create jobs. We need to maintain spending discipline in our Nation's Capital. I have a plan to protect small-business owners and employees from frivolous and junk lawsuits and needless regulation. We have a plan to control the cost of health care and give people better access through association health care plans and health savings accounts. And in order to control health care costs and to make sure docs are available, we need national medical liability reform now.

We have a strategy to make sure Florida goods are sold in markets all around the world. I proposed a great strategy to make sure our Nation has a sound energy plan, a plan that encourages conservation, a plan that modernizes the electricity system, a plan to make America less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

They talk a lot about job creation. My opponent talks about it, but he's against every one of these job-creating measures. Empty talk about jobs and economic isolationism won't get anyone hired. The way to create jobs is to reelect a pro-growth, pro-entrepreneur, small-business President, and that's George W. Bush.

Our future also depends on America's leadership in the world. The momentum of freedom in our time is strong, but we still face serious dangers. Al Qaida is wounded but not broken. Terrorists are testing our will in Afghanistan and Iraq. Regimes in North Korea and Iran are challenging the peace. If America shows weakness and uncertainty in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This will not happen on my watch.

This Nation is strong and confident in the cause of freedom. And today, no friend or enemy doubts the word of the United States of America. America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Afghanistan. The Taliban chose defiance, and the Taliban no longer are in power. America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Iraq. The dictator chose defiance, and the dictator today sits in a prison cell.

September the 11th, 2001, taught a lesson I will never forget: America must confront threats before they fully materialize. In Iraq, my administration looked at the intelligence, and we saw a threat. Members of Congress looked at the intelligence, and they saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence, and it saw a threat. The previous administration and Congress looked at the intelligence and made regime change in Iraq the policy of our Government.

In 2002, the United Nations Security Council yet again demanded a full accounting of Saddam Hussein's weapons programs. And as he had for over a decade, Saddam Hussein refused to comply. So we had a choice to make, either take the word of a madman or to take action to defend America. Faced with that choice, I will defend America every time.

My opponent admits that Saddam Hussein was a threat. He just didn't support my decision to remove Saddam from power. Maybe he was hoping Saddam would lose the next Iraqi election. [*Laughter*]

We showed the dictator and a waiting world that America means what it says. Because our coalition acted, Saddam Hussein's torture chambers are closed. Because we acted, Iraq's weapons programs are ended forever. Because we acted, nations like

Libya have gotten the message and renounced their own weapons programs. Because we acted, an example of democracy is rising at the very heart of the Middle East. Because we acted, the world is more free and America is more secure.

We still face thugs and terrorists in Iraq who would rather go on killing the innocent than accept the advance of liberty. There's a reason. They know that a free Iraq will be a major defeat for the cause of terror. This collection of killers is trying to shake the will of the United States. They don't understand us. America will never be intimidated by thugs and assassins.

Audience members. U.S.A.! U.S.A.! U.S.A.!

The President. We are aggressively striking the terrorists in Iraq. We're on the offensive. We will defeat them there so we do not have to face them in our own cities.

Other nations are helping us to build a free society in Iraq, because a free Iraq will make us all safer. We're standing with the Iraqi people as they assume more of their own defense and move toward self-government. These aren't easy tasks, but they're essential tasks. America will finish what we have begun, and we will win this essential victory in the war on terror.

On national security, Americans have the clearest possible choice. My opponent says he approves of bold action in the world but only if other countries don't object.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. I'm all for united action, and so are our 34 coalition partners in Iraq right now. Yet America must never outsource America's national security decisions to the leaders of other countries.

Some are skeptical that the war on terror is really a war at all. Senator Kerry said, and I quote, "The war on terror is far less of a military operation and far more of an intelligence gathering, law enforcement operation."

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. I disagree—I disagree. Our Nation followed this approach after the World Trade Center was bombed in 1993. The matter was handled in the courts and thought by some to be settled. The terrorists were still training in Afghanistan. They were still plotting in other nations. They were still drawing up more ambitious plans.

After the chaos and carnage of September the 11th, it is not enough to serve our enemies with legal papers. With those attacks, the terrorists and supporters declared war on the United States of America, and war is what they got.

Our men and women in the military are taking great risks, and they're doing great work. At bases across our country and the world, I've had the privilege of meeting with those who defend our country and sacrifice for our security. I've seen their great decency and unselfish courage. And I can assure you, ladies and gentlemen, the cause of freedom is in good hands.

This Nation is prosperous and strong, yet we need to remember that our greatest strength is in the hearts and souls of our fellow citizens. We're strong because of the values we try to live by, courage and compassion, reverence and integrity. We are strong because of the institutions that help give us direction and purpose, families and schools and religious congregations. These values and institutions are fundamental to our lives, and they deserve the respect of our Government.

We stand for the fair treatment of faith-based groups so they can receive Federal support for their works of compassion and healing. We will not stand for discrimination by the Federal Government against people of faith.

We stand for welfare reforms that require work and strengthen marriage, which have helped millions of Americans find their independence and dignity. We will not stand for any attempt to weaken those reforms and send people back into lives of dependence.

We stand for a culture of life in which every person counts and every person matters. We will not stand for the treatment

of any life as a commodity to be experimented upon or exploited or cloned.

We stand for the confirmation of judges who strictly and faithfully interpret the law. We will not stand for judges who undermine democracy by legislating from the bench or judges who try to remake the values of America by court order.

We stand for a culture of responsibility in America. It's the culture of a country that's changing from one that has said, "If it feels good, do it," and, "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each of us understands we are responsible for the decisions we make in life. If you are fortunate enough to be a mother or a father, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart. If you're worried about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you're responsible for doing something about it. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you're responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And in the responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor, just like we'd like to be loved ourselves.

For all Americans, these years in our history will always stand apart. There are quiet times in the life of a nation when little is expected of the leaders. This is not one of those times. You and I are living in a period when the stakes are high, challenges are difficult, a time when resolve is needed.

None of us will ever forget that week when one era ended and another began. On September the 14th, 2001, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers. I'll never forget that day. One guy pointed at me and said, "Don't let me down." Workers in hardhats were shouting, "Whatever it takes." And as we all did that day, these men and women searching through the rubble took it personally. I took it personally. I have a responsibility that goes on. I will never relent in bringing justice to our enemies. I will defend the security of America, whatever it takes.

In these times, I've also been witness to the character of this Nation. Not so long ago, some had their doubts about the American character, our capacity to meet serious challenges or to serve a cause greater than self-interest. But Americans have given their answer. I've seen the unselfish courage of our troops. I've seen the heroism of Americans in the face of danger. I've seen the spirit of sacrifice and compassion renewed in our country. We've all seen our country unite in common purpose when it mattered most.

We'll need all these qualities for the work ahead. We have a war to win. The world is counting on us to lead the cause of freedom and peace. We have a duty to spread opportunity to every corner of America. With your help, we're going to share our message of optimism and national strength with every voter in the State of Florida.

I'm looking forward to this campaign ahead. I'm going to give it my all. And I'm counting on you all to do the same. Talk to your friends. Talk to your neighbors. Get out the word. Ask people to join our cause to participate in democracy. With you at my side, there is no doubt in my mind we're headed to a victory on November the second.

Thank you for coming. God bless. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:14 p.m. at the Orange County Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida, and his wife, Columba; Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger of California; Lt. Gov. Toni Jennings of Florida; Tom Gallagher, chief financial officer, Florida Department of Financial Services; Kevin Beary, sheriff, Orange County, FL; Roberto Candelario, pastor, Centro de la Familia Cristiana, Orlando, FL; country music entertainer Billy Ray Cyrus; musical group the Katinas; pro football Hall of Fame receiver Lynn C. Swann;

John "Footy" Kross, Miami Y100.7 radio personality; and Al Hoffman, finance chairman, Republican National Committee.

Telephone Remarks to the South Boston Saint Patrick's Day Breakfast
March 21, 2004

The President. Senator, this would be your President calling.

State Senator Jack Hart. President Bush, President Bush is on the line. How about a nice round of applause for President Bush? Happy Saint Patrick's Day. What an honor.

The President. Yes, same to you, Jack. Thanks for letting me call in. I appreciate you taking my call.

Senator Hart. Any time, Mr. President, we'll take your call any time, for crying out loud.

The President. Well, I'm proud of that. Listen, I want to thank Father Casey. I presume he's got quite a few souls to save there in that crowd. [*Laughter*]

Senator Hart. There's quite a few Democratic souls to save in this hall, Mr. President.

The President. I know you've got one—you invited at least one Republican, and that's my friend the Governor.

Senator Hart. Yes, yes, he's here. Mitt Romney is here. We were going to ask you, Mr. President, do you need a runningmate? [*Laughter*]

The President. Wait a minute.

Senator Hart. We like Dick Cheney and all, but we'd like for you to take the Governor to Washington, DC. [*Laughter*]

The President. Look, you're lucky to have the guy. Here's the way I like to put it about Massachusetts: I know there's a lot of talk about a Massachusetts politician who has his eye on the Presidency. But tell Mitt it's not open until 2008. [*Laughter*]

Senator Hart. Oh, you're talking about—you had me stumped for a second there. You're talking about Senator Kerry, of course.

The President. Oh, no, no.

Senator Hart. Oh, my goodness.

The President. You mean the—well, never mind. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank the Lieutenant Governor. I want to thank the speaker and the senate president. I miss my days as being the Governor. I loved dealing with our Lieutenant Governor and speaker and members of the statehouse and the State senate. And I wish you all the very best. I know you're struggling with some big issues. But these are good, decent folks working for the people of Massachusetts to get some things done, and I appreciate, Jack, the spirit of this lunch.

Senator Hart. Well, thank you very much. We are certainly honored that you called, and we respect the job that you're doing. We pray for you every day, Mr. President. You're a good man, and we just wanted to wish you a very, very happy Saint Patrick's Day.

The President. Same to you, sir, and I wish everybody a happy Saint Patrick's Day as well. God bless, everybody. God bless our great Nation.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:25 a.m. from the Residence at the White House to breakfast participants meeting in Boston, MA. In his remarks, he referred to Rev. Robert E. Casey, pastor, Saint Brigid's Catholic Church, Boston, MA; Gov. Mitt Romney and Lt. Gov. Kerry Healey of Massachusetts; Thomas M. Finneran, speaker, Massachusetts State House of Representatives; and

Robert E. Travaglini, president, Massachusetts State Senate.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting a Consolidated Report on the Deployment of United States Combat-Equipped Armed Forces
March 20, 2004

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

In the interests of improving the efficiency of the reporting process and to increase the utility of reports to the Congress, consistent with the War Powers Resolution, I have decided to consolidate supplemental reports I provide to the Congress regarding the deployment of U.S. combat-equipped armed forces in a number of locations around the world. This consolidated report is part of my efforts to keep the Congress informed about such deployments and covers operations in support of the global war on terrorism (including in Afghanistan), Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Haiti. Operations in Iraq are a critical part of the war on terror, and it is my intention to continue to provide, consistent with the War Powers Resolution, information regarding the deployment of U.S. forces in Iraq in the reports to the Congress under Public Law 107–243 and Public Law 102–1, as amended.

The Global War on Terrorism

Since September 24, 2001, I have reported, consistent with Public Law 107–40 and the War Powers Resolution, on the combat operations in Afghanistan against al-Qaida terrorists and their Taliban supporters, which began on October 7, 2001, and the deployment of various combat-equipped and combat-support forces to a number of locations in the Central, Pacific, and Southern Command areas of operation in support of those operations and of other operations in our global war on terrorism.

United States efforts in the campaign in Afghanistan continue to meet with success, but as I have stated in my previous reports, the U.S. war on terror will be lengthy. United States Armed Forces, with the assistance of numerous coalition partners, continue to conduct the U.S. campaign to eliminate the primary source of support to the terrorists who viciously attacked our Nation on September 11, 2001. These operations have been successful in seriously degrading al-Qaida's training capability and virtually eliminating the Taliban's ability to brutalize the Afghan people and to harbor and support terrorists. Pockets of al-Qaida and Taliban forces, however, remain a threat to U.S. and Coalition forces and to the Afghan government and Afghan people. United States, Coalition, and Afghan forces are actively pursuing and engaging remnant Taliban and al-Qaida fighters.

The United States continues to detain several hundred al-Qaida and Taliban fighters who are believed to pose a continuing threat to the United States and its interests. The combat-equipped and combat-support forces deployed to Naval Base, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, in the U.S. Southern Command area of operations since January 2002, continue to conduct secure detention operations for the approximately 610 enemy combatants at Guantanamo Bay.

In furtherance of the U.S. worldwide efforts against terrorists who pose a continuing and imminent threat to the United States, our friends and allies, and our forces abroad, the United States continues to work with friends and allies in areas around the globe. For example, combat-equipped and combat-support forces deployed to Georgia to assist in training and equipping the

Georgian government's forces will be completing their task in May 2004. United States combat-equipped and combat-support forces are also located in Djibouti. The U.S. forces headquarters element in Djibouti provides command and control support as necessary for military operations against al-Qaida and other international terrorists in the Horn of Africa region, including Yemen. These forces also assist in enhancing counterterrorism capabilities in Kenya, Ethiopia, Yemen, Eritrea, and Djibouti. The United States is engaged in a continuous process of assessing options for working with other nations to assist them in this respect.

Additionally, the United States continues to conduct maritime interception operations on the high seas in the U.S. Central, European, and Pacific Command areas of responsibility. These maritime operations have recently expanded into the U.S. Southern and Northern Command areas of responsibility to stop the movement, arming, or financing of international terrorists.

It is not possible to know at this time either the duration of combat operations or the scope and duration of the deployment of U.S. Armed Forces necessary to counter the terrorist threat to the United States. I will direct additional measures as necessary in the exercise of the U.S. right to self-defense and to protect U.S. citizens and interests. Such measures may include short-notice deployments of special operations and other forces for sensitive operations in various locations throughout the world.

NATO-Led Kosovo Force (KFOR)

As noted in previous reports regarding U.S. contributions in support of peacekeeping efforts in Kosovo, most recently on November 14, 2003, the U.N. Security Council authorized member states to establish KFOR in U.N. Security Council Resolution 1244 of June 10, 1999. The mission of KFOR is to provide an international security presence in order to deter renewed hostilities; verify, and, if necessary, enforce the terms of the Military Technical Agreement between NATO and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (which is now Serbia and Montenegro); enforce the terms of the Undertaking on Demilitarization and Transformation of the former Kosovo Liberation Army; provide day-to-day operational direction to the Kosovo Protection Corps; and maintain a safe and secure environment to facilitate the work of the U.N. Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK).

Currently, there are 18 NATO nations contributing to KFOR in addition to the 18 non-NATO nations that provide forces. The U.S. contribution to KFOR in Kosovo is about 1,900 U.S. military personnel, or approximately 11 percent of KFOR's total strength of approximately 17,500 personnel. Additionally, U.S. military personnel occasionally operate from Macedonia, Albania, and Greece in support of KFOR operations. Eighteen non-NATO contributing countries also participate with NATO forces in providing military personnel and other support personnel to KFOR.

The U.S. forces have been assigned to a sector principally centered around Gnjilane in the eastern region of Kosovo. For U.S. KFOR forces, as for KFOR generally, maintaining a safe and secure environment remains the primary military task. The KFOR operates under NATO command and control and rules of engagement. The KFOR coordinates with and supports UNMIK at most levels, provides a security presence in towns, villages, and the countryside, and organizes checkpoints and patrols in key areas to provide security, protect minorities, resolve disputes, and help instill in the community a feeling of confidence. By the end of 2003, UNMIK had transferred all non-reserved competencies under the Constitutional Framework document to the Kosovar Provisional Institutions of Self-Government (PISG). The PISG includes the President, Prime Minister, and Kosovo Assembly, and has been in place since March 2002.

NATO continues formally to review KFOR's mission at 6-month intervals. These reviews provide a basis for assessing current force levels, future requirements, force structure, force reductions, and the eventual withdrawal of KFOR. NATO has adopted the Joint Operations Area plan to regionalize and rationalize its force structure in the Balkans. The KFOR has transferred full responsibility for public safety and policing to the UNMIK international and local police forces throughout Kosovo except in the area of Mitrovica, where the responsibility is shared due to security concerns. The UNMIK international police and local police forces have also begun to assume responsibility for guarding patrimonial sites and established border-crossing checkpoints.

NATO-Led Stabilization Force in Bosnia and Herzegovina (SFOR)

As noted in previous reports regarding U.S. contributions in support of peacekeeping efforts in the former Yugoslavia, most recently on January 22, 2004, the U.N. Security Council authorized member states to continue SFOR for a period of 12 months in U.N. Security Council Resolution 1491 of July 11, 2003. The mission of SFOR is to provide a focused military presence in order to deter hostilities, stabilize and consolidate the peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, contribute to a secure environment, and perform key supporting tasks including support to the international civil presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The U.S. force contribution to SFOR in Bosnia and Herzegovina is about 1,100 personnel. United States personnel comprise approximately 9 percent of the approximately 12,000 personnel assigned to SFOR. NATO has agreed to reduce the size of the force to 7,000 personnel by June 2004. United States participation is expected to be reduced proportionately. Currently, 16 NATO nations and 11 others provide military personnel or other support to SFOR. Most U.S. forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina are assigned to Multinational Brigade, North, headquartered near the city of Tuzla. The U.S. forces continue to support SFOR efforts to apprehend persons indicted for war crimes and to conduct counterterrorism operations.

Multinational Interim Force in Haiti

As I reported on February 25 and March 2, 2004, the United States deployed combat-equipped and combat-support personnel to Haiti in order to secure key facilities, facilitate the continued repatriation of Haitian migrants, help create conditions in the capital for the anticipated arrival of the Multinational Interim Force authorized by U.N. Security Council Resolution 1529, and for other purposes consistent with Resolution 1529. Additional U.S. forces have since been deployed to Haiti, bringing the total of U.S. combat-equipped and combat-support forces in Haiti to approximately 1,800. It is possible that additional U.S. forces will be deployed to Haiti in the future; however, it is anticipated that U.S. forces will redeploy when the Multinational Interim Force has transitioned to a follow-on United Nations Stabilization Force.

I have directed the participation of U.S. Armed Forces in all of these operations pursuant to my constitutional authority to conduct U.S. foreign relations and as Commander in Chief and Chief Executive. Officials of my Administration and I communicate regularly with the leadership and other members of Congress with regard to these deployments, and we will continue to do so.

Sincerely,

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Ted Stevens, President pro tempore of the Senate. This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 22.

Remarks Following a Cabinet Meeting and an Exchange With Reporters
March 23, 2004

The President. Thank you all for coming. We've just had a very constructive Cabinet meeting. We talked about the need for us to remain strong in the war on terror. I assured our—my team that America is not going to blink in the face of the attacks that took place in Spain. As a matter of fact, we'll continue to rally the world to fight off terror.

Here at home, my economic advisers, economic team presented a very upbeat assessment about our economy. It's strong, and it's growing stronger. Inflation is low. Interest rates are low. Manufacturing activity is up. The job base is growing. There's a lot of signs that the economic plan we put in place are working. There's more work to do.

In order to make sure the economy continues to grow, in order to fight off economic isolationism, we've got to work to control the cost of health care, which makes it awfully difficult for many small businesses to provide health care for their employees. We need an energy plan. The Secretary of Energy discussed the need for an energy plan. We need to make sure that we have legal reform. Junk and frivolous lawsuits make it awfully difficult for people to find work here in the United States. We need to make sure that the regulations at the Federal, State, and local level are absolutely necessary. And finally, we need to make sure the tax cuts are permanent. Tax relief has stimulated economic growth, and they need to be permanent. And I call upon Congress once again to, at the very least, make sure the child credit, the marriage penalty, and the 10-percent bracket are made permanent now so that people can plan—consumers can plan and small-business owners can plan.

But I'm pleased with the report I received. I'm pleased with the progress. There is more work to do. I look forward to working with Congress to get it done.

I'll answer two questions here today. Tom [Tom Raum, Associated Press], wherever you are.

Q. Mr. President, over here.

The President. Yes, right there.

Counterterrorism Efforts

Q. Mr. President, there's been a lot of attention over the last couple days to a book written by your former counterterrorism adviser that suggests that you understated the threat of Al Qaida before September 11th and then rushed to blame Iraq after the terror attacks. Is there any basis at all in any of these allegations? And do you agree with the Republican Senator Chuck Hagel that the White House needs to take these charges more seriously and not just undermine Mr. Clarke's credibility?

The President. Well, the facts are these: George Tenet briefed me on a regular basis about the terrorist threats to the United States of America, and had my administration had any information that terrorists were going to attack New York City on September the 11th, we would have acted. We have been chasing down Al Qaida ever since they attacked. We've captured or killed two-thirds of their known leaders. And we're still pursuing them, and we will continue to pursue them so long as I am the President of the United States.

I want to thank the troops involved. We've got a couple of thousand troops involved in Afghanistan that are hunting down Al Qaida in that part of the world. We've got intelligence officers all over the world collecting information so that we can act. We've got a strong network of cooperative governments trying to chase down terrorist money and to prevent that money from being spread around to cause harm.

I was on the phone today to Gerhard Schroeder, reminding them that we need to stay strong in the fight on terror. And I appreciated his strong comments today by phone, that he fully understood the stakes. We're making progress. There is more work to do. And this country will stay on the hunt. The best way to protect our country from further attack is to find the terrorists before they come to our homeland or anywhere else to inflict harm.

Steve [Steve Holland, Reuters].

Hamas Threats/Middle East Peace Process

Q. Yes, sir. Thank you, sir. Are you worried about the threat from Hamas to attack U.S. targets over Israel's killing of Sheik Yassin? And were you troubled by his killing?

The President. Yes, I'm worried about terrorist groups targeting America. And we take every threat seriously in this administration. Nearly every morning that I come to work, I talk to George Tenet, FBI Director Mueller, and others about the threats to the United States. And there's still serious threats because of what we stand for. There are still people who want to harm our country. And so, whether it be an Hamas threat or an Al Qaida threat, we take them very seriously in this administration.

As far as the Middle East, it's a troubled region, and the attacks were troubling. There needs to be a focused, concerted effort by all parties to fight terror. Any country has a right to defend itself from terror. Israel has the right to defend herself from terror. And as she does so, I hope she keeps consequences in mind as to how to make sure we stay on the path to peace. This administration is committed to finding a two-state solution—a two-state solution for the good of Israel, a two-state solution for the good of the Palestinian people. To this end, if the circumstances on the ground allow, I'll be sending a team back out to the Middle East next week to see if we can't keep the process alive, the process toward peace.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:05 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder of Germany. Reporters referred to Richard A. Clarke, former National Coordinator for Transnational Threats at the National Security Council; and Sheik Ahmed Yassin, founder of the Hamas terrorist organization, who was killed in an Israeli missile attack in Gaza City on March 22.

Remarks Honoring NCAA Fall Championship Teams
March 23, 2004

Thank you for coming. Behave yourself up on the balcony. [*Laughter*] That would be you. This is Champions Day here at the White House, and it is my honor to welcome some great champs. We are proud you're here.

I want to thank those who represent the universities, here present. James Moeser, the chancellor, and Dick Baddour, the athletic director of the University of North Carolina, we appreciate you being here. Mike Garrett, who is the athletic director of the University of Southern California, is with us today. Bill Jenkins, who is the president of LSU, along with Roger Ogden, who is the chairman of the LSU Board of Supervisors, and Skip Bertman, who is the athletic director, we're proud you're here.

As you can probably see, we've got some Members of the United States Congress with us here today, and there seems to be quite a large and vibrant delegation from the great State of Louisiana. Senator John Breaux and Mary Landrieu are with us today, mighty Tiger fans. Richard Baker and Jim McCrery and Chris John and Rodney Alexander, thank you all for coming. We're proud you're here. From California, Congressman Chris Cox and Diane Watsonare with us today. Thank you all for coming. Congressmen David Price and Mike McIntyre from North Carolina are with us as well. Thank you all for being here.

First, it's my honor to recognize the football cochamps this year, LSU and USC, fantastic group of athletes and teams that battled to the end. Any good team obviously requires good players; these teams have got good players, but it also requires really good coaches. Pete Carroll and Nick Saban are two of the finest coaches in the United States. We're glad you're here. There was quite a lot of discussion about who really was number one. My attitude is, the South Lawn is a pretty good size. [*Laughter*] Never mind. [*Laughter*] I appreciate the class of these two programs and the grace they demonstrated under pressure. Both schools, LSU and USC, are, in fact, national champs. And we're proud to call you national champs.

Obviously, in order to be a national champ, you've got to field fine players at every position. I particularly want to say something about USC tailback Reggie Bush. Where is he? His teammates call him "the President"—[*laughter*]—"President Bush." You must feel pretty comfortable here at the White House, "President Bush." [*Laughter*]

I also want to say one other word about an individual who is not with us today, and that is Jeff Boss, who was the equipment manager for 24 years for LSU. Last October he died from cancer. The Tigers named their locker room in Jeff's honor, and they kept his family in their prayers throughout the season. You all know and I know that Jeff would be incredibly proud of the fact that LSU won its first national championship in 45 years. May God bless Jeff and his family, and may God bless both the USC team and the LSU football team. Thank you all for coming.

Now it's my honor to welcome back the Lady Trojans volleyball team from USC. They did pretty well this year. They were 35–0. [*Laughter*] Last year, I had the honor of welcoming my friend Mick Haley here to the White House. See, Mick used to coach the University of Texas volleyball team, and I used to work out at the gym there, and he used to come over and give me pointers all the time about how to strengthen up and look a little better. My advice is, when you see the Governor of California, he doesn't need many pointers, Mick. [*Laughter*]

Mick's a good man. He coaches a group of great ladies who are, in fact, national champs. I asked how many of them are coming back next year. Of course, one of them asked if I was. [*Laughter*] But he has a lot of returners for next year, and this group of champs is welcome here at the White House any time. Thank you for coming.

Then we honor Coach Anson Dorrance's UNC Tarheel women's soccer team. Anson's got a pretty good record. He's coached for 25 years, and he's won 18 national championships. That's the sign of a good coach who knows good talent and knows how to mold everybody into a good team. This year they were 32–0. When I had my honor of having my picture taken with the team, I asked what was the closest match, closest game. One of the ladies said it was 3–0. That's a heck of a team, 32–0 and the closest game is 3–0. UNC gets a lot of attention for its basketball team, but let me remind you of what the legendary coach Dean Smith said. He said, "UNC is a women's soccer school." And

once again, these ladies have proven Coach Dean Smith correct. Welcome back.

Jerry Yeagley is here with the Indiana Hoosier men's soccer team. He's been with the Hoosiers for three decades, and in those 30 years they have won six national titles. He retired last fall with 544 wins, more than any coach in NCAA Division I history. Coach Yeagley, we're proud of you. We're proud of the team you've brought here. We're proud of your dedication to athletics. I want to thank you for working so hard to teach the young men of your teams the difference between right and wrong and how to play as a team. Today we honor your coaching career at the same time we honor the great Indiana Hoosier soccer team. Welcome.

These are impressive athletes behind me, but I think if you really look beyond the athletics, you'll find some decent and compassionate people as well. These athletes, in the most part, understand they have a responsibility to uphold to the communities in which they live. They understand it's one thing to be a champ on the field; it's another to be a champ off the field by setting the right example for some youngster who is wondering what it means to be a champ.

By sending good messages about right and wrong behavior and by volunteering in their community—the USC football team makes a trip to the USC Children's Hospital every year to visit patients and to give gifts and to sign autographs. You know what they're doing? They're bringing some sunshine into somebody's life, is what they're doing. The LSU football players visit hospitals, and they teach elementary school children how to read. They're taking their talents off the football field and putting them in the classroom, so some child in Louisiana has a chance to realize a better life. The USC women's volleyball team raised money and participated together in the Race for the Cure for breast cancer research. They took their athleticism and put it into practice to help save somebody's life. The UNC women's soccer team is helping to build a Habitat for Humanity house near the campus. They're using their God-given talents to make sure somebody has a place to live. And finally, the Indiana soccer players volunteer as coaches and mentors for youth soccer teams in Bloomington, Indiana.

All these players have understood it's important to serve something greater than yourself in life. They learned to do so by working together for a team, and they're learning to do so by making the community in which they live a better place for every citizen.

It is my honor to welcome true champs here to the White House. I congratulate you for your hard work. I wish you all the best for the—whatever the future may hold. God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:21 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Pete Carroll, head football coach, University of Southern California; Nick Saban, head football coach, Louisiana State University; Mick Haley, head coach, University of Southern California women's volleyball; Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger of California; Anson Dorrance, head coach, University of North Carolina women's soccer; Dean Smith, former head coach, University of North Carolina men's basketball; and Jerry Yeagley, former head coach, University of Indiana men's soccer.

Remarks on Presenting the Congressional Gold Medal to Dorothy I. Height

March 24, 2004

Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker and Leader Frist, distinguished Members of Congress, I want to thank the authors of the bill that bestowed this high honor, Senator Clinton and Senator Levin and Congresswoman Watson. Thank you all for being here to honor such a fine American.

Since the American Revolution, Congress has awarded gold medals to the heroes of our country. And today we recognize a citizen who has helped to extend the promise of our founding to millions. We recognize a hero.

I'm so pleased to join with the Congress in honoring this good and gracious woman and the great life she has lived. And what a life it's been. If you know—in the presence of Dorothy Height, you kind of—she's such a calming influence. You realize you're in the presence of grace. But you've got to understand what she's done to realize that behind the grace, there's a will of steel and absolute determination.

She's been a leader and a witness to a lot of our great history. We've heard a lot of talk about the "Big Six." As Leader Pelosi said—I think it was Leader Pelosi—"I sure would have liked to have been in the room. I would have liked to have seen Dorothy Height interface with some of the giants of the civil rights movement." The truth of the matter is, she was the giant of the civil rights movement. They were interfacing with her. [*Laughter*]

She was there when they planned the march. She was a few steps away from Dr. King's great speech at the Lincoln Memorial. She helped integrate the YWCA. She was in the South during the sixties setting up freedom schools and voter registration drives. She was in Mississippi bringing white and black women together. She was in Birmingham in 1963 comforting the mothers of that city. Condi Rice was there at the time. She's told me the story about what it was like. It would have taken a presence like Dorothy Height to instill hope and calm and confidence during that very troubled time. She helped create the Black Family Reunion. She's done a lot.

She's a woman of enormous accomplishment. She's a friend of First Ladies like Eleanor Roosevelt and Hillary Rodham Clinton. She's known every President since Dwight David Eisenhower. She's told every President what she thinks since Dwight David Eisenhower. [*Laughter*]

I find it really interesting that Dorothy Height has always stressed the importance of institutions closest to us, our families, our churches, and our neighborhoods. She understands that those institutions are important in shaping the character of an individual and, therefore, the character of the Nation. In her recently published memoir, Dr. Height wrote, "It is in the neighborhood and communities where the world begins. That is where children grow and families are developed, where people exercise their power to change their lives." Incredibly wise words from a strong leader.

Few Americans have done more than Dorothy Height to help their fellow citizens discover and exercise their own life-changing power. Dorothy has always remembered what her mother told her when she was a girl of 8 in 1920. She recalls, "My mother, always so gentle and so firm, put her arms around me. She said, 'You're a nice girl, Dorothy. You're a smart girl. And there are many things you can do.' " Mom was right. There was a lot of things she could do, and she did them, and America is a better place for it.

We're proud of you, Dorothy. We're honored to be in your presence. You're about to receive a gold medal, but perhaps the best medal we can give as a society

is to continue to work for equality and justice for all.

It's now my honor to join Speaker Hastert and Senator Stevens, the Senate—the President pro tem of the Senate, in presenting this high award, this important award, to a great American.

May God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:02 p.m. in the Rotunda at the U.S. Capitol.

Remarks to the United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
March 24, 2004

Thank you all. Thank you for that warm welcome. *Sientese, por favor. Bienvenidos.* I'm so glad you're here. Thanks for having me. [*Laughter*] I love to be in the presence of entrepreneurs, people who are willing to dream and to work to realize their dreams, which is really what America has been, is, and should be all about.

I appreciate the fact that it's the entrepreneurs here in America that take the risks and create the new jobs, do the hard work that's helping our economy go forward. You see, by pursuing your own dreams you're making the American Dream possible for more. You're helping to make sure that others can realize the potential of our country. Every day you show faith in what we stand for in America, and I'm here to tell you, the country is grateful to you. And I want to thank you for what you do.

What I want to do is talk about, today, the challenges facing our economy and how to put good policies in place to unleash the entrepreneurial spirit of America—that's what we're really here to talk about—and talk about the need for—to make sure we've got a small-business sector that is vibrant, strong, growing, confident, optimistic about the future. And there are some things Government can do. Government can't create wealth, but it can create an environment in which the entrepreneurial spirit can flourish. And that's what I'm here to talk about today.

I want to thank Hector—he's the Small Business Administration head—for joining me. I had the honor of meeting Hector, Sr., right before we came out here. Hector and I are lucky. We've both got good dads. [*Laughter*] So, Hector Barreto, Sr., I appreciate you here. He's the cofounder of the U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.

I appreciate my friend John Snow, who is the Secretary of Treasury. Mr. Secretary, thanks for coming to share some thoughts. I appreciate your wisdom. He's a smart guy. [*Laughter*] He knows what I know, that it's best not to be thinking about economic theory; it's best to be thinking how to unleash the great creativity of the American people. It's the best economic policy there is.

I appreciate so very much J.R. Gonzales, the chairman and acting president of the U.S. Chamber. I want to thank Tina Cordova, the vice chair, for having me here. I see my friend Massey Villarreal. He's an old friend from Texas. I don't know if there's any *Texanos* here. [*Applause*] Yes. Tell them hello back home. [*Laughter*] Tell them I remember where I came from, and I'm not going to change because of polls and focus groups. I'm going to take the—I'm bringing the principles that I was raised with here. I'm going to stand on principle. I'm going to work as hard as I can for the American people, and I'm not going to change what I believe just because some are trying to change me.

And one of the things I believe is, this country is a great country. That's what I believe. I believe it is a great country for a lot of reasons. You know what I believe? I believe it's a great country because if you're willing to work for a dream, you can own your own business. To me, that's great, when somebody can start with little and end up with a lot, and that's what we've got to encourage here in this country.

I want to remind you that we have reason to be optimistic about the economy, particularly when you realize what we have been through as a nation. Beginning in 2001, the economy headed into a recession. The definition of a recession, of course, is three quarters of negative growth. So in the first three quarters of 2001, we were going backwards. That made it hard. I'm sure many of you remember the period. If you're a small-business owner, it's difficult to survive in a recession. If you're a worker, there's a lot of uncertainty during a recession.

The stock market, by the way, had begun its decline in March of 2000, and that affects a lot of people. It affects people's confidence when they see their savings begin to dwindle.

As well—we began to recover, by the way, and then we got attacked. And the attack did a couple of things. Obviously, it changed how one must conduct foreign policy. In other words, we have to deal with threats early, before they materialize. Oceans no longer protect us like we used to think. And therefore, when we see a threat, we have to deal with it. But the other way it affected us, it hurt our economy. Make no mistake about it, we lost nearly a million jobs as a result of the attack. But we began to recover from that. We're a strong country. We said loud and clear to the enemy, "You can't intimidate us. We refuse to quit. We're determined to move forward as a nation."

And then we found out that some of—corporate citizens or U.S. citizens who happen to be in corporate America didn't tell the truth, and that hurt our confidence. See, the system counts on people being honest and open, particularly when it comes to cashflow numbers and earnings per share. And the dishonesty of some in corporate America cost people their jobs and cost a lot of savings, but we acted. We passed tough reforms. As you can see on your TV screens, wrongdoers are being held to account. The message is, we're not going to tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America.

And then we overcame a significant hurdle as well. I just told you we had to deal with threats before they materialize. I made a tough but correct decision to join with the rest of the world—or the United Nations Security Council, and say, "Disarm, Saddam Hussein. For the sake of world security and world peace, you disarm. We've told you to do so for 12 years, and you haven't. Now you have one final chance to do so." And he wouldn't, of course, and so we led a coalition to remove Saddam Hussein. He was in defiance, and now he's in jail. And by the way, the world is better off for it, and America is more secure.

But that decision affected our economy. The decisionmaking process affected the economy. Remember turning on your TV screen and seeing "March to War." That's an incredibly negative thought. And in the world of finance and job creation, it's important to be hopeful and optimistic. People are more likely to invest if they're hopeful and optimistic about the future. And when you're looking on your TV screens and you are seeing "March to War," it made it difficult for people to see a better future. Now we're marching to peace. The march to war is over, and the march to peace has begun, and the world is becoming more peaceful.

My point to you is that we faced a lot of challenges in a brief period of time. In 3 years, we've overcome a lot because of the strength and the character of the American people and the strength of the entrepreneurial spirit. Think about where we are

today. Inflation is low. Interest rates are low. That's helpful, by the way, if you're a businessowner. Mortgage rates are low. Homeownership is at the highest rate ever. That's what we want. If we want people—we want people—more people to own their own business. We also want people to own their own home. It's part of the American experience, and it's happening here.

Manufacturing activity is on the rise. The unemployment rate today is lower than the average rate in the seventies, eighties, and nineties. Thanks to our productive workers—and we're very productive—and to the visionary business leaders, small and large, the United States is the fastest growing major industrialized economy in the world.

We have overcome a lot because of the strength of our country. And members of the Hispanic Chamber are playing an essential part in the progress, so I'm here to thank you for that. According to the most recent data, Hispanic-owned companies employ about 1.4 million Americans and carry a payroll of nearly $30 billion. Our economy is stronger and society is better because Hispanic-owned businesses are thriving all across the country.

One of the main reasons why the recession that I described to you is the shortest in modern history is because we acted with tax relief. And I want to describe to you why I felt it was so strong to promote tax relief here in Washington. First, if a American has more of their own money in their pocket, they're more likely to demand a good or a service. And in our marketplace, when somebody demands a good or a service, somebody is going to produce the good or a service. And when somebody produces that good or a service, somebody is more likely to keep a job or find work. That's the economic theory behind the tax relief.

But there's really more to it than that. When you reduce taxes on everybody who pays individual income taxes, the way many small businesses are structured in America, you're really helping the small-business sector. If you're a sole proprietorship or a Subchapter S corporation, you pay tax at the individual income-tax rate, and therefore, when you're cutting income taxes on the individual, you're really cutting taxes on small businesses. And when a small business gets tax relief, it means they've got more money in their company treasury in which to invest and/or expand. That's what tax relief does.

As well, as you may recall, we raised the amount of money you can deduct for capital purchases from 25,000 to $100,000 for small businesses, all aimed at encouraging investment, all aimed at stimulating the economy. Because when you go out and invest, somebody has to make the product that you're purchasing, and when somebody makes that product, somebody is more likely to find work or keep a job.

As well we did some other things in the tax relief. We increased the child credit to $1,000 per child. That means it makes it easier for moms and dads to raise their families. We reduced the marriage penalty. What kind of Tax Code is it that penalizes marriage? It's not a very wise Tax Code, so we reduced the marriage penalty.

We also did something else. And that is, we put the death tax on its way to extinction. I think that's important for—see, I think that's important to enhance the entrepreneurial spirit. Look, if you're a small-business owner, like many of you are, you know that when you're profitable you get to pay taxes to Uncle Sam. But the death tax means you not only pay him when you're living, you pay him when you die. And that makes it awfully hard for you, who've started your own business, who've built up your assets, to pass on your assets to whomever you want.

Most small businesses know what I'm talking about. You know, you can't—you have to sell the business just to pay the inheritance taxes. And that dims the entrepreneurial spirit. It doesn't increase the entrepreneurial spirit. It makes it more difficult for the entrepreneur to realize his or her dream, because part of the dream

of the entrepreneur is to leave his or her business to whomever he or she wants. That's part of the experience, and the death tax gets in the way. It's a lousy tax. And we passed good policy to get rid of it, for the sake of the entrepreneurial spirit.

What I'm telling you is, these are—this is what we—when you hear the word "progrowth," these are progrowth policies, all aimed at growing not the Government but all aimed at growing the private sector. Seventy percent of most new jobs are—70 percent of new jobs are created by small businesses. And so when you hear me talk progrowth, we're talking about progrowth in the small-business sector.

What's interesting about the economy today, and you know this as well as I do, that the economy is experiencing some change, some fundamental changes. Take, for example, productivity. Productivity has grown faster over the last 2 years than at any time in more than 50 years, because of new technologies, technologies that are changing the way we do business. Productivity means one worker can produce 10 widgets today, when it took—one worker could produce 2 widgets in the same amount of time in years past. It's kind of a simple definition. We call that a Texas definition. [*Laughter*]

Higher productivity is good, by the way. It's a good thing for the economy. It's good for your business. It helps you—when you become more productive, it means you're better at competing. You can make a product that satisfies consumer demand in a more efficient and, sometimes, less costly way. And that's good.

Productive businesses are more likely to grow, and that's good. That's what we want. We want growth in order for people to work. Productive workers receive better wages. If you're working in America and you become more productive, you get paid better. That's just a fact of life. The quality of your life goes up. The more—the better worker you are, the more productive you are, the more likely you're going to make more money for your family.

A more productive economy leads to greater national wealth. In other words, it helps the individual, but it also helps the Nation. We become a wealthier nation.

But there's some challenges with an economy that is more productive. Think of it this way: Companies fill new orders and expand operations without needing to hire new workers. If you're more productive, you can expand your business to meet expanding demand, and you may not need to hire an additional worker to do so. And that creates a problem for somebody looking for work. And that's what I'm interested in, by the way. You know, the unemployment rate is low, but so long as anybody is looking for work and can't find a job, it says to me, we've got an issue here in America.

The other thing that productivity requires is an acknowledgment that new jobs require new skills. If you think about it, things are changing in the workplace, and we better have an education system that encourages—that allows workers to find the new skills necessary to be able to meet the challenges and new jobs of the 21st century.

There's workers who are concerned here in the country. I hear it all the time. There are workers concerned about jobs going overseas. They're worried about changes in the economy. They wonder whether or not, as the economy changes, he or she will have the skills necessary to survive. They're worried about whether their children can find a good job close to home. They're worried about whether or not their health care and their benefits, retirement benefits, will exist.

Here in Washington, you hear the economists say we're in a time of transition. I just want people to understand—know that I know that transition is not easy for people in our country. Transition unsettles the nerves. And so there's some things we've got to do to help, to help our workers and

to help our entrepreneurs. And that—and I'm talking about something more than just unemployment insurance. There's some strategies that need to be in place, progrowth, proworker strategies to make sure that the American experience is reached all throughout the country.

One thing we can't do is go back to the old policies of tax and spend in Washington. I think you're going to find the old tax-and-spend philosophy will drain the entrepreneurial spirit, because when you hear "tax and spend," it means somebody has got to pay more taxes. And guess who gets stuck with them? Small-business owners, people who are beginning to realize their dreams.

And the other thing we've got to do is reject economic isolationism. We can't isolate ourself from the world and expect to have a growing economy. There are some here—I'm just going to tell you what you're going to hear, when you hear this, "We're going to raise taxes on the rich." Just remember, most small businesses are sole proprietorships and Subchapter S corporations. And guess what? If you're one of those, you're rich, according to the definition here in Washington, DC. Raising taxes on small businesses would be a disaster for our economy.

I know some who want to build barriers to trade. You hear a lot of talk about trade and the way to deal with certain problems is to wall us off from the world. I think it's wrong. I think it's bad policy, and I think a lot of Hispanic-owned businesses know what I'm talking about. Rather than building barriers, we need to break down barriers so that the American entrepreneur and American companies can sell American products on every continent in the world. The best policy to make sure jobs stay here at home and somebody can find a job is to open up markets for U.S. products. See, pessimistic people say, "We can't compete. Therefore, let's throw up walls." Optimistic folks say, "We can compete with anybody just so long as the playing field is level." And good policy says, "Let's make the playing field level."

Look at it this way: Five percent of the world's population is right here in America—means 95 percent of potential customers are elsewhere. Ninety-seven percent of all U.S. exporters are small or medium-sized businesses. It's a pretty interesting statistic, isn't it? A lot of people in America think "export"; they think "big guys." The facts are that small businesses export a lot. Companies with fewer than 20 employers—employees—make up nearly 70 percent of all exporting firms. Of all the businesses that sell overseas, sell a product in demand overseas, 70 percent are U.S. companies with less than 20 employees. That's small business.

If we allow ourselves to fall into the trap of trade wars and throwing up barriers and walls between America and other markets, those small businesses will have little chance to survive. When you hear people talk about trade, I want you to remember this: Hispanic-owned businesses are selling car and truck parts, food, construction equipment, financial services, manufactured goods, and products all over the globe.

I know my friends from Texas have realized and seen the benefits of NAFTA. Our trade with our friend Mexico has tripled over the past decade. When you triple trade, it means there's opportunity on both sides of the border for people to realize their dreams. We must not allow people to raise economic barriers.

Look what it would do to companies like Ruiz Foods in Dinuba, California, where I went. The Ruiz family started in the kitchen. The story, by the way, may sound familiar to many of you here. It may not have started in the kitchen. It may start—your business may have started in a garage, or it may have started sitting around a dining room table. In this case, they started in a kitchen using Grandma Rosie's pots and pans to make enchiladas. They now produce 3.5 million burritos a day. And I want you to know, they are selling some

of their frozen foods into Mexico. That's a pretty darn good burrito. [*Laughter*]

Kim Ruiz Beck, the company's vice chairman—I think Kim is the daughter of the founder—said it was tough to break into the Mexican market. "At first, there was some skepticism about how authentic we are. But there's a lot of trust in products that are made in the United States of America." What she said is darn wise. There is a lot of trust in the products that say "Made in the USA." And therefore, it makes sense from a policy perspective to encourage more products to be sold that say "Made in the USA."

If you're a person looking for work, you want the United States of America selling products and services from our country. It's good for job creation. Presidents of both parties have agreed that trade is good for the American economy. For over 50 years, that's been the case. In other words, we've opened up our markets. And it's been good for consumers, frankly, that people are able to sell into the markets. It's been good for small business when you're trying to buy something.

But the real challenge is to make sure other countries open up their markets. That's the challenge. As opposed to saying, "We're going to close our market, and we don't care about you," we ought to be saying the opposite: "Our markets are open, and if you expect to trade with us, we want you to open yours." And so when you hear about trade agreements, that's what we're doing. We're making sure the playing field is level. We've done a trade agreement with Singapore and Chile. We recently completed negotiations with Morocco, Australia, and our friends in Central America.

What's that mean? You hear "trade agreement"—let me see if I can shed some light on what it means. There are 6,000 small and medium-sized businesses in America that export to Chile. When we opened up an agreement with Chile, it made it easier for 6,000 small and medium-sized businesses to sell product. When people are able to sell product into Chile, it means they're going to—likely somebody—they're more likely to hire somebody. That's why it's easy to connect jobs and trade. That's what I'm trying to explain. When you're selling into markets, it makes it more likely somebody is going to find work.

There are 4,000 medium and small business that export to Costa Rica; 3,000 export to Honduras. By making the playing field more level, there is a greater opportunity that the small businesses around the United States will be able to find new markets and sell additional products and goods and services, which means somebody is more likely to find a job.

A second way to make sure that jobs stay at home and that somebody is likely to find a job is to make sure that America is the best place in the world to do business, is to make sure the environment is right for capital formation, for business expansion, to make it easier, not harder, for our small businesses to exist and thrive and grow.

There are some things we can do. One, there needs to be less regulations at the Federal, State, and local level on businesses and small businesses. It just doesn't make any sense for you to feel like—I see people nodding their heads. I mean, you fill out a lot of forms. I can't guarantee whether the form has ever been read, much less looked at. [*Laughter*] But nevertheless, endless regulations make it harder to be competitive and make it harder for businesses to stay at home.

We've got legal problems in our country. Too many small-business owners get sued. There are too many frivolous and junk lawsuits. We need tort reform in America in order to make sure the job base can grow and expand. We're taking on some tort reform here in Washington. We've got a good class-action bill moving through the Congress. We've got some asbestos reform moving through the Congress. The trial lawyers here are awfully tough. I hope the small-business community is even tougher

and works with Members of the United States Senate to make sure we can get meaningful tort reform out of the United States Congress, which will make it more likely somebody will be able to find a job.

We need to make sure we help small businesses control health care costs. I've spent a lot of time talking to small businesses in forums around the country. I hear—a lot—people saying, "I can't afford health care anymore." It's hard to be a compassionate employer if you can't provide health care to your employees. There are some practical things we can do.

One, Congress needs to pass what's called associated health care plans, to allow small businesses to pool across jurisdictional boundary—pool risk across jurisdictional boundary, which will give small businesses in the aggregate the same purchasing power that big businesses have in order to drive down the cost of health care.

I hope you all look into what's called health savings account—it's a part of the new Medicare law that I've signed—that will allow employees to save tax-free for routine medical expenses. You'll be able to contribute tax-free into your account, save tax-free in the account, withdraw money tax-free out of the account to pay for routine medical expenses. And their employers can provide coverage for major medical issues or major illnesses or injuries. It's a reasonable way to control costs. It's an interesting new product that's now being developed that I think you—small businesses will benefit, and so will your employees, most importantly.

And finally, one of the reasons why health care costs are on the rise is there are—again, there's too many frivolous and junk lawsuits. There's a lot of docs who practice defensive medicine. Why? Because they're getting sued all the time. It's kind of like a giant lottery. Medicare liability lawsuits are like lotteries. The only problem is there's only one winner, and those are the people who take 40 percent of the win. That would be your lawyers, the trial lawyers. And we need to have national medical liability reform now. It passed the Congress. It is stuck in the Senate—passed the House, stuck in the Senate.

To control health care costs, we need to have a reasonable legal system. If people get hurt, they ought to be able to sue a doc, but the rewards need to be reasonable. And we need to do things to cut down on these massive amounts of frivolous lawsuits. Frivolous lawsuits affect your business. They affect your business when you get sued, and they affect the cost of doing business.

We also got to make sure we have affordable and reliable supplies of energy. If you're a small business in the manufacturing world, and you're wondering whether or not your gas bill is going to be—spikes or you're wondering whether or not—whether you're going to get electricity at all, it makes it awfully hard to plan and to grow. So we need a reasonable energy policy. We need to encourage conservation, of course. We need to work on alternative sources of energy. We need clean coal technology. We need to explore for more natural gas. But one thing is for certain: In order for our economic security and national security, we need to be less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

I think something that will benefit our economy and help the small-business sector is to reform our immigration laws to help—I proposed a worker program here that says we can match a willing foreign worker with a employer in America so long as an American is not willing to do the job. Look, I know a lot of you are wondering whether or not you're hiring somebody who you should be hiring. And that's because the system is broken down. That's why you wonder that. My attitude is, rather than have people live in the shadows of our society, let's have an honest system. Let's say that if you're—if you need a worker, there's a way to help expedite your search for somebody in our country. But if you can't find anybody, you ought to be able to hire

anybody you want, and therefore, we ought to have a temporary-worker card for people.

And it will help rout out the corruption and the fraud. You know what I'm talking about. The paperwork, you don't know where it comes from if you're hiring in the construction world. It doesn't make sense to have a system where Border Patrol is kind of searching for workers simply coming to our—people coming to our country to make a living for their families. They ought to be looking for terrorists and narcotraffickers, smugglers. And so a worker system would take the burden off of many at our borders.

People often ask me, "Do you support amnesty?" I don't. You see—and the reason I don't is because I'm afraid it would further illegal immigration as well as reward those who haven't lived to the law. We've got a lot of honest people who are trying to become citizens of the United States of America, who have stood in line for a long period of time, and it doesn't seem that we ought to have a worker system that allows somebody to cut in line. That's not fair. One of the things we are in America is we're fair. And people should—people who have been in line shouldn't be penalized for having taken the legal route up to now.

But one thing is for certain: We've got to respect people who are in our country. We've got to treat them with decency, and when the system is broke, we need to reform it.

Finally, in the Tax Code—you probably know this, but all the tax cuts I've described are set to expire. It's kind of hard to explain it, but that's just the way it is here in Washington. [*Laughter*] Child credit is going down next year, unless Congress acts. The marriage penalty goes up next year, unless Congress acts. The 10-percent bracket that had been expanded to include more people will go back to its original form, unless Congress acts. All tax rates go up in 2011, and the death tax comes—the death tax doesn't expire after 2011. So it expires, and then in 2011 it shows back up. By the way, in 2010, that's going to make a lot of interesting choices for people. [*Laughter*] Anyway, it's hard to explain any rationale behind it. [*Laughter*]

There's uncertainty in the Tax Code. If you're somebody thinking about investing and you've got an investment plan, a capital investment plan scheduled out, and you're uncertain whether or not you're going to get $100,000 worth of deduction or $25,000 worth of deduction, it makes you less bold when it comes to expanding your business.

Uncertainty in the Tax Code creates indecision amongst people that we want to feel comfortable making decisions, particularly when it comes to buying capital goods or expanding the job base. And so rather than increasing taxes to pay for new programs, I've got a better idea for Congress. To keep the economy expanding, they need to make the tax cuts permanent.

Finally, I do want to talk about how to make sure workers are better prepared—workers are prepared for the jobs that you're able to offer. There are some new jobs being created, quite a few, as a matter of fact. They're just in different sectors. I remember going down to North Carolina and hearing a textile worker talk about getting skills necessary to become a health worker. And in this particular case, the person was doing great. But you notice there had to be a transition. There are new jobs being created in fields in which some people don't have the skills necessary to fill the jobs. And that's of concern to governments at all levels. It should be.

The place to start with making sure workers have got the skills is in early grades. I worked with Congress to pass the No Child Left Behind Act. Let me tell you the theory behind the act. I believe every child can learn. I know there are some circumstances when certain children are just shuffled through the school system, the "hard to educate." Those are generally kids, by the way, whose parents don't speak

English as a first language or inner-city kids. And we had a system in some school districts where—"Just shuffle through, please. Let's just get them out of the system." And as a result, too many of our children ended up not being able to read at grade level, and that's really sad.

So we passed a new law called the No Child Left Behind Act that said, "We're going to increase Federal money for Title I students." Those are the poorest students. But now we're going to ask the question whether or not the children can read and write and add and subtract. For the first time, the Federal Government is saying, "In return for Federal money, measure. Measure because we believe every child can learn. We believe every child has worth, and we want to know. And we want to know early, before it's too late."

By measuring, we're able to determine whether a curriculum works. By measuring, we're able to determine whether a child needs extra help. There's money in the Federal budget to provide the extra help. By measuring, we can find out whether or not society is doing its duty to make sure every child gets a quality education. The No Child Left Behind Act is a great piece of legislation, and I will defend it with every fiber in my body.

There are other things we need to do. There needs to be remedial education for high school kids. Listen, because we're late in the accountability process, we didn't know for a while whether or not kids were getting shuffled through, and there's probably some in high school that can't read. And now is the time to find those souls and make sure they read.

Laura went down to a program in Florida the other day, a remedial education program, where they're able to take 10th graders, with intense education in a 6-month period, to get them up to—nearly to grade level or at grade level. There's some great things that are happening in education. The Federal Government has a responsibility to help State and local governments focus resources to make sure people aren't left behind.

By the way, we need to do the same thing with math. It's hard, if you're an employer, to hire somebody who doesn't have math skills. I guess, maybe there's some businesses where it's not needed, but a lot of businesses, it's important to have the basic skills in math.

I tell you, another interesting opportunity is community colleges. Everybody can identify with the community college in the community in which they live, and there's some great community colleges. The interesting thing about community colleges is, is that the curriculum should be flexible. And when you can find a place of higher learning that's got a flexible curriculum, it means if you're an employer or a group of employers, you can go to your community college and say, "Look, we need nurses. Help us train nurses. Adjust your education system for the jobs which actually exist."

We've got a bold initiative coming out of Washington here to help the community colleges help people find jobs. And the other day, I was in Mesa Community College in the Phoenix area. I met with a lady who had worked as a graphic artist. I think she told me she had been there as a graphic artist for, like, 13, 15 years, something like that. Anyway, she goes back to the community college and takes a 6-month course, if I'm not mistaken, that enabled her to become hired by Cable One Company. She made more money in her first year at Cable One than she had made in her last year as a graphic artist.

And it's important for us to provide those opportunities for as many people as possible. People are going to have to want to do this, by the way. Government—we can't say, "Be ambitious." We can't say, "It's—you must change your habits." But we can say, "Here's an opportunity for you, and we encourage you to gain the skills necessary so you can become an employable person," because this economy is generating jobs. And we want to be able to

match the jobs with the skills needed for the job with the people who are looking for work, and that's a challenge. And that's something that I'm committed to doing.

A couple of other things that I want to say, now that I got you. [*Laughter*] There was a period of time in the seventies and eighties—I don't know if you remember this or not—when a lot of people doubted America, doubted whether we can compete. Do you remember that? The Japanese were going to be the predominate economy in the world, some would say, or the Germans would be. It was claimed that we weren't flexible enough. Our companies were—we had rigid rules, that the workers were not disciplined enough, that the American products really weren't good enough to compete. That's what a lot of people thought. Those were what we called the pessimists. And they were wrong. They were just flat wrong, obviously. I mean, America—we improved. We changed. We're flexible. Our education systems began to work better. The entrepreneurial spirit remained strong. We're the greatest economy in the world now, and it's important that we keep it that way with good policies.

The economy is vibrant today. There are still people who hurt and looking for work, and that's why we've got to think about pro-growth, pro-entrepreneurial policies. We've got to be confident. But think about this. We sell computer chips to Japan. We produce BMWs in Greer, South Carolina, for export to Germany. We're exporting California wine to France. [*Laughter*] And we're selling Mexican food to Mexico.

The role of Government is to get policies in place that encourage growth, that enhance the spirit of ownership and rely upon the American people. It's a safe bet, when we get the policies right, things will be great here in America, because you know why? The American people are great. This country is full of people—our country is full of people who can rise to the challenge. Many people want to own something and, therefore, are willing to work for it—responsible, honorable, decent citizens who love their family, love their communities, and love their country. And it's a privilege to be the President of such a grand nation.

Thank you for coming. God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:45 p.m. at the Renaissance Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Massey Villarreal, member, board of directors, U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Remarks at the Radio and Television Correspondents' Association Dinner
March 24, 2004

Thank you. Thanks for inviting me—finally. [*Laughter*] And thank you for honoring David Bloom. It was a fantastic speech you gave for a man you loved.

I am sorry Laura couldn't be here, and I'm sorry Secretary Rumsfeld is not here either. The guy constantly surprises me. Do you know what Rummy's favorite TV show is? "Queer Eye for the Straight Guy." [*Laughter*] My Cabinet could take some pointers from watching that show. In fact, I'm going to have the Fab Five do a make over on Ashcroft. [*Laughter*]

Anyway, it's nice to be with you. A couple of years ago when I was here, I read from my book of "Misarticalations." [*Laughter*] Fortunately, my verbal phonation and electrocution—[*laughter*]—have improved. So tonight I'm going to do one of my slide shows. These are actual, unstaged photos pulled from the files of the White House Photo Office. So, ladies

and gentlemen, I present a White House election-year album.

As you know, the contest with my opponent is going to be a slugfest. I'm feeling good. [*Laughter*] I'm feeling ready. [*Laughter*] I'm psyching myself up for the fight. [*Laughter*]

I knew it was going to be a tough campaign when Karl Rove started dressing like this. [*Laughter*]

And this is Condi Rice, of course. Here I am trying to explain John Kerry's foreign policy. [*Laughter*]

I have to admit it really ticked me off when Democrats questioned my National Guard service in Alabama. Here's a photo proving that I was in Alabama fulfilling my duties. [*Laughter*]

Political campaigns always have their unexpected moments. This next photo is when I heard that Senator McCain said he was considering being Kerry's runningmate. [*Laughter*]

The next one was taken a couple of months ago. I had just gotten word that Howard Dean had lost Iowa. [*Laughter*]

In addition to campaign calls, I also spend a lot of time on the phone listening to our European allies. [*Laughter*] The conversation went like this: "Hey, John, Kim Chong-il here." [*Laughter*] "Just wanted to call and let you know, you're my guy." [*Laughter*]

Those weapons of mass destruction have got to be somewhere. [*Laughter*]

As you can tell from the look on Andy Card's face, we've become a little concerned about the Vice President lately. [*Laughter*] Whenever you ask him a question, he replies, "Let's see what my little friend says." [*Laughter*]

But we get along well. Here I am saying, "Dick, if the Hunan Palace doesn't get lunch here in 4 minutes, we're going out." [*Laughter*]

Nope, no weapons over there. [*Laughter*] Maybe under here. [*Laughter*]

Oops, this photo wasn't supposed to be in here. This is the Skull and Bones secret signal. [*Laughter*]

I'm not paranoid. But it was at this point in my Presidency that I had a strange feeling somebody was following me. [*Laughter*]

One thing about being President is you get lots of advice. "Yes, Mother." [*Laughter*]

"Yes, Mother." [*Laughter*]

"Mother, would you just listen to us for once." [*Laughter*]

I like this next picture a lot. It's hard to get Rumsfeld to laugh, but when he does, boy, it is worth it. [*Laughter*]

This photo was taken down at the ranch, and as you can tell, Barney is not very happy with me. This is the day I told him he'd been neutered. [*Laughter*].

And this is the day that Barney got his revenge. [*Laughter*]

Now, on long flights, the staff and I often play cards. The key to playing poker is keeping a straight face and never letting your opponent know what you're thinking. [*Laughter*] Actually, this is on the way to the G–8 summit. Once I got these trading cards, it's easy to remember the names of the foreign leaders. [*Laughter*]

All Presidents have dreams and aspirations of what their legacy will be. Here they are measuring me for Mount Rushmore. [*Laughter*]

But I do have a few serious photos to show you, in closing. It's photos like these that mean the most to me.

Some of our Special Forces sent me this last picture. The faces are blurred in the slide because they remain in harm's way. The photo hangs in my private study next to the Oval Office. To honor those who died on September the 11th and to make a statement of their own commitment to this country's security, these Americans buried a piece of the World Trade Center in a place in Afghanistan where the Al Qaida once ran free. They wrote that they held a ceremony, which was far more emotional than they had expected. The team

leader wrote a prayer and a dedication. Let me read you one sentence from that dedication: "We consecrate this spot as an everlasting memorial to the brave Americans who died on September the 11th, so that all who would seek to do her harm will know that America will not stand by and watch terror prevail."

We will not stand by. The greatest honor of being President is leading such men and women. We have the freedom we enjoy tonight because they protect that freedom. And may God protect them.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:55 p.m. at the Washington Hilton Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to former Democratic Presidential candidate Howard Dean; and Chairman Kim Chong-il of North Korea.

Message to the Congress Transmitting a Notice of Intention To Enter Into a Free Trade Agreement With the Dominican Republic
March 24, 2004

To the Congress of the United States:

Consistent with section 2105(a)(1)(A) of the Trade Act of 2002 (Public Law 107–210; the "Trade Act"), I am pleased to notify the Congress of my intent to enter into a free trade agreement (FTA) with the Government of the Dominican Republic.

This agreement will create new opportunities for America's workers, farmers, businesses, and consumers by eliminating barriers to trade with the Dominican Republic, the largest economy in the Caribbean Basin. At the same time, it will help bring to the Dominican Republic expanded economic freedom and opportunity, and it will provide an opportunity for regional stability, democracy, and economic development through closer ties of commerce, investment, and friendship.

Consistent with the Trade Act, I am sending this notification at least 90 days in advance of entering into an agreement with the Dominican Republic. My Administration looks forward to working with the Congress in developing appropriate legislation to approve and implement this free trade agreement.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,

March 24, 2004.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 25. The notice of March 24 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks in a Discussion on Job Training and the Economy in Nashua, New Hampshire
March 25, 2004

Lucille Jordan. Mr. President, on behalf of the faculty, the administration, the students, and the great citizens of the great State of New Hampshire, I'd like to welcome you to our campus. Mr. President, thank you.

The President. Lucille, thanks. Thank you all. Thanks for having me.

Ms. Jordan. Thank you.

The President. We're going to have an interesting dialog today about jobs, job creators, and education, and how they all work together to make sure that this State remains competitive and a good place to find work.

Before we do so, though, I do want to thank you, Lucille, for—and your board and your faculty and your students—for welcoming me here. It's not easy to have the President come. [*Laughter*] Seems like there's a large entourage. But I appreciate it. And it's going to be—I think you're going to enjoy this. I know I am.

Participant. I'm planning on it. [*Laughter*]

The President. Good. I had the privilege today of riding from the airport in Manchester with your great Governor, Craig Benson. Appreciate you coming, Governor. I got to see the New Hampshire Government in action, because also in the car was the speaker, Gene Chandler, and the senate leader, Tom Eaton. I want to appreciate you all being there.

I know the State attorney general is here. Peter, where are you? Thanks for coming. Good to see you, sir. Got a lot of members of the State house and State senate here. I know that Senator Jane O'Hearn, who happens to be the chair of the senate education committee—Lucille told me to be especially nice to her. [*Laughter*] Thank you for coming.

I first want to tell you how optimistic I am about the future of the country. You know why? Because we've overcome a lot, when you think about it. In the last 3 years, this country has really been challenged. Our spirit has been challenged. Our economy has been challenged, and we've overcome them. We're a great country, full of wonderful people, dedicated, hard-working people.

When I say the economy has overcome a lot, let me explain what I mean. We've been through a recession. That means things are going backwards. Ask any of these businessowners what it's like to be in a recession. They'll tell you it's plenty tough. It's hard to plan. It's hard to be optimistic when you don't have any growth. It's hard to find work during a recession.

As well we got attacked on September the 11th, and that affected our spirit. It affected our economy. Cheryl McGuinness is with us today. It affected her life. Her husband Tom was the pilot of American Airline Flight 11.

The Government has got a solemn duty to protect America. And that's why we created the Department of Homeland Security. That's why we put out the PATRIOT Act, so our FBI and CIA can share intelligence to make sure we know who's here to hurt us. That's why the great United States military is on the offensive against—[*applause*]. The best way to protect us is to stay on the offensive and to find terrorists before they try to harm us again, and they will. That's what they're trying to do. Our solemn duty is to protect America.

There's a commission going on in Washington, DC. It's a very important commission. It's a commission determined to look at the 8 months of my administration and the 8 years of the previous administration to determine what we can learn, what we can do to make sure we uphold our solemn duty. Had I known that the enemy was going to use airplanes to strike America, to attack us, I would have used every resource, every asset, every power of this Government to protect the American people.

There's a lot of good folks working to keep us safe. We overcame September the 11th because this Nation refused to be intimidated. We weren't going to let killers and assassins determine our course of life. It's a great nation because the people of America are resolute and strong and determined people.

And then we found out we had some corporate leaders that didn't tell the truth. And it hurt us. It was another obstacle to overcome. You see, business numbers and

accounting all depend upon honesty, and the fact that there were some in our society who were irresponsible citizens and who didn't tell the truth, it cost a lot of people jobs. It hurt our confidence. It was yet another hurdle to overcome. We reacted strongly, I want you to know. We passed tough laws. Perhaps you've seen on your TV screens some of the people that forgot to be responsible citizens getting their day in court. The message is—should be loud and clear to people in the business world: We're not going to tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America.

Part of the war on terror is to—is broader than just Al Qaida. The war on terror encompasses other theaters as well. You see, the lesson of September the 11th is we must deal with threats before they fully materialize. You can't just see a threat and hope it goes away. That's the lesson of September the 11th. Remember, prior to September the 11th, we thought oceans could protect us. But the strategic calculations of America must shift in order to do our duty to keep this country safe.

I saw a threat; the Congress saw a threat; the United Nations Security Council saw a threat in the form of Saddam Hussein. He was not only a threat to people in the Middle East because of terrorist ties; he's a threat to America or anybody else who loved freedom. He's a threat to his own people. He had torture chambers and mass graves.

And so I went to the United Nations—I think you might remember that—[*laughter*]—and said, "Deal with the guy. He's been out there for 11 years defying every time you have said, 'Disarm for the sake of peace, for the sake of freedom.' And he ignored it." And so I said, "We'll give him one more chance." And we did. The United Nations Security Council voted unanimously to say to Saddam, "Disarm, or face serious consequences." And he was defiant once again. And given the lessons of September the 11th, I had a choice: You either take the word of a madman, a guy who had gassed his own people at one point in time, or defend America. I'll defend our country every time. [*Applause*] Thank you all. Thanks.

During the runup to the liberation of Iraq, on our TV screens you see "March to War." That's hard to the business world. It's hard for job creators. It's not a very—it's not—you don't get a lot of confidence when you think your country is marching to war. War is negative. I did what I thought was right. Now we're marching to peace. But we overcame that part.

So we've been through recession, an attack, corporate scandals, and war. And yet our economy is growing and getting stronger. Part of it had to do, I think, with the policy of our administration, which is tax cuts. See, I believe that when you let somebody have more of their own money to spend or save, that person is likely to demand an additional good or a service. And when they demand a good or a service, the way our economy works, somebody will produce the good or a service. And when somebody produces the good or a service, somebody is a lot more likely to find work.

And so this tax stimulation came right at the right time. We cut the taxes on everybody. Sometimes in Washington, if you hear the tax debate, they say, "Well, this person deserves tax cuts and this one doesn't." It's kind of like picking and choosing winners and losers, which I don't think is good tax policy. My attitude is, if you pay taxes and you want tax relief, then everybody ought to get tax relief.

We increased the child credit to $1,000 per child. That helps people raising their families. If you've got children, it helps a lot. Reduced the marriage penalty. It doesn't make much sense to penalize marriage in the Tax Code when you're trying to encourage marriage in society. I mean, marriage is a good thing, not a bad thing. Put the death tax on its way to extinction. If you're a small-business owner, you ought to be able to leave your assets to whomever you choose. You get taxed when you're

growing your business, and you get taxed after you leave the Earth. And sometimes it's hard to pass on your assets to whoever you want. I mean, one of the ways to encourage entrepreneurship is to say, "Build your business and leave it—leave your assets to whomever, whether it's a business or a farm or a ranch." So we did some good things with the tax cut.

Let me tell you what else we did that relates to small business. Most of the new jobs in America are created by small-business owners. Seventy percent of small businesses—or new jobs are created by small businesses. And so most small businesses are Subchapter S corporations or sole proprietorships. Those are legal words for meaning they pay tax at the individual income-tax rate. So when you cut the taxes on the individuals, you're really cutting taxes on small businesses around America. And if you're interested in job growth, it makes sense to allow small businesses to have more of their own capital so they can expand and grow and hire more people.

We also provided incentives in the Tax Code to allow small businesses to deduct up to $100,000, as opposed to $25,000. We had bonus depreciation plans available for investment. So we've made a difference, and the results are good. They really are good, when you think about it. And the unemployment rate here in this State is 4.1 percent. That's good, real good. The inflation is low. Interest rates are low. Homeownership is at the highest rate ever. That's positive for society. We want people owning things. We want people owning their own business. We want people owning their own home. By the way, minority homeownership rates are extraordinarily high in America, and that is really important too for our country. Manufacturing is increasing, and we've had job growth.

Now, there's more to do, and we're not going to be satisfied until people who want to work can find a job. And so what are the things we can do? Well, one, we need an energy plan. It's hard to run a business; it's hard to be a manufacturer if you're worried about the reliability of energy. Ask somebody what it's like to run a business that requires energy and your energy bills spike up, or what was it like if you're worried about getting electricity at all because the grid is antiquated. It wasn't all that long ago, like last summer, that much of the east coast was affected because the grid is old. We need an energy bill that encourages conservation, alternative sources of energy, a bill that modernizes the electricity system, and a bill that makes us less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

In order to make sure jobs stay here at home, in order to make sure people can find work, we need to be competitive. That's what we need to be thinking about—how to make sure we can do a better job of encouraging the entrepreneurial spirit to be strong so people create jobs in America. One way is good energy policy.

We need tort reform. If you're a businessowner you talk to any businessowner, and in most places, they're worried about junk lawsuits that run up the cost of doing business. When they spend more time fighting off a junk lawsuit, it means there's less time hiring somebody.

We need to worry about the cost of medicine. Listen, health care costs are going up. You ask any businessowner what it's like to run a small business, and they'll tell you, "One of my big fears is that I can't provide for my employees," they'll tell you, because the cost of health care is going up. There's a debate in Washington. There's a philosophical debate over who you want running the health care. There's some up there, good people, good, honest, decent Americans who say, "We want the Federal Government making all the health care decisions." I'm on the other side of that. I think we want consumers to be making—[*applause*].

There's some practical ways to do that. One, small businesses ought to be allowed to pool risk across jurisdictional lines so they can get the same purchasing power

that big businesses have. Those are called association health care plans. Another interesting option for small businesses and employees is called health savings accounts; lets you put money in your health saving account tax-free, earn money tax-free, take money out tax-free. And you combine that with a major medical insurance policy, you've got yourself affordable health care, and it's good for small businesses. These are exciting options that are now developing in the marketplace, where the consumer has got more choice over the decisionmaking, as opposed to Government.

Finally, in order to make sure that the health care costs are reasonable, we need medical liability reform. I want to praise the Governor and the speaker and the senator for working on medical liability reform here in New Hampshire. We need national medical liability reform too.

There's three other things I want to talk about right quick. I promise you others are going to talk. You know how we are in Washington, once we get a mike—[*laughter*]—it's hard to pry it out of our hands.

Ms. Jordan. College presidents——

The President. Yes, college presidents. [*Laughter*]

The tax cuts are set to expire. The child credit goes down next year. The marriage penalty goes up, and the 10-percent bracket as part of the overall tax cuts changes to the bad. Now, Congress needs to make these permanent. They need to make sure that people have more money in their pocket. We're strong. We're getting stronger. There's more to do. It's hard to run a business if you're uncertain about what the Tax Code is going to look like, and we definitely want our consumers to have more money in their pockets as we're coming out of what has been a very difficult period of time. You've heard the challenges we've overcome. If they don't make these tax cuts permanent, it means they're raising taxes on people with families. It means they're raising taxes on people who are married. It means they're raising taxes on people who are in the 10-percent bracket. The tax cuts need to be permanent.

There is a temptation in Washington to say the solution to jobs uncertainty is to isolate America from the world. It's called economic isolationism, a sense that says, "Well, we're too pessimistic. We don't want to compete. As opposed to opening up markets, let's close markets, starting with our own." That is very dangerous for the New Hampshire economy. One in five jobs in New Hampshire depends upon exports. In other words, it depends upon the ability to get our goods into somebody else's market.

Presidents before me, both Republican and Democrat, had made the decision to make our markets relatively open compared to other countries, because it's good for U.S. consumers. You see, when consumers have got more choices and there's more competition, it gives you—it helps satisfy your demand at reasonable price.

And so the fundamental question is, do we keep our market open, or do we close it? My attitude is, we keep it open but make sure others open theirs too, see, and make sure the playing field is level. I've got great confidence in New Hampshire's workers. I've got great confidence in New Hampshire's entrepreneurs. I've got great confidence in products that say "Made in the USA." And so do a lot of people who live in other lands. So let's sell. Let's have a—I'm going to continue what I've been doing and say, "You reduce your barriers, see? Ours are down; just treat us the same." One way to make sure jobs don't go overseas, and one sure way to make sure we're vibrant here at home is to insist that other people lower their barriers so we can compete. That's all we ask. Just give us a chance. America's—Americans can rise to the challenge. Trust me.

Okay, here we go. Two other things—I want to mention one other fellow before I get off here. Remind me, Larry, to mention you. [*Laughter*] I want to talk about education and the role of education to

make sure jobs are here at home and that people can find work.

First, we've got to get it right at the elementary school level. We've got to make sure that every child learns to read and write and add and subtract. I'm a big believer in accountability, not because I want to punish—I don't see—if the goal is to teach every child to read at grade level by the third grade and keep him at grade level, I don't see how you can figure that out unless you measure.

Now, the people of New Hampshire ought to be running your own business. You don't want the Federal Government telling you how to run your schools. You want to be able to design your own accountability systems. But I would hope you would want government at all levels saying, "What are the results?"

And so we're spending record amounts of money at the Federal level, for particularly Title I students, which are poor students. And Senator Gregg, by the way, has been working hard for education matters. A good guy, I'm sure he would be here, but he's voting. [*Laughter*] But so we're asking the question, and we're going to get good results. See, accountability allows you to test your curriculum. Accountability lets you determine who needs help today, before it's too late. And one thing I'm not going to tolerate as your President—and you shouldn't tolerate as citizens—is just shuffling kids through the system and hope they learn. Those days have got to end.

We've got remedial programs to help high school and junior high kids. Let's face it. Because there hasn't been accountability and hasn't been rigorous examinations of curriculum, some teachers need to be retrained, we're shuffling some kids through. And all of the sudden, they show up in high school, and they can't read. And so we need to have a focus on remedial education. I've asked Congress to put up some money to do just that, to help States and districts do that.

But I think one of the great and hopeful opportunities for the country is to utilize our community college systems to make sure that people are trained for the jobs which actually exist. Community colleges have got the capacity to be flexible in their curriculum. They don't stay stuck in a certain kind of course load. Community colleges are able to say to businesses, local businesses, "What do you need?" Local businesses say to community colleges, "This is what we need." Mayors and Chamber of Commerces are able to say to community colleges, "In order for us to track a certain type of business or jobs, here's what we need."

And so long as the community college has got able leadership, like educational entrepreneurs like Lucille, and are willing to be flexible, you can actually match people with the skills needed to work in the new jobs of the 21st century. Listen, our economy is changing. We're a productive workforce, and some people need to be retrained in order to be productive workers. And the community college is a great place to do so.

And that is what we're going to start talking about. But I mentioned Larry, Larry Jeffery. You probably don't know Larry. I didn't know him until I landed, and he was standing at the foot of Air Force One, the steps of Air Force One. He's here because he is a volunteer. He's a mentor. He teaches—he helps people learn what it's like to start your own business. We're going to talk to some people who have started their own business here today. It's heartening to know that a World War II vet, experienced businessperson, is willing to take time out of his life to mentor.

The reason I bring up—raise your hand, Larry, will you? There you go. That's him. The reason why I bring up Larry is because the strength of this country is the heart and souls of our citizens. You know, people say, "Well, America is strong because of our military"—and it's one reason, and by the way, we'll keep the military strong—

or "We're strong because we're a prosperous nation, we're the largest economy in the world, and we've got a great spirit here." But we're really strong because we've got people who want to love their neighbor just like they'd like to be loved themselves.

I know it happens all over Nashua and the State of New Hampshire, where people get involved with church and synagogue and mosque in order to help a neighbor in need, or whether you go to your local civic group or whether you're a mentor. Listen, my call to you is, be like Larry. Take time out of your life and help change America, one heart and one soul at a time, and the country will be better off for it.

All right, here we go. Lucille says she's tired of me talking. [*Laughter*] Lucille is the president of the community college in which we sit. I have chosen this community college because she is doing exactly what I think a community college ought to do, which is to be practical in its application of education in order for people to be able to find a job. Explain to people how you're doing it.

Ms. Jordan. I will. But before I do that, with all due respect, I need to tell you that I have the best job in the United States as president of this college.

[*At this point, Ms. Jordan continued her remarks.*]

The President. Yes, let me ask you about this one program, the national emergency grants. What happens is, is that sometimes, under certain circumstances, when a business gets shut down, there is worker-training money available at the Federal level to go to community colleges to help retrain workers for jobs which exist. And I believe we—the Federal Government granted a national emergency grant to this college.

Ms. Jordan. Yes.

The President. And how's that going?

Ms. Jordan. Very well, very well.

The President. A plant shut down in Manchester.

Ms. Jordan. Yes, and actually I think our sister campus in Manchester is——

The President. Is handling most of it.

Ms. Jordan. ——really helping them out a great deal, not only in the English second language area but as well as helping them out gaining new skills in manufacturing and computer skills in programming. And it's a real success, very much so, credit to the president, Tom Wisbey.

The President. The point I'm making is, is that you can be proactive and reactive, proactive to find a curriculum that works to attract jobs or if jobs expand, reactive to economic downturn for a particular company, and help people. And that's what the community colleges are good at. They're good at taking people and converting their skill base to a useful skill base.

I'll tell you a very interesting story. I went out to Mesa Community College in Arizona, and I met a lady who had been a graphic design artist, I think for 15 years. And she went back to the community college and went to a technically based program. I think it was a 6-month program, if I'm not mistaken. She got out and joined Cable One, and in her entry-level job, she made more, after having gone to 6 months of community college, than she had in her 15th year as a graphic design artist. In other words, the transference of skills, the ability to make a person more productive, raises pay.

And the community college system—if people are interested in the community college system, think about going back to school for a period of time to raise your pay, to raise your standard of living, to give yourself a better shot at making a living by being employed by companies who are vibrant, competitive, and 21st century companies.

Ms. Jordan. Absolutely.

The President. Is that what you find?

Ms. Jordan. I think another area too that we don't think about often in industry is the allied health industry. And one of the things that we've done in a partnership

here in Nashua is Southern New Hampshire Medical Center. We did not have the money to open up a lab. They came to us and said, "Look, we have a nursing shortage. We want to open it up to the public. We're going to open up a million-dollar lab on their west campus," and they did that. And as a result, we have new nurses in the field.

The President. You know, it's an interesting point. Again, if anybody's listening—[*laughter*]—and you're trying to work, think about the health care field. In a lot of our States around the country, there is a shortage of health care workers. Now, it's going to require a desire to go back and get the skills necessary to go into the health care field. Government can't make you make the decision to be a—to work and to gain new skills, but we darn sure can open the door. And that's what we're here to talk about.

Let me talk about Mike for a second, if you don't mind. Mike Hills is a student. He is a—I can't wait for you to hear his story. If you'd look at Mike walking down the street, you'd say, "You don't look like a student to me." [*Laughter*]

Mike Hills. I hear it at the campus sometimes too.

The President. There you go. [*Laughter*] Tell us your story, Michael. Tell us what you're doing, why you're a student here. Give us a little sense of the background. Bring people up to date. There may be somebody listening who is wondering whether or not it is worthwhile to go back to a place like Nashua, New Hampshire Community Tech. How you're paying? Are you paying it out of your pocket? How you getting here?

Mr. Hills. Well, first, before I begin, Mr. President, I'd like to thank you for coming and having me here with you. I'd like to take a moment to introduce to you my brother Patrick and my—[*laughter*].

The President. Patrick, how are you? Keep your remarks short, Patrick, will you? We've got—[*laughter*].

Mr. Hills. ——and my girlfriend, Nancy, who is sitting right next to me.

The President. I would suggest reversing the order next time, Michael. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Hills. Well, you know, they say blood is thicker than water.

The President. Yeah, right. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Hills. Well, as you know, I'm a 41-year-old student here at the college, and I started here in September 2003. Before I started here, I was in the retail business. I sold everything from soup to nuts. You name it, I probably sold it. And I have two daughters at home, and as you know, raising two daughters becomes more expensive as they get older. [*Laughter*]

The President. Hair gets a little whiter too, doesn't it?

Mr. Hills. As you can see, yes.

[*Mr. Hills continued his remarks.*]

The President. Good. Can I ask you one more question? You remind me of old Larry over there, you know? [*Laughter*] That's good.

Mr. Hills. Thank you, sir.

The President. As I understand, you got a little help to come here?

Mr. Hills. Yes, I did, through financial aid, through Pell grants, through Stafford loans. I also was awarded the Triple A scholarship, the American Motors Association, and also two upon graduating that will also enable me to be ASE-certified, which is the Automotive Service of Excellence, which is an accredited program. It's not mandatory, but it also makes you more marketable in your area. And I encourage anybody who is thinking about going back to school—let me tell you, dollars and cents make some sense.

The President. There's money available. There's Pell grants available. There's Trade Adjustment assistance available. There's national emergency grants available. You got to want it, now. You just can't say, "Okay, I think I'm going to gain skills just by thinking about it." People are going to have

to seize the initiative. It's up to the individual, like Mike, but it's available. And that's why I'm so glad Mike is here to explain that even at 41 or, perhaps, especially at 41, there's great opportunities if you're willing to seize the moment.

Heather is with us, Heather Limanek. So Heather's working along. She's got one child. By the way, if the child credit is not made permanent, Heather pays more taxes next year. Just think about that now. [*Laughter*] So when—the Congress—I'm not worried about your Senators or your Congressmen, but there are some others you need to be thinking about. The people up there in Washington who say, "Oh, we're going to repeal the tax. We're going to tax the rich," that means they're going tax small-business owners. And if they don't make the child credit permanent, they're going to be taxing Heather right at the wrong time. So it's important for people to put a face with the consequences of bad tax policy.

Anyway, she's here—guess what happens? She's got a kid. She's working. She gets laid off in 2000, and then what happens?

[*Heather Limanek, student, New Hampshire Community Technical College at Nashua, and owner, Heather's Happenings, made brief remarks.*]

The President. Yes, let me tell you something. That's great, a fantastic story. What a great story. She has a dream, goes back to school, and starts her own business. It happens all the time in America. The job of Government is to create an environment in which people are confident about chasing their dreams. It's really the thing that makes our economy so unique and vibrant, isn't it.

Heather gets laid off, gets kicked in the gut, I think you said. [*Laughter*] Stomach, yes. [*Laughter*] Anyway, and now she's a businessowner. Government can't guarantee success. That's up to Heather. And it's why she's staying in school, to learn the skills necessary to be as good a small-business owner as she can. But we darn sure can make the environment such that somebody like Heather feels comfortable about taking risks.

We're really proud of you. I love the story. It's what I love about our country, isn't it? Somebody can own something that she can call her own and make it work. You noticed she said, "I hope to be hiring people next summer." That's how it works in America.

By the way, speaking about people hiring somebody, David Dunfee is with us today. He is the president of D.G. O'Brien, Inc. Tell us about D.G. Who is D.G.?

[*David Dunfee made brief remarks.*]

The President. Yes, let me step in. He got him 175 employees, which is a good size company, but he's a Subchapter S corporation, which means he pays taxes at the individual income-tax rate. So when you hear them in Washington talking about taxing the rich, that's the rich right there, see? That's who they're talking about. They're talking about taxing employers. If you're a small-business owner and they're running up the top rates on you, you're taxing people who are creating jobs.

It makes no sense to be draining capital out of the economy, out of his coffers. He says he wants to expand this year. It means he's going to add more employees. If they're taking money away from this company, they're not going to be adding more employees. That's how the economy works. That is why I am so strong on making sure that the tax cuts are permanent.

Tell me—the other thing you noticed he said, because of the bonused appreciation—that's an accountant word for, we're trying to encourage you to buy equipment. That's what that means. What did you buy?

Mr. Dunfee. Last year, we spent about $400,000 in capital equipment, anywhere from machine tools to computers to CAD stations. And this year, in part because of

that tax credit, we're upping that 25 percent to $500,000 and buying additional equipment to improve our productivity.

The President. You see, he makes a capital decision. In other words, he's going to go buy a machine. Somebody has got to build the machine. So when you said—when you heard me talk about increasing demand for a good or a service, it's precisely what I'm talking about. He increased demand last year for additional capital purchases by $400,000. This year, he's going to make another $500,000 of purchasing. Somebody has got to make those goods. And when somebody fills his order, it means a worker is more likely to retain a job or find a—or a worker is able to find a job. And that's how this economy works of ours. And that's what the decision-making process, not only by this company but by millions like him all across America, help define whether our economy is vibrant or not.

And I appreciate, Dave, your—taking on this business and being an employer. You notice the other thing he said, "The employees make it work." That's a great owner of a company and a great manager if he says—he gives the credit where credit belongs.

[*Mr. Dunfee made further remarks.*]

The President. Yes, I think you need to look at health savings accounts, seriously. An employer, for example, can buy a catastrophic plan with a high deductible, say $1,000 deductible. It's a fairly inexpensive plan relative to the current plans on the market that you're probably buying. And then the employer and the employee can match on some basis, depending upon the nature of the company, a tax-free entry into the health savings account, out of which the consumer pays incidental medicals until you get up to $1,000. But if you don't spend all $1,000, you earn interest, tax free, and you can roll it over from one year to the next. In other words, you have a health savings account, and it makes sense because it puts the consumer in charge of health decisions. It also encourages people to make healthy decisions with their bodies, like walk and exercise and don't drink too much and quit smoking. There's a lot of serious things you can do to keep their health savings account vibrant because it's your money.

Anyway, I wish you would look at that. I think you'll find it to be some pretty interesting——

[*Mr. Dunfee made further remarks.*]

The President. Fiscal policy can determine pressure on interest rates. We've got a plan to cut the deficit in half. Let me talk about the deficit right quick. We have a deficit, and we've got a deficit because we were in a recession, for starters. A recession means less revenue is coming into the Treasury, and if you don't cut expenses, you're going to get a deficit. We didn't cut expenses. As a matter of fact, we increased expenses, particularly in two areas—the military. If I put somebody in harm's way, they're going to get the best, as far as I'm concerned. [*Applause*] Thank you all. Sit down, please. Yes, I appreciate you applauding our troops. That's who you're applauding.

But we can get the deficit down half. It's going to have to be tough on spending. And it's hard. Appropriators are appropriators, and they take their title seriously. And so we're working with Congress to set priorities and to bring the deficit down, which will help, but Alan Greenspan has a lot to do with it. I'll tell—I'll pass it on. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Dunfee. The only other thing I ask you to do is, let's bury that death tax.

The President. Yes, I agree. Let me talk about the death tax again. If you noticed, early in his discussion, he said he was struggling with being a second-generation owner. I'll tell you what he was struggling with. He was struggling with, probably, the debt you had to borrow in order to have

the assets passed on from one generation to the next. That's what happens.

There's a lot of small-business owners who, when they faced with paying a death tax, have to sell the business in order to do so. And it just doesn't make sense. It's just not—it's a bad tax. It discourages entrepreneurship. It makes it harder for this good man to make sure his business is vibrant so that he keeps people working here.

So when you heard me talk about the death tax being good for the entrepreneur—getting rid of the death tax being good for the entrepreneurial spirit, that's what I meant. I meant it encourages people. It makes it easier for the businessowner to decide to pass their assets on to kids, families, whoever—charitable trusts, whatever it may be—without the Government standing in between the decider and the person who benefits from the transfer of the company. That's what he's talking about.

It's important for small-business owners to make sure the death tax does not come back. Catch this, though. The way the law is written, the death tax comes back to life in 2011. So here we are—let's advance to 2010, and we're all alive. [*Laughter*] And the death tax has been scaled down, and all of a sudden, it pops back up into existence. Imagine what policy is going to be like. You talk about confusing. And you know, a lot of people are going to be—well, never mind how they're going to be thinking. I'm just telling you, it's bad law.

George, you are a—you weren't born here in this country, were you?

George Kassas. If you'd like me to.

The President. No, no. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Kassas. I was born in Lebanon, sir.

The President. So you're a first-generation American.

Mr. Kassas. Yes, sir.

The President. Welcome.

Mr. Kassas. Thank you. Thank you so much. Thank you.

The President. You weren't even born here, and you're the cofounder of a successful company. Is that an accurate assessment?

Mr. Kassas. Yes, sir.

The President. Well, then, why don't you just tell us about it.

Mr. Kassas. Okay. Thank you so much, sir, for the opportunity to be with you on this stage. And it's a great privilege and a distinct honor for me.

I'd like to avoid the mistake Mike made, so I'd like to introduce my family first to you. [*Laughter*] That's Kristen, Juliet, Tony, and George.

The President. That wouldn't be—that's not George W., is it? [*Laughter*]

[*Mr. Kassas, cofounder and executive vice president for operations and business development, Cedar Point Communications, made further remarks.*]

The President. Let me stop you. George has got two employees in the year 2000. You'll have 116—is that right?

Mr. Kassas. Yes, if you add the 25, absolutely.

The President. By the end of '04, you'll have 116 employees. That's really good news, isn't it? Think about that. I'm glad you're doing well, and the R & E tax credit does need to be permanent.

What I'm interested in people knowing is to connect, when you talk about the entrepreneurial spirit in small businesses, with job creation. This one company alone that was a dream in this guy's brain has now added employment of 117. It happens all over America. There's a lot of Georges in this world. [*Laughter*] There's a lot of entrepreneurs who dream big dreams and who work hard to achieve it. And the job of our society, in order to be competitive and to keep jobs here, is to make sure that entrepreneurial spirit is strong with good policy. And that's what we're talking about.

What else you got to say?

Mr. Kassas. Mr. President, this year and well into future years, we will be exporting our product to many customers around the

world, starting this summer. And what does that mean? It means that every time we export, we grow the company; we add jobs; we invest in our capital equipment. It's just as simple as that.

The President. Yes, well, I appreciate you understanding that. He is talking about—see, what he needs to be talking to me about is to make sure that the markets he wants to export into don't have a bunch of trade barriers and tariffs. See, what George wants from his Government is to say, "Don't shut it down here. Open it up over there." Just give him a chance to compete. We've got to reject economic isolationism in America. We've got to be bold and confident. We've got to believe in our people. We've got to believe the Georges of the world can compete anywhere if just given a chance to do so.

So when you hear me talking about trade policy, that's what I'm talking about. I'm talking about giving our entrepreneurs a chance to compete on a level playing field. And if you give Americans a chance to compete on a level playing field, we'll win just about every time.

Listen, I want to thank you all for coming. I hope you have found the conversations with your fellow citizens as stimulating, as interesting as I have. I mean, one of the things that's—I like to remind people, I'm an optimistic person. And the reason I'm an optimistic person is I listen to these kind of stories all the time, doers and dreamers and achievers, people who honor their family, people who love their country more than anything else. It is such an honor to be with you all. I'm so glad you're here.

Thank you for what you're doing. Thank you for being such great Americans, and may God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:21 p.m. at New Hampshire Community Technical College-Nashua. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Craig Benson and State Attorney General Peter W. Heed of New Hampshire; Gene G. Chandler, speaker, New Hampshire State House of Representatives; Thomas R. Eaton, president, New Hampshire State Senate; and New Hampshire State Senator Jane O'Hearn. Discussion participant Lucille Jordan referred to Thomas Wisbey, president, New Hampshire Community Technical College-Manchester.

Statement on Senate Passage of Legislation To Protect Unborn Victims of Violence

March 25, 2004

I applaud the Senate for passing the "Unborn Victims of Violence Act" today by a strong bipartisan vote. We must continue to build a culture of life in our country, a compassionate society in which every child is welcomed in life and protected by law.

Pregnant women who have been harmed by violence, and their families, know that there are two victims—the mother and the unborn child—and both victims should be protected by Federal law.

I look forward to signing this important legislation into law.

Statement on House of Representatives Passage of Budget Legislation
March 25, 2004

I commend the House for passing a responsible budget that advances our three highest priorities: defending America, winning the war on terror, and promoting growth and job creation, while cutting the deficit in half within 5 years. I am also pleased that this moves us closer to making the tax relief for America's workers and families permanent.

I urge the House and Senate to reach agreement quickly and pass a budget based on my principles of funding what's necessary to protect America and keep our economy growing, while restraining spending elsewhere.

Remarks at a Bush-Cheney Reception in Boston, Massachusetts
March 25, 2004

Thank you all. Thanks for the warm welcome. It's great to be back in Boston. Thank you. [*Laughter*] I spent some quality time here in the seventies—[*laughter*]—mostly in the library at Harvard, of course. [*Laughter*] Well, I spent some quality time here.

I really appreciate the traditions here in Massachusetts. Last weekend I had the honor of participating in one of the city's finest traditions. It was the annual Saint Patrick's Day breakfast in South Boston. I called in. The good senator took my call. Actually, he took Andy Card's call, a great Massachusetts citizen, and Andy handed me the phone. When I called in, I had the feeling they were going to ask me about a Massachusetts politician who had his eye on the White House, so I addressed the issue as directly as possible: I told Mitt the job was filled until 2008.

I'm proud of the job this good man is doing as Governor of this great State. Mitt Romney is a great Governor. And like me, he married very well. [*Laughter*] I'm proud Ann is here with us tonight. Ann, thank you for coming.

And I'm sorry Laura is not here. She is a fabulous First Lady. She is a great wife. She's visiting her mom in Midland, Texas. Like me, we put our faith in families first, above all. And she is—[*applause*].

I appreciate my friend Ambassador Dick Egan, for helping make this an incredibly successful fundraiser. The country called, and he responded as the Ambassador to Ireland. He did a fine job on behalf of the citizens of this country. Dick, thank you for your service.

And my old buddy, the former Governor of Massachusetts, Bill Weldis here tonight. I appreciate you coming, Governor. I want to thank all the State officials who are here and local officials who are here. I see the high sheriff and others here today. I want to thank my friend Joe O'Donnell for renting a tie for tonight. [*Laughter*] I appreciate so very much Mercer Reynolds, who is the national finance chairman for my campaign, for taking time out to make sure that we're able to get our message out all across our country.

I want to thank all the people who have worked so hard to really do a fantastic job, when you think about it. We've come to Boston, Massachusetts—some people would think that we wouldn't have much support here. But they're wrong. We've got a lot of support in this city.

I want to thank Darrell Crate, who is the chairman of the Massachusetts Republican Party, for being here. And I want to thank all the grassroots activists who are here. Nobody should take any State for granted in 2004.

The Vice President and I are counting on you. We want your help. We want you out there turning those voters out. Speaking about the Vice President, I made a really good pick when I asked Dick Cheney to be the Vice President of the United States. One time, giving a speech in front of Mother and Dad, I said, "Dick Cheney is the finest Vice President our country has ever had." Mother said, "Wait a minute." [*Laughter*] But he's doing a great job. [*Laughter*]

I've had the opportunity to observe the two United States Senators from this State. Your senior Senator, Ted Kennedy, is a very effective legislator. In Washington, he's known as the conservative Senator from Massachusetts. [*Laughter*] Your other Senator, my opponent, is an experienced Senator. He's built up quite a record. My opponent has been in Washington long enough to take both sides on just about every issue. [*Laughter*] He voted for the PATRIOT Act, for NAFTA, for the No Child Left Behind Act, and for the use of force in Iraq. Now he opposes the PATRIOT Act, NAFTA, the No Child Left Behind Act, and the liberation of Iraq. My opponent clearly feels very strongly about each of these issues. [*Laughter*]

In order to lead this country, you have to be consistent and clear. Someone asked Senator Kerry why he voted against the $87 billion funding bill to help our troops in Iraq. Here's what he said: "I actually did vote for the 87 billion, before I voted against it"—[*laughter*]—end of quote. [*Laughter*] That sure clears things up, doesn't it? [*Laughter*]

His answers aren't always so clear, but the voters will have a clear choice in this campaign. It's a choice between keeping the tax relief that is moving this economy forward or putting the burden of higher taxes back on the American people. It is a choice between an America that leads the world with strength and confidence or an America that is uncertain in the face of danger.

I'm looking forward to this campaign. I'm looking forward to traveling this great country to talk about what I want to do for our country. I'm looking forward to reminding people that in 3 years, we've achieved great things. The most important thing is that we have a positive vision, an optimistic vision, a hopeful vision for the years ahead. We have a positive vision for winning the war against terror and extending peace and freedom throughout the world, a positive vision for promoting opportunity and compassion here at home. I'm going to leave no doubt where we stand, and we're going to win on the 2d of November.

The last 3 years have brought serious challenges, and we have given serious answers. We came to office with a stock market in decline, an economy heading into recession. We delivered historic tax relief, and now our economy is the fastest growing of any major industrialized nation in the world. We had to confront corporate crime that cost people their jobs and their savings. We passed strong corporate reform and made it clear we will not tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America.

We saw war and grief arrive on a quiet September morning, so we pursued the terrorist enemy across the world. We've captured or killed many of the key leaders of the Al Qaida network, and the rest of them will learn there is no cave or hole deep enough to hide from American justice. We confronted the dangers of state-sponsored terror and the spread of weapons of mass destruction, so we ended two of the most violent and dangerous regimes on Earth. We freed over 50 million people, and once again, America is proud to lead the armies of liberation.

When Dick Cheney and I came to office, we found a military that was underfunded

and underappreciated, so we gave our military the resources and respect they deserve. And today, no one can question the skill, the strength, or the spirit of the United States military.

It is the President's job to confront problems, not to pass them on to future Presidents and future generations. A President needs to step up to make the hard decisions and to keep his commitments, and that is how I will continue to lead our Nation.

Great events will turn on this election. The man who sits in the Oval Office will set the course of the war on terror and the direction of our economy. The security and prosperity of America are at stake. The other side hasn't offered much in the ways of strategy to win the war or policies to expand our economy. So far, all we hear from that side is a lot of old bitterness and partisan anger. Anger is not an agenda for the future of this country. I will take on the big issues with optimism and resolve and determination. I will make it clear to the American people, I stand ready to lead this Nation for 4 more years.

The big issue for every American family is the Federal tax burden. With the largest tax relief since Ronald Reagan was President, we've left more money in the hands that earned it. By spending and investing and helping to create new jobs, the American people have used their money far better than the Federal Government could have.

I'm optimistic about the future of this country because I've seen Americans overcome economic challenge after economic challenge. I'm optimistic because of the good policies we've put in place but optimistic because of the hard work and productivity of the American people.

Economic growth in the second half of 2003 was the fastest in nearly 20 years. Manufacturing activity is increasing. Business investment is rising. Disposable income is rising. Inflation is low. Homeownership is at the highest rate ever. The minority homeownership rate is at the—nearly at the highest level ever. Job creation is gaining strength. We've added over 350,000 new jobs over the last 6 months. The tax relief we passed is working.

My opponent has a different view of tax relief. When we passed an increase in the child credit to help families, he voted against it. When we reduced the marriage penalty, he voted against it. When we created a lower 10-percent rate for working families, he voted against it. When we reduced the tax rate on dividends that many seniors depend upon, he voted against it. When we gave small businesses tax incentives to expand and hire, he voted against it. When we passed a phase-out of the death tax, he voted against it. We're beginning to see a pattern. [*Laughter*]

My opponent is one of the main opponents of tax relief in the United States Congress. When tax increases are proposed, it's a lot easier to get a "yes" vote out of him. Over the years, he's voted over 350 times for higher taxes on the American people, including the biggest tax increase in American history. He supported a 50 cent a gallon tax increase on gasoline. He wanted you to pay the extra money at the pump, and he wouldn't even throw in a free car wash. [*Laughter*]

Now my opponent is proposing a lot of new Federal spending—a lot of Federal spending. But somehow he's going to have to pay for it. There's a gap between Senator Kerry's spending promises and Senator Kerry's promise to lower the deficit. It's called a tax gap. Given Senator Kerry's record for supporting tax increases, it's pretty clear how he's going to fill the tax gap. He's going to tax all of you. But fortunately, he will not have that chance.

Higher taxes would undermine growth and destroy jobs just as this economy is getting stronger. To help grow the American economy and to create more jobs for American workers, I have a better idea. We should make all the tax cuts permanent.

And there's more to do. We must maintain spending discipline in the Nation's Capital. I've offered a plan to protect small-business owners and employees from frivolous lawsuits and needless regulation. We need tort reform in America. I've laid out a strategy to help control the cost of health care so people have better access to good health care through association health care plans and tax-free health savings accounts. We must have medical liability reform to protect our docs and to stop running up the cost of medicine on people.

In order to make sure we grow our economy, we need to reject economic isolationism and open up other countries' markets for U.S. goods and U.S. services.

I proposed—in order to make sure job growth is strong, we need to have an energy policy in America. We need to modernize the electricity system, and this country must become less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

Oh yes, there's a lot of talk about job creation. But my opponent is against every one of these job-creating measures. Empty talk about jobs and economic isolationism will not get anyone hired. The best way to make sure people can find work is to reelect a pro-growth, pro-entrepreneur President.

Our future also depends on America's leadership in the world. The momentum of freedom in our time is strong, but we still face serious dangers. Al Qaida is wounded but not broken. Terrorists are testing our will in Afghanistan and Iraq. Regimes in North Korea and Iran are challenging the peace. If America shows weakness and uncertainty in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This will not happen on my watch.

This Nation is strong and confident in the cause of freedom. And today, no friend or enemy doubts the word of the United States of America. America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Afghanistan. The Taliban chose defiance; the Taliban are no longer in power. America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Iraq. The dictator chose defiance; now the dictator sits in a prison cell.

September the 11th, 2001, taught a lesson I will never forget. America must confront threats before they fully materialize. In Iraq, my administration looked at the intelligence information, and we saw a threat. Members of Congress looked at the intelligence information, and they saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence information, and it saw a threat. The previous administration and previous Congress looked at the intelligence and made regime change in Iraq the policy of our Nation. In 2002, the United Nations Security Council yet again demanded a full accounting of Saddam Hussein's weapons program. As he had for over a decade, Saddam Hussein refused to comply. So I had a choice to make, either to take the word of a madman or defend this country. Given that choice, I will defend America every time.

My opponent admits that Saddam Hussein was a threat. He just didn't support my decision to remove Saddam from power. Maybe he was hoping Saddam would lose the next Iraqi election. [*Laughter*] We showed the dictator and a watching world that America means what it says. Because our coalition acted, Saddam Hussein's torture chambers are closed. Because we acted, Iraq's weapons programs are ended forever. Because we acted, a source of money to suiciders in the Middle East has been ended. Because we acted, nations like Libya got the message and renounced their own weapons programs. Because we acted, an example of democracy is rising in the heart of the Middle East. Because we acted, the world is more free and America is more secure.

We still face thugs and terrorists in Iraq who would rather go on killing the innocent than accept the advance of liberty. And there's a reason. They know that a free Iraq will be major defeat for the cause of

terror. This collection of killers is trying to shake the will of America. They don't understand our country. America will never be intimidated by thugs and assassins.

We are aggressively striking the terrorists in Iraq. We will defeat them there so we do not have to face them in our own country. We're calling on other nations to help Iraq build a free society, which will make the whole world more secure. And we're standing with the Iraqi people, the brave Iraqi people, as they assume more of their own defense and move toward self-government. These aren't easy tasks, but they are essential tasks. America will finish what we have begun, and we will win this essential victory in the war on terror.

On national security, Americans have the clearest possible choice. My opponent says he approves of bold action in the world but only if other countries do not object. I'm all for united action, and so are the 34 coalition partners in Iraq right now. Yet America must never outsource America's national security decision to the leaders of other countries.

Some are skeptical that the war on terror is really a war at all. My opponent said, and I quote, "The war on terror is less of a military operation and far more of an intelligence gathering, law enforcement operation." I disagree—strongly disagree. Our Nation followed this approach after the World Trade Center was bombed in 1993. The matter was handled in the courts and thought by some to be settled. But the terrorists were still training in Afghanistan, plotting in other nations, and drawing up more ambitious plans. After the chaos and carnage of September the 11th, it is not enough to serve our enemies with legal papers. With those attacks, the terrorists and their supporters declared war on the United States of America, and war is what they got.

Our men and women in the military are taking great risks, and they're doing great work. At bases across our country and the world, I've had the privilege of meeting with those who defend our country and sacrifice for our security. I've seen their great decency and their unselfish courage. I can assure you, ladies and gentlemen, the cause of freedom is in good hands.

This Nation is prosperous and strong, yet we need to remember that our greatest strength is in the hearts and souls of our citizens. We're strong because of the values we try to live by, courage and compassion, reverence and integrity. We're strong because of the institutions that help give us direction and purpose, our families, our schools, our religious congregations. These values and institutions are fundamental to our lives, and they deserve the respect of our Government.

We stand for a fair treatment of faith-based groups, charitable groups of all faiths, so they can receive Federal support for their works of compassion and healing. We will not stand for Government discrimination against people of faith.

We stand for welfare reforms that require work and strengthen marriage, which have helped millions of Americans find independence and dignity. We will not stand for any attempt to weaken those reforms and send people back into lives of dependence.

We stand for a culture of life in which every person counts and every person matters. We will not stand for the treatment of any life as a commodity to be experimented upon, to be exploited, or to be cloned.

We stand for the confirmation of judges who strictly and faithfully interpret the law. We will not stand for judges who undermine democracy by legislating from the bench and judges who try to remake the values of America by court order.

We stand for a culture of responsibility in America. We're changing the culture of our country from one that has said, "If it feels good, do it," and, "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each of us understands we are responsible for the decisions we make

in life. If you're fortunate enough to be a mother or a father, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart. If you're worried about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you're responsible for doing something about it. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you're responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And in the responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourself.

For all Americans, these years in our history will always stand apart. There are quiet times in the life of a nation when little is expected of its leaders. These aren't one of those times. You and I are living in a period when the stakes are high, the challenges are difficult, a time when resolve is needed.

None of us will ever forget that week when one era ended and another began. On September the 14th, 2001, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers. I'll never forget the day. A guy looked at me and said, "Don't let me down." A lot of the workers were shouting, "Whatever it takes. Whatever it takes, Mr. President." As we all did that day, these men and women searching through the rubble took it personally. I took it personally. I have a responsibility that goes on. I will never relent in bringing justice to our enemies. I will defend America, whatever it takes.

In these times, I've also been witness to the character of this Nation. Not so long ago, some had their doubts about the American character. They had doubts about our capacity to meet a serious challenge or to serve a cause greater than self-interest. Americans have given their answer. I've seen the unselfish courage of our troops. I've seen the heroism of Americans in the face of danger. I've seen the spirit of service and compassion renewed in our country. We've all seen our Nation unite in common purpose when it mattered most.

We'll need all these qualities for the work ahead. We have a war to win. And the world is counting on us to lead the cause of freedom and peace. We have a duty to spread opportunity to every part of America. This is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it. And we know that for our country, the best days lie ahead.

God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:10 p.m. at the Park Plaza Hotel and Towers. In his remarks, he referred to Massachusetts State Senator Jack Hart; Gov. Mitt Romney of Massachusetts and his wife, Ann; former U.S. Ambassador to Ireland Richard Egan; former Gov. William F. Weld of Massachusetts; and Joseph J. O'Donnell, fundraiser, and Mercer Reynolds, national finance chairman, Bush-Cheney '04, Inc.

Remarks in Albuquerque, New Mexico
March 26, 2004

Thank you very much. Thank you all. You all be seated, please. Thanks for coming. [*Laughter*]

I am glad to be in New Mexico. The sun is bright, and the people are friendly. Thanks for having me. We're here to talk about homeownership. We're here to talk about helping people realize their dreams. We're here to talk about making sure the business environment, particularly for small businesses, is strong and open so that people can realize their dream of owning their own business. We're here to talk about the great courage of America.

Before I begin, I do want to thank my friend Alphonso Jackson. He's the Acting Secretary. That means that the Senate hasn't approved him yet. [*Laughter*] So I made sure he sat next to Senator Domenici on the airplane. [*Laughter*]

But I've known Alphonso for a long time. He was the head of the Dallas Housing Authority. He did a great job of making sure the Housing Authority worked well. Now he's in Washington with me to make sure that the HUD works well. We want money being spent to help people buy homes. That's what we want. We want more people owning their own home in America. And Alphonso, I want to thank you.

I want to thank John Kaltenbach, who helped arrange this event. I want to thank the members of the Home Builders Association of Central New Mexico. I want to thank all the entrepreneurs who are here. I want to thank the builders who are here.

I want to thank Senator Pete Domenici. He flew down with me. This guy is a fabulous United States Senator. He's really a good one. That's why, when I try to get things done, I make sure Pete Domenici knows what we're trying to do. He's accomplished. He also loves New Mexico a lot. He loves the people here.

And so does Heather Wilson—Heather Wilson, a great Congresswoman. She's really effective, got a decent soul. She's an accomplished, decent person, and I love working with her. They let old Steve Pearce in from eastern New Mexico. [*Laughter*] You might remember I was raised in Midland, Texas. As a matter of fact, that's where Laura is today. She's in Midland, right across the border from eastern New Mexico. She's visiting with her mother. But I've spent a lot of time in eastern New Mexico, so I know people like Steve Pearce, down-to-earth, honest, patriotic, willing to serve his country as the United States Congressman from that part of the world. Steve, thank you for coming with us today.

I want to thank Mayor Bill Standley from the city of Farmington for coming down to say hello. Thank you, mayor, for being here—thank the other local officials who are here. It's good to be in front of a crowd where people are wearing "gimme" hats or cowboy hats. [*Laughter*] That doesn't happen all the time in Washington. Let me just say, it doesn't happen nearly enough in Washington. [*Laughter*]

Today when I landed, I met a fellow named Irving Hall. Where are you, Irving? Right there. Stand up. Now you can sit down. [*Laughter*] Irving Hall works for our Government at the laboratories, the high tech—Sandia—I think you worked there, didn't you, Irving? Yes. He worked there, and came time to retire, and his boss said, "What are you going to do, Irving?" He said, "Why don't you make a difference?" I believe that's what your boss told—what you told me your boss said. See, he met me at the airplane. I'd never met Irving before. But the reason he did is because this fellow, upon retirement, decided he was going to do something to help somebody, that he was going dedicate his years of retirement for making somebody's life better by building homes for Habitat For Humanity.

I love the spirit of voluntarism in America, the fact that people like Irving are willing to take time out of their life to make a difference in somebody else's life. A lot of times we talk about the strength of America being our military—it's part of our strength, and we intend to keep the military strong—or the size of our wallet, relative to other countries, and that's important. But the true strength of America is the heart and souls of the American people. That's the strength of our country, the fact that there are people willing to love a neighbor just like you'd like to be loved yourself.

And so, Irving, I want to thank you for setting such a good example for your community and your State and your Nation. I urge others to take time out of your life

to make a difference in a child who may be lonely, in helping somebody learn to read, by providing shelter for the homeless or food for the hungry, and in so doing, you will make America a hopeful place for all our citizens. Thank you, Irving.

I am very optimistic about the future of this country for a lot of reasons. One, I know the character of the American people. When you know the character of the American people, you can't help but be optimistic because we're a can-do group of folks. We refuse to let anything get in our way. And we're able to overcome challenges, and we have overcome a lot of challenges during the past 3 years.

Let me remind you of what we have overcome as a nation. We have overcome a recession. That means things are going backwards. A recession is a time when things are going backwards, where people are having trouble finding work, where there's not much hope in certain quarters of our country. We overcame that. And as we came out of a recession—and by the way, the stock market had begun to decline in March of 2000. The recession began in early '01. And when the stock market declined, that too affects people's attitudes. When you think about it, there's a lot of retired folks who look at their portfolios and see it going down. That's kind of a discouraging moment when that happens. You begin to wonder whether all the savings you put aside are going to be there when you really need them most.

And as we started to come out of the recession, we got attacked by an enemy on September the 11th, 2001, and it affected us. We lost nearly 1 million jobs in the 3 months after September the 11th attack. It also affected the way we have to think in America. We used to think that oceans can protect us. We now realized that America can be a battleground, and therefore, we have to do everything in our power to protect America. We're doing everything at home we can. But I'm going to tell you, the best way to protect America is to stay on the offense and get the terrorists before they get us. September the 11th affected us. It was one of the challenges that I talked about.

We also had some corporate scandals that affected the confidence of America. You know, it's important in a system like ours that people have confidence in balance sheets and numbers. If you're an investor or an employee or a shareholder, you've got to have—trust people. And yet there are some people who betrayed the trust. We had some corporate citizens who were not responsible. They didn't do their duty as responsible citizens.

We passed tough laws. The three Members here worked with us. We sent a clear message: We're not going to tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America. You cannot lie and cheat shareholders and employees without consequences in this country. But we overcame that. We're overcoming it.

And then I made a choice to defend the security of the country, which also affected our economy and affected the confidence of the people. September the 11th taught a lesson. It's an important lesson for America. We must deal with threats before they fully materialize. That's the lesson of September the 11th. You can't see what you think is a threat and hope it goes away. You used to could when the oceans protected us, but the lesson of September the 11th is, is when the President sees a threat, we must deal with it before it comes to fruition through death on our own soils, for example.

I looked at the intelligence and saw a threat in Iraq. The United States Congress looked at the same intelligence, and they saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence, and it saw a threat. In fall of 2002, I went back to the United Nations. I said, "Look, why don't we deal with this threat together? We all see a threat, so why don't we get Saddam Hussein to do what the world has been demanding to do for over a decade,

which is to reveal the weapons programs and get rid of him, for the sake of the security of the world. Your choice, Mr. Saddam." He said, "No, I'm not interested."

You see, given that choice whether to trust the word of a madman, a man who had used chemical weapons on his own people, or to defend our country, I will choose to defend America every time. [*Applause*] Thank you all.

The challenge we overcame was the fact that on your TV screens you saw the words "Marching to War." I don't know if you remember that or not. As we were trying to get Saddam to disarm peacefully through the United Nations and the collective will of the world, you see "March to War." That's hard if you're a business person. It's hard to risk capital or expand your business when the country is marching to war. It's not a good thought. Or if you're a consumer, maybe thinking about buying a house, if you look on your TV screens that say "March to War," you're not so sure you want to buy the house then, because you're not sure what the consequences of marching to war will be.

Now we're marching to peace. We're marching to peace, and the world is better off. We've overcome that obstacle. And the reason I say we've overcome these four things is, I want to remind you of the facts.

First, our economy is growing. It's strong, and it's getting stronger. Secondly, inflation is low, and interest rates are low. Manufacturing activity is up. The unemployment rate today is lower than the average rate in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. New Mexico's unemployment rate is 5.7 percent, down from 6 percent a year ago. Things are improving. Things are getting better. Thanks to being the most productive workforce in America—and I might say thanks to good policies—this economy is strong, and it's getting stronger.

I look forward to continuing to make the argument that the reason why things are improving, besides the fact that the character of this country is strong, is that we let people keep more of their own money. That's what tax relief is. When you got more of your own money in your pocket, pretty good chance you're going to demand an additional good or a service. And when you demand an additional good or a service, somebody is going to provide it for you. And when somebody provides an additional good or a service, somebody is more likely to keep a job or to find a job. That's the way the economy works.

And so the tax relief we passed came at the right time. The recession was a shallow recession, thanks to the tax relief. The tax relief helped families because we raised the child credit to $1,000 per child. The tax relief helped marriages because we reduced the marriage penalty. What kind of Tax Code is it that penalizes marriage, by the way? We helped our seniors by reducing the taxes on dividends.

We also helped the small-business community a lot in our tax relief plan. I'll tell you why. Most small businesses are sole proprietorships or Subchapter S corporations, which means they pay tax at the individual income-tax rate. So when you hear me talking about reducing all taxes, I want you to think about the benefit that does for the small-business community. Seventy percent of new jobs in America are created by small-business owners. And therefore, if you're worried about job creation, it makes sense to stimulate the small-business sector of this country, and the tax relief did exactly that.

One of the great successes of this period of time, a period of time that had a lot of challenges, is the fact that housing starts and homeownership are incredibly strong right now. Low interest rates help. It makes it easier, obviously, to afford a mortgage, but so did the tax policies. See, when people feel more confident they're going to have money in their pocket, they're more likely to go out and buy a home.

The home sales were the highest ever recently. That's exciting news for the country, when you think about it—good for the

builders—[*laughter*]—but more importantly, it's good for the owners. We want people owning something in America. That's what we want. The great dream about America is, "I can own my own home," people say, or "I can own my own business," like many back here do, or "I can own and manage my own health care account or my own retirement account."

See, we want more people owning something because when somebody owns something, they have a vital stake in the future of the country. The more people who own their home, the better off America is, and we're making good progress. Our Nation's 68-percent homeownership rate is the highest ever. More people own homes now than ever before in the country's history, and that's exciting for the future of America.

There's a homeownership gap in America that exists for minorities, and we've got to do something about it. So Alphonso mentioned the goal—I set a good goal, which is adding 5.5 million new minority homeowners in America by the end of the decade. When we're talking about homeownership, we're talking about for everybody. That's what I'm talking about. The more people who own their home, the better off America will be.

Since then, since I laid out the goal, more than 1.5 million minority families have become homeowners. And for the first time ever, more than half of minority households own their own home. We're making progress closing the gap. But more importantly, people are understanding what it means to be a buyer and an owner. People understand what it means to say, "This is my house."

Lori Benavidez is with us. Lori, thank you for coming. She's a mom of two. She brought her own mother with her—that would your grandmother. [*Laughter*] Lori is—when I met her backstage—the kind of person that you want really owning a home because she's so thrilled with the idea. We helped her. I say we—people here in this part of the world did. We got a program that helps people who rent through Voucher 8 programs to afford a downpayment. It helps them take some of those payments and set it aside for a downpayment so that she can afford to buy her own home. What she did is she got counseling services. I know there's some—we'll talk a little bit about that in a second.

Let me tell you what she said, though, about owning her first home. She said, "I never thought the day would happen when my girls and I would be sitting in our own home. It's a miracle," she said. Yes, Lori said, "You made it possible." I think she told me that. I said, "No, Lori, you made it possible. You're the reason why the miracle happened," because she decided she wanted to follow her dream. And the role of Government is to help people realize their dream, not stand in the way of dreams but to make it easier for people to realize their dream.

And there are practical ways to do that. One practical way is to help people with a downpayment. There are low-income citizens in our country who simply cannot afford a downpayment. They may be able to afford the mortgage over time, but they—one of the hurdles for homeownership is, "I can't—I don't want to put the money up. I just don't have that kind of cash to make the downpayment," people will say.

I'm sure some homebuilders and real estate agents know what I'm talking about. They say, "I think this is what I want to live out my dream, but I can't put up the money." So the Government has a chance to help, in my judgment. I want to thank very much the Congress working on the—providing money to help people with their downpayment on their home, the practical way to encourage more people to own a home, to give them a chance. There will be $900,000 coming in May to help families in this State afford a downpayment.

A practical way—another practical way to help people, first-time homebuyers is to make zero downpayment loans possible for

those whose mortgages are insured by the Federal Housing Administration. In other words, you go to your FHA administration, get your loan insured, then you don't have to pay a downpayment. Right now they have to pay a 3-percent downpayment. It doesn't sound like a lot to some. It's a lot to people who are struggling to make ends meet and who yet still want to realize their dream.

Those are two practical ways to help people cross the hurdle—the initial hurdle of buying a home. By the way, if we can get the FHA plan in place, it will help 150,000 families buy homes in the first year alone. It's a practical way, again, of encouraging homeownership.

I don't know if you saw Lori. She had a tear in her eye when I introduced her because of the thrill of owning her own home. We want Loris all over the country to feel the same way, to have that great sense of enthusiasm and joy about saying, "This is my home. Welcome to my home."

The second way we can help is to make sure that Americans understand what it means to buy a home. You know, I don't know if you've looked at those forms, but there's a lot of fine print. [*Laughter*] And if you're nervous about fine print, like a lot of good citizens are, then that may become a stumbling block to buy a home. "I'm not going to sign anything that's got all that fine print," people might say.

And there's a practical way to help people, and that is through counseling services. You've got good counseling services right here in New Mexico. Home New Mexico is such a counseling service. Tierra del Sol, in Las Cruces, is a counseling service.

Lori told me she got counseling services. I don't know if there's any counselors here, but there are people all across the country who get help through HUD, that sit down with people like Lori and explain what it means to buy a home, own a home, and the responsibilities with owning a home. They explain the credit policies. They explain what it means to make a monthly payment. They explain what the monthly payments will be. It's a way of compassionate people to help somebody who wants to realize their dream.

As well, under the Fair and Accurate Credit Transaction Act, people will have access to their credit report. And that's important. A lot of people have never seen their credit report before. Now you got access to it.

See, what happens is, people go start to try to buy a home and up pops the credit report, and they say, "Sorry, brother, your credit isn't any good. You can't buy a home." People need to be able to look at all the hurdles and impediments to buying a home as they go through the process. We don't want people to have their dreams crushed. We want people to realize dreams. And so I want to thank the counselors who are here for working with the Lori Benavidezes of the world, to explain to them what it means to be a homeowner.

As well we've got to make sure affordable housing is available to more and more citizens. In other words, we've got to provide incentive for homebuilders to build low-income houses, and so I've proposed a single-family affordable housing tax credit. It's a good plan. It's a plan that will make more homes available in parts of America that—where a lot of homes haven't been built or rehabilitated. It's a good way to encourage people to build homes in *barrios* or inner cities. It's a good way to make sure affordable housing is more available to citizens from all walks of life.

I also have called upon real estate and mortgage—the mortgage finance industry to join in our efforts in closing the minority homeownership gap to help low-income people buy a home. And more than two dozen major companies and organizations have stepped up. Suburban Mortgage outfit here in New Mexico as well as the Bank of Albuquerque have committed to extending more loans to low-income families and to financing the construction of more affordable homes. And I want to thank these

corporate citizens for stepping up to the plate and helping the country become a better country by encouraging more people to own their own piece of property.

Homeownership is strong. We need to keep it that way. I want these builders back here employing people. I want people showing up for work. By the way, when it comes to work, we ought to have reasonable immigration policy. I bet you'd get a fair appraisal from some of the businessowners back here. They'll tell you that the immigration policy of this country isn't conducive for good economy; let me put it to you that way. I mean, you don't know if you're hiring somebody who's here legally or not legally.

See, we got a policy that has encouraged forged documents and smugglers. My attitude is if you—a builder back here can't find an American willing to do the job, they ought to have the ability to put somebody on the job who can do the job. My attitude is, is that we ought to have a temporary-worker's card for people who are willing to work.

This is not an amnesty program. I don't think it makes sense to have amnesty right now in the country. Amnesty would encourage further illegal immigration. And amnesty would say to those who have stood in line for a long period of time who want to be a legal citizen, "Standing in line legally wasn't worth it. We're going to let somebody cut in line."

What I'm talking about is a worker plan, a plan that understands people coming up from Mexico want to put food on their table for their sons and daughters and that people right here behind me are looking for somebody to put roof—lay roof or lay tile, and they can't find workers here. In order to make sure the economy runs well, in order to make sure we treat people humanely, we need a temporary-worker plan. It makes sense to do that. I look forward to working with Congress to get something reasonable out.

A couple of other things I've got on my mind I'd like to share with you about how to make sure America remains a good place to do business. You hear a lot of talk about jobs going overseas. Some are going overseas, and some from overseas are coming here. But the best way to make sure people can find work in America is to make sure the business environment, the entrepreneurial environment is strong and solid, that it's a good place to do business; let me put it to you that way. If you want people hiring people in America, we've got to make sure America's a good place to do business, a good place for our employers, and there's some things we need to do.

We need tort reform in America—too many lawsuits. Ask these employers what it's like when you're threatened by a lawsuit or you see your neighbor threatened by a lawsuit. There's too many lawsuits in the country; there just is. There's reasonable tort reform. Congress passed—the House passed some class-action reform and some asbestos reform and medical liability reform. It's stuck in the Senate. As people tell you, the trial lawyers are a strong lobby up there in Washington, DC. But I'm going to keep pushing for tort reform because it's right, and it's the way to make sure America stays a competitive place to do business.

Speaking about medical liability reform, another issue that plagues small-business owners and employers is the cost of health care. It's going up, and we need to address the cost of health care without letting the Federal Government run the program.

And there are some practical ways to do that. One, I told you about medical liability reform that's got stuck in the Senate. But one of the reasons health care costs are going up is because of the frivolous and junk lawsuits that are threatening our docs and hospitals. And so therefore, docs and hospitals practice what's called defensive medicine in order to protect themselves in a court of law.

Listen, there's reasonable reform. But what's not reasonable is a system today when you've got trial lawyers who view the legal system as a lottery where they can hit the jackpot, where they can get a big salary. All that's going to do is make your health care costs too high.

We need association health plans for small businesses so they can pool risk. If you're a small builder here in Albuquerque, it's hard to go into the marketplace and find affordable insurance for your hands. But if you're able to team up with other builders, not only in New Mexico but around the country, and pool risks just like big corporations do, you're going to be able to find more affordable health care for your employees.

We also need to expand health savings accounts. This is a great idea, by the way, for small businesses and employees to be able to put money in tax-free, keep it in your plan tax-free, and take it out tax-free. You cover incidentals, and then you can have major medical to make sure you cover your big expenses. And believe me, this is a way for small businesses to be able to better afford health care.

You know what else we need to do? We need an energy plan. Pete Domenici is in the lead on having an energy plan in the United States Senate. It's stuck in the Senate right now, and Pete's going to get it unstuck. He's going to need some help. You might want to write some other people up in Washington, DC, who aren't with us here today. This bill needs to get moving. We need to be—we need to encourage conservation. We need to encourage alternative sources of energy. We need to modernize the electricity grid. But for the sake of keeping jobs here at home and for the sake of expanding the economy, we need to be less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

I'll tell you what else we need to do. Ask these builders what it's like to put up with Federal, State, and local regulations. I told Alphonso we've got to do something about it at the Federal level, and he says we are. So we'll watch him. [*Laughter*] He's got a—you don't need to fill out the same form to meet the same requirement at all three levels of government. Regulations cost small businesses a lot of money. It means you have less money in your pocket to expand your business and hire people; that's what that means. If you want to keep jobs here in America, we'll need to be—we need less paperwork.

And by the way, I don't know, Alphonso may not agree with this, but I bet a lot of the paperwork that's filed up in the Federal Government is never read. [*Laughter*] And if that's the case, it's another reason to make sure we don't have too much paperwork.

The other thing we need to do here in this country is to make the tax cuts we passed permanent. The way it works up there is, they passed the tax cuts so people have more money in their pocket, and they're set to expire. The child credit is going to go down next year unless the Senate and the House make the tax cuts permanent. The marriage penalty's going to go up next year. The 10-percent bracket expansion is going to shrink. In other words, it's a tax increase. We're fixing to get taxed if the Congress doesn't act. These three Members are strong supporters of making those aspects of the tax cuts permanent. It makes sense not to be taking money out of people's pockets just as this economy is beginning to recover. We want to keep demand strong. We want people being able to have their own money.

I like to tell people, the people of the country spent their own money better than the Federal Government could have, and that's why the economy is getting stronger. So they need to make the tax cuts permanent. If you're a businessperson, you need to be able to plan. You don't want to think your taxes are going to be here today and gone tomorrow. You need certainty in the Tax Code. Ask any businessperson what it's like to run a business, and the more certain

the environment is in the future, the more likely it is they will be successful, and when they're successful, somebody will be able to find a job.

I also want to talk about trade. Presidents before me in both political parties made decisions to make sure America's markets were open for goods produced overseas. It made sense in many ways. It helped keep consumer prices down. It helps the consumer when there's competition.

My attitude is, if our markets are open, I want the other people's markets to be open. My attitude is, instead of walling each other off like the economic isolationists want us to do, let's be confident. Let's trust in our entrepreneurs. Let's understand our farmers and ranchers are the best at the world. Let's say, "If you trade with us in an open way, you've got to open up your market." That's the Bush policy, "You open up your market so we can compete."

Economic isolationism will lead to economic stagnation. We can't have that. If we want people working, we've got to be confident in our ability to compete. A lot of people make a living here in America because their products they make are sold overseas. We're good at things in this country. When you see that label "Made in the USA," you know you got yourself a quality product. I want "Made in the USA" sold all over the world.

What I'm telling you is in order to be—make sure people can find work and retain a job, we've got to make sure this economy grows. These are what we call progrowth policies. We say we understand that the vibrancy of the country is in the small-business sector. We're vibrant when we make sure the entrepreneurial spirit is strong.

I want to talk about one other thing we've got to do to make sure this is a good place for people to realize their dreams and start a business and get well educated, is we've got to make sure this country is on the leading end of broadband technology. You see, new ideas and new businesses and new ways to educate people in Farmington, New Mexico, are going to occur when we're able to get information flowing across cables and telephone lines in a fast way. That's what broadband technology is. It means we'll open the highways of knowledge—new highways of knowledge.

This country needs a national goal for broadband technology, for the spread of broadband technology. We ought to have a universal, affordable access for broadband technology by the year 2007, and then we ought to make sure as soon as possible thereafter, consumers have got plenty of choices when it comes to purchasing the broadband carrier. See, the more choices there are, the more the price will go down. And the more the price goes down, the more users there will be. And the more users there will be, the more likely it is America will stay on the competitive edge of world trade.

The more users there are, the more likely it is people will be able to have interesting new ways to receive doctors' advices in the home. The more affordable broadband technology is, the more innovative we can be with education. It's important that we stay on the cutting edge of technological change, and one way to do so is to have a bold plan for broadband.

Let me say one thing about broadband. We don't need to tax access to broadband. The Congress must not tax access to broadband technology if we want to spread it around.

The role of Government is to create an environment in which the entrepreneurial spirit is strong and in which people are able to realize their dreams. And that's what we're here talking about, when you think about it. We're talking about making sure America is the place where dreams can be realized and people can own something. People can own their own business. People can own their own home. People have a chance to say, "This is mine. This

is my property." And we're making good progress here, doing just that.

Remember where I started? I talked about the hurdles we've overcome. We really have. The country is a strong country. It's overcome a lot, and there's more hurdles to overcome in the future. I'm confident of that. But you know what else I'm confident of? We'll overcome. This is such a great country, full of decent and honorable people.

Thank you for coming. May God bless. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:45 a.m. at Expo New Mexico. In his remarks, he referred to John Kaltenbach, owner, John Kaltenbach Homes; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Remarks in a Discussion on Homeownership in Phoenix, Arizona
March 26, 2004

The President. Thank you all. Thanks a lot. Thank you all very much. I appreciate Doug McCarron's leadership in terms of making sure people have the skills necessary to work in the jobs of the 21st century. Actually, you look like you're dressed the way a president should be—[*laughter*]—and I'm dressed like a carpenter—[*laughter*]—which isn't all that bad a deal.

I want to thank you for having me here. I appreciate Mike McCarron for opening up this facility. Thank you, Mike, for inviting us. He invited us here so we can have a discussion on job training skills and homeownership.

Before we have the discussion, I do want to say a couple of things. First, I want to recognize some people in the audience. Two great United States Senators, John McCain and John Kyl, are with us. I don't know if you know this, Doug, but John McCain was telling me on the way over from the airport that he was here when they opened this facility. He told me—he said, "You're going to find a magnificent training facility." He forgot to tell me how magnificent it is. This is quite a place—quite a place. I know you're proud of it.

I appreciate Members of the Congress who are here, J.D. Hayworth, John Shadegg, Jeff Flake, Trent Franks. Thank you all for coming.

It's such an impressive place, they even brought old Ron Lewis from Kentucky, who's a Member of the House, with us. Ron, thank you for being here, glad you came. There he is.

Mr. Mayor, Phil Gordon, is with us. Thanks for coming, Mr. Mayor. I appreciate you being here.

I want to thank members of the Carpenters Union who have opened up this beautiful facility to us. Thank you for working hard. Thank you for being responsible citizens who love your family and love your country. Most of all, I'm honored to be in your presence. Thanks for building the stage. [*Laughter*]

Today when I landed, I met a lady named Barbara Lockwood. Barbara, where are you? There she is. Thanks for coming, Barbara. Barbara is a volunteer of Keep Phoenix Beautiful. The reason I bring that up is, communities are really strong when people are willing to volunteer, willing to take time out of their lives to improve the community in which you live. There's all kinds of ways to do so. Keep Phoenix Beautiful is one such idea. Mentoring a child is an idea. Loving a neighbor like you'd like to be loved yourself is an idea on how to make sure your community is good. I know that many of your members work hard on the day job and volunteer to help

somebody's life. See, America can change for the better, one heart and one soul at a time.

And the reason I want to bring up Barbara is that she sets such a good example by taking time out of her life to make Phoenix, Arizona, a better place. Barbara, thank you for your service, and thank you for the example you have set for others.

The housing industry is booming, which means more people own their home, and that's positive. It means more carpenters are working, and that's positive. It's an amazing statement to say that, given what this country has been through. We've been through a recession. We've been through an attack on America, and that attack on America affected us. We lost jobs after the attack on America. It also changed our way of thinking about how we look at the world. We used to think oceans could protect us, where we could kind of sit back and see threats gather and could deal with them if we felt like it or ignore them if we wanted to, because oceans protected us. But that changed on September the 11th.

We're doing everything we can to secure the homeland. I want to thank those who are involved with the first-responders or our police and firefighters for working hard to be ready. But the best way to protect America's homeland is to stay on the offense and bring these people to justice before they hurt us again. [*Applause*] Thank you.

The Nation is strong. We refuse to be intimidated by these killers. And we started to recover, and then we found out that some corporate citizens forgot what it meant to be responsible citizens. You know who I'm talking about, the people who didn't tell the truth to their shareholders and their employees. We passed tough new laws. I want to thank the Members of the Senate who are here and the members of the congressional delegation for joining together to pass tough laws that sends this message: We're not going to tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America. That dishonesty affected us. It was another hurdle we had to cross. It kind of shook the confidence of the people.

And then we had another hurdle we had to cross. As I told you, September the 11th changed how we should view the world. We must deal with threats before they fully materialize. When we see a threat, we've got to deal with it. I looked at the intelligence in Iraq, and I saw a threat. The Congress looked at the same intelligence, and it saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the same intelligence, and it saw a threat as well. We said to Saddam Hussein, "Everybody thinks you're a threat, so you disarm." We gave him yet another choice. It was his choice to make. We said, "Disarm, for the sake of freedom and peace," and he defied the world again.

And therefore, I had a choice to make: Do I trust the word of somebody who had used weapons of mass destruction on his own people? Do I trust the word of a madman? Or do I take actions necessary to defend America? Given that choice, every time, I will defend this country. [*Applause*] Thank you all.

When you're marching to war to defend the country, it sends a negative signal. If you're a homebuyer, it doesn't instill a lot of confidence in the future if you think your country is going to war. If you're somebody trying to build homes, marching to war is a negative thought, not a positive thought. Now we're marching to peace. The world is more peaceful.

But these are hurdles we have overcome as a country. Think about these statistics: We're the fastest growing major industrialized nation in the world; the unemployment rate right here in Arizona has gone from 5.9 percent last year to 5.2 percent this year; inflation is low; interest rates are low; manufacturing activity is up. No, this economy has gone through a lot. And you know why? Because the American workers and the American people and the American

entrepreneurs are strong, steady, and resolute.

I'm going to tell you another statistic, which is an amazing statistic given what we've been through: Housing starts in 2003 were the highest in a quarter of a century. Homeownership sales were the highest ever. Sixty-eight percent of homeownership—the homeownership rate is the highest ever, and that's fantastic news for America.

We want more people owning their own home. There's nothing like saying, "This home is my home." There's nothing better than somebody over there saying, "Welcome to my home." And we're about to talk to some first-time homeowners. And I want to share their stories with you. They're going to share their stories with me, and you're going to get to hear it.

I do want to talk about a challenge for our country, and there is a minority homeownership gap in America. Not enough minorities own their own homes. And it seems like to me, it makes sense to encourage all to own homes. And so we've done some interesting things. Again, I want to thank the Congress, but we passed downpayment assistance programs that will help low-income folks buy their own home. A lot of times, if you're trying to buy your own home, you never bought one, the downpayment seems like a little much. Some of you know what I'm talking about. It seems to make sense if one of the things we're trying to do is to get—to close the minority homeownership gap and to get 5.5 new—million new minority homeowners into homes over the next 5 years, that we ought to help with downpayments, and we have.

The State of Arizona is going to have $2.6 million to help people with downpayments. I proposed that mortgages that have FHA-backed insurance pay no downpayment. That will help 150,000 new homeowners.

What we're trying to do is make it easier for somebody to own a home, and there's practical ways the Government can help. We've got what's called HUD Section 8 programs that are generally rent programs. We've converted those rent programs to self-sufficiency programs, where people are helped to be able to set aside money for downpayments. We're about to hear somebody who has benefited from such program.

We've got HUD's home program that provides grants to States to help counseling. That's really important. Have you ever seen some of the contracts? There's a lot of fine print. And if you've never bought a home before, it kind of makes you nervous to sign off on something with a lot of fine print. There are counselors all over the State of Arizona who are willing to help people understand what it means to sign a contract, to understand what it means when they're buying their first home, what it means to be a homeowner, what the obligations are.

I want to thank the counselors who are here. I want to thank the people who are here who work with first-time homebuyers. We need to make sure that there's affordable houses around the country. That's why I proposed a $2.5-billion tax credit for rehabilitation of inner-city homes and for the building of affordable homes for low-income citizens. We want homes. We want people owning their own home. Ownership is an important part of the American experience.

One other thing I've done is I've called on private sector mortgage banks and banks to be more aggressive about lending money to first-time homebuyers. And the response has been really good. There's a lot of people in this—our communities around the country that deeply care about the issue of homeownership, and they've been responsive.

Senators Kyl and McCain told me about a fellow named Jerry Bisgrove here in Arizona. He's not a part of a mortgage banking deal. He's just a decent citizen. But like the mortgage bankers who have helped new time—first-time homeowners, Bisgrove is a

successful businessman, evidently, has turned back and said, "I want to help people with affordable housing." It's that kind of effort—effort at the Federal level, effort at the charitable level—that's going to make a big difference in closing the minority homeownership gap, and when we do, America will be a better place.

The thing I like about Doug is he understands that when you give somebody additional skills, it will improve their lifestyle. You see, when a worker becomes more productive, that worker is going to make more money. And we're about to hear a story that verifies that point—Jorge. Anyway—not yet. [*Laughter*] *Casi.*

But Doug is an innovative leader. And as he mentioned to you, I've had the honor of going to some of his training facilities around the country, and they're impressive. They're impressive because they're so humane, and they take a person who wants to work, give him a little additional help, and they become well-paid, more able to do their duty as a mom or a dad. So, Doug, thanks. I appreciate you having me.

[*At this point, Douglas J. McCarron, general president, United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America, made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

Mr. McCarron. Mr. President, the men and women that I represent have shown that they are willing to work hard. They are willing to train hard. And they are willing to compete. Now, I know, Mr. President, over the next few months, you'll hear from advisers and pundits, but speaking for the Carpenters Union, let me tell you, the most important issue for us is jobs.

The President. Doug, let me say something. Yes. The most important issue for me is jobs.

[*Mr. McCarron made further remarks.*]

The President. One of the things I forgot to mention to Doug and to congratulate Doug and the union on was the work at the World Trade Center after September the 11th. A lot of his members went to help clear the rubble. And they went in there, and they worked long, long hours, and there was not one accident. They did an unbelievable job, and I want to thank you and thank the membership——

Mr. McCarron. That's good union labor, Mr. President.

The President. Good job. All right. Jorge Sotelo. Jorge is a family man, hard-working guy. Jorge, tell us about yourself.

[*Jorge Sotelo, foreman, DPR Construction, Avondale, AZ, made brief remarks.*]

The President. So in other words, let me make sure I understand. Before you came here, what were you doing?

Mr. Sotelo. I was doing the same thing. You know, I was in construction but at less wages. You know, I didn't——

The President. You were just out there working hard and less wages. And how did you hear about this facility?

Mr. Sotelo. They went to the place where we were working before, and they told us about the union. And you say, "Yes, it's time for a change. I want to learn something. I want to—better skills for myself and get a better life for my family."

The President. And so, let me ask you something, Jorge. Were you working during the day and coming here at school at night?

Mr. Sotelo. Yes. After work.

The President. And how long did it take for you to get the skills necessary to get another certification?

Mr. Sotelo. It depends how many hours—we got the program for 18 hours, 20 hours. It's just how many hours you can give me here.

The President. Somebody told me, like this—you bought a home this year.

Mr. Sotelo. Yes.

The President. First home?

Mr. Sotelo. Actually, it was the second home, but it's a better home now.

The President. Better home?

Mr. Sotelo. Yes.

The President. So you upgraded?

Mr. Sotelo. Yes, definitely.

The President. The lesson is, is that you can improve your quality of life if you work hard, one, and two, you're willing to go back to school.

I remember coming to Mesa Community College a while ago. Doug, I think you'll find this interesting. It's the same exact principle that you employ here. And I met a woman who had worked for—as a graphic design artist for 15 years, went back to a Mesa Community College technical training program, graduated, and got out. And in her first year, she made more money than she did after her 15th year as a graphic design artist. She gained skills. She upgraded her ability to be a productive worker, and she improved her quality of life dramatically.

And that's exactly what Jorge did. And that's one of the reasons why we're heralding programs like this. If people are looking for work, you can find work in Phoenix, Arizona. And if you're really interested in improving yourself, you can do so by going to programs such as the one Doug sponsors here or at the one at Mesa Community College.

Now, Emily is with us. Are you ready?

Emily McElhaney. Yes, sir.

The President. Emily McElhaney. How many homes have you owned in your life?

Ms. McElhaney. This is the first one.

The President. Would you mind telling us your story?

[*Ms. McElhaney, first-time homebuyer, Mesa, AZ, made brief remarks.*]

The President. See, this is a story that's repeated all throughout the country. It's a family of five, and they wanted their own home. They want a place to say, "This is my home," a place where they raise their kids, in their own home. And you had trouble with the downpayment—like, you kind of looked at it, "It might be a little too high for us."

So what happened? You went to a HUD home program?

Ms. McElhaney. The Housing for Mesa was able to set us up with a realtor and a lender, and they gave us downpayment assistance to help us through that. And then they walked us through every step of the program and explained all those contracts that we had to sign that you were mentioning earlier.

The President. Slightly intimidating, aren't they?

Ms. McElhaney. Exactly, yes.

The President. It's what we call "the fine print." [*Laughter*]

Ms. McElhaney. That's right.

The President. And they explained it all to you?

Ms. McElhaney. We had a counselor that was assigned specifically to us. And she, even before we went to the title agency to sign all the papers, she went over each of them with us, because you can't read all of those in that short amount of time, and so we knew what we were signing when we got there.

The President. See, that's a very important part of being a homeowner, is you've got to help people understand what they're doing. I mean, it's an intimidating process. For some, it might seem like a natural process. But here's Emily. She was slightly intimidated by the size of the contract, and a good soul stepped up as a result of probably—I know Federal money helped, probably State money as well—and provided a counseling service. Had the counseling service not been there, in all likelihood—I'm not predicting what you would have done, but I suspect you might not done it.

Ms. McElhaney. That's correct. We wouldn't have.

The President. Is the counselor here? No.

Ms. McElhaney. Yes, she is.

The President. She is here? Where?

Ms. McElhaney. Edna McLaughlin is right here.

The President. Well, thank you. Thank you. Thank you for doing that. It must

make you feel pretty good to know you've helped this family realize their dreams.

Edna McLaughlin. Very good.

The President. Yes. She said, "Very good." [*Laughter*]

Monica Mims is with us. Hi, Monica.

Monica Mims. Hi.

The President. Hi. Do you own a home?

Ms. Mims. Yes, I do.

The President. How many have you had?

Ms. Mims. This is my first home.

The President. Tell us about yourself.

[*Ms. Mims, first-time homebuyer, Mesa, AZ, made brief remarks.*]

The President. The Section 8 housing program was a rental program, and it was important to help people rent. But remember, we want people owning. That's what we want. The more people that own their home, the more carpenters are going to be working. But more importantly, the more people that own their home, the more satisfaction there will be in America, in the American experience.

And so they took the Section 8 program, and what she just told you was they helped her, through Section 8 money, get the credit necessary and the planning necessary and the ability to buy her own place. Section 8 helped with the downpayment a little bit too, didn't it?

Ms. Mims. Yes, they did. What they do is every time you pay your rent, they set a little money aside for you in an account. And that helped me with my downpayment. My downpayment was 3 percent. So as long as you also show that you can save your money, you want to show that you can establish your credit, but you can also show that you can save some money also. So my downpayment, it wasn't that bad, but I was kind of nervous about it.

The President. Yes. The fine print get you, too?

Ms. Mims. The fine print got me. So I went through a lot of classes, the first-time homebuyers class, through Housing for Mesa. And I went through it twice so I could make sure I understood. And they also get you prepared to know what you're going to get yourself into, that you're going to have to pay your water and the sewer and stuff like that, when you're not used to doing that when you live in an apartment.

The President. Right. Practical lessons, maybe some help on budgeting and understanding what it meant to budget.

Ms. Mims. That's correct.

The President. You know, I bet somebody is listening out there and wonders whether or not he or she can buy a home. I bet there's somebody saying, "Gosh, I don't think a homeownership is—even though I want a home, I'm not so sure I'm able to do so." I hope you hear the story of Monica and Emily. These are people that had a dream and found help and are now realizing their dreams. It's the greatness of America, you know that? Jorge is sitting here. He's got a family to raise, gets a little extra help, making more money, got him a second home, upgrading, family is better off.

What we want is we want this dream to be extended to every neighborhood in America. We want people owning their own home. We want people getting the skills necessary to make a living.

Doug, again, thanks for having us. It's an honor to be here. Doug said, "You look a little antsy. Are you heading over to the ranch?" [*Laughter*] I said, "I'm not telling you, but I'll be fishing tomorrow." [*Laughter*]

I'm honored to be here. God bless you all, and God bless America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:02 p.m. at the Carpenters Training Center. In his remarks, he referred to Mike McCarron, executive secretary treasurer, Southwest Regional Council of Carpenters; Mayor Phil Gordon of Phoenix, AZ; Jerry Bisgrove, founder, Stardust Foundation; and Edna McLaughlin, director of education and counseling, Housing for Mesa.

The President's Radio Address
March 27, 2004

Good morning. This week brought good news about homeownership in America. The Census Bureau reported that new home sales in February rose to an annual pace of 1.16 million homes, a 24-percent increase over the past year. This success follows one of the most impressive years in America's housing industry. More homes were sold in 2003 than ever before. Housing starts last year were at their highest level in a quarter century. Rising home values have helped take the wealth of American households to a new record level.

In our growing economy, more Americans can afford a new home. Incomes are rising. The unemployment rate is falling. Mortgage rates are low. And because of tax relief, Americans have more to save, spend, and invest, and that means millions of American families have moved into their first homes.

Our Nation's 68-percent homeownership rate is the highest ever, and our Government is taking steps to make owning a home a reality for more Americans, especially minorities and those with low incomes. In June 2002, I set the goal of adding 5.5 million new minority homeowners in America by the end of this decade. Since then, more than 1.5 million minority families have moved into houses of their own, and for the first time, most minorities own their own home.

We are building on this progress. I have signed into law the American Dream Downpayment Act, which will help low-income Americans to afford the downpayment and closing costs on their first home. I'm asking Congress to provide an annual $200 million for this program. That additional money would help an estimated 40,000 low-income families every year become first-time homeowners. I'm proposing that we make zero downpayment loans available to first-time buyers whose mortgages are guaranteed by the Federal Housing Administration. And this will help about 150,000 families buy homes in the first year alone.

Another obstacle to homeownership is the often complicated process of buying a home and getting a loan. My budget for 2005 would more than double funding for housing counseling services from 2001 levels. A house and a mortgage represent a big personal commitment, and we want to prepare more Americans to make that commitment with confidence. To make homeownership attainable for more of our citizens, I have asked Congress to create a tax credit to encourage the construction of affordable homes. Under my proposal, builders will have an incentive to provide an additional 200,000 affordable homes over 5 years for families with low incomes.

And finally, we are encouraging the real estate and mortgage finance industry to join in our efforts in closing the homeownership gap. More than two dozen major companies and organizations have committed to extending more loans to low-income families, financing the construction of more affordable homes, and providing financial counseling to potential buyers. These policies will make a difference in the lives of millions of Americans.

This week, I met with Lori Benavidez, a single mom living in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Last November, with the help of a Federal homeownership program, she moved into her first home. Here's what Lori says: "I never thought the day would happen when my girls and I would be sitting in our own home. It is a miracle."

Every time a family moves into a home of their own, it fulfills a dream and it shows faith in the future. And that faith is well-placed because America's economy is strong and it is getting stronger.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:03 a.m. on March 26 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on March 27. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 26 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks at a Ceremony Honoring Seven Nations on Their Accession to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization
March 29, 2004

Thank you all. Good afternoon, and welcome to the White House.

Fifty-five years ago, the representatives of 12 nations gathered here in Washington to sign the North Atlantic Treaty, which established the most successful military alliance in history. Today we proudly welcome Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia. We welcome them into the ranks of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

When NATO was founded, the people of these seven nations were captives to an empire. They endured bitter tyranny. They struggled for independence. They earned their freedom through courage and perseverance, and today they stand with us as full and equal partners in this great Alliance.

It has been my honor to host the Prime Ministers of each new NATO member in the Oval Office. I want to thank them for their friendship. I want to thank them for their leadership. I look forward to working with them to make the world more peaceful and more free. Welcome to America.

I want to thank the foreign and defense ministers of the new NATO members who are with us today. I want to thank the Prime Ministers of Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia, who are with us today. Jaap de Hoop Scheffer is with us today, who is the Secretary General of NATO. Thank you for coming, Mr. Secretary General. I thank the Ambassadors of all the members of NATO, both old and new.

I want to thank the Vice President, Secretary of State Powell, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, General Dick Myers, General Jones, members of my administration. I want to thank the Members of Congress who are with us today: Majority Leader Bill Frist of the United States Senate; Members of the Senate which voted unanimously in support of the admission of the new members that we welcome today. I want to thank the Members of the House of Representatives who have joined us today. I want to thank those who are here today whose vision years ago helped make this moment a reality. I want to thank other distinguished guests. Welcome.

Today marks a great achievement for each of the nations joining our Alliance. All member nations of NATO must be free and democratic and fully committed to defending the principles of liberty. All member nations must be willing and able to contribute to the common defense of our Alliance. Our seven new members have built free institutions. They've increased their military capabilities in the span of a decade. They are stronger nations because of that remarkable effort, and the NATO Alliance is made stronger by their presence.

Since NATO's founding, the assurance of mutual defense has been a safeguard for peace. As President Truman said, "By this treaty, we are not only seeking to establish freedom from aggression and from the use of force in the North Atlantic community,

but we are also actively striving to promote and preserve peace throughout the world."

Under NATO's banner, the nations of Europe put aside rivalries that had divided the Continent for centuries. NATO members stood watch on freedom's borders for two generations of the cold war. Because of NATO's vigilance, free people lifted the Iron Curtain and tore down the Berlin Wall and replaced dictators with democratic governments.

In the aftermath of this victory, some questioned whether NATO could or should survive the end of the cold war. Then the Alliance proved its enduring worth by stopping ethnic cleansing in Bosnia and by ousting the armies of a tyrant in Kosovo. Some wondered whether NATO could adapt to the new threats of the 21st century. Those doubts were laid to rest on September the 12th, 2001, when NATO invoked for the first time in its history Article 5 of our Charter, which states that an attack against one NATO Ally is an attack against all.

NATO's core mission remains the same, the defense of its members against any aggression. Today, our Alliance faces a new enemy, which has brought death to innocent people from New York to Madrid. Terrorists hate everything this Alliance stands for. They despise our freedom. They fear our unity. They seek to divide us. They will fail. We will not be divided. We will never bow to the violence of a few. We will never—we will face the mortal danger of terrorism, and we will overcome it together.

The countries we welcome today were friends before they were Allies, and they were allies in action before becoming Allies by treaty. Today, all seven of these nations are helping to bring lasting freedom to Afghanistan and Iraq. Bulgaria provided refueling facilities during the early days of Operation Enduring Freedom and has deployed more than 400 soldiers to Iraq. Military engineers from Estonia and Latvia are helping to clear explosive devices from Iraq. Forces from Lithuania and Slovakia are helping to secure Iraq. Romanian troops have sacrificed their lives fighting terrorists in Afghanistan. And troops from Slovenia are serving in the international force that is protecting the city of Kabul in Afghanistan.

Forces from Albania and Croatia and Macedonia are also contributing in Afghanistan or Iraq, proving their mettle as they aspire to NATO membership. These three nations, joined together under the Adriatic Charter, are building strong democracies at home that can contribute to NATO efforts abroad. The United States supports these efforts. The door to NATO will remain open until the whole of Europe is united in freedom and in peace.

As witness to some of the great crimes of the last century, our new members bring moral clarity to the purposes of our Alliance. They understand our cause in Afghanistan and in Iraq, because tyranny for them is still a fresh memory. These nations know that when great democracies fail to confront danger, far worse peril can follow. They know that aggression left unchecked can rob millions of their liberty and their lives. And so now, as members of NATO, they are stepping forward to secure the lives and freedom of others.

The NATO Alliance now flies seven new flags and reaches from the Bay of Biscay to the Black Sea. And Europe, once the source of global conflict, is now a force for stability and peace. Our great transatlantic Alliance has met and overcome great dangers in the past, and our work in NATO is not done. In the past, many assumed that NATO represented a pledge that America would come to the aid of Europe. Today, by our words and by our actions, we know that NATO means much more. It is a solemn commitment that America and Europe are joined together to advance the cause of freedom and peace.

NATO is acting to meet the challenges of our time. NATO forces are securing Afghanistan. NATO ships are patrolling the

Mediterranean, and NATO is supporting the Polish-led division in Iraq. NATO is widening the circle of its friends by creating a new chapter in our relationship with Russia. NATO members are reaching out to the nations of the Middle East to strengthen our ability to fight terror and to provide for our common security. And we're discussing how we can support and increase the momentum of freedom in the greater Middle East.

Our unity and our commitment to freedom carried us to victory in the cold war, and they showed us the way to victory in the war on terror. Together, Europe and America can lead peaceful nations against the dangers of our time. Europe and America can advance freedom and give hope and support to those who seek to lift the yoke of isolation and fear and oppression. That is the mission that history has set for NATO—this great and confident alliance of 26 nations—and we proudly accept this mission.

May God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:42 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Simeon Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, Defense Minister Nikolai Svinarov, and Foreign Minister Solomon Pasi of Bulgaria; Prime Minister Juhan Parts, Defense Minister Margus Hanson, and Foreign Minister Kristiina Ojuland of Estonia; Prime Minister Indulis Emsis, Defense Minister Atis Slakteris, and Foreign Minister Rihards Piks of Latvia; Prime Minister Algirdas Mykolas Brazauskas, Defense Minister Linas Linkevicius, and Foreign Minister Antanas Valionis of Lithuania; Prime Minister Adrian Nastase, Defense Minister Ioan Mircea Pascu, and Foreign Minister Mircea Dan Geoana of Romania; Prime Minister Mikulas Dzurinda, Defense Minister Juraj Liska, and Foreign Minister Eduard Kukan of Slovakia; Prime Minister Anton Rop, Defense Minister Anton Grizold, and Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel of Slovenia; Prime Minister Fatos Nano of Albania; Prime Minister Ivo Sanader of Croatia; Prime Minister Branko Crvenkovski of Macedonia; NATO Secretary General Jakob Gijsbert "Jaap" de Hoop Scheffer; Gen. James L. Jones, USMC, NATO's Supreme Allied Commander, Europe; and former President Slobodan Milosevic of the former Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

Remarks on the National Economy in Appleton, Wisconsin
March 30, 2004

Thank you all very much. I appreciate the warm welcome. Please be seated. It can get pretty cold here in the winter, but that's a really warm welcome, for which I'm grateful. Thanks so much for coming out.

Bill, thank you for your kind introduction. Thank you for putting up with my entourage. Thank you for setting this deal up.

I've got some things I want to share with the good people of Fox Valley and Wisconsin, some of the challenges that we face as a country, my absolute determination to overcome those challenges, to lead our Nation for a better day for every citizen.

I've got a lot of friends here in this State. I took one of them with me. [*Laughter*] And that was Tommy Thompson. Tommy is doing a great job. I gave him a tough job to do, and he's handling it with such class. He's really a fine, fine leader. You trained him well. [*Laughter*] I was looking for him on his Harley, driving in today, but I guess at 38 degrees, it's a little chilly to be on your Harley. [*Laughter*] But he

sends his best, and I want to thank you very much for raising Tommy the right way.

I also want to thank all the entrepreneurs who are here. One of things—I love to be in the presence of entrepreneurs and small-business owners and dreamers and doers. After all, it's—to me, it's one of the characteristics of our country, the fact that we're an optimistic people, the fact that we're risktakers, the fact that we're job creators, that we care about our fellow citizens. The characteristics of America are what really enable me to say that there's no challenge we can't overcome by working together. I appreciate so very much the—[*applause*].

I want to thank the Chamber of Commerce, Fox Cities Chamber of Commerce for hosting me. I want to appreciate the mayor, Tim Hanna, for coming out to say hello. My advice to the mayor is, fill the potholes and empty the garbage. [*Laughter*] All will be well. [*Laughter*] But Tim, I appreciate it. It's good to see you again. Thank you for your leadership and your service. I want to thank all the State and local officials who have come today. I also appreciate your service to your communities and your State.

Today when I landed, I met Gloria Grandone. Where are you, Gloria? There she is, up there. Gloria is a volunteer, a person who is a mentor, a person who is involved with helping people go to college, a person who helps people become more self-sufficient and financially secure. The reason I bring up Gloria and her willingness to volunteer, see, I think that happens to be the strength of the country, the fact that there are fellow citizens who love a neighbor just like they'd like to be loved themselves.

Oftentimes, America is described as being strong because of our military—we'll keep our military strong—or we're described as being a strong nation because we're wealthy compared to other nations. And that's good, by the way. It's better to be a wealthy nation than a poor nation. But nevertheless, that's not our strength. Our strength lies in the hearts and souls of our citizens. Our strength in America exists because there are people like Gloria who are willing to take time out of their life to help somebody.

My call to our fellow citizens is to love your neighbor like you'd like to be loved yourself. Mentor a child. Put your arm around somebody who hurts. Find shelter for the homeless, food for the hungry. All of us working together can change America, one soul at a time. Gloria, thank you for the example you set.

Let me walk through the last little bit of history so that when I make my point that we've overcome challenges, you'll understand the challenges that we have overcome. First of all, the stock market began to decline in March of 2000. That matters, by the way, if you're concerned about savings and you own stocks. In other words, the psychology of the country began to get affected when people started opening up their accounts of their portfolios and noticed that their worth was diminishing. A lot of people who retired noticed their worth was diminishing. Pension funds—if you run a 401(k), you noticed that things were changing.

And then the country headed into a recession in early 2001. A recession means we're going backwards, not forwards. A recession is negative growth for three quarters. If you ask any business leader here, they can tell you what it's like to try to manage during a recession. There's uncertainty. Your workers are getting anxious. Sometimes you had to lay people off. A recession is tough for a country to handle. It's a challenge. The challenge is how do you come out of the recession. We passed tax cuts, which I'm going to talk about in a minute, which made the recession one of the shallowest in our Nation's history.

But then we had another challenge shortly thereafter, and that is an enemy attacked us. We weren't thinking about attacks in

the scale of which they attacked us. It was a new thought for America. After all, most of us baby boomers grew up thinking that oceans would protect us forever. It changed our way of thinking. The attack means that anybody in a position like I'm in must deal with threats before they materialize. That's one of the lessons of September the 11th. We just can't sit back and hope that oceans protect us now. We must take every threat seriously.

It also affected our economy. It hurt us economically. We lost a million jobs shortly after the attacks of September the 11th, and that hurt. Remember, we had to shut down the stock market. Airplanes weren't getting up in the air. It affected us; it just affected us. And yet, we're a strong nation who refused to be terrorized. We refused to give in to the terrorists.

We resolved as a nation that we would do everything we can to protect our homeland. But the best way to protect the homeland is to chase the terrorists down and bring them to justice, which is precisely what we're doing.

I laid out a doctrine that said, "If you harbor a terrorist, you're just as guilty as the terrorist." By the way, when the President says something, you better mean it. It turns out in this job—I, of course, meant it. And the Taliban found out what we meant. They didn't yield, and so I unleashed a great United States military. I did so to uphold the doctrine. We wiped out the ability for the terrorists to use Afghanistan as a training facility.

We also liberated people, liberated about 25 million people from the clutches of one of the most barbaric regimes in the history of mankind, so barbaric—[*applause*]. Now the country is changing. There's women's rights. There's equality under the law. Young girls now go to school, many for the first time ever, thanks to the United States and our coalition of liberators.

We started to recover from September the 11th. The resolve of the country, by the way, is incredible when tested. It's a nation of people of deep character. Perhaps it's because we've got a lot of people of deep faith in our country.

But we discovered shortly thereafter that there were some of our citizens who must have not been raised right, because they didn't tell the truth. There was corporate scandals in America that betrayed the trust. When somebody betrays the trust in our world, it can affect confidence. I mean, if you're not sure whether or not the accountants are telling the truth, it's hard to invest. These corporate wrongdoers cost people their jobs, cost a lot of people their savings. It affected our psychology. We had to overcome the hurdle.

We passed tough laws, by the way, in Washington, and now the message is very clear: We will not tolerate wrongdoing in the boardrooms of America; we will hold you to account if you lie or cheat. But we overcame that.

As I mentioned to you, it's important for this country never to forget the lessons of September the 11th, and that is, when we see a threat, we must deal with it before it fully materializes. That's one of the clear lessons of that horrible day in our history. I looked at intelligence from Iraq and saw a threat. The United States Congress looked at the same intelligence, and the Members of Congress saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence, and it saw a threat. And so, in the fall of 2002, I went to the United Nations Security Council and said, "We all see a threat. Let's come together and deal with the threat. Let's say to Mr. Saddam Hussein, 'You have one final chance to disclose and disarm, for the sake of peace and security.' "

A lot of people remembered that he was a person that had used weapons of mass destruction on his own people. He's a person that had terrorized the neighborhood. He's a person that was paying suiciders to kill innocent citizens. He's the person that tortured people. He's the person that had rape rooms. He's the person that had mass

graves. He was a threat. Saddam Hussein once again chose defiance, and so I had a choice to make: Do I trust the word of a madman, or do I take action to defend America. Given that choice, I will defend our country every time.

This is an historic time. We're going to get it right in Iraq. Iraq will emerge as a free society.

I'll tell you a very interesting story. I was having Kobe beef with Prime Minister Koizumi from Japan. Laura and I were over there, and by the way, she sends her greetings. She's a great First Lady, I might add. Very interesting conversation, because we're talking about how we should work together to deal with Mr. Kim Chong-il and the nuclear weapons program on the Korean Peninsula. In other words, we were working together on a common threat. It dawned on me in the midst of the conversation, had we not gotten the post-World War II peace right, an American President and a Japanese Prime Minister wouldn't be talking about how to deal with a common threat. It also dawned on me during the course of the conversation that when we get it right in Iraq, some day an American President will be talking to an elected President or Prime Minister of a country in the heart of the Middle East, talking about how to deal with the threats of a future generation.

These are historic times. A free and democratic Iraq will change the world.

It's a hard job in Iraq. After all, there are terrorists who want to stop the progress of liberty. And there's a reason: They understand that a free society is not in their interests; a free society is a peaceful society; a free society is one that will put the conditions of terrorism out of business. That's why we love freedom in America. See, the other thing I believe in, I believe that freedom is not America's gift to the world. I believe freedom is the Almighty's gift to each man and woman in this world.

On your TV screens, starting in 2002, were the words "March to War." I don't know if you remember that. That's not conducive for creating jobs. Think about what it means, "March to War." It's a negative thought. One of the hurdles we had to overcome was the business about going to war. If you're trying to plan your future, whether you're an employer or employee, you're not going to be all that optimistic, thinking that your country's marching to war. We're now marching to peace. We've overcome that hurdle.

We've overcome four major hurdles, when you think about it. People say, "How can you be so optimistic about our country?" And the answer is, "Because I've seen what we've come through." And guess what? Our economy is growing. Interest rates are low. Inflation is low. Homeownership rates are the highest in history. More people are owning their home. There is a minority homeownership gap in America, but now more minorities own a home than ever before, which is incredibly positive. When people own something, they have a vital stake in the future of this country. Manufacturing activity is up. The unemployment rate today is lower than the average rate in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. We've overcome a lot.

Wisconsin is helping lead the growth of this country. Farms, factories, and offices are shipping high-quality goods all across America and all throughout the world. The State's unemployment rate is down from a year ago, below the national average, I might add. The economy is on a path of growth because we acted.

You see, the role of Government is not to create wealth but to create an environment that encourages economic vitality and growth, is to create the grounds for the entrepreneurial spirit to flourish. That's the role of Government. And that's why I went to Congress and said, "Listen, we've got problems, economic problems, and the best way to deal with those problems is let people keep more of their own money." When a person has more of her own money, she demands an additional good or a service.

And the way our economy works, somebody will meet that new demand for a good or a service by producing a good or a service. And when somebody produces a good or a service, somebody is more likely to keep a job or find work. That's the way the economy works. The tax relief came at just the right time.

We also accomplished some other objectives in the tax relief. Remember, I argued that if we're going to provide tax relief, let's provide it for everybody who pays taxes, so that Government is not in the business of picking winners and losers when it comes to tax relief. The fairest way to deal with tax relief is to say, "If you pay taxes, you get relief."

We also increased the child credit to $1,000 per child. By the way, that's very helpful if you happen to be a mom or a dad. We reduced the marriage penalty. My question to the Congress is, what kind of Tax Code is it that penalizes marriage? We ought to be encouraging marriage. After-tax incomes in America have been lifted by 8.4 percent since the end of 2000. People have got more money, and it's making a big difference.

I also want you to know I understand job creation. Seventy percent of all new jobs are created by small businesses. It seems like, if that's the case and you're worried about somebody finding work, you want to make sure the small-business agenda is vibrant and foremost on our agenda. And it is. Because, you see, most small businesses are Subchapter S or sole proprietorships. I see a lot of people nodding their heads. A sole proprietorship or Subchapter S corporation means that the business pays tax at the individual income tax. And if you're paying tax at the individual income tax as a small business and all taxes get reduced, small businesses have got more money to invest and to expand.

We also provided incentives for capital investment. We raised the amount of the limit to $100,000 from $25,000 that the small business can deduct for new capital expenditures. What I'm telling you is, is that small business is a direct beneficiary of the tax plan that we passed. It's an integral part of making sure that the environment for the entrepreneurial spirit is just right.

Another way to make sure the entrepreneurial spirit is strong is to get rid of the death tax. The death tax is a bad tax. A lot of farmers want to leave their farm to their family and not to the Government. A lot of small-business owners are dreaming big dreams, not only because they want to help somebody find a job but they also want to leave their business to whomever they choose. The problem with the death tax is, they tax you while you're alive, and then they tax you again after you die. And that doesn't seem fair. And a lot of people who own a small business or a farm, in order to pay the death tax, have to liquidate their assets in order to do so, which means it is impossible to pass your assets on, in many cases, to whomever you choose. Congress wisely put the death tax on its way to extinction, for the good of the entrepreneurial spirit here in America.

This economy is going through a fundamental change. We're growing, which is great. One of the reasons we're growing is because we're incredibly productive. You've heard about productivity increases. That means one worker that used to be able to produce 5 units can now produce 15 units. That's what productivity means. A productive society is a society that will generate more wealth, and that's very positive. In other words, the more productive you are, the wealthier your society becomes. A productive society means America will remain more competitive, will be able to expand and grow, not only internally but externally, because if you're a productive company here in America, you have a better chance to compete. And remember, our system is based upon competition. If you're a productive company in America, you have a better chance to compete with companies overseas.

It's a fact that the more productive you are as a worker, the better you get paid. But the problem is, as I mentioned, many companies are able to fill new orders and don't have the—don't have a need to expand because they're more productive. In other words, it's possible to grow our economy and not have people find new jobs. And that's a problem we face today for some workers.

This is called a period of transition. That's an economist's word for things aren't going too well for you. [*Laughter*] And I understand that. I understand that people are worried about the job they have. They're worried about whether their children can stay close to home where they were raised and find work. A productive society is positive in many ways, but for the worker who needs new skills, it's not so positive in the short term.

So we have got to do something about it. We've got to deal with the economy the way it is. Many people are working, and more and more people are working. But there are some who, frankly, feel like they're being left behind, and that's not right. The role of Government is more than just providing unemployment insurance; it's to provide a sound strategy to make sure our economy continues to grow and people find the skills necessary to be productive employees in the 21st century. Those are the challenges we face.

Some in our Nation's Capital respond a little differently than I will. They want to increase Federal spending dramatically. The problem with that plan is somebody has to pay for it, and that somebody is going to be you. That's who will pay for it. In order to pay for more spending, you'll hear the language "tax on the rich." When you start raising income-tax rates up, you're raising on small businesses. If the tax relief helps small businesses, the corollary to that is that when you raise those taxes, it means small businesses are going to pay. If 70 percent of the new jobs are created by small businesses, it makes absolutely no sense to be taking money out of their coffers to expand the role of the Federal Government.

Tax and spend is the enemy of job creation. Taxing and spending in excessive amounts in Washington, DC, is not creating an environment for the entrepreneurial spirit to flourish. Quite the contrary. It will diminish demand. It will make it difficult for people to start their own businesses and to expand.

There's another issue we're facing as well in the Nation's Capital. That's whether or not we're going to build walls around America, whether we're going to isolate ourselves from the world. I call it "economic isolationism." When you hear people talk about, "Let us reconsider free trade agreements," what they're really saying is, is that perhaps we ought to wall ourself off from the rest of the world. See, I think that would be absolutely wrong for America to be so pessimistic about our ability to compete that we've become economic isolationists, that we erect barriers to trade, that we're so—that we lack confidence, that we say to our farmers and ranchers, our entrepreneurs that we don't think you can compete. See, I believe just the opposite. I believe this Nation can compete anywhere, anytime, anyplace, so long as the rules are fair.

Look at it this way. America's got 5 percent of the world's population. That means there's 95 percent of the people out there that should be buying products that say "Made in the USA." It's important to understand that exports, the ability to sell overseas, to be able to make something here in Wisconsin and sell it elsewhere, is an important part of your economy. Dairy farmers are selling their goods overseas.

I read this, and I wasn't quite sure—it says that Wisconsin cheese is being sold in France. [*Laughter*] That's a good cheese. Oshkosh Truck sells overseas. Harley Davidson sells overseas. Wisconsin exports last

year were worth $11.5 billion. See, Wisconsin is making products the world wants to buy. Wisconsin's exports to Canada rose last year. Exports to Mexico rose. Exports to China rose fourfold in the last 4 years. In other words, people are finding jobs here in Wisconsin because they're helping make products that people want in other countries. Exports equal jobs. It's important for people to understand that.

Nationwide, 97 percent of all U.S. exporters are small and medium-sized businesses. You know, a lot of folks say, "Exports—you got to be a big guy to be able to export." No, there's a lot of small-business owners and entrepreneurs and medium-sized businesses that are making products, goods, and services, that people want. An important part of our economy is the small-business sector, as I told you. Companies with fewer than 20 employees make up nearly 70 percent of all U.S. exporting firms. So when you hear the talk about, "Let's wall off America from the rest of the world," I want you to remember that we're talking about walling off small businesses from opportunities—opportunities to sell a product and, therefore, opportunities to eventually hire somebody.

The other thing it's important for people to understand is that foreign companies recognize how great the U.S. workforce is. I mean, we're very good at what we do. We've got fantastic workers here in America, incredibly productive people. And therefore, there's a lot of foreign-owned companies that are interested in bringing their business here. A hundred thousand workers in Wisconsin work for foreign-owned companies, half of them in manufacturing. Fiskars Brands employs U.S. workers. It's a Finnish company. Kikkoman Foods, they make soy sauce. They employ U.S. personnel.

In other words, when you hear about trade, just remember, trade means selling product overseas, but it also means welcoming foreign capital here in the United States to employ people, so they can find work. It's an important part of the equation to know that confident trade policy not only means the sale of goods, but confident trade policy means people want to set up their plants here.

I was in Greer, South Carolina, at a BMW plant selling BMWs into Germany. We've got great workers in America. We ought not to be fearful of the future. We ought to be confident of our capacity to compete.

And so, the question is, what do we do about trade policy? And that's what I want to spend a little time talking about. Five—for five decades, Presidents have made the decision that U.S. markets should be open, for the good of our consumers. In other words, when there's competition, it generally means better price. Other markets haven't been open to U.S. goods. So it seems like to me, the logical thing to do, rather than shutting down our own market, which will hurt consumers and hurt opportunity, is to spend time opening up other people's markets. And so when you hear me talk about negotiating trade agreements, really what we're doing is leveling the playing field. What we're really doing is make sure America has a chance to compete on the same terms that people can sell into our market.

And if they don't respond, there's some things we can do. See, if we say, "Our market is open, and yours isn't, so open yours up," rather than shutting ours down and creating trade wars which will jeopardize jobs, make it harder for small business to exist, there are things we can do. For example, we filed the first World Trade Organization case against China because of their unfair tax policy. We got Canada to stop exporting subsidized dairy products into the United States. We won a major international case against Mexico's telecommunications barriers. In other words, this administration is not going to—refuses to accept the doctrine of economic isolationism but instead says, "We'll use the

tools necessary to make sure that the playing field is level."

Japan is buying American apples. If you're an apple grower, that's good news. India is buying American almonds. My point is, not only are we focused on industries like the semiconductor industry, we want people buying U.S. farm products too. We're good at growing things here in the United States.

Open trade means fair trade. It means that the buyer and the seller—that if we're a buying nation, it means the selling nation must open its markets too. That's what I'm talking about. It's important to be confident here in America because we're good at what we do, and our policies ought to reflect that.

A lot of talk about jobs going overseas. There's a lot of uncertainty in the marketplace for some people looking for work. I understand that—I understand that. But the best way to deal with that in my judgment is to make sure America remains the best place in the world to do business so that our job base will expand. The more vibrant the small-business sector, the more likely it is somebody's going to find work. The more vibrant the business sector, the more likely it is jobs will stay right here at home. That's what people have got to understand.

Let me talk real quick about some things we need to do. We need to stop harassing small-business owners and entrepreneurs with endless amounts of regulation and paperwork. I know there's a lot of Federal forms. My problem is, I can't guarantee that they're ever read.

Secondly, like you, I'm concerned about the rising costs of health care. It's an issue for consumers. It's an issue for employers. If you talk to small-business owners, they're concerned about being able to provide their employees with a good package for health care. There are some things we can do. One thing we must not do is turn over the health care industry to the Federal Government. There's a philosophical tug-of-war in Washington, DC. I believe the Federal Government would make matters worse. I believe the marketplace and empowering consumers will make matters better.

One way we can control health care costs is to allow small businesses to share risk through association health care plans. In other words, big companies are able to pool risk because they've got a lot of employees over which they can spread risk. Small businesses don't have that advantage. I believe small businesses ought to be able to pool risk across jurisdictional boundary to get the same benefits, the same economies of purchase, that big businesses get.

We passed a new aspect to health care, which I think a lot of small-business owners and employees will find very interesting. They're called health savings accounts. This is the opportunity for people to put money into a health savings account tax-free, earn money tax-free, withdraw it tax-free to meet certain health care costs, and then any major medical or larger health care costs are covered by a catastrophic plan. Now, what this does is it puts the consumer back in charge of health care decisions, as opposed to bureaucracies or Government. What it also does is it helps control the cost of health care. If you look into it as a small-business employer, I think you'll find it is an imaginative way to help your employees have affordable health care.

The other thing we need to do in order to make sure we hold the cost of health care down is to have medical liability reform at the Federal level. There's too many junk lawsuits that are running up the cost of medicine. A lot of docs practice defensive medicine because they're afraid of getting sued. But guess who pays? Small-business owners and employees, that's who pays. A lot of docs are tired of getting sued, so they're moving out. Maybe it's happened in your community. That means not only is the cost of medicine going up, the cost of health care going up, but there's fewer docs available to practice their trade.

Listen, if you get hurt, you ought to have your day in court. But the system in many places looks like a lottery, and there's only one winner, and those are the trial lawyers who sue and sue and sue.

We need other tort reform to make sure America's a good place to do business so jobs stay at home. We're close to getting a reform on class-action lawsuits. Perhaps some of you have been caught up in these class-actions lawsuits. It's—again, sometimes it's a gravy train, not for those who are the plaintiffs but the people representing the plaintiffs. We're close, but the trial bar is tough in Washington, DC. They're able to hold up a lot of stuff in the United States Senate, which is discouraging, because good tort reform will make it easier for people to find a job here at home, will make sure the environment for the entrepreneurs is good and strong.

There's another thing we need to do here in America. Look, if you're a manufacturer in Wisconsin, you need to make sure you've got energy so you can manufacture your product. We have a problem in America because we don't have an energy plan. It doesn't make much sense when you're a giant nation like ours not to have an energy plan, but we can't get it out right now. It's stuck. I'm calling upon the House and the Congress to reconcile their differences and get an energy plan on my desk that will encourage—to my desk that will encourage clean coal technology so we can burn coal, a plentiful supply, in a clean way, so that we can encourage more exploration of natural gas.

Natural gas is absolutely vital for many manufacturers here in Wisconsin. You've got to have energy in order to make sure your business is viable. We need to modernize our electricity system. We got a wake-up call last summer when parts of our country were shocked by a rolling blackout. If you're a businessowner and you're trying to expand your business, if you're trying to make a product and if you're worried about whether or not you're going to get any power, it's very difficult to be optimistic about your future. We need to encourage conservation. What we need is an energy plan so we're less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

We're debating a highway bill right now in Congress. I look forward to signing a 6-year bill without raising your gas taxes. We don't need to be raising the Federal gas tax. Gas taxes would hurt the economy. There are some in the other party in Washington who would like to raise gas taxes. I think it would be wrong. I think it would be damaging to the economy, not positive to the economy.

Also, speaking about highways, the Nation must stay on the leading edge of technology. I want to make sure broadband technology is available for every home in America by the year 2007, and that, shortly thereafter, there's adequate competition so consumers get to choose. There's nothing like choice, by the way, if you're a consumer, to make sure that a product stays reasonably priced. And there are ways to do that.

We ought not to tax access to broadband at the United States—in the United States Congress. And we've got to make sure that the regulatory environment is conducive to making sure broadband extends throughout America. There's some practical things we can do. But for America to be competitive, to make sure jobs stay at home, we've got to stay on the leading edge of technological change. And the broadband technology is going to be—it's going to be just amazing. It's going to be amazing for small-business owners. It's going to be amazing for people who work out of their home and are productive citizens. It's going to be amazing for education opportunities. It's going to be amazing for health care. We need it, and we need to get it out as quickly as possible in a price-sensitive way for the consumers.

Finally, these tax cuts that I'm talking about are set to expire. Congress giveth, and the Congress taketh away. [*Laughter*]

And if you're a small-business owner, it's hard to plan for your future if you're uncertain about your tax liabilities. If you're wondering whether or not the tax—taxes that—tax relief today is going to be taken away, it is not good for planning. People who plan need to have a steady environment, not an unpredictable environment.

It's also not good if you're a mom or a dad raising your child to be paying more taxes right now. And if Congress doesn't make the child credit permanent, it means it's a tax increase on somebody with a child. If you're married, that marriage penalty is going back up unless Congress makes the tax relief permanent. If you are in the 10-percent bracket, it means that bracket is going to become squeezed if Congress doesn't make the tax cuts permanent. For the sake of job creation, for the sake of keeping jobs here at home, we need to make the tax cuts a permanent part of our Tax Code.

Now that I've got you stuck here—[*laughter*]—we're going to talk about education right quick. A economy which is changing, an economy in transition, is an economy that better make sure people are educated to take advantage of the new jobs being created. In a lot of parts of our country, there are jobs going begging because people don't have the skills necessary to fill them. In some older industries, jobs are not as prevalent as some of the new industries. Nurses, for example—there's a nursing shortage. We've got to make sure people get the skills necessary to be able to fill the new jobs.

We can't make somebody say—decide to go to work. That's in their mind. But we darn sure can help somebody get the skills necessary to take advantage of the jobs which are being created. We can help somebody become a more productive citizen. Remember, higher productivity for a worker means better wages.

And I've got some plans to do so. It starts, by the way, by making sure every child can read and write and add and subtract. We passed a good law in Washington. It's called the No Child Left Behind Act. The principles behind that law are, one, we trust local people to make the right decisions for the communities in which they live when it comes to their public schools. But for the first time, the Federal Government is asking the question, are we getting any return for our money we're spending? It's called accountability. It means that—[*applause*].

We've increased the Title I or elementary and secondary school budget by 49 percent since 2001, which is good. But as importantly, we've started to say to the State of Wisconsin, "Measure, so we can determine whether or not it's working." How can you tell whether or not things are going well in the education system if you don't measure? You can't. And guess what happens in a system that doesn't measure? Kids just get shuffled through. And guess who gets shuffled through? The so-called hard-to-teach. That would be low-income, inner-city, African Americans, parents who may not speak English as a first language. It's easy to quit on those kids. "Just going to move them through." What accountability says is that we're tired of moving kids through. We're going to challenge the soft bigotry of low expectations. We believe every child can learn.

Things are improving around the country because we are holding people to account. By the way, the accountability system is not to punish anybody. It's to determine whether or not the curriculum is working. It's to make sure that the methodology makes sense. It's also to catch problems early and correct them before it's too late. There are some problems that are almost too late. We've got plans to help junior high and high school kids learn the basics of reading and math before it is too late—very good intervention programs.

But one of the things I'm most excited about is using our community college system. We've got a great strategy to make

sure the community college system is a vibrant part of job training programs all across America. I hope you've got a good community college system here. The definition of a good system, by the way, is one that is flexible and open-minded, so that when employers come and say, "These are the kinds of people we need to hire," that the curriculum changes and actually trains people for the jobs which exist.

There's nothing like the Chamber of Commerce being able to say, "We've got a fantastic community college system here. If you move your business here, the community college will make sure—will help train people for the jobs you need." A more productive worker is a worker that's going to make more money.

I remember going to Mesa Community College and met a woman there that was a graphic design artist. I think she'd been one for 15 years. She got a scholarship—and by the way, there's money available to help people go back to school. She got a scholarship to go back to the community college, and she took a technical course. Upon graduation, which—I can't remember the exact number of months it was, but it was a reasonable period of time—her starting job at Cable One paid her more than her 15th year as a graphic design artist.

That's the definition of becoming a more productive worker. If you increase your productivity by going back to school, it makes you obviously more employable for the jobs which exist, but it also raises your own standard of living. Education is a crucial part to make sure that jobs here in America stay home and that the job base can expand in a confident way.

So those are some reasonable things that the country needs to do: to stand with the people, not stand against them; to make sure that we unleash the great talent of America; to make sure that we capture the entrepreneurial spirit which makes this country so unique and such an exciting place for people to live; practical things to do to make sure jobs stay here at home and people can work and do their duty as a responsible citizen.

Let me conclude by telling—speaking about responsibility, I do think one of the interesting things that's happening in America is we are ushering in a period of personal responsibility, which stands in stark contrast to kind of an old culture which said, "If it feels good, do it," and, "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else." People in the country are beginning to understand that there is a—you're responsible for loving your children. If you're fortunate enough to be a mom or a dad, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart. If you're worried about the quality of the education in which you—in the community in which you live, you're responsible for doing something about it. Just don't hope for some magic response from a faraway Government. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you're responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And in this new responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourselves.

We've got a fabulous country. There's nothing we can't overcome. Thank you for coming today. May God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:35 a.m. at the Fox Cities Performing Arts Center. In his remarks, he referred to Bill Welch, president, Fox Cities Chamber of Commerce & Industry, who introduced the President; Mayor Tim Hanna of Appleton, WI; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan; and Chairman Kim Chong-il of North Korea.

Remarks to Wisconsin First-Responders in Appleton
March 30, 2004

Thank you very much. I was just looking for a salad. [*Laughter*] Thank you all for your welcome. Thanks for letting me barge in. Please sit down.

Ed, thanks for letting me come in to say something to our first-responders here in this State. First, I want to thank you for your service to our country. We're at war, and we better be ready on all fronts. And so the first-responder effort and the strategy with the local, State, and Federal government is really an important part of making sure that we do everything we can to do our solemn duty, which is to protect our fellow citizens from harm.

We've got a big and vast country, which makes the task particularly tough. So the best way to protect our citizens from harm is to find the enemy, bring them to justice, to get them before they try to get us. And that's exactly what the country is trying to—[*applause*].

We're on the hunt. There's a lot of really fine folks wearing this Nation's uniform that are making the world and America more safe and secure. If you happen to have a relative in the military, you thank them on behalf of the Commander in Chief for this job they're doing and for the sacrifice that they're making. This military of ours is fantastic. It's really got unbelievably capable people. My job is to make sure they get the best—the best equipment, the best training. Any time you put anybody in harm's way, we have a solemn duty to make sure that they're well-equipped. And there are a lot of good folks out there running them down right now, and that's exactly what this Government must do and will continue to do.

I am—I just came from giving a speech on the economy, but part of the challenges we face is—my job as the Commander in Chief is to provide people as direct assessment I can about the future of this country. And the problem we face right now is, we love freedom, and we're not going to change, and the people that we fight hate freedom. That's just the way it is.

I've always felt that September the 11th was going to be—the type of war that started that day was going to be the type of war that I constantly have to explain to the American people. It's going to be different. I suspect there's some old vets here. It's easy to find infantry and airplanes and a flotilla of ships. It's hard to find people that are so cold-blooded in their murder that they hide in caves and the dark corners of cities. But that's what we're going to do. We're going to find them.

The other thing is, is that you've just got to know that any time you see a threat, after September the 11th, you've got to take it seriously. It used to be that oceans would protect us, that we could say, "Well, there's a threat over here. We can deal with it if we feel like it, but we're protected by oceans." September the 11th taught us another lesson, that this Nation must always deal with threats before they fully materialize, that we've got to—in order to do our duty, in order for me to do mine as the Commander in Chief, if we see a threat, we'll take action of some kind. Obviously, the military option is the last option, not the first.

But I want to remind you that I saw a threat. I looked at the intelligence and saw a threat in Iraq. The United States Congress looked at the very same intelligence, and it saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence, and it saw a threat as well. We went back to the United Nations and said, "Look, this guy is a problem. He's a threat. He used gas on his own people. He used weapons of mass destruction on his own

people. He's a—we've got to take it seriously. September the 11th taught us a lesson." So we came together and said, "Look, get rid of your weapons, Mr. Saddam Hussein." He said, "No." So I was faced with a choice: Do I trust the word of a madman, or do I do my duty to defend America? And given that choice, I will defend our country every time.

We're living in historic times. It's a different kind of war, and all of us are called to do our part. And I want to thank you. I came by to thank—they said there's some people who are on the frontlines of helping us secure the country. I said, "I want to come by." I don't care about your politics. What I do care about is the fact that you're serving, and I wanted to come by and thank you for that. I want to thank you for doing everything you can to help somebody, to prepare our country. I just want you to know, I'm going to do my part too.

It's a fantastic country we have. It's a—it's been such an amazing experience to see the character of this Nation, a nation which refuses to buckle under to the threat of terrorism, a nation which showed incredible resolve, a nation in which firefighters were willing to rush into burning buildings to save their fellow citizens, a nation also which has got an incredible amount of compassion. You know what I'm talking about when I talk about people who are willing to love their neighbor just like they love themselves in the community in which you live. To me, that's the courage of the country which defines us, but it's also the heart of the country which defines us as well.

So thanks for letting me come by to say hi. I'm keeping office hours now, so I've got to head back—[*laughter*]—head back over yonder, as they say in Texas. [*Laughter*] But I, again, want to thank you for your service.

May God bless your work. May God bless your families, and may God continue to bless our great country. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:39 p.m. at the Radisson Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Ed Gleason, administrator, Wisconsin Emergency Management; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Remarks Announcing That National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice Will Provide Public Testimony to the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States

March 30, 2004

Today I have informed the Commission on Terrorist Attacks Against the United States that my National Security Adviser, Dr. Condoleezza Rice, will provide public testimony. I've also advised Chairman Kean and Vice Chairman Hamilton that Vice President Cheney and I will jointly meet with all members of the Commission in a private session.

This Commission has been charged with a crucial task. To prevent future attacks, we must understand the methods of our enemies. The terrorist threat being examined by the Commission is still present, still urgent, and still demands our full attention.

From the day the panel was created, I have directed executive branch agencies and members of my staff to cooperate with the Commission. Recognizing the exceptional nature of this inquiry, we have given Commission members access to relevant Presidential daily briefings, to my communications with foreign leaders, and to internal White House communications.

More than 800 members of the administration have been interviewed. More than 20 White House officials have met with the Commission or soon will do so. Dr. Rice herself has already met privately with the Commission for 4 hours. I've ordered this level of cooperation, because I consider it necessary to gaining a complete picture of the months and years that preceded the murder of our fellow citizens on September the 11th, 2001.

As the Commission has done its work, I've also been concerned, as has Dr. Rice, that an important principle be upheld: A President and his advisers, including his Adviser for National Security Affairs, must be able to communicate freely and privately without being compelled to reveal those communications to the legislative branch. This principle of the separation of powers is protected by the Constitution, is recognized by the courts, and has been defended by Presidents of both political parties. We have observed this principle while also seeking ways for Dr. Rice to testify, so that the public record is full and accurate.

Now the Commission and leaders of the United States Congress have given written assurances that the appearance of the National Security Adviser will not be used as precedent in the conduct of future inquiries. The leaders of Congress and the Commission agree—they agree with me that the circumstances of this case are unique, because the events of September the 11th, 2001, were unique. At my direction, Judge Gonzales has informed the Commission that Dr. Rice will participate in an open public hearing.

Our Nation must never forget the loss or the lessons of September the 11th, and we must not assume that the danger has passed. The United States will confront gathering dangers to our freedom and security. The Commission knows its responsibility to collect vital information and to present it to the American people. And I know my responsibility as well to act against the continuing threat and to protect the American people. I have made that pledge to my fellow citizens, and I will keep it.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:46 p.m. in the James S. Brady Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Thomas H. Kean, Chairman, and Lee H. Hamilton, Vice Chairman, National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States (9/11 Commission); and Counsel to the President Alberto R. Gonzales.

Remarks Honoring Members of the National Baseball Hall of Fame
March 31, 2004

Thank you all for coming. Laura and I are honored and thrilled that you're here. We have a fair amount of lunches and dinners here, and I've got a confession to make. This is my favorite one. [*Laughter*] It's kind of like having your baseball card collection spread out in real life. [*Laughter*]

Some of you were here the last time we invited the Hall of Famers here. It was one of the first lunches we had. It's when I discovered that one of the best parts about living in the White House is that when you invite somebody for lunch, they generally come. [*Laughter*]

We're glad you're back. Vice President Cheney is with us. Mr. Vice President, thank you for coming. Secretary of Energy Spence Abraham is with us. He's a Tiger fan, I believe, if I'm not mistaken.

We've got a great Hall—lot of Hall of Famers. One that I work with on a regular basis, of course, is Senator Jim Bunning.

Mr. Senator, thank you for being with us today.

I want to thank Jane Forbes Clark, the chairman of the Hall of Fame, appreciate you being here, Jane. Dale Petroskey, thank you for being here, Dale, as well. He is the president of the Hall of Fame.

All the Hall of Famers, we're glad you're here. And thanks for bringing family members too. You're welcome to the people's house.

I appreciate the ESPN Baseball Tonight folks who are here, Joe, Tim, and Peter. That's where I get my news. [*Laughter*] They do a great job of making—bringing baseball into our homes.

My Chief of Staff is here, by the way, Andy Card. He is a long-suffering Red Sox fan. I'm glad you're here. George Will is here as well—long-suffering Cubs fan. But welcome, everybody.

I particularly want to congratulate Paul Molitor and Dennis Eckersley, who will be the newest members of the Hall of Fame. Thank you all for coming. We're honored you're here, and congratulations. And Ozzie Smith and Gary Carter and Eddie Murray took your rightful place amongst some of the game's greatest players. We welcome you here as well. Thanks for coming, honored you're here, and congratulations.

I can't wait for the baseball season to open. You know, some people, like when they go up to relax, will have the symphony on. I have a baseball game on. I like to do my—prepare for the next day, and my background noise is a baseball game. I'm really looking forward to it. And it's a great way for us to kick off the season here in Washington is have some of the greatest players ever to come and help us kick off baseball.

It's such a wonderful sport. There aren't any time limits, which means you can go and enjoy yourself. It's a great place to go and relax. It's a wonderful place to visit with somebody you love. It's an important part of our history. And we love to herald it here. We love to herald it so much that one of my favorite things to do is to host tee-ball on the South Lawn, so that future Hall of Famers can come and say to one of their classmates, "I love baseball, and I got to play at the White House." [*Laughter*]

One of the traditions, of course, is for the President to throw out the opening pitch for baseball. I'm going to do so for the Cards. I was talking to Phil Niekro coming in. My arm is a little sore. [*Laughter*] I was getting suggestions on how to throw a knuckler. [*Laughter*]

I also know that a former pitcher for the American Legion team in Casper, Wyoming, will also be throwing out an opening day pitch in Cincinnati. That would be your Vice President. He suggested that they not pull out the radar gun. [*Laughter*]

You know, I love the game of baseball. I grew up loving baseball. It's a sport that's passed down from dad to son, in my case—actually, my mother used to keep score for the Yale Bulldogs. I happened to be 1½ years old when she was keeping score for the Yale Bulldogs. So both my parents passed on the love of baseball. I played Little League baseball in Midland, Texas. It's where I peaked. [*Laughter*] I actually played for the Midland Cubs—except, unlike Ernie Banks, I was not known as "Mr. Cub." [*Laughter*] I was known as an all-right catcher.

I think one of the wonderful things about being with Hall of Famers is you set such high standards for other players, as you've set the stage of excellence. I know there's a lot of players who are getting ready to start the opening season that long to be sitting here in the White House like you are. You've set such a high mark of how to be excellent in a grueling sport, in a sport that requires not only incredible skill but a lot of patience. It's a marathon, not a sprint. And you've set the standard, and we're proud to have the standard-setters here in the greatest house on the face of the Earth, the people's house, the White House.

Thanks for coming. May God bless you and your families, and may God continue to bless our great country. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:25 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to ESPN broadcasters Joe Morgan, Tim Kurkjian, and Peter Gammons; and columnist George Will.

Remarks at a Bush-Cheney Dinner
March 31, 2004

Thank you all very much. Thanks for coming. Thank you all. Alex, thank you very much. I didn't realize you were such a good orator. [*Laughter*]

I wasn't Alex's first choice to speak tonight. His request was that Laura come to be the key speaker. Alex is a man of good judgment. So am I, by asking Laura to marry me. She's a fabulous wife and a great First Lady. She sends her love. I think Laura deserves 4 more years as the First Lady.

Laura will be out campaigning with me, and so will Dick Cheney. Our country has had no finer Vice President than Dick Cheney. Mother heard me say that the other day, and she said, "Now, wait a minute." [*Laughter*] No, I'm proud of the Vice President. He's doing a fabulous job.

And I want to thank you all for supporting this ticket, and thanks for coming tonight. This is a huge turnout. Alex said, "Why don't you come by. I may have a few friends here"—[*laughter*]—"a few Greek Americans might show up."

And Manny, thank you as well. I appreciate you and Alex working so hard to make this a spectacular event. I want to thank my friend Mercer Reynolds, who is the national finance chairman for Bush-Cheney. He's a business guy who has taken time out of his life to help. I thank my friends Jim Langdon and Julie Finley for being the Washington, DC, finance cochairmen. Manny and Alex have helped the DC finance cochairmen meet their goals, for which we are grateful.

I want to thank Congressman Mike Bilirakis from the great State of Florida, for joining us. Congressman Jim Greenwood is with us today, from the great State of Pennsylvania. Thanks for coming, Jim. Jerry Kilgore, the attorney general from Virginia, is with us today. The Lieutenant Governor of the great State of Maryland, Michael Steele, is with us today. I really appreciate you all being here.

I finally got an opponent. The campaign season has arrived. My opponent is an experienced Senator, and he's built up quite a record. In fact, he's been in Washington long enough to take both sides of just about every issue. Senator Kerry voted for the PATRIOT Act. He voted for NAFTA. He voted for No Child Left Behind, and he voted for the use of force in Iraq. Now he opposes the PATRIOT Act, NAFTA, No Child Left Behind, and the liberation of Iraq. He feels strongly about these issues. [*Laughter*] If he could find a third side, I imagine he'd take that one too. [*Laughter*]

It's going to be an interesting campaign. Someone asked Senator Kerry why he had voted against the $87 billion funding bill to help our troops in Iraq. And here's what he said, "I actually did vote for the $87 billion before I voted against it." [*Laughter*] Clears things up, doesn't it? [*Laughter*]

The voters this year are going to have a clear, unmistakable choice. It's a choice between the tax relief that is moving this economy forward or putting the burden of higher taxes back on the American people.

It is a choice between an America that leads the world with confidence and strength or an America that is uncertain in the face of danger. I look forward to this campaign. I look forward to the debate. I look forward to reminding the American people that in the last 3 years, we've accomplished great things. And I look forward—and most importantly, I look forward to laying out a positive vision for the years ahead, a positive vision for winning the war against terror and extending peace and freedom throughout the world, a positive vision for creating jobs and promoting opportunity and compassion here at home. I will leave no doubt where we stand, and we are going to win on the 2d of November.

The last 3 years have brought serious challenges, and we've given serious answers. When we came to office, the stock market was in decline and our economy was headed into recession. We delivered historic tax relief, and now our economy is the fastest growing of any major industrialized nation in the world.

We had to confront corporate crimes that cost people their jobs and their savings, so we passed strong corporate reforms, and we made it clear that we will not tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America.

We saw war and grief arrive on a quiet September morning, so we pursued the terrorist enemy across the world. We've captured or killed many key leaders of the Al Qaida network, and the rest of them will learn there is no cave or hole deep enough to hide from American justice.

We confronted the dangers of state-sponsored terror and the spread of weapons of mass destruction, so we ended two of the most violent and dangerous regimes on Earth. We freed over 50 million people, and once again America is proud to lead the armies of liberation.

When Dick Cheney and I came to Washington, we found a military that was underfunded and underappreciated, so we gave our military the resources they deserve. And today, no one can question the skill, the strength, and the spirit of the United States military.

It is the President's job to confront problems, not to pass them on to future Presidents and future generations. A President needs to step up, to make hard decisions, to keep his commitments, to speak clearly, and that is exactly how I will continue to lead our great country.

Great events will turn on this election. The man who sits in the Oval Office will set the course of the war on terror and the direction of our economy. Security and the prosperity of America are at stake. The other side hadn't offered much in the ways of strategy to win the war or policies to expand our economy. So far all we hear is old partisan rhetoric and bitterness. Anger and bitterness are not an agenda for the future of America.

I will take on the big issues, set big goals. With optimism, resolve, and determination, we stand ready to lead this Nation for 4 more years.

A big issue for every family in America is the Federal tax burden. With the largest tax relief since Ronald Reagan was President, we have left more money in the hands that earned it. By spending and investing and helping create new jobs, the American people have used their money far better than the Federal Government would have.

I'm optimistic about our future. I'm optimistic about our economy because I've seen the hard work of the American people. I understand the entrepreneurial spirit of this country. Because of good policies and because of that spirit, our economy is strong, and it is growing stronger. Economic growth in the second half of 2003 was the fastest in nearly 20 years. Manufacturing activity is increasing. Business investment is rising. Disposable income is up. Inflation is low. Interest rates are low. Homeownership is at the highest rate ever in American history. Job creation is gaining strength. We've added over 350,000 new jobs over

the last 6 months. The tax relief we passed is working.

My opponent has a different view of tax relief. When we passed an increase in the child credit to help families, he voted against it. When we reduced the marriage penalty, he voted against it. When we created a lower 10-percent rate for working families, he voted against it. When we reduced tax on dividends that many seniors depend upon, he voted against it. When we gave small businesses tax incentives to expand and hire, he voted against them. When we phased out the death tax, he voted against it. We're beginning to see a pattern here. [*Laughter*]

My opponent is one of the main opponents of tax relief in the United States Congress. But when tax increases are proposed, it's a lot easier to get a "yes" vote out of him. Over the years, he's voted over 350 times for higher taxes on the American people, including the biggest tax increase in American history. He supported higher gas taxes 11 times. He's favored a gas tax increase of 50 cents a gallon. That would cost you another $5 or more every time you fill up the tank. For that kind of money, at least he ought to offer a free car wash. [*Laughter*]

Senator Kerry is proposing a lot of new Government spending as well—about $1.7 trillion at last count—and the campaign is just getting started. He says he's going to pay for all this by raising taxes on the rich. To cover all of the spending, Senator Kerry would need to eliminate every single one of the tax reductions we passed as well as more tax increases. The marriage penalty would go back up. The child credit would go down. Taxes on many small businesses would rise. Even low-income people paying the 10-percent rate would see their taxes go up. I guess that's his idea of taxing the rich. It turns out, if you have a job, a child, or a dollar to spare, Senator Kerry thinks you're rich enough to pay more taxes. Fortunately, we're not going to give him that chance.

Higher taxes would undermine growth and destroy jobs, just as our economy is getting stronger. Raising taxes is lousy economic policy. To help grow the American economy and to create more jobs for our workers, I have a better idea. We should make the tax cuts permanent.

We must do more to keep this economy growing and to create jobs. We need to maintain spending discipline in the Nation's Capital. We need to protect small-business owners and employees from frivolous and junk lawsuits. We've laid out a plan to control the cost of health care and get people better access through association health care plans, tax-free health savings accounts. And we need to pass medical liability reform at the Federal level in order to hold down health care costs.

This country must never become isolated from the world. We must reject the pessimistic thoughts of the economic isolationists and knock down trade barriers and open up new markets around the world for our country's farmers and ranchers and entrepreneurs and manufacturers. I proposed a sound energy strategy, one that will modernize our electricity system and one that will make America less dependent on foreign sources of oil. The Congress needs to pass the energy bill.

You hear a lot of talk about job creation up here, but the other side is against every one of these job-creating measures. Empty talk about jobs and economic isolationism won't get anyone hired. The way to make sure this economy continues to grow is to reelect a pro-growth, pro-entrepreneur President, and that is George W. Bush.

Our future also depends on America's leadership in the world. The momentum of freedom in our time is strong, but we still face serious dangers. Al Qaida is wounded but not broken. Terrorists are testing our will in Afghanistan and Iraq. Regimes in North Korea and Iran are challenging the peace. If America shows weakness and uncertainty in this decade, the

world will drift toward tragedy. This will not happen on my watch.

This Nation is strong and confident in the cause of freedom, and today no friend or enemy doubts the word of the United States of America. America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Afghanistan. The Taliban chose defiance, and the Taliban are no longer in power. America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Iraq. The dictator chose defiance, and now the dictator sits in a prison cell.

September the 11th, 2001, taught a lesson I will never forget, a lesson this Nation must never forget: America must confront threats before they fully materialize. In Iraq, my administration looked at the intelligence information, and we saw a threat. Members of Congress looked at the intelligence, and they saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence, and it saw a threat. The previous administration and Congress looked at the intelligence and made regime change in Iraq the policy of this country.

In 2002, the U.N. Security Council yet again demanded a full accounting of Saddam Hussein's weapons programs. As he had for over a decade, Saddam Hussein refused to comply. So I had a choice to make: Either take the word of a madman or defend this country. Given that choice, I will defend America every time. [*Applause*] Thank you all.

My opponent admits that Saddam Hussein was a threat. He just didn't support my decision to remove Saddam from power. Maybe he was hoping Saddam would lose the next Iraqi election. [*Laughter*] We showed the dictator and a watching world that America means what it says. Because our coalition acted, Saddam's torture chambers are closed. Because we acted, Iraq's weapons programs are ended forever. Because we acted, nations like Libya have gotten the message and renounced their own weapons programs. Because we acted, an example of democracy is rising at the very heart of the Middle East. Because we acted, the world is more free, and because we acted, America is more secure.

We still face thugs and terrorists in Iraq who would rather go on killing the innocent than accept the advance of liberty, and there's a reason why. They know that a free Iraq will be a major defeat in the cause of terror. This collection of killers is trying to shake our will. America will never be intimidated by thugs and assassins. We are aggressively striking the terrorists in Iraq. We will defeat them there so we do not have to face them in our own country.

Other nations are helping. They're helping Iraq become a free society, because they understand what we in America know: The world will be a safer place with a free Iraq. We stand with the Iraqi people as they assume more of their own defense and move toward self-government. These are hard tasks, but they're necessary tasks. America will complete what we have begun, and we will win this essential victory in the war on terror.

On national security, Americans have the clearest possible choice. My opponent says he approves of bold action in the world but only if other countries don't object. I'm all for united action, and so are our 34 coalition partners in Iraq right now. Yet, America must never outsource America's national security decisions to the leaders of other countries.

Some are skeptical if the war on terror is really a war at all. My opponent said the war on terror is far less of a military operation and far more of an intelligence-gathering, law enforcement operation. I completely disagree. Our Nation followed this approach after the World Trade Center was bombed in 1993. The matter was handled in the courts and thought by some to be settled. But the terrorists were still training in Afghanistan. They were plotting in other nations. They were drawing up more ambitious plans. After the chaos and carnage of September the 11th, it is not

enough to serve our enemies with legal papers.

With those attacks, the terrorists and their supporters declared war on the United States of America, and war is what they got. Our men and women in the military are taking great risks, and they're doing great work. At bases across our country and the world, I have had the privilege of meeting with those who defend our country, sacrifice for our security. I've seen their great decency and unselfish courage. And I assure you, ladies and gentlemen, the cause of freedom is in good hands.

This Nation is prosperous and strong, yet we need to remember that our greatest strength is in the hearts and souls of our citizens. We're strong because of the values we try to live by, courage and compassion, reference and integrity. We're strong because of the institutions that give us direction and purpose, our families, our schools, and our religious congregations. These values and institutions are fundamental to our lives, and they deserve the respect of our Government.

We stand for the fair treatment of faith-based groups, so they can receive Federal support for the works of compassion and healing. We will not stand for Government discrimination against people of faith.

We stand for welfare reforms that require work and strengthen marriage, which have helped millions of Americans find independence and dignity. We will not stand for any attempt to weaken those reforms and to send people back into lives of dependence.

We stand for a culture of life in which every person counts and every person matters. We will not stand for the treatment of any life as a commodity to be experimented upon, exploited, or cloned.

We stand for the confirmation of judges who strictly and faithfully interpret the law. We will not stand for judges who undermine democracy by legislating from the bench or judges who try to remake the values of America by court order.

We stand for a culture of responsibility in America. We're changing the culture of this country from one that has said, "If it feels good, do it," and, "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each of us understands, we are responsible for the decisions we make in life. If you are fortunate enough to be a mother or a father, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart. If you're worried about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you're responsible for doing something about it. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you're responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And in this new responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourself.

For all Americans, these years in our history will always stand apart. There are quiet times in the life of a nation when little is expected of its leaders. This is not one of those times. You and I are living in a period when the stakes are high, the challenges are difficult, and the choices are clear. We live in a time when resolve is needed. None of us will ever forget that week when one era ended and another began.

On September the 14th, 2001, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers. I'll never forget that day. Workers in hardhats were shouting, "Whatever it takes." A guy pointed at me and said, "Don't let me down." As we all did that day, these men and women searching through the rubble took it personally. I took it personally. I have a responsibility that goes on. I will never relent in bringing justice to our enemies. I will defend the security of America, whatever it takes.

In these times, I've also been a witness to the character of this Nation. Not so long ago, some had their doubts about the American character, our capacity to meet serious challenges, or our willingness to serve a cause greater than self-interest. But

Americans have given their answer. I've seen the unselfish courage of our troops. I've seen the heroism of Americans in the face of danger. I've seen the spirit of service and compassion renewed in our country. We've all seen our Nation unite in common purpose when it mattered most.

We will need all these qualities for the work ahead. We have a war to win, and the world is counting on us to lead the cause of freedom and peace. We have a duty to spread opportunity to every part of this country. This is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it, and we know that for our country, the best days lie ahead.

May God bless you. Thank you for coming. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:30 p.m. at the Marriott Wardman Park Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Alex G. Spanos and Manuel N. Stamatakis, event cochairmen, Bush-Cheney '04, Inc.; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Remarks on Signing the Unborn Victims of Violence Act of 2004
April 1, 2004

Thank you for coming. Thank you all. Please be seated. Thanks for the warm welcome. [*Laughter*] Welcome to the people's house, the White House. I'm pleased that you all could be here for the first bill signing ceremony of the year 2004.

The Unborn Victims of Violence Act provides that, under Federal law, any person who causes death or injury to a child in the womb shall be charged with a separate offense, in addition to any charges relating to the mother. As of today, the law of our Nation will acknowledge the plain fact that crimes of violence against a pregnant woman often have two victims. And therefore, in those cases, there are two offenses to be punished. Under this law, those who direct violence toward a pregnant woman will answer for the full extent of the harm they have done and for all the crimes they have committed.

I appreciate Members of the United States Congress who have joined us today. Majority Leader Bill Frist is with us from the Senate. Thank you for coming. Majority Leader Tom DeLay of the House of Representatives, Members from both political parties have joined us. I appreciate the Members on stage here. House bill sponsor Congresswoman Melissa Hart from Pennsylvania is with us. Senate sponsor Senator Mike DeWine from Ohio is with us. And the chairmen of the Judiciary Committees, Senator Orrin Hatch and Congressman Jim Sensenbrenner, are with us as well. Thank you all. I appreciate those in attendance today from across the country who have worked hard to get this bill passed.

I also want to thank Sharon Rocha and her husband, Ron Grantski, for joining us today. This act of Congress addresses tragic losses such as Sharon and Ron have known. They have laid to rest their daughter Laci, a beautiful young woman who was joyfully awaiting the arrival of a new son. They have also laid to rest that child, a boy named Conner, who was waiting to be born when his life too was taken. His little soul never saw light, but he was loved, and he is remembered. And his name is forever joined with that of his mom in this statute, which is also known as Laci and Conner's law. All who knew Laci Peterson have mourned two deaths, and the law cannot look away and pretend there was just one.

Each of these families on this stage has lost a child or a grandchild or both. Carol and Buford Lyons, Tracy Marciniak-

Seavers, Stephanie Alberts, Cynthia Warner, I thank you all for your courage for coming today.

As these and the other families understand, any time an expectant mother is a victim of violence, two lives are in the balance, each deserving protection and each deserving justice. If the crime is murder and the unborn child's life ends, justice demands a full accounting under the law.

Until today, the Federal Criminal Code had been silent on the injury or death of a child in cases of violence against a pregnant woman. This omission in the law has led to clear injustices. The death of an innocent unborn child has too often been treated as a detail in one crime but not a crime in itself. Police and prosecutors had been to crime scenes and have shared the grief of families but have so often been unable to seek justice for the full offense. The American people as well have learned of these cases, and they urged action. The swift bipartisan passage of this bill through Congress this year indicates a strong consensus that the suffering of two victims can never equal only one offense.

The moral concern of humanity extends to those unborn children who are harmed or killed in crimes against their mothers. And now, the protection of Federal law extends to those children as well. With this action, we widen the circle of compassion and inclusion in our society, and we reaffirm that the United States of America is building a culture of life.

It is now my honor to sign the Unborn Victims of Violence Act of 2004.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:57 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. H.R. 1997, approved April 1, was assigned Public Law No. 108–212.

Remarks at a National Republican Congressional Committee Dinner
April 1, 2004

Thank you all very much. Thanks for the warm welcome. Whew! [*Laughter*] Go ahead and have a seat. Thank you. I am honored you all are here. I appreciate such a warm welcome. It's good to be with so many friends from the NRCC. By ensuring that we have a Republican majority in the House, you're helping our confident and hopeful agenda; that's what you're doing. You've had great success in the last couple of years. And all of us who represent the people are grateful for your hard work.

As a former House candidate—[*laughter*]—I have tremendous respect for anybody who runs for the Congress. My campaign back in 1978 in the 19th Congressional District didn't turn out the way I hoped. As a matter of fact, walking in here, I saw the guy who beat me. [*Laughter*] There he is. [*Laughter*] I had a great time, though. It was really an interesting campaign. I was campaigning right after Laura and I got married, so it was like an extended honeymoon. [*Laughter*] We learned a lot about each other as we drove across west Texas. Laura likes to say I even convinced her to vote for me. [*Laughter*] Unfortunately, I didn't convince enough people. [*Laughter*] I put my political career on hold for about 15 years, but I like to think things worked out all right.

This year, I'm looking forward to campaigning with a man who did win in his race for the Congress in 1978 and five times after that. Dick Cheney was a fine United States Congressman from Wyoming. He was by far the best Congressman from Wyoming. [*Laughter*] Dick Cheney is the finest Vice President our Nation has ever had, and I'm proud to have him on the

ticket with me. When Dick came to Congress, the House held 277 Democrats and only 158 Republicans. Things are a lot different today, and the country is better off for it.

Thanks to your generosity and hard work, we have a strong Republican majority. And with your help, we intend to increase the Republican majority in 2004. Mr. Speaker, I can't tell you what a joy it is to work with you. Denny Hastert is solid as a rock. He's a man of his word. He's a kind and decent person. He's a man of enormous accomplishment. Denny Hastert needs to remain the Speaker of the House of Representatives for the good of the country.

I wasn't Denny's first choice to speak here; Laura was. [*Laughter*] Mr. Speaker, she sends her love to you and to all our friends out here. By the way, Laura is a fabulous First Lady for our country.

I appreciate Congressman Tom Reynolds, the chairman of the NRCC. Thank you, Tommy, for your good work. The chairman of the spring dinner is Congressman Jerry Lewis from California. Jerry, you did a fabulous job. Thank you, sir.

I'm proud of the job my fellow Texan is doing as the majority leader of the House of Representatives, Tom DeLay. He's a great majority leader. We enjoy working with the whip, Roy Blunt from Missouri, who is doing a good job of counting those votes.

I see the conference chair is with us tonight, Congresswoman Deborah Pryce from Ohio. Thank you for coming. The vice chair, Jack Kingston from Georgia, is with us tonight. Jack, thank you. The conference secretary, Congressman John Doolittle from California; Congressman Chris Cox, the policy chair from California, is with us as well. Thank you, Chris.

And finally, the only other Congressman I'm going to mention tonight is my friend from Texas. He's about as fine a Congressman as you'll find. I'm proud to call him friend, and that's Congressman Ralph Hall.

I appreciate Angela Pregano-Knight for sharing her talents tonight, singing the national anthem. What a beautiful person, and with a great voice. And finally, Timmy Kelly is here with us. And Timmy, thanks for singing "God Bless America," and I'm glad you're here. Thanks for bringing your mom and dad with you as well.

I finally got an opponent. [*Laughter*] He's an experienced Senator. He's built up quite a record. He's been here in Washington so long, he's taken both sides of just about every issue. [*Laughter*] Senator Kerry voted for the PATRIOT Act, for NAFTA, for the No Child Left Behind Act, and for the use of force in Iraq. Now he opposes the PATRIOT Act, NAFTA, the No Child Left Behind Act, and the liberation of Iraq. He's been on both sides of many big issues. If he could find a third side, I'd imagine he'd take that one too. [*Laughter*] Someone asked my opponent why he had voted against the $87 billion funding bill to help our troops in Iraq. Here's what he said: "I actually did vote for the $87 billion, before I voted against it." [*Laughter*] End of quote. [*Laughter*] Sure clears things up, doesn't it? [*Laughter*]

What is going to be clear is that the voters have a clear choice this year. It's a choice between keeping the tax relief that the Congress passed, tax relief that is moving this economy forward, or putting the burden of higher taxes back on the American people. It is a choice between an America that leads the world with strength and confidence or an America that is uncertain in the face of danger. And I look forward to making these choices clear to the American people.

I'm ready for this campaign. I'll remind the people that working with the United States Congress, under Speaker Hastert's leadership, we've achieved great things in the past 3 years. I'll also remind them that we have a positive vision, a hopeful vision, an optimistic vision for the years ahead; a positive vision for winning the war on terror and extending peace and freedom

throughout the world; a positive vision for creating jobs and promoting opportunity and compassion here at home. We will leave no doubt where we stand, and we will win on November the 2d of this year.

The last 3 years have brought serious challenges, and working with the Congress, we've given serious answers.

When we came to office, the stock market was in decline and the economy was headed into a recession. But we acted. We worked together. We delivered historic tax relief, and now our economy is the fastest growing of any major industrialized nation in the world.

We had to confront corporate crimes that cost people their jobs and their savings, so we worked with the United States Congress and passed strong corporate reforms and made it clear that we will not tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America.

We saw war and grief arrive on a quiet September morning, so we pursued the terrorist enemy across the world. We've captured or killed many key leaders of the Al Qaida network, and the rest will learn there is no cave or hole deep enough to hide from American justice.

Working with the Congress, we confronted the dangers of state-sponsored terror and the spread of weapons of mass destruction. So we ended two of the most violent and dangerous regimes on Earth. We freed over 50 million people, and once again America is proud to lead the armies of liberation.

When the Vice President and I came to Washington, we found a military that was underfunded and underappreciated, so we worked with this Congress and this leadership to give our military the resources and respect they deserve. And today, no one can question the skill and the strength and the spirit of the United States military.

It is the President's job to confront problems, not pass them on to future Presidents and future generations. A President needs to step up and make the hard decisions and keep his commitments, and that is how I will continue to lead our great country.

Great events will turn on this election. The man who sits in the Oval Office and the man who is the Speaker of the House will set the course of the war on terror and the direction of our economy. Security and the prosperity of America are at stake. The other side hasn't offered much in the way of strategies to win the war or policies to expand our economy. So far, all we hear is partisan anger, loud words. Anger is not an agenda for the future of America. We'll take on the big issues with optimism and resolve and determination, and we will make it clear that we stand ready to lead this Nation for 4 more years.

A big issue for every family in America is the Federal tax burden. Because of the leadership of Denny Hastert and Members of the United States Congress, we passed the largest tax relief since Ronald Reagan was the President. We have left more money in the hands that earned it. By spending and investing and helping create new jobs, American people have used their money far better than the Federal Government would have.

Oh, I hear some pessimists around our country, but I'm optimistic about our economy. I'm optimistic because we've put good policies in place, and I'm optimistic because the entrepreneurial spirit is strong and we've got the best workers in the world. Economic growth in the second half of 2003 was the fastest in nearly 20 years. Manufacturing activity is increasing. Business investment is rising. Disposable income is rising. Inflation is low. Mortgage rates are low. Homeownership is at the highest rate ever. Job creation is gaining strength. We've added over 350,000 new jobs over the last 6 months. The tax relief we passed is working.

My opponent has a different view of tax relief. When we passed an increase in the child credit to help families, he voted against it. When we reduced the marriage

penalty, he voted against it. When we created a lower 10-percent bracket for working families, he voted against it. When we reduced the tax rate on dividends that many seniors depend on, my opponent voted against it. When we gave small businesses a tax incentive to expand and to hire new people, he voted against it. When we passed a phaseout of the death tax, he voted no. We're beginning to see a pattern here. [*Laughter*]

Senator Kerry is one of the main opponents of tax relief in the United States Congress. But when tax increases are proposed, it's a lot easier to get a yes vote out of him. Over the years, he's voted over 350 times for higher taxes on the American people, including the biggest tax increase in American history. He supported higher gas taxes 11 times. He favored a tax increase of 50 cents a gallon. That would cost you another $5 or more every time you fill up the tank. For that kind of money, he at least ought to throw in a car wash. [*Laughter*]

My opponent is proposing a lot of new Government spending, about $1.7 trillion at last count, and the campaign is just beginning. He says he's going to pay for all this by raising the taxes on rich people, but he's got a problem. To cover all the new spending, he would need to eliminate every single one of the tax reductions we have passed. To pay for all his new promises, he'd still have to raise taxes on top of that. The marriage penalty would go back up. The child credit would go back up. Taxes on small businesses would rise. Even low-income people paying at the 10-percent rate would see their taxes go up. It turns out, if you have a job, a child, or a dollar to spare, Senator Kerry thinks you're rich enough to pay taxes. Fortunately, he's not going to have that chance.

Higher taxes would undermine growth and destroy jobs, just as this economy is getting stronger. To help grow the American economy and to create more jobs for our citizens, I have a better idea. We should make the tax cuts permanent.

We must do more to keep this economy growing and to create more jobs. I'm working hard with the Congress to maintain spending discipline in Washington, DC.

I have a plan to protect small-business owners and employees from the frivolous lawsuits that make it hard to create new jobs. The House of Representatives has passed good tort reform legislation, thanks to the leadership of Speaker Denny Hastert.

I'm working with the leadership on a plan to control the cost of health care and to get people better access through association health care plans and tax-free health savings accounts. And the Senate needs to follow the lead of the House and pass medical liability reform.

We need to knock down trade barriers and open up new markets around the world for this country's farmers and ranchers and entrepreneurs and manufacturers.

And we need a sound energy strategy. We need an energy plan to modernize our electricity system and make this country less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

On every one of these measures, the working people have got an ally in the leadership in the Republican Congress.

You know, my opponent talks about job creation, but he's against every one of these job-creating measures. Empty talk about jobs and economic isolationism will not get anyone hired. The best way to create jobs is to reelect a pro-growth, pro-entrepreneur President and United States Congress.

Our future in the world also depends on America's leadership in the world. The momentum of freedom in our time is strong, but we still face serious dangers. Al Qaida is wounded but not broken. Terrorists are testing our will in Afghanistan and Iraq. Regimes in North Korea and Iran are challenging the peace. If America shows weakness and uncertainty in this decade,

the world will drift toward tragedy. This will not happen on my watch.

This Nation is strong and confident in the cause of freedom. Today, no friend or enemy doubts the word of the United States. America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Afghanistan. The Taliban chose defiance, and the Taliban are no longer in power. America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Iraq. The dictator chose defiance, and now the dictator sits in a prison cell.

September the 11th, 2001, taught a lesson I will never forget. It's a lesson the Congress must never forget. It's a lesson this country must never forget. America must confront threats before they fully materialize. In Iraq, my administration looked at the intelligence information, and we saw a threat. The Congress looked at the intelligence, and they saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence, and it saw a threat. The previous administration and Congress looked at the intelligence and made regime change in Iraq the policy of our country.

In 2002, the United Nations Security Council yet again demanded a full accounting of Saddam Hussein's weapons programs. As he had for over a decade, Saddam Hussein refused to comply, so we had a choice to make: Either take the word of a madman, or take action to defend America. Faced with that choice, I will defend America every time.

My opponent admits that Saddam Hussein was a threat; he just didn't support my decision to remove Saddam from power. Maybe he was hoping Saddam would lose the next Iraqi election. [*Laughter*] We showed the dictator and a watching world that America means what it says. Because our coalition acted, Saddam's torture chambers are closed. Because we acted, Iraq's weapons programs are ended forever. Because we acted, nations like Libya have gotten the message and renounced their own weapons programs. Because we acted, an example of democracy is rising at the very heart of the Middle East. Because we acted, the world is more free. Because we acted, America is more secure.

We still face thugs and terrorists in Iraq who would rather go on killing the innocent than accept the advance of liberty. And there's a reason why. They know that a free Iraq will be a major defeat for the cause of terror. This collection of killers is trying to shake the will of the United States. America will never be intimidated by a bunch of thugs and assassins. We are aggressively striking the terrorists in Iraq. We will defeat them there so we do not have to face them in our own country.

Other nations are helping Iraq to build a free society, because they know what we know: A free Iraq will make the whole world more secure. We stand with the Iraqi people, the brave Iraqi people, as they assume more of their own defense and move toward self-government. These are not easy tasks, but they are essential tasks. We will finish what we have begun, and we will win this essential victory in the war on terror.

On national security, Americans have the clearest possible choice. My opponent says he approves of bold action in the world, but only if other countries do not object. I'm all for united action, and so are our 34 coalition partners in Iraq right now. Yet, America must never outsource America's national security decisions to the leaders of other countries.

Some are skeptical that the war on terror is really a war at all. Senator Kerry said the war on terror is far less of a military operation and far more of an intelligence-gathering, law enforcement operation. I disagree. Our Nation followed this approach after the World Trade Center was bombed in 1993. The matter was handled in the courts and thought by some to be settled. But the terrorists were still training in Afghanistan. They were still plotting in other nations. They were drawing up more ambitious plans. After the chaos and carnage

of September the 11th, it is not enough to serve our enemies with legal papers. With those attacks, the terrorists and their supporters declared war on the United States of America, and war is what they got.

Our men and women in the military are taking great risks and doing a great job. At bases across our country and the world, I've had the privilege of meeting with those who defend our country and sacrifice for our security. I've seen their great decency and unselfish courage. I can assure you, ladies and gentlemen, the cause of freedom is in good hands.

This Nation is prosperous and strong, yet we need to remember that our greatest strength is in the hearts and souls of our citizens. We're strong because of the values we try to live by, courage and compassion, reverence and integrity. We're strong because of the institutions that help give us direction and purpose, our families, our schools, our religious congregations. These values and institutions are fundamental to our lives, and they deserve the respect of our Government.

We stand for fair treatment of faith-based groups, so they can receive Federal support for their works of compassion and healing. We will not stand for Government discrimination against people of faith.

We stand for welfare reforms that require work and strengthen marriage, which have helped millions of Americans find independence and dignity. We will not stand for any attempt to weaken those reforms and to send people back into lives of dependence.

We stand for a culture of life in which every person counts and every person matters. We will not stand for the treatment of any life as a commodity to be experimented upon, to be exploited, or to be cloned.

We stand for the confirmation of judges who strictly and faithfully interpret the law. We will not stand for judges who undermine democracy by legislating from the bench or judges who try to remake the values of America by court order.

We stand for a culture of responsibility in America. The culture of this country is changing from one that has said, "If it feels good, do it," and, "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each of us understands we are responsible for the decisions we make in life. If you are fortunate enough to be a mother or a father, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart. If you're worried about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you're responsible for doing something about it. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you're responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And in a responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourself.

For all Americans, these years in our history will always stand apart. There are quiet times in the life of a nation when little is expected of its leaders. These are not one of those times. You and I are living in a period when the stakes are high, the challenges are difficult, when resolve is needed.

None of us will ever forget that week when one era ended and another began. On September the 14th, 2001, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers. I will never forget that day. Workers in hardhats were shouting, "Whatever it takes." One guy pointed at me and said, "Don't let me down." As we all did that day, these men and women searching through the rubble took it personally. I took it personally. I have a responsibility that goes on. I will never relent in bringing justice to our enemies. I will defend the security of America, whatever it takes. [*Applause*] Thank you all.

In these times, I've also been a witness to the character of this Nation. Not so long ago, some had their doubts about the American character, our capacity to meet a serious challenge, or our willingness to

serve a cause greater than self-interest. But Americans have given their answer. I've seen the unselfish courage of our troops. I've seen the heroism of Americans in the face of danger. I've seen the spirit of service and compassion renewed in our country. We've all seen our Nation unite in common purpose when it mattered most.

We will need all these qualities for the work ahead. We have a war to win, and the world is counting on us to lead the cause of freedom and peace. We have a duty to spread opportunity and hope through every corner of this country. This is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it. And we know that for our country, the best days lie ahead.

May God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:08 p.m. at the Washington Hilton.

Remarks in a Discussion on Job Training in Huntington, West Virginia
April 2, 2004

The President. Thanks for coming. Please be seated. I wish Dan had said "a friend of long standing"—[*laughter*]—as opposed to "an old friend." I knew him when he lived in Texas. You've got a good one running Marshall University here. He's a fine fellow. He's doing a fine job.

I'm proud to be back in Huntington. We're going to have an interesting discussion today about how to make sure people have an opportunity to get the skills necessary to fill the jobs of the 21st century. That's really what we're here to talk about. We're going to talk about how to make sure everybody's life is optimistic and hopeful as this economy of ours grows and changes. A perfect place to do so here is at this community college, and I'm so honored to have been invited. Thank you for opening up your fantastic facility, and thank you for giving me a chance to come and talk.

By the way, right as I walked in—I want to thank the sisters. One of them said to me—probably the most important thing a President can hear is, she said, "Mr. President, I'm praying for you." Thank you.

I want to thank the State and local officials who are here. Thanks for coming by to say hello. I think that when you finish hearing this discussion, you're going to realize what an important asset you have in the community college system of West Virginia and how the Federal Government and employers can work together with the community colleges to make sure people get the skills necessary to take advantage of an expanding job base.

I met a lady coming in named Robin Black. She was out there at the airport. The reason I mention Robin is, a lot of times people say the strength of America is our military. And that's a part of our strength, and by the way, it is strong, and we intend to keep it strong. Or they say the strength of America is the fact that we're a wealthy nation. And that's important as well. But the true strength of the Nation is the hearts and souls of our citizens. That's the true strength of America. And the reason I mention Robin Black is that she's a volunteer. Robin's sitting right there, by the way. She's a volunteer to help people going for a job interview to look as good as they possibly can, to understand what to say. She's a mentor to people who need help.

No, the strength of this country is the fact that we've got citizens from all walks of life who are willing to love a neighbor just like they'd like to be loved themselves, who are willing to work to change America

one heart and one soul at a time. If you're one of those soldiers in the army of compassion, I thank you for doing what you're doing. You're making a difference to our country—just like you are, Robin. Thank you.

I'm an optimist, because I fully understand America's strengths and I've seen what we've come through. I want to remind you right quick what has happened to this country, what our economy has been through, what the America people have had to endure over the last 3 years.

We went through a recession. That means things were going backwards. That means three quarters of negative growth. Now, if you're a small-business owner, it's difficult to survive in a recession. If you're somebody looking for a job, it's hard to find a job during a recession. But we acted, and we cut the taxes on the people, which made the recession one of the shallowest recessions in economic history.

And then as we were recovering from the recession, the enemy hit us. They attacked us, and it affected us. It affected our way of thinking, for starters. See, when most of us were growing up, we thought oceans could protect us, and we found out that wasn't the case. We found out that America could be harmed by people who hate what we stand for. We suffered for those who lost life. I vowed then and there that the best way to protect America was to get on the offense and stay on the offense and bring people to justice. We resolved as a nation not to allow terrorists to cause us to lose our optimism and our spirit. That's what we resolved. And we still have that spirit and resolve, by the way.

And then we found out we had some corporate citizens who didn't tell the truth. That affected our economy. It kind of shattered our idealism about people in positions of responsibility. We passed tough laws, by the way. We're not going to tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America. There will be consequences if you lie to your shareholders and your employees. But it affected us. It was a hurdle we had to cross. It was a challenge to our economy.

And then, as you know, I made the decision to remove Saddam Hussein from power. Let me tell you one of the important lessons of September the 11th, and it's important for people to understand, is that when we see a threat, we cannot let it materialize. That's an important lesson. I saw a threat. I looked at intelligence and saw a threat. The United States Congress looked at the same intelligence, and it saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence, and it saw a threat. People were worried about Saddam Hussein because of his past behavior. Remember, he had used weapons of mass destruction against his neighbors and his own people. I remembered the lesson of September the 11th as I looked at the data. I had a choice, either to trust a madman or defend the country. Given that choice, I'll defend America every time.

We've still got hard work in Iraq. The reason we do is, there's killers there who want to shake our will. They want the American people to forget what it means to promote freedom. They want us to retreat. See, a free Iraq is an historic opportunity. A free Iraq will change a neighborhood that needs to be free. A free Iraq will make the world more peaceful. But a free Iraq is something that the terrorists fear. They hate freedom. They can't stand the thought of a free society, so they're willing to kill. And they're trying to shake our will, but they don't understand this country. We will never be intimidated by thugs and assassins. This country will stay the course and get the job done. We will get the job done.

Laura reminded me one time, she said, "Do you remember what it was like in the summer of 2002 when you turned on your TV sets and saw 'March to War'?" That's a hurdle that we had to overcome. You see, it's not good for the economy to be marching to war. It's good for our security, but it's hard for people to make investment

decisions if you think you're marching to war. It's a negative thought. So that was the fourth challenge we faced here in America.

We faced a recession, an attack, corporate scandals, and a march to war to make us more secure. But we've overcome all those challenges, because the entrepreneurial spirit is strong, because the America people are great workers, and because of good policy.

One of the things I think really did help, and I look forward to continuing this dialog on the subject, is, you see, when a person has more money in their pocket, they're more likely to demand an additional good or a service. And when they demand additional good or a service, somebody's likely to provide the good or a service. And when somebody provides a good or a service, somebody is more likely to keep a job or find work.

The tax relief we passed is working. It's making a difference for this economy. And the reason I say that is, for example, the homeownership rate is the highest ever. That's really important. We want people owning their own home. It's a vital part of our economy.

Small businesses—the spirit of the small-business owner is strong in America. Remember, when you cut income-tax rates on individuals, you're really affecting most small businesses in America, because most small businesses are sole proprietorships or Subchapter S corporations, which means they pay tax at the individual income-tax rate. And in that most new jobs are created by small businesses, it makes sense to have a vibrant small-business sector in America. And the small-business sector of this country is strong, and it's growing, and people are more optimistic about expanding their businesses.

Manufacturing is up. An important statistic besides the growth statistics is the fact that after-tax income is up by 10 percent since late 2000. That's good. If you've got more money in your pocket, that's a good thing.

The economy is growing, and people are finding work. Today the statistics show that we added 308,000 jobs for the month of March. We've added 759,000 jobs since August. This economy is strong; it is getting stronger. You can understand why I'm optimistic when I cite these statistics because I remember what we have been through. I mean, we're getting better, and that's important.

There are other things we need to do. We need to make sure the tax cuts are permanent. Congress doesn't need to be taking away the child credit or the marriage penalty or the 10-percent—or the reduction—or the increase of those eligible for the 10-percent bracket. We need to make these tax cuts permanent. Small-business owners need to have certainty in the Tax Code if they're going to be confident about expanding their businesses.

We need tort reform in America, if you're a small-business owner. If we want our jobs to stay here in America and want people to be able to find work, we better make sure the legal environment is fair and balanced. Frivolous lawsuits hurt small-business owners. They make it hard for people to expand their business.

We need less regulation. I wish I could tell you that every single piece of paper you fill out is read at the Federal level. [*Laughter*] I can't. [*Laughter*] If I were to say it is true, a lot of people would walk right out of the hall. [*Laughter*]

We need to make sure that we've got good policies to help control the cost of health care: medical savings accounts; association health care plans; and real, substantial medical liability reform at the Federal level.

West Virginia's unemployment rate is 5.4 percent, down from 6.4 percent a year ago. The policies are working. There's more we need to do. There's more we need to do to make sure the job base here is strong and people can find good jobs right here

in America. We need an energy policy that makes sense.

If you're a small manufacturing company—or big, for that matter—manufacturing company, and you're worried about where you're going to get your electricity from, it's hard to expand your business. It's hard to expand your business if you're worried about the reliability of electricity, not just the cost but whether or not electricity is going to be reliable. Our electricity system is antiquated. It wasn't all that long ago, last summer, to be exact, that we started having rolling blackouts. That affects the ability for people to find a job when that happens.

We've got a great, abundant resource in coal, and we need to—[*applause*]. I came to West Virginia a while ago when I was seeking the vote. I said, "We're going to have a robust, clean coal technology program funded by the Federal Government." My budget for this year has got $447 million in it for clean coal technology. This Nation must be willing to use—we must be willing to use the resources we have in a smart way. We put out good regulations for mining companies to make sure we don't shut down the ability to find coal and, by the way, to hurt people finding work. In other words, we've been responsible, and the most responsible position is to make us less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

The job base is expanding. We've got a good strategy to keep expanding. But you've got to remember that as the economy changes, people need to change with it. Their skill levels need to change. And one of the big challenges we have is how to make sure we match people who want to work with the jobs which are available, and that's what we're going to discuss today.

This is—as I say, this is a time of transition. That's what the economists say. That's okay to use that word. The problem is, if you're one of the people that are worried about the transition, we need to make sure there's a plan to help you. That's what we need to do. We need to stand with people who want to work and help them gain the skills necessary so that they can do what they want to do, which is to put food on the table for their families, to do their jobs as a responsible adult.

By the way, all job training starts with making sure we get it right at the elementary and secondary school level. The No Child Left Behind Act is really important. It's an important part of making sure that people can read and write and add and subtract. And we're going to stay on it by insisting that in return for Federal money, that we achieve high standards. See, I believe every child can learn, and I'm against these systems that just move these kids through and hope that they learn. We've got a—we'll say, "Show us whether or not a child is learning to read and write and add and subtract early in life." And if not, there will be the help necessary to make sure not one single child gets left behind. If you talk to the educators, they'll tell you, if we can get it right at the elementary and secondary school level, we'll be able to get it right at higher education as well.

Now, the other thing we need to do is recognize that some kids have been shuffled through and they need remedial help at the high school level. And we've laid out a good strategy to deal with that.

But I think one of the most exciting strategies is the one I started to detail in the State of the Union and will continue talking about next week, which is to make sure the WIA Program, the Workforce Investment Act, gets money into the classrooms, gets money to the people so that they can get properly trained for the jobs which exist.

The community college system is an incredibly important part of the education system in America because the curriculum are flexible. That means that if an employer group says, "We need these kind of people," that they're willing to adapt a curriculum to help train people for the jobs

which exist. Vicki Riley is going to tell us what that means here in a second.

It's important for us to make sure there's collaboration, for example, for high-tech industries, so people get the skills. Listen, technology is changing, and it races through our economy, but work skills don't change as quickly. And that's the challenge we face. We've got to make sure we get people trained, and that's what we're here to talk about.

I want people out there listening to listen to the story of some of the people who have gone back to school, to realize that that option is available for you. If you're worried about the job you're in and you feel like you need a new skillset in order to meet the new jobs, there's some opportunity for you. There's Pell grants available. There's scholarship money available. Now, Government can't make you make up your mind to seek new skills, but we darn sure can help, and that's what we're here to talk about today.

And a perfect person to start the conversation is Vicki Riley. She's the provost and CEO of Marshall Community College. She has put in some very innovative programs. And Vicki, thank you for giving me a chance to visit this beautiful campus.

[*At this point, Vicki Riley made brief remarks.*]

The President. I think what Vicki is saying is, is that there are some fields that are begging for—looking for workers, best way to put it. The health care field is such a field. I mean, I have traveled this country quite extensively, and a lot of times I hear that, "Gosh, if we only had more skilled nurses, or if we only had more skilled technicians, we could meet the demands, our needs." And what Vicki is saying is, the community college here has got a curriculum developed to meet the needs of the health industry here in West Virginia. And I presume part of the curriculum was developed by the people doing the hiring.

Ms. Riley. Absolutely. One of the things, again, that is a strength of community college is we're connected. We're connected to business and industry. And those employers sit on our advisory boards, and they tell us what needs to be current. They tell us what they need. They tell us what we may be missing, and we go back and fix it, so that they're getting the types of employees they want to hire that next go-round.

The President. Yes, you see, that's an interesting concept, isn't it, and it's something people have got to understand, that Vicki goes out and says, "Who are you looking for? What kind of skills do you need? What can we do to adapt our curriculum to your needs?" And that's very important. It's that flexibility which I think makes the community college system such a vibrant part of the American experience.

That's why I've asked Congress to put up an additional $250 million for collaborative efforts between the community college and the local employer groups, so people can find the skills. I mean, after all, it makes sense for Government to help people help themselves. And that's what we're talking about here.

The other thing we can do to make sure Vicki's job is better is to make sure the paperwork requirements from the Federal Government are more streamlined. I mean, they've got all kinds of programs coming out of—am I right? [*Applause*]

We have got a student with us named Rina Angus. Now, Rina, first of all, what were you doing before you became a student?

Rina Angus. I was in administrative management at a local health club in Huntington. And whenever the facility was coming under new ownership, I decided that that was my time to leave.

The President. So you made the decision, right?

Ms. Angus. I made a decision.

The President. That's good. [*Laughter*] You're a mom?

Ms. Angus. Yes, sir.

The President. Two children?

Ms. Angus. Yes, sir.

The President. How old?

Ms. Angus. Eleven and thirteen.

The President. Whew, yeah, I've been there. [*Laughter*] You have a job, you decide to leave because of the change in the business, and then what happens?

Ms. Angus. My husband got laid off.

The President. Yes? Then what happens? So far it's not a very pretty story.

Ms. Angus. Well, we prayed a lot, and we found out through the Parkersburg Job Service that there was additional training available, that we qualified for a program called the Displaced Worker Program. And when we went for the initial training and interviews, it just happened that my husband lucked into another job and I qualified for the program. So they showed me a list of skills that were needed in the area, the in-demand jobs, and I saw one on there that I had thought about when I was in high school and decided to pursue it.

The President. And what is it?

Ms. Angus. Radiologic technology in the allied health field here at Marshall.

The President. Fantastic. Catch the story. Listen to the story. I mean, I think it's a wonderful story about a mom and wife who, instead of getting, like, totally distraught with the circumstances, says,"I'm going to go back to school." And there's help for that. The Displaced Worker Program is part of the Federal monies that are available to help people go back to the community college system.

So, was it easy to go back to community college? Was it hard to go back to school?

Ms. Angus. Well, it was scary to go back after being out of school for 18 years. But with the help of Steve Brown, with the adult recruitment office here at Marshall—he made the transition very smooth. He told me the classes I needed to get into. He helped me sign up for them. He directed me where I needed to go. The staff at Marshall is wonderful. I mean, if you have situations arise with your children or an illness, they work with you to let you get your job done.

The President. Good. Do you think you're going to make more in your new job after having come here, or not? That's a loaded question. [*Laughter*]

Ms. Angus. Yes. I mean, the statistics show that I should double the salary that I was making before.

The President. Yes. Let me pick up on that. That's why the kind of leading question, as we say, and I'm not even a lawyer. [*Laughter*] It's important for people who are listening to realize that if you go back to the community college and gain new skills for the jobs which exist, not only can you become employable, you're likely to make more money.

I was at Mesa Community College and met a woman who had been a graphic design artist for 15 years. She decided to go back to school in a technological program, got out—the Government helped her—got out, and she made more in her first year in her new job because of the skills she had gained than she'd made in her 15th year as a graphic design artist.

You hear a lot of talk about becoming—productivity. That's kind of the talk of the economists these days. That means that one worker can produce more units now than they could have before. But productivity also means having the skills necessary to work in the new jobs. And if you're more productive, if the society is more productive, wealth goes up. And in this case, when Rina gets more productive, her personal wealth will go up.

Now, are you almost through?

Ms. Angus. I'm completing my first year here at Marshall, the basic skills program. And I'm currently awaiting an interview at Saint Mary's School of Radiology, where, if I'm accepted, I would start this summer and complete 2 years of clinical and classroom training. And at that time, you take a board certification to become a certified radiologist——

The President. Do you need a recommendation? [*Laughter*]

Ms. Angus. Well, if you're willing to give one.

The President. Okay, you got one.

Ms. Angus. Thank you very much, sir.

The President. Thanks. Great job.

[*The discussion continued.*]

The President. Rocky McCoy is with us. Rocky, tell us what you do. He's got a very interesting job and a great opportunity to help people.

[*Rocky McCoy, site coordinator, Huntington Work4WV Career Center, and manager, Huntington Job Service, made brief remarks.*]

The President. That's good. Now, tell me about your board. Do you have employers on your board?

Mr. McCoy. Yes, we do. Yes, we do.

The President. Like, how many? [*Laughter*] Well, not exactly.

Mr. McCoy. Our board is made up of—it's a pretty large board. There's probably 50-plus, and we're required to have 51 percent of the membership from the private sector.

The President. Right, that's good.

Mr. McCoy. So we have—we have several employers that are on our board.

The President. How many people do you see, would you say?

Mr. McCoy. In the Huntington office, I'd say we see anywhere from 400 to 600 people come through our door a month for one-stop services. It's not necessarily job service; that is for all one-stop services and all of our partners within our one-stop system.

The President. Right. What else could people do at the one-stop?

Mr. McCoy. We have the job service, if someone's looking for a job. We can go through the necessary paperwork, so to speak, to find out what a person's skills are, and we can refer them out to jobs that are available. We also have the veterans program so——

The President. Right.

Mr. McCoy. ——if we have any veterans that need special programs for veterans, they can talk to a veterans officer there. People with disabilities—we also have the Department of Rehabilitative Services there; the Department of Health and Human Resources, if people need some support until they find a job; senior employment programs; adult basic education, if a person needs to work on their GED; and also the basic skills program, such as remediation, job-seeking skills, interviewing skills, how to fill out a resume and job application.

The President. See, these services, by the way, used to be scattered all over. And now he calls it one-stop because you go to one place, and I appreciate that. Who's hiring?

Mr. McCoy. Folks in the health industry, folks in the IT industry, and there are several smaller businesses that are hiring in the area.

The President. That's good. See, there are jobs. And a lot of people say, "I hear there's jobs available, but I don't have the skills, so I'm not going to go look." And Rocky's job and, truth of the matter, all our jobs, is to say, "Here's someone available to help you." And you've got to want to help yourself, like this good lady did. You got to say, "I want to embetter myself. I want to take advantage of the opportunity." But Rocky's job is to help steer people to the opportunities, whether it be the community college or the jobs which exist, if people don't feel like they need to enhance their skills.

And I appreciate you, Rock. I call you Rock.

Mr. McCoy. That's fine. [*Laughter*] You can call me whatever you want. [*Laughter*]

The President. All right, Sally Oxley is with us. Sally is a small-business owner. I love to be with entrepreneurs, people who are willing to start their own business

and dream big dreams, people who—and as a result, by the way, of dreaming a dream, gets in a position, when successful, to hire people. That's one of the dividends of the entrepreneurial spirit, is people can find work.

Sally, tell us about your business. How did you get started? Why did you start your own business? How did you find the courage to start your business? And anything else you want to say.

[*Sally Oxley, owner, Huntington Physical Therapy, made brief remarks.*]

The President. By the way, that's not easy. It sounds easy; it's hard. It requires a good plan, a good strategy, and the development of a product people need.

Ms. Oxley. And the reason that I started my own business was, I wanted to do it my way. I wanted to do it the right way. And that seemed to be what evolved.

The President. Good. And are you looking for people?

Ms. Oxley. We are. We're always looking for good people.

[*Ms. Oxley made further remarks.*]

The President. And how is your business doing?

Ms. Oxley. It's growing. We're doing well.

The President. A lot of old guys like me with kind of aches and pains. [*Laughter*]

Ms. Oxley. A few. Birth to death, is what we say.

The President. I like that beginning part. [*Laughter*]

[*Ms. Oxley made further remarks.*]

The President. I'm glad you're doing well. Thanks for starting your own business. Thanks for putting people to work. I think it's a very interesting story, isn't it, that a small business in the health field connects with the community college in order to do two things, one, lay out the requirements necessary to hire people, but also provide a opportunity for on-the-job training.

I appreciate your contribution to the community. It's a great story.

Ms. Oxley. It's a great community.

The President. It is a great community. Thanks for coming.

Bryan Johnson.

Bryan Johnson. Yes, sir.

The President. I'm glad you're here.

Mr. Johnson. Glad to be here, sir.

The President. They ever call you "Red"? [*Laughter*]

Mr. Johnson. On several occasions. I haven't figured out why just yet. [*Laughter*]

The President. I'll be the funny guy. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Johnson. If we're going to do the act then, sir, I'll sit over there on your lap——

The President. That's right. [*Laughter*] Whew! Anyway, Bryan, changing subjects rapidly—[*laughter*]—no longer verbally dueling with Bryan. [*Laughter*] He is the chief information officer of Mountain State Center for Independent Living. Tell us your story, please sir.

[*Mr. Johnson made brief remarks.*]

The President. What did you get? What degree did you get here at Marshall?

Mr. Johnson. I got the IT degree. And they actually offer——

The President. Explain what IT means, just in case somebody——

Mr. Johnson. Yes, information technology, which basically covers computers and networking and whatnot.

The President. Now, that sounds like a pretty big leap, from a guy in a restaurant business to the IT business. Was it a big leap?

Mr. Johnson. You better believe it. When I started in 1998 into the program, I couldn't even tell you how to turn a computer on, okay? Now I'm a network engineer.

The President. That's good.

Mr. Johnson. Thank you. Thank you.

The President. By the way, did you have to pay for the—how did you handle the cost?

Mr. Johnson. I got student loans, and I also received some assistance through WIA as well.

The President. Right, Workforce Investment Act. A lot of times, with Government things, we talk in initials.

[*Mr. Johnson made further remarks.*]

The President. And so what is your—with the degree you have, not only do you provide a—you're an important employee for the firm for which you work, you're also now a consultant.

[*Mr. Johnson made further remarks.*]

The President. Are you making more money now than in the restaurant business?

Mr. Johnson. Oh, yes.

The President. That's really important for people to understand, that if you come back to Marshall Community College, for example, and get new skills—how long did it take you to get them?

Mr. Johnson. Well, sir, it actually took me 4 years with this program, because there are four specializations on the degree, and I went for all four because of portability. I wanted to be able to go anywhere and do anything.

The President. So you went for the full monty.

Mr. Johnson. Oh, yes. Indeed. [*Laughter*]

The President. Most programs don't take 4 years, I don't think.

[*The discussion continued.*]

The President. It's very important for people to understand that, one, the job base is growing in different sectors. You know, I know workers are worried that—you know, "I wish my son or my daughter could have worked in the same industry I've worked in for all my life." But this is a changing economy. It's a different economy. It's an economy that provides great opportunity. However, people are going to have to seize the moment, and that's what we're here discussing. We're discussing this sense of providing—so that people can provide for their families.

And there's two great examples here of people that could have decided, "Well, I don't think I'm going to improve myself," and just stayed doing what they were doing. But instead, I sense a great deal of excitement in their voices about having made a decision that was an important decision, a decision that probably seemed pretty darn hard at first. But now that you've made it and you're in the middle of it, you can recommend it, I suspect.

I love being with an entrepreneur, a job creator, a compassionate soul who is interested in expanding the workforce in a smart way. I want to thank the local government providing for the one-stops. Appreciate you running it, Rocky—or Rock. [*Laughter*]

And finally, I'm so honored to have been here at this community college. Madam President, thanks for opening it up. Thank you for doing what you're doing. Thank you for providing hope for people, providing an opportunity for people to take advantage of this exciting era in which we live.

Finally, I want to conclude by telling you that I talked about the challenges that faced our country. We'll have other challenges too. There's no doubt in my mind, this great country will overcome any challenge put in its path, because this country is great because of the people of this country.

Thanks for coming. God bless, and God bless our great land. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:40 a.m. at Marshall Community and Technical College. In his remarks, he referred to Dan Angel, president, Marshall University.

The President's Radio Address
April 3, 2004

Good morning. This week, we received a powerful confirmation that America's economy is growing stronger. The Department of Labor reported that America added 308,000 jobs in March, the highest monthly job growth number since the spring of 2000. And since August, we've added over three-quarters of a million new jobs in America. The unemployment rate has fallen from 6.3 percent last June, to 5.7 percent last month. Over the last year, the unemployment rate has fallen in 45 of the 50 States. This is good news for American workers and good news for American families.

Inflation is low, and interest rates and mortgage rates are near historic lows. Manufacturing activity is high. Worker productivity is high, which means rising wages for American families. After-tax disposable income is up 10 percent since the end of 2000. And more Americans own their own home than at any time in history. Our economy's momentum is building. People are finding jobs, and the Nation's future is bright. America's families and workers have reason to be optimistic.

Tax relief put this economy on the path to growth. Since 2001, we've cut tax rates for everyone who pays income taxes. We've reduced the marriage penalty in our Tax Code. We raised the child credit to $1,000 per child, and we have reduced taxes on dividends and capital gains. This tax relief is critical because all workers are keeping more of what they earn, and small businesses, which create most of the new jobs in America, have the resources to expand and hire.

As our economy adds more jobs, we will need to make sure all Americans are prepared to take advantage of new opportunity. We must help current workers and future workers learn the skills they need today and in the years to come.

Our economy has increasing demand for workers with advanced skills, such as teachers, health care workers, and environmental engineers, but too many Americans do not have these kinds of skills. So on Monday, I will travel to North Carolina to propose reforms of our Federal job training system, to give our workers the help they need. Better job training will mean better jobs for American workers.

We must also make sure our schools are preparing the next generation of workers. We've already taken action to improve our elementary schools with the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act. This good law is raising standards and hopes for all our children. But we must also address the needs of older students in high schools and colleges.

On Tuesday, I will travel to Arkansas, where I will propose ways to help high school students who are struggling in math and reading. I'll propose reforms that will strengthen vocational programs at our high schools, and I will propose more incentives for college students to take math and science, so America can continue to lead the world economy.

Over the past 3 years, our economy has overcome a lot of challenges, from stock market declines to recession to terrorist attacks to corporate scandals to war. Yet, our economy is moving forward, and jobs are being created steadily and increasingly. I'm optimistic about the future because I'm confident in the American worker and the American entrepreneur. And with the right policies in Washington, there are even brighter days ahead for American workers and American families.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 9:20 a.m. on April 2 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on April

3. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 2 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks on Job Training and the National Economy in Charlotte, North Carolina

April 5, 2004

Thanks a lot for the warm welcome. I tried to visit last February. [*Laughter*] That's when your fine mayor and Police Chief Stephens told me that they didn't think the Presidential motorcade would be an ideal way to plow the streets. [*Laughter*] The weather is beautiful today. Thanks for the warm welcome. It is great to be here in the great State of North Carolina in such a vibrant part of your State, the great city of Charlotte.

I'm here to talk about an important subject, which is our economy and how we make sure people are properly trained for the jobs of the 21st century. It's an important stop on my way to throwing out that first pitch for the St. Louis Cardinals. I've been loosening up over the weekend. [*Laughter*] My wing isn't what it used to be. But opening day of baseball season is a pretty special day for a guy like me who loves the game. I'm looking forward to getting there with the good folks of St. Louis.

But I'm particularly interested in coming here to Central Piedmont Community College, for this reason: This place of higher learning is doing a fabulous job of helping men and women seek new opportunities. This is such a hopeful campus. It's a place where the future is brighter for people who come here. And I want to thank you for the hospitality. I want to thank the faculty for their dedication. I want to thank the staff for putting up with me and the entourage.

I met with some business leaders earlier who were touting the virtues of Piedmont Community College's ability to use their ideas and incorporate their ideas into curriculum so that the training programs train people for jobs which actually exist. And that's an important part of making sure our economy, which is in the strongest in the world today, remains the strongest in the world.

I want to thank Tony. He is an innovative leader. He was right, Mother is still the boss of the family—[*laughter*]—except Laura is the boss of my family. [*Laughter*] By the way, I don't know if you know this, but Tony married a school librarian. Beth is a school librarian. We both married above ourselves. [*Laughter*]

I appreciate so very much Secretary of Labor Elaine Chao, who's traveling with me today. She's a very capable member of my Cabinet. Her job is to make sure that the training programs in place enable people at the local level to succeed. That's what I'm going to talk about a little bit today, about how to make sure that the monies we're spending actually fulfill their mission.

I appreciate so very much two Members from the United States Congress who have joined us. First, Congressman Richard Burr from North Carolina is with us—Richard. Richard is a good friend of mine. I appreciate him coming today. I also appreciate the Congressman from this district; Congressman Robin Hayes is with us as well. We came down on Air Force One; we spent more time talking about fishing and hunting than we did anything else. [*Laughter*] Those were the good old days.

I appreciate my friend Mayor Pat McCrory, who's with us, the mayor of this great city. He's done such a fine job for Charlotte. Thank you for coming, Mayor.

I thank all the students who are here. I hope after this speech you leave with a hopeful—a sense of hope about the future of this country. I mean, you have—you're entering into an economy that is just so fantastic and exciting. And I just wish you all the best as you realize your dreams.

I met Laura Spencer today when I landed at the airport there. Where are you, Laura? There she is. Laura, thanks for coming. Laura—you probably have never heard of her before, but she is soldier in the army of compassion. She's a person who volunteers here at Central Piedmont in the Adult Basic Literacy Education program. She's a person who takes time out of her life to try to help somebody else. The reason I herald people like Laura is because the true strength of the country lies in the hearts and souls of our citizens. We're strong because we're militarily strong, and I'll keep it that way. We're strong because we're wealthy. But we're really strong because we've got people from all walks of life who are willing to love a neighbor just like they'd like to be loved themselves. If you want to serve your community and your Nation, find somebody to help. Mentor a child. Care for somebody who's lonely. Feed the hungry. Find shelter for the homeless, and you'll be doing a vital service to the future of our country. Laura, I'm proud of you. Thank you for the example, and thank you for what you do.

America's economy is getting stronger. I am optimistic about our future, not only because of what I see today but because of what I know we have overcome. Let me just review right quick the economic history of the last couple of years. First, when I came to office, the country was headed into a recession. That means we were going backwards. That means it's hard to find work if you're somebody who is looking for work. It means it's hard to make payroll if you're a small-business owner. It is a negative period. Fortunately, we cut taxes, which made this recession the shallowest—one of the shallowest in American economic history.

As we were beginning to recover from the recession, the enemy hit us. September the 11th, 2001, marked a new day in American history. It was a sad day. It was a different—we entered a different period on that day. It's a day in which we realized oceans could no longer protect us from enemies which hate what we stand for. These coldblooded killers came and attacked us because they hate freedom. They can't stand the things that we love here in America. And it hurt us. It hurt us economically. Our economy lost nearly one million jobs in the 3 months after we were attacked.

It changed how we must view foreign policy. Before the attack, we could see a threat that might be emerging overseas, and we could pick and choose whether or not we wanted to deal with it or not. Now when we see threats, we recognize that those emerging threats must be dealt with in order to protect ourselves. It changed the attitude of those of us involved with the most solemn duty of protecting the American people. On that day, I vowed that I would bring to justice those who inflicted harm on America.

We're on the offensive. We will stay on the offensive until this scourge to civilization is removed. It is important to stay on the offensive, using all our resources to bring these people to justice, because Al Qaida is wounded but not broken. They're still dangerous. We take them seriously, because I'm convinced they'd still like to inflict harm on America or Americans.

It's also that day—right after that day, I announced a doctrine that said, "If you harbor a terrorist or feed a terrorist, you're just as guilty as the terrorist." It's very important for the American President to speak clearly and mean what he says. I meant what I said. The Taliban found out that

I mean what I say. Afghanistan is now free of one of the most barbaric regimes in the history of mankind, and Al Qaida no longer has a safe haven in Afghanistan.

America refused to be intimidated by killers. And so we began to recover, and then we had another challenge we had to overcome. We discovered that some of our corporate citizens behaved irresponsibly. They didn't tell the truth to their shareholders or their employees. That shook our confidence. I worked with Congress, Members of both parties, to pass tough new law. And the message is now clear: We will not tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America. It was a challenge we overcame.

As I mentioned, September the 11th, 2001, taught a lesson that said when we see a threat, that the country must take threats seriously before they fully materialize. That was one of the changes that was necessary in order to protect this country. I looked at the information on Iraq and—the intelligence—and saw a threat. The United States Congress looked at the same intelligence, and it saw a threat. My predecessor and the previous Congress looked at the same intelligence and made regime change in Iraq the policy of our Government. In other words, it saw a threat as well. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence, and it saw a threat.

And so I had a choice to make after Saddam Hussein refused once again to disarm. That was, I went to the United Nations Security Council; I said, "We all see a threat. Let's do something about it, finally." And they agreed. They passed a resolution unanimously that said, "Disarm. Get rid of your weapons programs, or face serious consequences." That was the message that the members of the United Nations Security Council said, loud and clear.

Saddam Hussein once again defied the demands of the world. And so I had a choice: Do I take the word of a madman, do I trust a person who had used weapons of mass destruction on his own people, plus people in the neighborhood, or do I take the steps necessary to defend the country? Given that choice, I will defend America every time. [*Applause*] Thank you.

We're still being challenged in Iraq, and the reason why is, a free Iraq will be a major defeat in the cause of terror. Terrorists can't stand freedom. They hate free societies. And yet, we know that free societies will be peaceful societies. We also believe that freedom is the Almighty's gift to every person in this world. It's one of the values that we hold dear. These killers don't have values. They want to shake our will, so we've got tough action in Iraq.

But we will stay the course. We will do what is right. We will make sure that a free Iraq emerges, not only for our own security but for the sake of free peoples everywhere. A free Iraq will change the Middle East. A free Iraq will make the world more peaceful. A free Iraq will make America more secure. We will not be shaken by thugs and terrorists.

The march to war was a difficult period for our economy. Marching to war is not positive. When you look on your TV screen and it says, "America is marching to war," and if you're somebody who is thinking about expanding your business, you may decide not to in the face of such a negative thought. And so the final hurdle we had to overcome in the last 3 years was the march to war. We're now marching to peace. But think what our economy has been through: a recession; an attack; corporate scandals; and a march to war. And yet we've overcome them all.

A lot of it has to do with the fact that this country is great and the people in this country are strong. The entrepreneurial spirit is vibrant. We've got the best workers in the world. Plus, I happen to think tax relief helped a lot. We based our decisions on this idea, that if a person has more money in their pocket—more of their own money in their pocket, by the way—they're likely to demand an additional good or a

service. And when they demand an additional good or a service, somebody is likely to produce the good or a service. And when somebody produces the good or a service, somebody is more likely to keep their job and/or find a new job.

Also, a major part of the tax relief was some good policy that said if you have a child, we want to help you raise your children. We've increased the child credit. We said that we want to encourage marriage in America, not discourage marriage, so we lessened the effects of the marriage penalty in the Tax Code.

We understood the important role of small business in hiring people. As a matter of fact, it's estimated that 70 percent of all new jobs are created by small businesses in America, so a key ingredient of the tax relief plan was to encourage small businesses. If you're a small business, you're likely to be a sole proprietorship or a Subchapter S corporation. Those are legal words for this: It says you pay tax at the individual income-tax rate. So when you reduce individual income taxes, you're really reducing taxes on small businesses as well. Plus, we created some incentives for investment. And it's paying off. It's paying off.

The entrepreneurial spirit is strong. One way to make sure to keep it strong is to say to our farmers and ranchers and small businesses that when you—after you built your business, you can leave it to whomever you want without the Federal Government getting in the way. We've got the death tax on the way to extinction. We need to make sure it's extinct forever, for the sake of—[*applause*].

And here's why I say it's working. We've had strong economic growth. This economy is growing. Inflation is low. Interest rates are low. Manufacturing activity is on the increase. Homeownership rates are the highest ever. Isn't that a wonderful thought? More people own their home than ever before. We have a minority homeownership gap in America, which we must close for the sake of the future. And now we've got more minorities, families, owning their own home than ever before. There's still a gap, but nevertheless, more people are owning their home. And we're working to close the gap. We want people owning something in this country. If you own your own home, own your own business, you've got a vital stake in the future of America.

And last week, we received confirmation that our economy is stronger. The Department of Labor reported the economy created 308,000 new jobs in March, more than three-quarters of a million new jobs since August. That's good news. The economy is strong, and it's getting stronger. We've overcome the challenges from the past 3 years. Listen, most of those challenges would have cratered most economies—not America's economy, because the ingredients for growth are there. We've got visionary business leaders. We've got great, productive workers, and we've had good policy.

In North Carolina, you've seen progress of your own here. First of all, I fully understand that there are people who hurt here. Industries like the textiles and the furniture manufacturers are struggling, and that is an issue that we've got to deal with. But there are incredibly positive signs as well. The housing industry in this State is strong. More people own a home here in North Carolina than before. The health care industry is strong. Biotechnology are strong. The unemployment rate is down in this State. You've got to be optimistic about your future here, because North Carolina is a great place to do business, and you need to keep it that way.

We have a strategy to make sure the economy stays strong. Let me share some of the ingredients of that strategy with you. First, in order for us to keep jobs at home, in order for us to make sure the job market expands, we've got to make sure the legal system is fair. Frivolous and junk lawsuits make it hard to expand the job base. The United States Congress must pass class-action lawsuit reform, asbestos reform, for the

sake of creating new jobs. Tort reform is necessary.

The rising cost of health care makes it difficult to keep jobs at home and to expand the job base. There is a battle in Washington, DC. There's a philosophical argument over how to deal with the cost of health care. Some say that the Federal Government ought to run the health care system. I strongly disagree. We need to implement policies that put consumers in charge of health care.

There's some practical ways to deal with the rising cost of health care. One, we must allow small businesses to pool risk, just like big businesses get to do, through association health care plans. See, when you pool risk, it means you can buy health insurance for your employees at a lower cost than if you have to go into the market by yourself. Secondly, we passed what's called health savings accounts. These are methodologies for holding down the cost of health care and putting consumers back in charge of health care decisions. Third, we need medical liability reform at the Federal level. Junk lawsuits are running up the cost of medicine for people all across this State.

Good trade policy is necessary to keep jobs at home. There's a tendency to say, "Gosh, the jobs are going overseas; therefore, let's isolate ourselves from the world." I think that's a mistake. Many small businesses rely upon being able to export. Farmers all across this country need to export their product. We're good at things, see. We're good at growing things. We're good at building things. And therefore, rather than isolate ourselves, we ought to take a different policy. We ought to make sure the playing field is level for our exporters.

Presidents before me, from both political parties, had made the decision to make our markets relatively open to products from around the world. It happens to be good for our consumers. If you're a consumer, when you've got more choice, more competition for your dollar, it means prices are better for you and quality is better. But what's happened in the past is that we haven't demanded the same openness in other markets. So rather than closing our market, what I think we ought to be doing is going to other countries and saying, "Look, we're going to treat you this way; you need to treat us the same way. You need to have that playing field level for U.S. products."

And we're sending a message. There's ways to do so. We took China to the World Trade Organization and said, "They're not treating our semiconductor manufacturers fairly. They're giving unfair tax breaks." In other words, the playing field is not level. So we're spending a lot of time leveling the playing field through enforcement and trade policy.

Last year, our customs and border agents seized over $200 million worth of smuggled textiles that were headed to this country. It's another way to make sure the playing field is level, to stop people and pirates and thieves from bringing products in that destroy our markets here at home—bring them in illegally—that destroy our markets here at home. I refuse to allow us to become isolated. I think pessimistic people are willing to isolate the country. My attitude is, give us a chance to compete, and we can outcompete anybody in the world.

In order to make sure the economy is strong, we need spending discipline in Washington. I've laid out a plan to cut the deficit in half over 5 years. It's going to require the United States Congress not to overspend, and I look forward to working with them.

Finally, another thing we need to do is, we need an energy policy in this country. If you're a person trying to—if you're a manufacturer who relies upon energy, it's awfully hard to expand your job base if you're worried about whether or not the electricity system that you rely upon is modern. It's hard to expand your job base if you rely upon natural gas. It's hard to

rely upon sound energy when we're dependent on foreign sources of energy. In order to make sure that the economy stays strong and people can find work here at home, the Congress needs to pass the energy plan we submitted, which will encourage more conservation, which will encourage our electricity system to become modernized, but—which will allow us to use clean coal technologies and to explore for natural gas so we're less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

What I'm telling you is, is that in order for this job base to be secure, in order for people to be able to keep work here at home, America must be a good place to do business. It must be a reasonable place to do business. It must be a place where the entrepreneurial spirit remains strong.

Here in Washington, you'll hear a different set of opinions about this. There are people who believe we need to increase spending and need to therefore increase taxes. I think raising taxes at this point would be a disaster for our economy. It's the absolute wrong thing to do as our economy is beginning to recover. I feel quite the contrary. As a matter of fact, all the tax relief we passed, some of which is set to expire next year, other parts set to expire later on in the decade—all that tax relief needs to be permanent.

The other interesting thing about this history, besides the challenges we've overcome, is that we're in a period of historic economic change. This is a very interesting period of time. The economists call it a period of transition. I call it the beginnings of an innovation economy. It's an economy where technology is transforming just about every job. It's a very fascinating period of time.

For example, the average car today has 27 onboard computers. And in some cases, our cars have more raw computing power than that which was used to send the Apollo astronauts to the moon. Now, that's a pretty interesting thought, isn't it? Which means, if you're an automobile repair guy—[*laughter*]—you better know something about computers—[*laughter*]—or if you're an automobile manufacturer. In other words, this is the kind of sophisticated level that is necessary for our workers.

What I'm telling you just doesn't apply to the automobile manufacturing world. We've got people here—workers in this State and other States who hold jobs that didn't even exist a few decades ago: biological technicians; software engineers; desktop publishers; bioinformatic specialists. These are the jobs of the 21st century. And if you'd have said to somebody 30 years ago or 20 years ago, "Gosh, don't you look forward to being a bioinformatic specialist"—[*laughter*]—they'd have probably wondered what you were talking about.

Ninety percent of all scientific knowledge has been generated in the last 30 years. This is why we're in a period of such great innovation and possibility. That's how I view it, as a moment of fantastic possibility for America and our workforce.

And North Carolina is making advantage of this—taking advantage of the possibilities. Think about this: Six years ago, the largest export of this State was tobacco—just 6 years ago—and now it's computer equipment. That's an amazing transformation of an economy, isn't it? About 10 percent of the Americans who are employed in biotechnology work reside right here in North Carolina. That's a workforce that's beginning to change quite dramatically. North Carolina has the world's greatest concentration of labs devoted to clinical testing of new medical technology and pharmaceuticals.

For an economy that was based upon tobacco and, to a certain extent, textiles, you're now on the leading edge of technological change. New industries are part of what's driving this economy forward across the country and certainly what's driving the North Carolina economy forward. And I

congratulate you on that. It must be exciting to live in a State that is the center of innovation.

There's a reason why we're that way, by the way. The entrepreneurial spirit is really strong here. The role of Government is not to create wealth. The role of Government is to create an environment in which the entrepreneur is willing to take risk and be able to get a return on the risk taken. And we need to keep the entrepreneurial spirit alive and well across this country.

Secondly, our universities are a great place for people to learn. I mean, when you—there's a lot of—the main reason why people from around the world want to come here to study is because we're on the leading edge of change. We've got good, efficient capital markets. That means that when somebody has got a good idea, they've got good access to capital. And that's very important. We've got a flexible workforce, flexible work rules. These are all the ingredients as to why we stay on the leading edge of change.

But we still—we live in a competitive world, though. It's just—we should never take anything for granted. We shouldn't take our preeminence as the world's greatest economy for granted. We've constantly got to make sure the economic environment here is strong. We've got to make sure that we're innovative. I'm going to talk about an innovative way to make sure our workers get retrained here today. But I'm also going to talk about, in the next couple of weeks, economic growth and security through innovations on the information technology front, communications, and health care and energy. In other words, my job is to make sure the environment is such that we're constantly on the leading edge of change, so people can find good work.

Today and tomorrow I'm going to talk about the fact that we've got to prepare all Americans to succeed in this new economy. Today I'm going to talk about community colleges and the workforce training programs, and in Arkansas, I'm going to be talking about how to make sure our high school and Pell grant programs work properly.

Here's the challenge: You just heard me describe how your State has changed, and it's going to even change even faster as time goes on. And so, are we going to be able to make these opportunities available for your workers? That's the challenge we face. Technology is changing; can the workforce change with it? And that's the challenge.

High-tech companies created twice as many jobs as those in any other industries. By the way, it required a productive worker to work in those jobs. A productive worker also made two times the amount of money they were making before. In other words, when you're more productive, you're going to make more. Are we going to be able to use our education systems to be able to match a person's desire to work with the skills necessary to become employable? That's the challenge we face.

We're not training enough people to fill the jobs of the 21st century. There is a skills gap. And if we don't adjust quickly and if we don't do smart things with the taxpayers' money—if we don't properly use our community colleges, for example—we're going to have a shortage of skilled workers in the decades to come. And if you've got a shortage of skilled workers in the decades to come, guess what's going to happen to America—we're no longer going to be on the leading edge of change. It's going to be hard for our children and grandchildren to find the kind of jobs that will be being generated in the world's economy.

And so that's what I want to talk to you about today. It requires, first of all, people's willingness to adapt. We've got to get it right early, by the way, in order to make sure we've got a workforce that's capable of filling the 21st century jobs. That's why I'm such a big believer in what we call the No Child Left Behind Act. It was an

act that said we'll spend more Federal money, particularly on Title I students. Those are the poorest of students. But for the first time, we're going to ask whether or not the school systems are teaching children to read and write and add and subtract. It's really the basis of No Child Left Behind. It says, "Gosh, if you're going to get Federal money, it seems reasonable to ask the question whether or not there's results."

And the reason you ask that—I ask that question, at least, is because I believe every child can learn. I refuse to condemn inner-city black kids to failed school systems. I refuse to—I don't like it when I hear stories of first-generation American families—the children of first-generation American families being just shuffled through because English isn't the primary language of their family. That's not right. I believe every child can learn. And so what we have said is, "In return for Federal money, we expect you, the State, to show us, to measure."

And by the way, there's money available for early childhood intervention programs. Like in third grade, if a child can't pass a simple reading comprehensive exam, that child needs help early, before it's too late. The best way to make sure we're competitive, by the way, one of the best ways to make sure we're competitive in the 21st century, is to get it right at the public school system. And the No Child Left Behind Act challenges the soft bigotry of low expectations.

As we focus on high schools, which I'll talk about tomorrow, and the Pell grant system for higher education, we've always got to remember that there are a lot of folks who are long past school age who need help and are interested. Government can't make somebody say, "I'm going to go get retrained." That's—impossible to do that. We can help people who want to be retrained.

I met Sharon Segee today. She is with us. She is—four years ago, she was a medical lab assistant at the local hospital. She got to the point where, as she put it, she was deadlocked. In other words, she wasn't satisfied with what was happening in her life. She put it this way; she said, "I was making about as much as I was going to make, and I was doing all I was going to do." That's the definition of "deadlocked." She enrolled in a nursing program here at Central Piedmont. She enrolled in the program. In other words, she said, "I'm going to do something about it. I'm tired of being deadlocked. I want to raise my standards. I want to raise my sights."

She went here with the help of the local hospital. I want to thank the local hospital for providing funds to help somebody who is desirous of gaining new skills to do so. She's now making more salary. She loves her career. She's thinking about getting a bachelor's degree. In other words, Sharon has made the decision that she wants to take advantage of what Piedmont has to offer so that she becomes a more productive worker. Remember, if you're more productive, you're going to make more money.

Sharon, I don't know where you are, but I want to—there you are. Thank you very much for coming. I appreciate it.

See, it's important for people listening here to realize that there's—that what Sharon has done is available for you as well; that if you want to improve yourself, there's a great opportunity to do so throughout the State of North Carolina. I know. I went to Forsythe Community College in Forsythe County—[*applause*]—there you go. It's good to see you all again. [*Laughter*] This is a part of the world that had been hit by the changing economy. Yet because the health care industry was so vibrant in that part of your State, there was a collaborative effort between the hospital and the community college, and now people that were once in the textile industry are now in the health care industry, making more money, I want you to know.

I met a woman named Stacey Leedom in Mesa Community College in Arizona.

In other words, I've been going to community colleges all over the country. They're exciting places to visit, by the way, because there's so much innovation going on at the community college level. I met Stacey. She was a graphic artist for 15 years. And she decided to take technology classes at the Mesa Community College. She got a little help. There's Federal money, by the way, available; there's scholarship help. And now, after having gone to the technology course at the community college, she made more in her first year in her new job than she made in her 15th year as a graphic design artist. When you become a more productive citizen, you're going to make more money for your family.

A more productive society is one that is more competitive. A productive society is one that allows us to stay on the leading edge of change. And a productive society is one that lifts the living standards of all Americans. And a good way to get more productive is to make sure worker training programs are vibrant and viable and available. That's what we're talking about.

The main worker training program is called the Workforce Investment Act. That's the primary—[*applause*]. Yes, there you go. [*Laughter*] The program spends about $4 billion a year in grants on States—to States. Money from those grants go to about 3,500 State and local one-stop centers around the country. Perhaps some of you who have been looking for work or help have gone to a one-stop center. They're smart things to do. See, those one-stop centers have been providing employment services, advice, job search assistance, resume writing. There's—people walk in and say, "Look, I need some help." They're kind of a decentralized approach to providing help for people, and that's very smart.

They also give workers individual training accounts, or what I call innovation training accounts, they can use to get job training. In other words, you take the money in your innovation training account, and you can go to a community college, just like Piedmont right here, or at a business or at a union hall or at other locales.

But last year, only about 206,000 workers obtained job training through this program. In other words, we've got a great Federal program where we spend $4 billion—and admittedly, some of it goes to other services—but only 200,000 workers got trained. It says to me, we've got to do a better job of training more people with the money we spend. We've got to make the system work better.

One of my jobs as the President is to analyze programs and, if they're not doing the job they're supposed to do, is to redesign them so they do do the job they're supposed to do, so that we properly spend taxpayers' money. So today I want to talk about a plan to reform the job training programs, to the WIA programs, to the Workforce Investment Act. And I believe we can double the number of workers who are going through the job training programs.

And let me tell you how we're going to do it. First, the Federal job training programs need to be—the money needs to be sent directly to the Governors. We don't want to Federalize the program, quite the opposite. We want the Governors—and let the Governors distribute the money to programs which actually are training people for jobs which exist.

Now, that sounds simple, but that's not the way it's working today, because the Federal Government, as a result of the laws passed by Congress, micromanaged the system. There's a series of programs, all of which have their own specifications—in other words, they tell the Governors and the States where to spend the money, what to spend the money on, the kind of system the Governors ought to set up—and as a result of micromanagement, miss opportunities for jobs which exist in the communities in which people are looking for work.

In other words, we need to make the system more flexible, more available to

workers, and less dependent on foreign—on Federal rules, in order to make sure that the money gets to the people who need it most. So, step one is to change the system on how—the relationship between the Federal Government and the State government.

Two, we need to make sure that the States reduce the overhead costs connected with these job training programs. There's now a 15-percent cap on how much Federal job training money that States can spend on administrative overhead. That's positive. It seems to make sense. If you're going to spend money, a certain amount ought to go to setting the program up, and the rest of it goes to the people. But unfortunately, there's loopholes in the program. Too much Federal money is spent on things that have little to do with job training, such as management studies or travel. We want the money going to the people. That's what we want. It's okay to spend money to set the system up; we want as much money going to the people. We need to close the loophole. One of the reforms is to say, "The 15-percent cap is a stringent cap. We mean what we say when we say we're going to limit the amount of money that can go to overhead." We believe that by making sure the cap is a strong cap on overhead money, we will save about $300 million, which means an extra $100,000—100,000 workers a year get trained.

Third, we need to require clear results of Federal tax dollars that go to training workers. In other words, if we're going to spend $4 billion a year, we want to make sure we get results for the money. It's amazing what happens when you start to ask for results. The problem is, there are now 17 different goals involved in the training programs. If you've got 17 goals, there really are no goals, right? I mean, if you've got so many goals, it's really hard to measure. And so what we need to do is to make sure that people are judged—people who are spending your money are judged on what we care about. Job centers will report how many people they help find work. That makes sense as one of the goals. In other words, we've got money coming your way; tell us how many people have actually found a job, how much they earn on their jobs, and how long they stay on those jobs. That's what ought to be measured, and nothing else. And we ought to say, "Look, this is what the programs exist for, and these are the three goals we'll measure you on." And if the State doesn't make progress, then it only makes sense to take some of the money that is being sent to the States and send it directly to the job trainers, so that we actually do meet what we expect to have happen, and that is people being trained for the jobs which exist.

And finally, look, I recognize—there is a balance between the State role—the States have got a vital role to play—and between places like Piedmont. Piedmont does a fabulous job, and so do a lot of other community colleges, because their curriculum is flexible. They're just not stuck. They don't—you know, like some places get stuck, and they don't change. The community college system has the capability of change. One reason they change is because they listen to the job providers.

One of the things, if you talk to a leader in the community college, a good community college, they'll say, "I call in a group of business leaders who are looking for workers and say, 'What skills do you need? If you're interested in hiring people, what can we do to help you? What kind of people are you looking for?' " And then they change the curriculum accordingly. I met with a small-business owner earlier. I think he said 75 people had gone through the Piedmont—through the campus. And he helped pay for the programs for worker training.

In other words, the community college system is a flexible program. It's adaptable to meet the needs of the local communities. And so the fourth proposal is to provide

Federal job training money directly to community colleges. And that was part of the Jobs for the 21st Century Initiative I outlined. It's $250 million additional to go to community colleges directly, to help create partnerships with job providers and the community college systems around the country. We believe this will help train up to an additional 100,000 people a year.

In other words, these are four reforms that will help meet the needs of this country as we go into the 21st century. This economy is changing. First of all, it's growing, and as it grows, it changes. And so what we need to do is adapt our systems and the programs we've got in place to help meet the needs of our people. It's a legitimate role of the Federal Government, is to help people who want to help themselves.

We've got people from all walks of life who say, "Gosh, I'm stuck. I see the new jobs being created, but I don't have the skills necessary. This is an innovative world we live in, but I'm not—I don't have the skills necessary to be an innovative worker. And I want to improve myself. Where do I go? Where can I find help?" Well, taxpayers' money is helping people do that. We just want to make sure the taxpayers' money we're spending is actually working to the maximum extent possible.

I think we have an obligation to help people help themselves. I love the stories of people who are willing to go back to the community college because they feel frustrated. They realize their job—they could be doing better. There's nothing better than an innovative person seizing the moment. And a vibrant society is one that makes the community college system accessible to those who have made the determination to improve their lot and improve their lives.

When people decide to become a better worker, they're helping our economy. As more workers become retrained for the jobs of the 21st century, it will help us stay on the leading edge of technological change in the world. As our workforce gets retrained—listen, we've got great workers; they just need the skills necessary to be able to compete. And as this labor force becomes more educated and more skilled for the jobs of the 21st century, we'll stay the leading country in the world. And that's what we want. We want to be the leader in the world, because when you're in the leader of the world, the standard of living for your people rises. We want the American Dream to shine brightly.

Listen, we've been through a lot in this country. We've been through an amazing period of time, and we're strong and getting stronger. You know why? Because the American people are great. The American people are strong, determined, resolved. They are willing to rise to any challenge. And it is my honor to lead a country full of such wonderful people.

May God bless you all. May God bless our country.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:15 a.m. at Central Piedmont Community College-Central Campus. In his remarks, he referred to Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Chief Darrel Stephens; and P. Anthony Zeiss, president, Central Piedmont Community College, and his wife, Beth. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks to the Travel Pool and an Exchange With Reporters in Charlotte
April 5, 2004

Visit With Family of U.S. Soldier Killed in Iraq

The President. I just met with Specialist Chris Hill's family from North Carolina. You know, I told the family how much we appreciated his sacrifice—he was killed in Iraq—and assured him that we would stay the course, that a free Iraq was very important for peace in the world, long-term peace, and that we're being challenged in Iraq because there are people there that hate freedom. But the family was pleased to hear that we would—that its son would not have died in vain. And that's an important message that I wanted to share with you today.

Let me ask you a couple of questions. Who is the AP person?

Q. I am.

The President. You are? Well, ask it.

Q. Sir, in regard to——

The President. Who are you talking to?

Deadline for Transfer of Iraqi Sovereignty/ Situation in Iraq

Q. Mr. President, in regard to the June 30th deadline, is there a chance that that would be moved back?

The President. No, the intention is to make sure the deadline remains the same. I believe we can transfer authority by June 30th. We're working toward that date. We're obviously constantly in touch with Jerry Bremer on the transfer of sovereignty. The United Nations is over there now—the United Nations representative is there now to work on the—on a—on to whom we transfer sovereignty. I mean, in other words, it's one thing to decide to transfer. We're now in the process of deciding what the entity will look like to whom we will transfer sovereignty. But no, the date remains firm.

Stretch [Richard Keil, Bloomberg News].

Q. Mr. President, are you concerned at all that events like we've seen over the last week in Iraq are going to make it tougher to meet that deadline or increase pressure from the U.N. or anyone else?

The President. Well, I think there's—my judgment is, is that the closer we come to the deadline, the more likely it is people will challenge our will. In other words, it provides a convenient excuse to attack. In this particular incident, with Sadr, this is one person who is deciding that rather than allow democracy to flourish, he's going to exercise force. And we just can't let it stand. As I understand, the CPA today announced a warrant for his arrest. This is one person—this is a person, and followers, who are trying to say, "We don't want democracy. As a matter of fact, we'll decide the course of democracy by the use of force." And that is the opposite of democracy. And it's—that's why the CPA issued the statement they issued.

But Stretch, I think throughout this period there's going to be tests. We were tested in Fallujah. And the desire for those who do not want there to be a free and democratic Iraq is to shake our will through acts of violence and terror. It's not only our will; it's the will of other coalition forces, and it's the will of the Iraqi people. As you know, that many Iraqis have been targeted. As a matter of fact, the Al Qaida affiliate Zarqawi made it clear that part of the strategy was to turn Shi'a on Sunni by killing innocent Iraqis.

And we've got to stay the course, and we will stay the course. The message to the Iraqi citizens is, they don't have to fear that America will turn and run. And that's an important message for them to hear. If they think that we're not sincere about staying the course, many people will not continue to take a risk toward—take the risk toward freedom and democracy.

Yes, Tamara [Tamara Lipper, Newsweek].

Selection of U.S. Ambassador to Iraq

Q. Mr. President, can you tell us a little bit about your decisionmaking for the next ambassador to Iraq, and what you're looking for in the person who would represent the administration?

The President. Good question. I am looking for somebody who can run a big embassy, somebody who understands the relationship between an embassy and the military. Because one of the things that's going to be very important for the next ambassador to Iraq—this will be the person that takes Jerry Bremer's place—will be the willingness and capability of working with a very strong—a country in which there's a very strong U.S. military presence as well as a coalition presence. This person is going to need to have enough experience to basically start an embassy from the ground up and also be willing to transfer certain people and authorities from the CPA to the embassy itself. In other words, it's a very complex task that's going to require a skilled soul. And we're in the process of searching it out now.

President's Upcoming Meeting With the 9/11 Commission

Q. Mr. President, can you just tell me—the 9/11 Commission, the Chairman yesterday, Governor Kean, said a date had been set, I think, for your testimony and the Vice President's. Is that——

The President. I would call it a meeting.

Q. A meeting, I'm sorry.

The President. Thank you.

Q. Has that date been set, and could you share it with us? And number two, can you tell us the rationale as to why you have chosen to testify or rather meet with them with the Vice President?

The President. First of all, it will be a great opportunity from them to ask both of us our opinions on the subject. And we're meeting with the entire Commission. I'm not exactly sure what the status is of putting out the date. I told them I'd meet with them at a time that's convenient for all of us, and hopefully we'll come to that date soon.I look forward to sharing information with them. Let me just be very clear about this: Had we had the information that was necessary to stop an attack, I'd have stopped the attack. And I'm convinced any other government would have too. I mean, make no mistake about it, if we'd have known that the enemy was going to fly airplanes into our buildings, we'd have done everything in our power to stop it. And what is important for them to hear not only is that, but that when I realized that the stakes had changed, that this country immediately went on war footing, and we went to war against Al Qaida. It took me very little time to make up my mind, once I determined Al Qaida to do it, to say we're going to go get them. And we have, and we're going to keep after them until they're brought to justice and America is secure.

But I'm looking forward to the conversation. I'm looking forward to Condi testifying. I made a decision to allow her to do so because I was assured that it would not jeopardize executive privilege. And she'll be great. She's a very smart, capable person who knows exactly what took place and will lay out the facts. And that's what the Commission's job is meant to do, and that's what the American people want to see. I'm looking forward to people hearing her.

All right, got to go to work. Thanks. Good to see you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:31 a.m. at Central Piedmont Community College-Central Campus. In his remarks, he referred to L. Paul "Jerry" Bremer III, Presidential Envoy to Iraq; Iraqi Shiite cleric Muqtada Al Sadr; senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi; and National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice. A reporter referred to Thomas H. Kean, Chairman, National

Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States (9/11 Commission).

Remarks at a Bush-Cheney Luncheon in Charlotte
April 5, 2004

Thank you all. Thank you all very much. Thanks for coming. Thank you all. Thanks for the warm welcome. Last time I was supposed to be here, it wasn't going to be so warm. [*Laughter*] And I want to thank you for your understanding about the mayor telling me not to come. [*Laughter*] He blamed it on the police chief. [*Laughter*] Actually, it was the right call. And I want to thank you all for your patience. Thank you for letting me come back.

I generally try to stay on time. I'm running a little late. I met with some special people in order for me to—before I came over here, so thanks. There's nothing worse than a politician making people wait. I think I've got a pretty good excuse. I met with the family of a fellow who was killed in Iraq. It's part of my duty; it's part of my obligation. It was an uplifting experience to meet with a family that loves their country. I told the dad and the mom and the wife that we'd stay the course, we'd do what's right, and their son would not have died in vain.

If you're noticing me working my shoulder a little bit, it's because after dinner I've got to go out and deliver a hopping fastball to open up the baseball season. I can't run very far—just hope I can throw 60 foot and 6 inches. [*Laughter*]

And the Vice President, by the way, is venturing out to the mound. He's been warming up. It turns out we don't need a radar gun on him either. [*Laughter*] Speaking about the Vice President, he's the finest Vice President our Nation has ever had. Mother heard me say that and said, "Wait a minute, boy." [*Laughter*]

I'm sorry Laura's not here. She's with her mother in Midland, Texas. We were both raised in Midland. She's helping her mom move out of her—the home she was raised in. Her mom is getting up in years, and Laura is doing her duty as a loyal daughter. Let me just tell you, this is a lady who's got her life in perspective. Her faith and her family come first. And I love her. She is a fabulous First Lady for the country. She sends her love. I'm going to see her tonight in Crawford. We're going to spend the Easter time in Crawford. I'm going to be working out at the Western White House, as we call it—the Southwestern White House. But I'll give her—you her best.

I appreciate Thompson and Hance. Those boys delivered a fine introduction, didn't they? They are silver-tongued devils from—[*laughter*]—Charlotte. But I want to thank Ken and Jim for their leadership on this event. I'm proud to have you on my team. I appreciate you working so hard to make this fundraiser so successful. I appreciate Ed McMahan as well for being one of the event chairmen. Thank you for your help.

I remember campaigning here and saying to the people of North Carolina that the best choice they had for the United States Senate was Elizabeth Dole, that she'd do a great job for the citizens of this State. And she has—really proud of the job Elizabeth is doing. She works hard. She's well versed on the issues. She's articulate. She's making a big difference, a big difference in a short period of time on the floor of

the Senate. I don't know about the company you're keeping there with Senator Faircloth, but—[*laughter*].

I appreciate so very much my friend Congressman Cass Ballenger for joining us today. Thank you for being here, Cass. Sue Myrick, as well, the great Congresslady from this part of the world—thank you, Sue, for coming. Congressman Robin Hayes is with us today. Robin, I appreciate your friendship.

And finally, the next United States Senator from the great State of North Carolina, Richard Burr. He'll be a good one. And I want him to win.

I appreciate Pat McCrory, the mayor. The mayor's doing a fine job. He's a good fellow. I've known him a while, and he's doing a really good for the people. I thank all the State and local officials who are here.

I want to thank my friend Jim Culbertson for his hard work, and Dr. Aldona Wos. I want to thank Ferrell Blount. I want to thank Jim Cain. I want to thank all my friends for working so hard to make this event a successful event.

I appreciate Teresa Earnhardt being here. Teresa, thank you for coming. It's—going to Daytona 500 is—it's a pretty interesting experience, if you've never been there. And starting the race is even more interesting. It's—I want to thank the Earnhardt family for their—for being such great Americans.

I want to thank Ric Flair, professional wrestler. He's with us today. Big Ric, I'm proud you're here. Thank you for coming.

I want to thank the grassroots activists who are here. We won North Carolina last time. We're going to win it this time. And I appreciate your help.

And I'm ready for the contest. I just want you to know I'm looking forward to it. I'm looking forward to campaigning. I'm looking forward to talking about what I intend to do. I'm looking forward to reminding people, in the last 3 years we've achieved great things. But most importantly, I'm looking forward to reminding people about our positive vision, a positive vision to win the war on terror, a positive vision for extending peace and freedom throughout the world, a positive vision for creating jobs and promoting opportunity and compassion at home. I'll leave no doubt where we stand, and we're going to win on the 2d of November.

The last 3 years have brought serious challenges, and we have given serious answers. We came to office with the stock market in decline and an economy headed into recession. We delivered historic tax relief, and now our economy is the fastest growing of any major industrialized nation.

We had to confront corporate crimes that cost people their jobs and their savings, so we passed strong corporate reforms, and we made it abundantly clear that we will not tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America.

We saw grief and war arrive on a quiet September morning, so we have pursued the terrorist enemy across the world. We've captured or killed many key leaders of the Al Qaida network. And the rest will learn there is no cave or hole deep enough to hide from American justice.

We confronted the dangers of state-sponsored terror and the spread of weapons of mass destruction, so we ended two of the most violent and dangerous regimes on Earth. We freed over 50 million people. Once again, America is proud to lead the armies of liberation.

When Dick Cheney and I came to Washington, we found a military that was underfunded and underappreciated, so we gave our military the resources and respect they deserve. And today, no one can question the skill and the strength and the spirit of the United States military.

It is the President's job to confront problems, not to pass them on to future Presidents or future generations. A President needs to step up and make the tough decisions and keep his commitments. And that

is how I will continue to lead our great Nation.

Great events will turn on this election. The man who sits in the Oval Office will set the course of the war on terror and the direction of our economy. The security and prosperity of America are at stake.

I finally got an opponent. [*Laughter*] I'm running against an experienced Senator who has built up quite a record. In fact, Senator Kerry has been in Washington long enough to take both sides of just about every issue. [*Laughter*] He voted for the PATRIOT Act, for NAFTA, for the No Child Left Behind Act, and for the use of force in Iraq. Now he opposes the PATRIOT Act, NAFTA, the No Child Left Behind Act, and the liberation of Iraq. He's been on both sides of so many big issues that if he could find a third side, I imagine he'd take it. [*Laughter*]

Someone recently asked my opponent why he had voted against the $87 billion funding bill to help our troops in Iraq. Here's what he said—he actually said this, "I actually did vote for the $87 billion, before I voted against it." [*Laughter*] End of quote. [*Laughter*] The President must speak clearly.

We will have a clear choice in the campaign this year, the choice between keeping the tax relief that is moving our economy forward or putting the burden of higher taxes back on the American people. We'll have a choice between an America that leads the world with strength and confidence or an America that is uncertain in the face of danger. I look forward to making that choice very clear.

The other side hasn't offered much in the way of strategies to win the war or policies to expand the economy. All we hear from that side is a lot of old bitterness and partisan anger. Anger is not an agenda for the future of America.

I look forward to taking on the big issues with optimism and resolve. I will make it clear that I stand ready to lead this Nation for 4 more years.

A big issue for every family in America is the Federal tax burden. With the largest tax relief since Ronald Reagan was the President, we have left more money in the hands that earned it. By spending and investing and to help create new jobs, the American people have used their money far better than the Federal Government would have.

This economy is strong, and it is getting stronger. Economic growth is strong. America added 308,000 new jobs in March, the highest monthly job growth total in almost 4 years. And since August, our economy has added over three-quarter of a million new jobs. The second half of 2003, the economy grew at its fastest rate in nearly 20 years. Interest rates are low. Mortgage rates are low. Manufacturing activity is on the increase. Disposable income is rising. Homeownership is at an alltime historic high. The tax relief we passed is working.

There's a clear difference when it comes to taxes. When we passed the tax increase in the child credit to help families, my opponent voted against it. When we reduced the marriage penalty, he voted against it. When we created a lower 10-percent tax rate for working families, he voted against it. When we reduced the tax rate on dividends that many seniors depend on, he voted no. When we gave small businesses tax incentives to expand and hire, he voted against it. When we passed a phase-out of the death tax, he voted against it. I think there's a pattern here. [*Laughter*]

When tax increases are proposed, it's a lot easier to get a "yes" vote out of him. Over the years, he has voted over 350 times for higher taxes on the American people, including the biggest tax increase in American history. He's supported higher gas taxes 11 times, and once favored a tax increase of 50 cents a gallon. That would cost you another $5 or more every time you fill up your tank. For that kind of money, he ought to at least throw in a free car wash. [*Laughter*]

My opponent proposes a lot of new Government spending, about $1.7 trillion at last count. And the campaign has just barely gotten started. He said he's going to pay for it by raising the taxes on the rich people. He's got a problem. See, to cover all the new spending, Senator Kerry would need to eliminate every single one of the tax reductions we've passed, and then he'd still have to raise taxes on top of that. The marriage penalty would go up; the child credit would go down; taxes on small businesses would rise. It turns out if you have a job, a child, or a dollar to spare, Senator Kerry thinks you're rich enough to pay more taxes. Fortunately, we're not going to give him that chance. Higher taxes now would undermine growth and destroy jobs. To help grow the American economy and to create more jobs, I have a better idea: We should make all the tax cuts permanent.

And there is more we can do to make sure we maintain economic growth. We need spending discipline in the Nation's Capital. I have a plan to protect small-business owners and employees from frivolous and junk lawsuits. I have a plan to help control the cost of health care by giving people better access to association health plans and tax-free health savings accounts. And the Senate must pass medical liability reform in order to control the cost of health care.

Rather than to wall ourselves off from the world, and rather than to listen to the economic isolationists, we need to level the playing field and open up more markets for North Carolina's farmers and ranchers and manufacturers and entrepreneurs.

In order to make sure this country continues to grow and people can find work at home, we need an energy plan that encourages conservation, that makes our electricity systems more reliable, that encourages clean coal technology, that allows for exploration. This Nation must become less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

These are ways to keep jobs here at home and to make sure the job base expands. But my opponent is against every one of these job-creating measures. Empty talk about jobs and economic isolationism will not get anybody hired. This country needs to reelect a pro-growth, pro-small-business, pro-entrepreneur President, George W. Bush.

Our future also depends on America's leadership in the world. The momentum of freedom in our time is strong, but we still face serious dangers. Al Qaida is wounded but not broken. Terrorists are testing our will in Afghanistan and Iraq. We still face dangers in North Korea and Iran. If America shows weakness and uncertainty in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This will not happen on my watch.

This Nation is strong and confident in the cause of freedom, and today, no friend or enemy doubts the word of the United States. America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Afghanistan. The Taliban chose defiance, and the Taliban are no longer in power. America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Iraq. The dictator chose defiance, and now the dictator sits in a prison cell.

September the 11th, 2001, taught a lesson I will never forget, a lesson America must never forget: America must confront threats before they fully materialize. In Iraq, my administration looked at the intelligence information, and we saw a threat. The United States Congress looked at the intelligence, and they saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence, and it saw a threat. The previous administration and Congress looked at the intelligence and made regime change in Iraq the policy of our country.

In 2002, the United Nations Security Council yet again demanded a full accounting of Saddam Hussein's weapons programs. As he had for over a decade, Saddam Hussein refused to comply. So I had a choice: either take the word of a madman, take the word of a man who had

used weapons of mass destruction on his own people, or take action to defend America. Given that choice, I will defend America every time.

My opponent admits that Saddam Hussein was a threat. He just didn't support my decision to remove Saddam from power. Perhaps he was hoping Saddam would lose the next Iraqi election. [*Laughter*]

We showed the dictator and a watching world that America means what it says. Because our coalition acted, Saddam's torture chambers are closed. Because we acted, Iraq's weapons programs are ended forever. Because we acted, nations like Libya have gotten the message and renounced their own weapons programs. Because we acted, an example of democracy is rising at the very heart of the Middle East. Because we acted, the world is more free. Because we acted, America is more secure.

We still face thugs and terrorists in Iraq who would rather go on killing innocent people than accept the advance of liberty. And there's a reason why. They know that a free Iraq will be a major defeat in the cause of terror. They hate freedom. They can't stand the thought of a free society. And what they're trying to do is they're trying to shake our will. They're trying to shake the will of America. America will never be intimidated by thugs and assassins.

We are on the offense. We will stay on the offense. We will aggressively strike the terrorists in Iraq. We will defeat them there so we do not have to face them in our own country. We're calling on other nations to help Iraq build a free society. They understand what we know: A free Iraq will make the world more peaceful. And we're standing with those brave Iraqi citizens who've endured Saddam Hussein and who now long for self-government.

These aren't easy tasks. I understand that. But they are essential tasks. America will finish what we have begun, and we will win this essential victory in the war on terror.

On national security, Americans have the clearest possible choice. My opponent says he approves of bold action in the world, but only if other countries do not object. I'm all for united action, and so are our 34 coalition partners in Iraq right now. Yet America must never allow our national security decisions to be made by leaders of other countries.

Some are skeptical that the war on terror is really a war at all. My opponent said this: "The war on terror is far less of a military operation and far more of an intelligence-gathering, law enforcement operation." I disagree.

Our Nation followed this approach after the World Trade Center was bombed in 1993. The matter was handled in the courts and thought by some to be settled. But the terrorists were still training in Afghanistan. They were plotting in other nations. They were drawing up more ambitious plans. After the chaos and carnage of September the 11th, it is not enough to serve our enemies with legal papers. With those attacks, the terrorists and their supporters declared war on the United States of America, and war is what they got.

Our men and women in the military are taking great risks and doing great work. At bases across our country and the world, I have had the privilege of meeting those who defend our country and sacrifice for our security. I've seen their great decency and unselfish courage. And I assure you, ladies and gentlemen, the cause of freedom is in good hands.

This Nation is prosperous and strong, yet we need to remember that our greatest strength is in the hearts and souls of our citizens. We're strong because of the values we try to live by, courage and compassion, reverence and integrity. We're strong because of the institutions that help give us direction and purpose, our families, our schools, our religious congregations. These values and institutions are fundamental to our lives, and they deserve the respect of our Government.

We stand for the fair treatment of faith-based groups so they can receive Federal support for their works of compassion and healing. We will not stand for government discrimination against people of faith.

We stand for welfare reforms that require work and strengthen marriage, which have helped millions of Americans find independence and dignity. We will not stand for any attempt to weaken those reforms and send people back into lives of dependence.

We stand for a culture of life in which every person counts and every person matters. We will not stand for the treatment of any life as a commodity to be experimented upon, to be exploited, or cloned.

We stand for the confirmation of judges who strictly and faithfully interpret the law. We will not stand for judges who undermine democracy by legislating from the bench or judges who try to remake the values of America by court order.

We stand for a culture of responsibility in America. We're changing the culture of this country from one that has said, "If it feels good, do it," and, "If you got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each of us are responsible for the decisions we make in life. If you're fortunate enough to be a mother or father, you are responsible for loving your child with all your heart. If you're worried about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you're responsible for doing something about it. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you're responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And in the new responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourself.

For all Americans, these years in our history will stand apart. There are quiet times in the life of a nation when little is expected of its leaders. These aren't one of those times. You and I are living in a period when the stakes are high, the challenges are difficult, a time when firm resolve is needed. None of us will ever forget that week when one era ended and another began.

On September the 14th, 2001, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers. I'll never forget the day. There were workers in hardhats yelling at me, "Whatever it takes." I remember walking a ropeline, a guy said to me, looked me right in the eye and said, "Don't let me down." As we all did that day, these men and women who were searching through the rubble took it personally. I took it personally. I have a responsibility that goes on. I will never relent in bringing justice to our enemies. I will defend the security of America, whatever it takes.

In these times, I've also been witness to the character of this Nation. Not so long ago, some had their doubts about the American character, about our capacity to meet serious challenges or our willingness to serve a cause greater than self-interest. Americans gave their answer. I've seen the unselfish courage of our troops. I've seen the heroism of Americans in the face of danger. I've seen the spirit of service and compassion renewed in our country. We've all seen our Nation unite in common purpose when it mattered most.

We'll need all these qualities for the work ahead. We have a war to win. And the world is counting on us to lead the cause of freedom and peace. We have a duty to spread opportunity to every part of America. This is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it, and we know that for our country, the best days lie ahead. May God bless you all.

Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:32 p.m. at the Charlotte Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Pat McCrory of Charlotte, NC; Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Chief Darrel Stephens; Ken Thompson and Jim Hance, event cochairmen; North Carolina State Representative W. Edwin

"Ed" McMahan; former Senator Lauch Faircloth of North Carolina; Jim Culbertson and Aldona Wos, North Carolina State finance chairs, Bush-Cheney '04, Inc.; Ferrell Blount, chairman, and Jim Cain, national committeeman, North Carolina Republican Party; and Teresa Earnhardt, chief executive officer and president, Dale Earnhardt, Inc.

Statement on Signing Legislation on Amendments to the Mexico-United States Agreement on the Border Environment Cooperation Commission and a North American Development Bank
April 5, 2004

Today, I have signed into law H.R. 254, "To authorize the President of the United States to agree to certain amendments to the Agreement between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the United Mexican States concerning the establishment of a Border Environment Cooperation Commission and a North American Development Bank, and for other purposes." The Act is intended to implement an agreement between the United States and Mexico to accelerate the delivery of environmental infrastructure projects on the border by improving the operations of the Border Environment Cooperation Commission and the North American Development Bank.

Section 546 of Public Law 103–182, as added by section 1 of the Act, purports to direct the President to instruct United States representatives on the Board of Directors of the North American Development Bank to take a particular position with respect to certain grant proposals. Under the Constitution, the President alone is charged with developing the position of the United States in international fora. The executive branch will accordingly interpret this provision as a nonbinding recommendation from the Congress.

Sections 2(5) and 2(6) of the Act purport to require the annual report of the Secretary of the Treasury to include a description of discussions between the United States and Mexican governments. In order to avoid intrusion into the President's negotiating authority and ability to maintain the confidentiality of diplomatic negotiations, the executive branch will not interpret this provision to require the disclosure of either the contents of diplomatic communications or specific plans for particular negotiations in the future.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
April 5, 2004.

NOTE: H.R. 254, approved April 5, was assigned Public Law No. 108–215.

Message on the Observance of Passover, 5764
April 5, 2004

I send greetings to those observing Passover, beginning at sundown on April 5.

Freedom is God's gift to every man and woman. During Passover, Jewish people celebrate their historic liberation from slavery. This joyous eight-day observance is testimony to the power of good to overcome evil and is an opportunity for Jews to share

the message of God's mercy. By reading the Haggadah, which tells the story of the Exodus and explains the traditional Passover Seder, Jewish children learn about their proud heritage and the importance of faith, courage, endurance, and love.

Laura joins me in sending our best wishes for a Happy Passover.

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this message.

Remarks in a Discussion on Job Training and the National Economy in El Dorado, Arkansas
April 6, 2004

The President. Thank you very much. Please be seated. Thank you, Skinny. [*Laughter*] Gosh, thanks for the warm welcome. It's great to be here. Huckabee told me I'm the first sitting President ever to come to El Dorado, Arkansas, and I'm glad I came. I'm really glad I came. Governor, thank you and Janet for meeting me at the airport. It's great to see you again. Thank you all for being here.

I really want to thank Kathy and her staff for putting up with us. It turns out it's not easy to welcome a President. You've got to have a stage; you've got to have this; you've got to have that. The entourages are huge. We're really glad to be here, because this is going to be an economics lesson coupled with a discussion about how to make sure everybody is educated for the jobs for the 21st century. That's what we're here to talk about. I think you're going to find it interesting.

The best news is, I'm not doing all the talking. I've got some of your fellow citizens here on stage with me that will help make the points necessary, make the points that say, "Look, this is a hopeful time; we've just got to make sure we educate people for the jobs which will exist." That's what we're here to talk about.

A community college is a great place to have this discussion, because the community colleges are very well adapted to meeting the needs of local employers. They're flexible. They're able to say to an employer, "What do you need? And we'll educate the people for the kind of workers you need." That's why we're here at this community college. Thanks for receiving me.

Lieutenant Governor Rockefeller is with us. Win, I'm glad you're here. Thank you for coming. Congressman John Boozman—he's up from north Arkansas, but he's down here in south Arkansas. Thank you for coming, John, glad you're here. And Cathy is with him too.

I appreciate the mayor, Bobby Beard. Where are you, Bobby? Yes, Bobby. Bobby, you would think you would get a better seat. [*Laughter*] I appreciate you. Just pick up the garbage. [*Laughter*] Thanks for coming. Thanks for the hospitality. I appreciate your troopers out there, State—the city police helping us come into town. Thanks a lot. I want to thank all the local officials here from El Dorado, here with us as well, and the county officials. I appreciate the fact that you've allowed Lane Jean, who is the mayor of Magnolia, to be here. Mr. Mayor, appreciate you coming over from Magnolia, Arkansas.

When I landed out there, I met a fellow named Joe McFadden. [*Applause*] Joe brought his family. [*Laughter*] Where are you, Joe? Oh, there's Joe, right here, yes. Same guy I met at the airport. [*Laughter*] Here's the reason I want to talk about Joe right quick. People say America is strong because of our military. And we have a strong military, and I'm going to keep the

military strong. Or people say we're strong because we're the most prosperous nation on the world, and that's positive. We want to keep it that way. We're strong, however, because of people like Joe. See, we're strong because of the hearts and souls of our citizens. That's really our strength.

The strongest part about this country is the fact that we have people who are willing to volunteer time to make the community in which they live a better place. See, Joe is involved with Main Street El Dorado. It's a way to make sure downtown El Dorado, Arkansas, has been revitalized, which is good for the community. He's also involved with the Boy Scouts. That's a wonderful program. It's a good way to pass on values from one generation to the next. Joe is a soldier in the army of compassion. That's what he is.

My call to our fellow citizens is, serve your country by loving a neighbor just like you'd like to be loved yourself. Help feed the hungry. Help find shelter for the homeless. Help a child learn to read. Find somebody who is lonely and surround them with love. See, Government can hand out money, it can dispense justice, but Government can't cause people to love. Love happens when you get inspired in your hearts. My call is to serve like Joe. I appreciate you, Joe. Thank you for setting such a good example.

First, I want to tell you, you're looking at an optimistic fellow, for a lot of reasons. I have seen what our country has come through, and we're strong, stronger than ever. The economy is growing. But let me remind you right quick what we have come through, which makes the statement "the economy is growing" even more profound.

We went through a recession. That's a hard time for a lot of people. That means the country is going backwards in the economy. In other words, we're not growing. And if you're somebody who is looking for work during a recession, it's hard to find a job. If you're a small business during a recession, your future is doubtful; it's cloudy. Things don't look so good. We passed tax relief, which made this recession the shallowest—one of the shallowest in economic history. In other words, we started to grow.

Just as we started to grow, the enemy hit us, and that hurt. It hurt in a lot of ways. It hurt our economy. We lost nearly a million jobs in the 3 months after the enemy attack. Just remember, during this attack we shut down the airlines. The stock markets closed down for a while. In other words, it hurt our economy. It also changed our outlook.

When I was coming up—in Midland, Texas, I want you to know—[*applause*]—there you go—which is where Laura is today, helping her mom move, and she sends her love—but we thought oceans could protect us from harm's way. And therefore, if you think an ocean can protect you from harm's way and you see a threat somewhere else, you can decide to deal with it or not; you're pretty well assured that you would be safe here at home.

But they hit us, and it changed the way Government must think about threats—can't take them for granted anymore. I vowed that day that we would bring justice to the killers. We have been on the offense since that day. We'll stay on the offense until those who have done us harm are brought to justice.

It affected us. It was a challenge we had to overcome. First, we had to overcome a recession, then we had to overcome an attack on our country. And just as we started coming out of that period—and we came out, by the way, because America refused to be intimidated. See, one of the greatest things about this country is the spirit of the Americans. You just heard me talk about the compassion. We've also got great spirit in this country. We are a determined, strong people.

Just as we started coming out of that, it turned out that some of our citizens forgot what it meant to be responsible citizens. You know who I'm talking about,

those who didn't tell the truth to their shareholders and their employees. We passed tough laws. Democrats and Republicans came together in Washington, DC, and sent a very clear message: We're not going to tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America; we'll hold people to account for not telling the truth.

However, that affected us, and it shook our confidence, when you think about it. When you think people are lying about their numbers, it affects the confidence. We're regaining that confidence, because you're seeing what's happening to people who didn't tell the truth. One good way to clean up the boardrooms is to send some of those who betrayed the trust—bring them to justice, is the best way to put it.

And then, as I told you, the September the 11th changed our calculation. Let me put it to you this way: When we see a gathering threat, we must deal with it before it materializes, is the best way to put it. Threats are dealt in different ways, by the way. Not every threat is dealt with the way I decided to deal with the threat in Iraq.

We looked at the intelligence in Iraq and saw a threat. The United States Congress, people in both political parties, looked at the same intelligence and came to the same conclusion. They saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at that intelligence, and once again, it saw a threat. So you might remember, I went to New York and gave the speech in front of the U.N. Security Council and said, "For 12 or 11 years, you have said this man's a threat. Let's make your words mean something. If he's a threat, let's give him a chance to disarm one more time and get rid of his weapons programs." As you might recall, he chose defiance.

So I was in a dilemma. I had a choice to make: Do I trust the word of a madman, a tyrant, somebody who had used weapons of mass destruction on his own people and on countries within his neighborhood, or do I remember the lessons of September the 11th and defend America? Given the choice between a madman and defending the country, I will defend America every time. [*Applause*] Thank you all.

Bob was telling me Bryan Machen is here. Where's Bryan? Somewhere. Bryan, thanks. You just got back from Iraq?

Bryan Machen. My dad did.

The President. Oh, okay. Hi, Dad. Thank you. Appreciate your service. Mr. Machen—Mr. Machen. Colonel Machen. What are you?

Command Sgt. Maj. James Machen, USAR. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Colonel now, as far as I'm concerned. Thank you for your service. Thank you for helping make America more secure.

We've got tough work there because, you see, there are terrorists there who would rather kill innocent people than allow for the advance of freedom. That's what you're seeing going on. These people hate freedom, and we love freedom. And that's where the clash occurs. See, we don't think freedom is America's gift to the world. We know that freedom is the Almighty's gift to every man and woman in this world. That's what we know.

And Machen will tell you there's a lot of brave people there that want to be free, but they've been tortured and terrorized and traumatized by a tyrant. And it's going to take a while for them to understand what freedom is all about. We will pass sovereignty on June 30th. We will stay the course in Iraq. We're not going to be intimidated by thugs or assassins. We're not going to cut and run from the people who long for freedom. Because, you know what? We understand a free Iraq is an historic opportunity to help change the world to be more peaceful. That's what we understand in this country.

I want to appreciate your service. For those of you who have got relatives in the Armed Forces, e-mail them and tell them the Commander in Chief is incredibly

proud of the sacrifice and service to our country.

Laura reminded me that one time on the TV screens in the summer of 2000, we saw "March to War." It is hard to have economic vitality when you're marching to war. That's a negative thought. It's about as negative a thought as you can think about. And so one of the hurdles we had to overcome besides recession, attack, corporate scandal, was the fact that I made the decision to defend us. We marched to war. It was a challenge we had to overcome. If you're somebody that's going to invest capital—in other words, if you're somebody that's trying to expand your business, you're going to probably hesitate if we're marching to war. If you're somebody looking for work, it's going to be harder to find work when the country is thinking about, "We're going to war."

We're now marching to peace. That's what we're doing. We've overcome that hurdle. I say we've overcome these four things. I just want to remind you of the statistics. Economic growth in the second half of 2003 was very strong. Manufacturing activity is up. One of the statistics I love to quote is that homeownership rates are the highest in our Nation's history. More people own their home in America. I'm particularly proud of the fact that more minority families own their home now, and that's an important statistic. We want more people owning something in America. The more people who own something, the more they have a vital stake in the future of this country. We want there to be a vibrant ownership society all throughout our country.

Recently, we saw that we added 308,000 new jobs for the month of March—that's a positive sign—plus 750,000 jobs since last August. This economy is strong, and it is getting stronger. And I intend to keep it that way through good policy.

Let me talk real quick about a couple of things we need to do to make sure that people can find work here at home. First, we've got to make sure that we're confident in trade policy. There's economic isolationists that want to wall us off from the rest of the world. I don't think that makes any sense. You're about to hear from a man who sells product overseas. And if he's selling product overseas, it means somebody is working. That's what that means. And see, Presidents before me, of both parties said, "Let's open up our markets for the good of the consumer." See, the more choice you have in Arkansas, the more likely it is you're going to get something you want at a better price.

And the problem is, other countries haven't treated us the same. That's the problem. And so my job is to say to other countries, "If we're going to open up our product—our markets for your products, you open up yours for us," because we're the best at what we do. We're great farmers. We're great ranchers. We're great timber people. We're great entrepreneurs and manufacturers. Give us a level playing field, and we can compete with anybody, anytime, anywhere. That's my attitude.

Secondly, we need good tort laws. You cannot run and expand your business; you can't find work here if people are getting sued all the time. We've got too many junk lawsuits.

We've got to worry about the cost of medical care. If you're somebody hiring somebody, if you're a small-business owner, the cost of medical care makes it awfully difficult to put people on the payroll. And therefore, we need association health care plans that allow small businesses to pool their resources—pool risk just like big businesses get to do, so health care is more affordable for the small-business sector. We need to expand health savings accounts. It's a new product. I'm telling you, it's going to make a big difference at controlling costs. We need medical liability reform at the Federal level. See, docs are getting sued too often, and they're leaving these small communities and rural communities in America, which means you don't have

health care; you don't have access to a doc. Plus, those who are hanging around are having to practice what's called defensive medicine, which is running up the cost. The cost of health care is tough to expand the job base. If we want jobs to stay at home and if we want the job base to expand, we've got to do something about the cost of health care.

We need an energy plan in this country. I'm telling you, it's hard to expand our job base; it's hard to keep jobs here at home if you're worried about the reliability of electricity and if you're worried about finding natural gas at reasonable price.

I put out a plan to the United States Congress a while ago. I think "a while ago" means a couple of years ago, by the way. Sometimes progress is slow. It said let's make the electricity systems reliable. See, if you're a manufacturer and you're wondering whether or not you're going to have electricity the next day, if that worry is in your mind, it's hard to expand your business. Let's make sure we utilize coal in America. Clean coal technology is important. Let's make sure we explore for natural gas here within our territory. Let's encourage conservation. Let's be smart about technology. But for the sake of jobs and job expansion, we must become less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

I'm getting there, I promise you. I'm winding up. You're probably wondering if anybody else is going to say a word. [*Laughter*] Thankfully, Laura is not here. She'd be going—[*laughter*].

One of the reasons why we grew is because of tax relief. And a lot of that tax relief is set to expire this year. The child credit is going down, which means if you've got a child, you're fixing to pay more taxes. It's a bad time to be raising taxes.

If the marriage penalty is going back up—see, one of the things we did in working with the Congress is reduce the effects of the marriage penalty. I don't quite get a tax system that discourages marriage by taxing it. It just doesn't make any sense. We ought to be encouraging marriage in America, not discouraging that institution.

I insisted, on the tax relief, we cut the rates on everybody who pays taxes. Some of them howled up in Washington when I did that. See, my attitude is, Government ought not to play favorites in the tact of, "You don't pay taxes, but you do." My attitude was, everybody who pays taxes ought to get relief if we're going to have relief.

It also had this effect. You see, most small businesses in America are sole proprietorships or Subchapter S corporations. That means they pay tax at the individual income tax. If you're worried about jobs—see, when I hear people looking for work and they can't find jobs, I worry about it—then what you want to do is stimulate small-business growth, because 70 percent of the new jobs in America are created by small businesses. And when you cut the individual income-tax rates, you're affecting small businesses in a significant way. You get more money in the pockets of the small-business owners, which makes it more likely they're going to hire somebody.

So by cutting the individual income-tax rates, we sent a message, loud and clear, that small businesses matter in America. Small businesses are the primary job creators in this country. We want there to be a small-business sector which is really strong. Congress needs to make all the tax cuts we pass permanent in order to make sure this economic recovery lasts.

I told you we're creating new jobs. Let me tell you something really interesting about Arkansas, and this is going to get us to the discussion, I promise you. Jobs in computer and math-related fields are expected to rise by nearly 60 percent by the year 2010 in the State of Arkansas. Health care and technical jobs are expected to rise by nearly 40 percent. That's an interesting statistic I want people to focus on right quick. In other words, there's going to be jobs. The question is, are people going to be prepared to fill those jobs? That's really what we're here to talk about today.

There's jobs. It's just some people are used to working in different kind of fields. And there's ways to get retrained for the jobs. That's what we're going to talk about here in a second. Before we do, I want you to know I fully understand that we've got to get it right at early grades. The No Child Left Behind Act is a really good piece of law, for this reason: It finally asked the question whether or not our children are learning to read, write, and add and subtract early. That's what it's asking. It doesn't seem too much to ask, does it, for increased Federal spending? You know, it's an important question to ask, because if you don't ask, you don't find out. And we better find out now, before it's too late.

This business about shuffling kids through the system is going to end, as far as I'm concerned. You know who is easy to shuffle? Inner-city black kids, that's who is easy to shuffle. It's easy to quit on them. You walk into a classroom, see a bunch of the so-called hard to educate—"Let's just shuffle them through." That's not fair. It's easy to quit on families who don't speak English as a first language—"He's a little too hard to educate; the best thing we've got to do here is just move him through." That's not going to work. It's not American. You see, I believe every child can learn. I believe every child has got it in him to learn. We must raise the standards.

The reason you have an accountability system is to test what you're—whether what you're doing is working. The reason you have an accountability system is to solve problems early, before it's too late. Part of the No Child Left Behind Act says when we find a child who has fallen behind early, there's extra help, extra money, extra ability to make sure kids get caught up. That's a vital part of making sure that our children have the skills necessary to fill the jobs of the 21st century.

We need to do more. See, I think high schools need to be—need to have the bar raised. I think all high schools ought to participate in what's called the NAEP. The NAEP is a national norming test. It's not a national test. It says there is—they take the Arkansas test and they compare them to other States to determine whether or not standards are being met. That's all it is. You need to know; your Governor needs to know; the citizens need to know how you stack up relative to other places, if you expect to educate children for the jobs of the 21st century. If you want Kathy not to have to reeducate people, you better get it right early. That's what I'm saying.

We recognize that some of the kids haven't had the advantage of accountability early, and so they've been shuffling through. So I put out an initiative called the Striving Readers Initiative, which is a competitive grant program that will help intervention with 8th and 9th and 10th grade kids now. In other words, we've got some kids—one of the things that's important for those of us in positions of responsibility, you've got to be just flat honest about things. We've got kids who can't read, see, and they're moving through. And we've got to stop it, and we've got to solve the problem. And so this initiative I've sent up to Congress provides $100 million for competitive grants so that the school district here, if you need it, can access the money to have strong intervention programs.

We've got a Mathematics and Science Partnership Program. One of the problems we've got, you heard me describe the kinds of jobs that will be available in Arkansas by 2010—you better make sure your math programs and science programs work. See, a new skill set is necessary to fill the new jobs. And therefore, we put out a program, a Math and Science Partnership Program, which will help teachers with curriculum but also provide extra help for kids just to make sure they don't get shuffled through. I mean, literacy is more than just being able to read. There's math literacy as well that we want to effect.

We've got an adjunct teacher program. That's an important way to help recruit

professionals into the classroom to teach math. If you've got yourself a retired NASA employee in your neighborhood, it seems like to me you want to be able to have that person go into the classrooms and teach science or math. One of the things the superintendent may tell you here—I know I've heard it from other superintendents—is that we've got a shortage of math teachers and science teachers. This is a practical way, Governor, to get people into the classrooms, to make sure that kids have got the skills necessary to be employable in the 21st century.

Perhaps you've heard of the Carl D. Perkins Act, which is a vocational training program. We spend about a billion a year for vocational training, and that's good. The program was written in 1917. I don't know if they understood what was going to be taking place in the year 2004. I suspect they didn't. I suspect they would be shocked to hear us talk about the skill level necessary to fill the jobs of the 21st century. My attitude is, is that this vocational training program ought to go forth, but it ought to make sure that the kids learn to speak English and that there's algebra and there's a science and social science component.

In other words, when kids are coming out of the vocational training program, they're going to need to do more than just what's taught at the vocational training level. They're going to need to be able to think. And we can't let kids go through without raising the standards and raising the bar. So I'm going to ask Congress to reform the Perkins vocational program. That's not to cut back on the money; it's quite the contrary. It's to make sure the money we are spending prepares these youngsters for the jobs of the 21st century.

I've got some other ideas I want to share with you right quick, and then I promise you—[*laughter*]. One of the challenges is to continue to raise standards; it's to raise that bar. A great way to do so is to expand advanced placement programs all across America. I've got a Federal program that does just that. It says we're going to train more teachers on how to teach AP.

Let me tell you one of the problems with advanced placement. You've got a kid going through AP, and they go home and say, "I need my money to take the test." And if you're low-income, that money means a lot to you. We need to help low-income students take the advanced placement test by paying for the entrance exam, is what we ought to do. I think that will help you attract people to the AP program. Advanced placement means you're taking college level type courses in high school. It means we're preparing people for the jobs of the 21st century.

We've got a State Scholars program here in Arkansas. We're going to hear—right there is the leading evangelist for the State Scholar program. We'll talk about it. It's a rigorous academic program. In other words, it's one thing to intervene and make sure kids don't get left behind. It's another thing to keep raising those standards. Raising the bar is what I want to do, is enhance the Pell grants. That says if you take the State Scholars program in Arkansas, you get more money for your Pell grant. It provides incentive. It says, for rigorous academics, we want to help you more with the Pell grant. It means you get to go to college, get help. But it says to a kid, "Take math and science, is what it takes." You're going to hear what it means in a minute.

The other thing I want to do is to make a—set up a Presidential Math and Science Scholars Fund, $50 million of Federal money matched by $50 million in the private sector—we'll be able to raise that—that says that when you go to college, we'll enhance your Pell grant if you continue to take math and science programs.

See, we want people to be prepared for the 21st century. That's what we want. We want to keep raising that bar. We want to make sure nobody gets left behind, but at the same time, we want to provide proper incentives, so people can have hope in

this country. That's what we're talking about. Listen, the jobs will be there. We're going to stay on the edge of technological change. We've just got to make sure people are prepared for the jobs.

You're about to hear two interesting stories about people who made some decisions in their life. The final thing I want to mention to you, in conjunction with these two stories, is that there's a lot of people that need help now that have been out of school for a while. And that's where the community colleges come in. Yesterday I gave a speech at a community college in North Carolina, before I went over and unleashed my fastball in St. Louis. [*Laughter*] And I talked about a direct grant program to help collaborative efforts between community colleges and job providers. See, that's the way you make sure people are trained for jobs which exist. I talked about reforming the Workforce Investment Act so it actually functions by getting more people trained for the jobs.

But the community college system is really an important part of our future, and that's why we're here. And so I want to first start off with Kathy. I want her to describe to you some of the programs that she's doing here. I think you'll find them interesting, the nursing program, for example.

Kathy, thanks for having me. Why don't you inform the good folks about this great asset they have in their community.

[*At this point, Kathy Matlock, president, South Arkansas Community College, made brief remarks.*]

The President. What you hear around our country a lot is that there are regional health centers that are looking for workers. That's what you're hearing. The economy changes. We're in a time of transition. That's what you hear. You hear "productivity increases." That means people need to be, in some cases, reeducated for the jobs which exist. A more productive worker makes more money.

One of my favorite stories I tell is, I met this lady in Mesa Community College in Phoenix, Arizona. She was a graphic design artist, and she went back to the community college. Now, that's not easy to do. You're about to meet a fellow who has done this, by the way. It's not easy for some to go back to community college. A lot of people say, "Gosh, I can't go back to school. I'm too old or not interested." She went back—she got helped by the Government; she went back. And in her entry-level job, in her new job—having taken a technical course at Mesa Community College, she got out—she made more in her first year than she did in her 15th year as a graphic artist. In other words, if you gain new skills and become more productive, you're going to make more money.

And so when you hear people talk about productivity, it means—really means new skill levels. And productivity is good for America. When you're a more productive country, your standard of living goes up; people make more money. And we've got to make sure people have got the skills to be more productive. And that's what we're talking about here. When you go to—when you work in the health care field, you're learning new skills that make you productive so you're employable for the jobs which actually exist.

Bob Hogan knows something about employing people. That's what he does. He's the CEO of AmerCable, right here. We're glad you're here. Tell us about your company, whatever you want to talk about.

Bob Hogan. Oh, you don't want to do that.

The President. Just don't talk about the Arkansas-Texas game. Other than that, whatever you want to talk about. [*Laughter*]

[*Mr. Hogan made brief remarks.*]

The President. Let me stop you right there. Hear what he said? This company, right here in El Dorado, Arkansas, that employs——

Mr. Hogan. About 220 people.

The President. Right. Thirty percent of their sales—I don't think you can say 30 percent of the workforce depends, but you can say a significant part of the workforce depends on his ability to sell overseas. If we're to become economic isolationists, he's not going to be able to sell overseas. See, that's the problem with trade wars and bad trade policy.

Sorry for interrupting.

Mr. Hogan. You can do that any time. [*Laughter*]

The President. Okay. My kind of guy. [*Laughter*]

[*Mr. Hogan made further remarks.*]

The President. Do you help them with tuition here?

Mr. Hogan. We have a tuition reimbursement program for our people.

The President. Yes.

Mr. Hogan. We sure do.

The President. See, here's the thing. If you're out there wondering whether or not you can find work and whether or not you have the skills necessary to find a job, there's help, sometimes through your employer, sometimes through the Pell grant program. There's ways to find work; it's just up to you. Government can't say to somebody, "Be motivated." [*Laughter*] That's not the proper—we can't say, "Love somebody." We can't say, "Be motivated." That's up to you. But we can say, "We want to help you if you are motivated."

And I want to appreciate you very much, Bob, for being a responsible CEO, somebody who understands that you've got to take care of your workers and you've got to make sure they're trained. I appreciate you coming. Thanks.

Okay. We're lucky enough that Juanita Vines has joined us. She's got a very interesting story. First, I want to congratulate her on being her valedictorian of her high school class. I'm not going to ask her how long ago it was.

Juanita Vines. It wasn't that long.

The President. No, it wasn't that long ago, I know, but it wasn't yesterday, either. Tell me about yourself.

[*Ms. Vines, student, South Arkansas Community College, made brief remarks.*]

The President. Yes, let me ask you something. There's a reason why you're doing that besides Mom probably telling you. I'm still listening to my mom too. [*Laughter*] Well, most of the time. [*Laughter*] Are you—do you make more money if you get a bachelor's? Is there a master? Is there an economic incentive? This is a leading question. [*Laughter*]

Ms. Vines. It's like this. The more letters you get behind your name, the more money you have. [*Laughter*]

The President. Actually, you might want to phrase it a little differently. The more skills you learn——

Ms. Vines. The more skills you learn——

The President. There you go.

Ms. Vines. ——the more educated you become, the more money you can make.

The President. Here is a valedictorian in her class who has come to this community college who's on her way to greater things. And I want to thank you for your motivation. Really good job.

Ms. Vines. Thank you.

The President. Superintendent of schools, big Bob Watson is here. [*Laughter*] They ever call you "Big Bob"?

Bob Watson. Yes, sir. And Governor—excuse me, President. [*Laughter*]

The President. How quickly they forget. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Watson. You've been welcomed, and I think properly so, but I like to do things in a big way, so I'm going to shake hands with you so you truly will have had a big welcome.

The President. Just don't hug me. [*Laughter*] Thank you, sir. He's the superintendent of schools, in case you don't know it.

Mr. Watson. Go ahead.

The President. No, I was going to say, tell us what you're doing.

[*Mr. Watson, superintendent, El Dorado Public Schools, made brief remarks.*]

The President. Oh, that's great. Well, thanks. I appreciate it. You know that the Secretary of Education was a superintendent of schools too. I decided to put somebody in a position of responsibility that had actually done it. [*Laughter*] Thank you.

Mr. Watson. Thank you.

The President. Good job.

Okay, Tony Johnson is with us. Tony, this is a really interesting story. Have you ever been in the military, Tony?

Tony Johnson. Yes, sir, I have. I served 4 years in the Air Force and 4 years in the Army, achieving the rank of sergeant in both.

The President. I appreciate that. All right, let her rip. Tell us about it. [*Laughter*]

[*Mr. Johnson, student, South Arkansas Community College, made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

Mr. Johnson. When I was 17, I was told by a couple of teachers to give up on the idea of going to college.

The President. Let me stop right there. This guy—a 17-year-old kid, and somebody told him not to go to college. That is the soft bigotry of low expectations. It's precisely the opposite of what we're talking about here. Let her go.

[*Mr. Johnson made further remarks.*]

The President. There you go. This is a guy that shouldn't have gone to college. You're doing good. This is a guy who's not even supposed to be here, right? He was told he can't come here. He's now head of the honor society. He got a Pell grant. There's a lot of people wondering whether or not they can go back to school. A lot of people are saying, "Well, gosh, I'm just—my skills aren't what is needed, and they're not high enough to get a good job, but I don't want to go back to school. Nobody my age will be there." Here's a living example of a guy who has decided to improve himself.

What are you going to do with your degree, your honors degree, I might add?

Mr. Johnson. Well, that was a self-esteem booster right there in itself. It showed that I could actually do the work. I know that my income will double over what I was making before.

The President. Yes. It's a lot easier to be smart and use your skills that you learned in a community college and make a lot more money. More productive, that's what that means. But tell me, do you have any dreams? Because, guess what, somebody is probably listening now to this story that might actually make the salary triple, if we're lucky. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Johnson. Well, as soon as I finish my associate's, I plan on going to get my bachelor's. I hope to one day teach.

The President. Fantastic. Great story. That's good. I'll tell you one thing, when you teach, you're never going to look at anybody and say, "You can't go to college." You'll be the guy saying, "You can do anything you want." I appreciate you. Thanks, Tony. It's a great story.

Mr. Johnson. I would just like to say to educators and future educators that it only takes one phrase to make or break a kid, and I'm living proof.

The President. You know something, Tony, it didn't break you, brother. It didn't break you, it just delayed you.

Mr. Johnson. I attribute that to the Army.

The President. And that's what people have got to understand. There's a lot of second chances in this world to go back to school. If you're wondering whether or not you want to stay at the end of a shovel, hurting your back, or want to get some new skills to take advantage of the jobs that are being created right here in this community, take a look here at the community college. There's help.

That's what we're here to talk about. We want every citizen in this country to be able to get the skills necessary to fill the jobs of the 21st century. There are new jobs being created. We just want to make sure the people have got the skills necessary to fill those jobs. That's what we're talking about. In order to make sure jobs are here—stay at home—in order to make sure the country is on the leading edge of technological change, we have got to make sure people have the skills necessary to fill those jobs. And it doesn't matter whether you've been in the Army for 8—or Air Force for 4 and Army for 4, there's still a chance.

And one of the things—there are people in every community that are wildly optimistic about things. Sammie is wildly optimistic about what she does. She is a—go ahead and tell me what you do.

Sammie Briery. Well, for a living, I work for the best bank in Arkansas, HEARTLAND Community Bank. I believe some of my coworkers might be out there.

The President. Probably your boss, after that.

Ms. Briery. Absolutely he is.

The President. All right, that's enough of that. No self-promotion. [*Laughter*]

[*Ms. Briery, Arkansas Scholars program coordinator, Camden Area Chamber of Commerce, Camden, AR, made brief remarks.*]

The President. You're doing good, Sam.

Ms. Briery. I told you you'd have to cut me off.

The President. I haven't cut you off yet. You and my mother go to the same hair-dye person. [*Laughter*]

Ms. Briery. President Bush, I'm a natural blonde.

The President. Oh, yes.

Ms. Briery. I'm just a natural blonde.

The President. I couldn't help myself, sorry. [*Laughter*] Do you want to say something? Good job.

[*The discussion continued.*]

The President. Thank you very much. Listen, I hope you've enjoyed this as much as I have. I found it to be interesting. It's just an uplifting experience, isn't it, to come and hear people who are taking responsibility for the education in the community in which you live, and the business guy who wants to help people, the students who are motivated. It is exciting. And I want to thank you all for doing this. You did a great job. And the stories are compelling.

You want to say something? Yes, okay. Here I am in my peroration. That's kind of the emotional part before the conclusion. [*Laughter*] Anyway, go ahead.

Mr. Watson. I just wanted to add that with everybody here, that education is the great equalizer in life. And I came from parents with no education and put five kids through college and four through post-graduate school, and it's the great equalizer. And it's the best thing a parent can give to children, is the gift of learning. And it just changes everybody's life around. And that math and science foundation that you have, we're ready to sign up, and we'll be matching something.

The President. Thank you.

Mr. Watson. I'm sure we have a lot out here that will as well.

The President. Thank you very much. You know, I want to follow what Bob said. He said a great gift from a parent is two things: one, a good education, and unconditional love—unconditional love.

God bless you all for letting us come by. Thanks. It's great to be El Dorado, Arkansas.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:05 a.m. at South Arkansas Community College. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Mike Huckabee of Arkansas and his wife, Janet; Lt. Gov. Win Rockefeller of Arkansas; Cathy Boozman, wife of Representative John Boozman; and Mayor Bobby Beard of El Dorado, AR.

Statement on the Fighting in the Darfur Region of Sudan
April 7, 2004

New fighting in the Darfur region of Sudan has opened a new chapter of tragedy in Sudan's troubled history. The Sudanese Government must immediately stop local militias from committing atrocities against the local population and must provide unrestricted access to humanitarian aid agencies. I condemn these atrocities, which are displacing hundreds of thousands of civilians, and I have expressed my views directly to President Bashir of Sudan.

For more than 2½ years, the United States has been working closely with the Government of Sudan and the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) to bring peace to Sudan. This civil war is one of the worst humanitarian tragedies of our time, responsible for the deaths of two million people over two decades. Achieving peace and reaching a just and comprehensive agreement must be an urgent priority for both sides.

The United States will move toward normal relations with the Government of Sudan only when there is a just and comprehensive peace agreement between the Government and the SPLM. All parties must also ensure that there is unrestricted access for humanitarian relief throughout Sudan, including Darfur, and the Government of Sudan must cooperate fully in the war against terrorism.

I continue to hope for peace for the people of Sudan and for normalization of relations between Sudan and the United States. However, the Government of Sudan must not remain complicit in the brutalization of Darfur. I renew my call to Khartoum to bring the peace process with the SPLM to a just conclusion and to bring peace and justice to Darfur.

Statement on the 10th Anniversary of the 1994 Rwanda Genocide
April 7, 2004

Ten years ago today, the world witnessed the beginning of one of the most horrific episodes of the 20th century, the 1994 Rwanda genocide. A 100-day campaign waged by Hutu extremists tore Rwanda apart and resulted in the murder of at least 800,000 Tutsi men, women, and children, as well as many moderate Hutus. This genocide also included systematic rape and sexual violence against countless Tutsi women and the orphaning of thousands of children.

The United States supports the people of Rwanda as they commemorate this horrific chapter in history. We urge all states, particularly those in the region, to work with Rwanda and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda to bring to justice those responsible for the genocide and to repatriate the thousands of displaced Rwandans. We also urge the international community to assist the survivors of that great crime as they continue to heal. The United States will continue to assist Rwanda in the unification of families, the providing of scholarships, the combating of HIV/AIDS, and the promotion of the rule of law.

The United States joins Rwanda and members of the global community in this day of reflection.

Message on the Observance of Easter 2004
April 9, 2004

The Lord is risen indeed . . .

LUKE 24:34

I send greetings to Christians around the world as they gather to celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus' life and teachings continue to speak to every generation, and Christians believe his miraculous Resurrection provides hope for the future and offers us the promise of new life.

Through His ministry and sacrifice, Jesus demonstrated God's unconditional love for us. He taught us the importance of helping others and loving our neighbors. His selfless devotion and mercy provide a remarkable example for all of us.

As families and friends gather to enjoy this Easter season, we celebrate God's gift of freedom and His love that conquers death. For those who observe Easter, our faith brings confidence that good will overcome evil and that joy is everlasting. Today, we give thanks for God's many blessings and pray for His peace in the affairs of men.

Laura joins me in sending our best wishes for a happy Easter.

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language version of this message. An original was not available for verification of the content of this message.

The President's Radio Address
April 10, 2004

Good morning. This week in Iraq, our coalition forces have faced challenges and taken the fight to the enemy, and our offensive will continue in the weeks ahead.

As the June 30th date for Iraqi sovereignty draws near, a small faction is attempting to derail Iraqi democracy and seize power. In some cities, Saddam supporters and terrorists have struck against coalition forces. In other areas, attacks were incited by a radical named Muqtada Al Sadr, who is wanted for the murder of a respected Shiite cleric. Al Sadr has called for violence against coalition troops, and his band of thugs have terrorized Iraqi police and ordinary citizens.

Coalition forces are conducting a multicity offensive. In Fallujah, marines of Operation Vigilant Resolve are taking control of the city, block by block. Further south, troops of Operation Resolute Sword have taken the initiative from Al Sadr's militia. Our coalition's quick reaction forces are finding and engaging the enemy. Prisoners are being taken, and intelligence is being gathered. Our decisive actions will continue until these enemies of democracy are dealt with.

Some have suggested that we should respond to the recent attacks by delaying Iraqi sovereignty. This is precisely what our enemies want. They want to dictate the course of events in Iraq and to prevent the Iraqi people from having a true voice in their future. They want America and our coalition to falter in our commitments before a watching world. In these ambitions, the enemies of freedom will fail. Iraqi sovereignty will arrive on June 30th.

In March, the Iraqi Governing Council signed a document that protects the rights of the Iraqi people, offers the timetable

for elections, and paves the way for a permanent constitution. At this moment, United Nations Special Envoy Lakhdar Brahimi is conducting intensive consultations with a wide range of Iraqis on the structure of the interim government that will assume control on July the first. We welcome this U.N. engagement.

The transition to sovereignty will mark the beginning of a new Government and the end of the coalition's administrative duties, but the coalition's commitment to Iraq will continue. We will establish a new American Embassy to protect our Nation's interests. We will continue helping the Iraqi people reconstruct their economy, undermined by decades of dictatorship and corruption. And our coalition forces will remain committed to the security of Iraq.

Iraq's elections for a permanent Government are scheduled to be held near the end of 2005, and the elected Government can count on coalition assistance. We will stand with the Iraqi people as long as necessary to ensure that their young democracy is stable and secure and successful.

As we have done before, America is fighting on the side of liberty, liberty in Iraq and liberty in the Middle East. This objective serves the interests of that region, of the United States, and of all freedom-loving countries. As the greater Middle East increasingly becomes a place where freedom flourishes, the lives of millions in that region will be bettered, and the American people and the entire world will be more secure.

From the first days of the war on terror, I said our Nation would face periods of struggle and testing. As the June 30th transition approaches, we will continue to see a test of wills between the enemies of freedom and its defenders. We will win this test of wills and overcome every challenge, because the cause of freedom and security is worth our struggle.

This weekend, many of the men and women who serve that cause in uniform will celebrate Easter and Passover far from home. In this season that celebrates hope and freedom, our Nation remembers in prayer the good and the brave people of our military. They are the best of America, and America is firmly behind them.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 8:50 a.m. on April 9 at the Bush Ranch in Crawford, TX, for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on April 10. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 9 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. In his address, the President referred to former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks and an Exchange With Reporters at Fort Hood, Texas
April 11, 2004

Easter

The President. Happy Easter to everybody. It's our honor to have celebrated this holy day with family members whose loved one is in Iraq. Fort Hood has made a mighty contribution to freedom in Iraq and to security for the country. I value my time with the family members and those who sacrifice on behalf of the country.

Today I ask for God's blessings for our troops overseas. May He protect them, and may He continue to bless our country.

I'll answer a couple of questions. Scott [Scott Lindlaw, Associated Press].

Situation in Iraq

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. We're coming off a week in which dozens of American soldiers have died. We've seen images of incredible violence and chaos. Should Americans brace for weeks or months of this? Do you expect it to abate soon? And also, what's General Abizaid telling you about how many more troops he'll need, if any?

The President. Yes, I've spoken to General Abizaid twice in the last 4 or 5 days. He knows full well that when he speaks to me that if he needs additional manpower, he can ask for it. He believes, like I believe, that this violence we've seen is part of a few people trying to stop progress toward democracy. Fallujah, south of Baghdad—these incidents were basically thrust upon the innocent Iraqi people by gangs, violent gangs.

And our troops are taking care of business. Their job is to make Iraq more secure so that a peaceful Iraq can emerge, and they're doing a great job. And it was a tough week last week, and my prayers and thoughts are with those who paid the ultimate price for our security. A free Iraq will make the world more peaceful. A free Iraq is going to change the world. And it's been tough, and our troops are performing brilliantly and bravely.

Q. Do you think it's right to add—[*inaudible*].

The President. It's hard to tell. I just know this, that we're plenty tough, and we'll remain tough. Now, listen, obviously, we're openminded to suggestions—members of the Governing Council wanted a chance to move into Fallujah and see if they could bring some order to the gangs and violence. And as you can tell, our military is giving them a chance to do so. Obviously, I pray every day there's less casualty.

But I know what we're doing in Iraq is right. It's right for long-term peace. It's right for the security of our country, and it's hard work. And today, on bended knee, I thank the good Lord for protecting those of our troops overseas and our coalition troops and innocent Iraqis who suffer at the hands of some of these senseless killings by people who are trying to shake our will.

Yes, sir.

President's Daily Briefing

Q. Mr. President, could you tell us, did you see the Presidential—the President's Daily Brief from August of '01 as a warning——

The President. Did I see it? Of course I saw it. I asked for it.

Q. No, no, I'm sorry. Did you see it as a warning of hijackers? And how did you respond to that?

The President. My response was exactly like then as it is today, that I asked for the Central Intelligence Agency to give me an update on any terrorist threats. And the PDB was no indication of a terrorist threat. There was not a time and place of an attack. It said Usama bin Laden had designs on America. Well, I knew that. What I wanted to know was, is there anything specifically going to take place in America that we needed to react to?

As you might recall, there was some specific threats for overseas that we reacted to. And as the President, I wanted to know whether there was anything, any actionable intelligence. And I looked at the August 6th briefing. I was satisfied that some of the matters were being looked into. But that PDB said nothing about an attack on America. It talked about intentions, about somebody who hated America—well, we knew that.

Yes, Dave [David Gregory, NBC News].

Q. Just to follow up on that, Mr. President. There was, in that PDB, specific information about activity that may speak to a larger battle plan, even if it wasn't specific. So I wonder if you could say what specifically was done, and do you think your administration should have done anything more?

The President. David, look, let me just say it again. Had I known there was going to be an attack on America, I would have moved mountains to stop the attack. I would have done everything I can. My job is to protect the American people. And I asked the intelligence agency to analyze the data to tell me whether or not we faced a threat internally, like they thought we had faced a threat in other parts of the world. That's what the PDB request was. And had there been actionable intelligence, we would have moved on it.

I'm not exactly sure what you're referring to in the PDB, but if you're referring to the fact that the FBI was investigating things, that's great. That's what we expect the FBI to do.

Q. Wasn't that current threat information? That wasn't historical; that was ongoing.

The President. Right, and had they found something, they would have reported it to me. That's—we were doing precisely what the American people expects us to do, run down every lead, look at every scintilla of intelligence, and follow up on it. But there was—again, I can't say it as plainly as this: Had I known, we would have acted. Of course we would have acted. Any administration would have acted. The previous administration would have acted. That's our job.

Q. Are you satisfied, though, that each agency was doing everything it should have been doing?

The President. Well, that's what the 9/11 Commission should look into, and I hope it does. It's an important part of the assignment of the 9/11 Commission. And I look forward to their recommendations, a full analysis of what took place. I am satisfied that I never saw any intelligence that indicated there was going to be an attack on America—at a time and a place, an attack. Of course we knew that America was hated by Usama bin Laden. That was obvious. The question was, who was going to attack us, when and where and with what. And you might recall the hijacking that was referred to in the PDB. It was not a hijacking of an airplane to fly into a building; it was hijacking of airplanes in order to free somebody that was being held as a prisoner in the United States.

Okay, thank you all. Happy Easter to everybody. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:15 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Gen. John P. Abizaid, USA, combatant commander, U.S. Central Command; and Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

The President's News Conference With President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt in Crawford, Texas
April 12, 2004

President Bush. Thank you all for coming. I'm pleased to welcome my friend Hosni Mubarak to my home. Welcome. I always look forward to visiting with him, and I look forward to hearing his wise counsel. I appreciate his frank views on many challenges that face our two nations and that face the greater Middle East.

Our nations have a relationship that is strong and warm. Our people share the bonds of friendship, a commitment to prosperity and peace and regional stability. Egypt is a strategic partner of the United States, and we value President Mubarak's years of effort on behalf of the peace and stability of the Middle East.

The meetings we have just had focused on these goals and on ways to make the Middle East safer and more secure. We recognize that the starting point for a prosperous and peaceful Middle East must be the rejection of terror. Egypt has taken a firm stand against terror by working to disrupt the activities and capabilities of the region's terrorist organizations. These are the policies of a nation and a statesman that understand the threat that terrorism poses to all of us, to my Nation, to his, to all the Arab states, to Israel, and to the future of any Palestinian state. Terrorism must be opposed, and it must be defeated. And I'm grateful for President Mubarak's support in the global war against terror.

Our objective in the Middle East must be true peace, not just a pause between wars, which can only happen within a framework of democracy and stability. I'm pleased that Egypt has engaged its neighbor Israel on closer trade ties that will help the Egyptian people find jobs and improve their lives. President Mubarak and I discussed the possible Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and our shared view that creation of a democratic, peaceful Palestinian state is a necessary goal on the road to peace.

We also believe that the future of the Middle East and the future of Iraq are closely linked, and I am grateful for President Mubarak's support for Iraq as it transitions to democracy and stability. The people of the greater Middle East have a right to be safe, secure, prosperous, and free.

President Mubarak and I spoke about the future of the region and of Egypt. Just as Egypt has shown the way toward peace in the Middle East, it will set the standard in the region for democracy by strengthening democratic institutions and political participation.

I'm encouraged by the ongoing debate on reform in Egypt, including the excellent discussions involving civil society representatives from the Arab world who met at the Alexandria Library in March. And President Mubarak can be confident in my friendship and America's partnership as he moves forward to realize the hopes of his people.

I welcome my good friend Hosni to my home. Our countries have three decades of solid, beneficial relations behind us, and the United States will continue to work with Egypt and the Arab world in a spirit of common purpose and mutual respect.

Thank you for coming, sir.

President Mubarak. I would like to thank President Bush for inviting me to his ranch in Crawford and for the friendly atmosphere and the gracious hospitality that prevailed throughout our meeting today. I had constructive, candid, and friendly discussions with President Bush and with members of his administration on a wide range of issues of mutual concern.

Our strategic relationship, which has matured over the past 30 years, has constituted a force for stability, both regionally and globally. The statement issued today, on the 30th anniversary of the reestablishment of diplomatic relations between Egypt and the United States, gives a clear reflection of our strong commitment to advance our special relationship and deepen our cooperation.

Together we have faced the challenges of peace, fighting terror and defeating aggression. In cooperation with the United States, many of Egypt's reform and development objectives have been achieved over the years. Our partnership is based on trust, mutual respect, and the increasing political will on both sides to continue to assume the responsibilities of leadership. These same principles will guide us into the future as we face a new set of challenges on the world stage and as we enter a new phase of reform on our domestic front.

Egypt has moved with vigor and determination over the past years to shoulder its increasing responsibilities in the Middle East. At the same time, we've confronted domestic challenges through an ambition

and irreversible program of reform. Our reform efforts have and will continue to emanate from my Government's desire to further widen the scope of democracy, freedom, and political participation in a vibrant and dynamic civil society.

Egypt's political reform program constitutes a core component of our comprehensive effort to improve the quality of life of our people. Our efforts continue to focus on opening up new opportunities for our citizens to improve their livelihood within a competitive global environment. In this, we seek to build on our numerous achievements in the areas of good governance, sustainable economic growth, education, and health care within a caring society in which social policies are central to our development goals. We continue to move forward within a process of debate and interaction between Government, civil society, and different political parties in Egypt.

We have also expanded the debate to include participation from the Arab world through a process of interaction among the civil society representatives in the region, which was launched at the Library of Alexandria last March. Your support, Mr. President, for our steps in that endeavor is appreciated.

On regional issues, we discussed our respective responsibilities regarding the peace process in the Middle East. The United States has always assumed a leading role in the search for peace in our region. I expressed my strong desire to see that leading role continue with ever greater vigor and determination to realize our vision of a two-state solution as early as possible in the context of a comprehensive, just, and lasting settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

I expressed to the President the centrality of the conflict to the people of the region. It is our conviction that reviving the hopes of peace through our determined efforts to put the peace process back on track is central to enhancing the prospects of reform and the prosperity in the region. Egypt has pioneered the path of peace in the region for over 25 years and will continue to assume its responsibilities for peace today. I reaffirmed to President Bush Egypt's steadfast commitment to do whatever it takes to revive the hopes for a comprehensive settlement and to bring the parties back to the path of dialog and negotiations.

On Iraq, I conveyed to the President our serious concerns about the current state of affairs, particularly in the security and the humanitarian areas. I further stressed the importance of restoring Iraq's sovereignty as soon as possible within a context that preserves its territorial integrity and unites all Iraqis toward a common future. The recent efforts to increase the role of the U.N. in that process is an important step that should be further encouraged.

We discussed our joint effort to fight terror. We agreed to intensify our extensive cooperation in this regard, to include finding solutions to the political and economic problems that represent the underlying causes of terrorism.

We discussed also various aspects of our bilateral relations, including the importance of deepening our economic and cultural ties. In the economic field, I briefed the President on our economic reform program and said the importance of free trade with the United States in attaining our economic objectives. I also stressed the importance of promoting cultural exchange and furthering the links between civil society in both our nations. This is certain to enhance mutual understanding between our two peoples and between the United States and the Arab world at large.

I am confident, Mr. President, after your talks today, that through our strategic partnership, we will continue to confront the challenge before us with greater determination and resolute leadership.

Thank you.

President Bush. Thank you, sir. Good job.

We'll answer two questions a side. We'll start with the American side here with Scott [Scott Lindlaw, Associated Press].

President's Daily Briefing

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. I'd like to take you back to August 6, 2001, if I could, ask you about your personal response when you received the PDB. Do you recall whether you called Bob Mueller, asked him about what the FBI was doing, asked about these 70 field investigations? And also, did your mind go back to the PDB when September 11th hit?

President Bush. Bob Mueller wasn't the Director of the FBI at the time.

Q. Did you call the Director?

President Bush. I don't think there was a Director. But no, here's my recollection. First, I asked for the PDB. In other words, I said to the intelligence agency, "Bring me up to date. What do you know? Give me an assessment," I guess is the best way to put it. And I read it and, obviously, was discomforted by the fact that Usama bin Laden hated America. But as I mentioned yesterday, we already knew that, and the fundamental question is, what was—was there any actionable intelligence. And by that I mean, was there anything that the agency could tell me that would then cause me to have to do something to make a decision to protect America.

There was nothing in there that said, you know, "There's an imminent attack." There was nothing in this report to me that said, "Oh, by the way, we've got intelligence that says something is about to happen in America." That wasn't what this report said. The report was kind of a history of Usama's intentions, I guess is the best way to put it, kind of a history of what the agency had known.

And you're right, there was included—they included the fact that the FBI was conducting field investigations, which comforted me. You see, it meant the FBI was doing its job. The FBI was running down any lead. And I will tell you this, Scott, that had they found something, I'm confident they would have reported back to me. That's the way the system works. And whoever was the Acting FBI Director, had they found something, would have said, "Mr. President, we have found something that you need to be concerned about in your duties to protect America." That didn't happen.

Q. Are you satisfied with their performance, then, today?

President Bush. I'm confident that had they found something that was a direct threat to America, they would have brought it to my attention.

Now, the 9/11 Commission hearings are going to analyze that which went on and, hopefully, bring recommendations forward to help this administration and future administrations do our solemn duty to protect the American people. And that's why I think the hearings are good things, particularly when they address any weaknesses in the system.

And Condi mentioned the other day something very interesting, and that is that now may be a time to revamp and reform our intelligence services. And we look forward to hearing recommendations. We're thinking about that, ourselves, and we look forward to working with the Commission.

Q. What's on the table in the way of reform——

President Bush. Hold on a second, please. Lindlaw, I don't want to lecture you here, but you were given one question and President Mubarak is going to wonder, is the press corps totally out of control here in America. So I'm going to have to cut you off at this point in time.

Mr. President, why don't you call on somebody?

Q. Thank you, Mr. President.

President Bush. Welcome.

Situation in Iraq

Q. President Bush, in recent days, we've seen a significant deterioration in the security situation in Iraq. Do you see a serious

risk in that such events and the American military response to them would lead to a wider popular resistance to the American presence in Iraq, and would that complicate the process of transferring sovereignty to the Iraqi people? Thank you.

President Bush. Thank you, and welcome. We will transfer sovereignty. And as a matter of fact, the United Nations representative, Brahimi, is in Baghdad as we speak, working with different parties to help devise the system to which we transfer sovereignty, and we look forward to that.

Secondly, the situation in Iraq has improved. But you're right, it was a tough week, because of—there was lawlessness and gangs that were trying to take the law in their own hands. These were people that were trying to make a statement prior to the transfer of sovereignty that they would get to decide the fate of Iraq, through violence. A civil society, a peaceful society can't grow with people who are willing to kill in order to stop progress. And our job is to provide security for the Iraqi people so that a transition can take place, and that's what you were seeing.

And our job also is to protect American lives. If our soldiers are at risk, they will defend themselves. And I'm proud of the fact that our soldiers did so, mindful that there are innocent Iraqis oftentimes in between them and an enemy that is shooting at them. We're a compassionate country that cares about the loss of innocent life, and it grieves us when we see innocent life lost. However, we will defend ourselves.

I believe—strongly believe that by far the vast majority of Iraqis want there to be a peaceful country and a free country. And so the Iraq people are on the side of the transition to a peaceful country. We just can't let a few people—and I say "a few"—listen, there was enough to cause harm, but a few, relative to the rest of the people. You just can't let a small percentage of the Iraqi people decide the fate of everybody, and that's what you're seeing.

Thank you.

Excuse me for a second, please. Steve [Steve Holland, Reuters].

Israeli Withdrawal From Gaza

Q. Thank you, sir. If I could ask both of you—are both of you prepared to endorse the Israeli withdrawal plan?

President Bush. Steve, I welcome—first of all, let's not prejudge what Prime Minister Sharon is going to tell me. So I don't want to put words in his mouth until he actually comes to America on Wednesday. We discussed the rumors of such a withdrawal, and we discussed it in the context of the two-state solution and the roadmap.

In other words, we both are in agreement that if Israel makes the decision to withdraw, it doesn't replace the roadmap; it is a part of the roadmap, so that we can continue progress toward the two-state solution. And I really welcomed my friend's advice. He is—he knows the area well, and he's been in touch with the parties, and he has got good judgment on this matter. Let's wait until the Prime Minister comes. But if he were to decide to withdraw from the Gaza, it would be a positive development.

Q. Thank you, Mr. President.

President Bush. He wanted to know your—just a second, excuse me. He wanted to have your reaction to a possible withdrawal, if you'd like to share that. You don't have to, if you don't want to. He's a kind fellow——

President Mubarak. I have discussed this with the President, the withdrawal from Gaza. I think any withdrawal from the occupied territory is very highly appreciated. But I would like the withdrawal to coincide with the roadmap, which is very important, because withdrawing from Gaza alone, without connecting it with the roadmap, we never know it will be Gaza alone. It will be very difficult. It will not be accepted by the public opinion in the area. So the withdrawal from Gaza, if it is a part from the roadmap, I think it will be very highly appreciated.

President Bush. Yes, the point is that the decision doesn't replace the path toward the establishment of a Palestinian state that will provide hope for the Palestinian people and provide continuity and put the institutions in place necessary for a state to evolve. I'm confident there will be ample willingness of people in Europe or the United States Government to enact economic—to take economic measures necessary to provide a hopeful future. And we're in accord on this issue, and I look forward to meeting with the Prime Minister and hear what he has to say.

Final question, if you'd like to call on somebody.

Q. Thank you very much. My question is for you, Mr. Excellency Bush and Mr. Excellency Mubarak. But let me first tell you, happy Easter, before asking about the peace process. [*Laughter*]

President Bush. Thank you. We had a great Easter. I'm sorry it's so chilly here. It's usually warmer.

Two-State Solution for the Middle East

Q. Thank you very much. Sir, you announced your vision of a two-state solution almost 2 years ago——

President Bush. Yes.

Q. Do you think this vision can be realized in spite of the Israeli policy of expanding settlements and establishment of the separate wall, which violates the green line?

And for you, Mr. President Mubarak, how can Egypt help the Palestinians to take their responsibilities after the Israeli withdrawal?

President Bush. Great question. Yes, I think we can achieve a two-state solution. You're right, I think I made the speech at the United Nations in 2001, if I'm not mistaken—September of 2001—the first American President to do so, to make that public declaration a policy. And the reason I did is because I believe it's in the Palestinians' interest to have their own state, and I believe it's in Israel's interest that the Palestinians develop a peaceful state.

The reason why—we've made some progress, by the way. There is what they call the roadmap, a strategy to achieve that, which is good. The problem is, is that there's terrorists who will kill people in order to stop the process, and that's why it is essential that we work together to stop terrorist killing. There will never be a Palestinian state, in my judgment, if terrorists are willing to kill. And so the first step we've all got to do is to work on the mutual security concerns of the region. And we can't let people blow up a process, but that's what's happened, as you might recall. And there's been suiciders and killers, and you know—and it's essential that we work together to stop that kind of terror.

It will be much easier for the Palestinians to assume their responsibilities—and there are responsibilities for the Palestinians, particularly when it comes to developing a state that is a peaceful state—it will make it a lot easier if we can continue to keep the pressure on the terrorists, make it a lot easier for them to assume their responsibilities.

President Mubarak. The problem of the Middle East has stayed nearly about—about to be 50 years now. It's a very complicated problem, and if we keep it, more and more, it will be much more complicated than ever before. It could have been solved several years ago, but now it's very difficult. But in this context, I really thank President Bush, the first President of the United States who could say that, "I'm ready to agree on establishing two states beside each other, independent states, Palestinian state and the Israeli state." This is the first time we could hear it. We have to build on it.

Concerning Gaza, I think we could help a lot in Gaza by training the police, by giving them advice, by sending them some groups to make plans for them how to work. And in that regard, we are ready to do. We have contacts with them, we have contact with the different factions which could create problems now and then.

And you remember, they convened in Cairo several times. We are ready to invite them again so as to help stability in Gaza for a continuation for more withdrawal.

Thank you.

April 13 News Conference

President Bush. Thank you, sir.

By the way, tomorrow night I'm interested in answering more questions for you all. So if you pick out a red or blue tie——

Q. A news conference?

President Bush. Why not. See you at the East Room.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 11:52 a.m. at the Bush Ranch. In his remarks, he referred to Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice; Lakhdar Brahimi, Special Adviser to the U.N. Secretary-General; and Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of Israel. He also referred to the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States (9/11 Commission).

Joint Statement by President George W. Bush and President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt
April 12, 2004

Thirty Years of American-Egyptian Relations: A Partnership for Peace and Development

For thirty years, Egypt and the United States have enjoyed a partnership dedicated to peace, stability, prosperity, and freedom in the Middle East.

Secretary Powell and Foreign Minister Maher plan soon to conduct a session of our bilateral strategic dialogue in Washington, reaffirming the determination of our two countries to strengthen our partnership.

In our meetings today, we reiterated our resolve to continue working, along with our partners in the region, in Europe, and around the world, to promote peace in the Middle East, maintain regional stability, fight terrorism, and bolster the region's efforts toward economic, political, and social development and modernization.

Our two nations have nurtured a vision of peace that is anchored by the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty. This first peace agreement between Israel and an Arab country has been a model for subsequent endeavors to achieve a just, comprehensive, and lasting peace in the region.

Our two nations' unwavering commitment to this process led to the universal acceptance of the necessity and inevitability of a negotiated settlement. We envisage two states, Israel and Palestine, living side-by-side in peace and security. We will continue our determined efforts in the forthcoming months to achieve these objectives. We believe that an Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and parts of the West Bank can, under the right conditions, and if it is within the context of the implementation of the Roadmap and President Bush's vision, be a significant step forward. It is our firm conviction that resolving the Arab Israeli conflict will be a major contribution to stability and progress in the region, removing a major source of tension.

Egypt and the United States also recognize the need for political and economic reform in the region. The United States has followed the steps taken by Egypt over the past few years, as well as the ongoing debate on reform in different sectors of

Egyptian society. This ongoing debate, including the call for reform produced at the meeting of Arab civil society held at the Library of Alexandria last March, as well as the speech given by President Mubarak in the opening of that meeting reaffirming his commitment for a continuing reform process, provide for a constructive foundation for further efforts toward democracy and development.

Egyptian-American cooperation will also continue to encompass many other areas. Iraq faces a critical moment in its history, with wide implications across the region. We are committed to helping the Iraqi people realize their aspirations to build a sovereign, prosperous, stable, unified, and peaceful modern nation.

We intend to maintain our close cooperation in the fight against terrorism. Our two nations are among those who have suffered the most from the scourge and have no intention to relent in this fight. The United States expresses its appreciation for Egypt's invaluable help and its readiness to continue its contributions towards combating and eliminating terrorism.

Since the 1970s, the United States has been Egypt's leading partner in economic, political, and social reform efforts, providing highly appreciated material and moral support. The two nations look forward to strengthening their partnership in this respect for the benefit of the people of both countries and region as a whole.

The Egyptian-American partnership has promoted peace and stability, while supporting positive change in the Middle East, for thirty years. We are confident that it is equally capable of meeting the challenges of the next thirty years and beyond. We look forward to an intensified dialogue about Egyptian-American cooperation and partnership in the 21st century.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Statement on Signing Legislation To Provide for the Conveyance to the Utrok Atoll Local Government of a Decommissioned National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Ship

April 13, 2004

Today, I have signed into law H.R. 2584, a bill to provide for the conveyance to the Utrok Atoll local government of a decommissioned National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration ship, and for other purposes.

Section 101(c) of the bill purports to require the Utrok Atoll local government, in consultation with the Government of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, to submit a plan to four committees of the United States Congress for the use of the ship to be conveyed. The Republic of the Marshall Islands, of which Utrok is a political subdivision, is a self-governing republic with a sovereign right to self-determination whose government has the capacity to conduct foreign affairs. Accordingly, in light of the status of the Republic of the Marshall Islands and the exclusive authority of the President with respect to the conduct of the foreign affairs of the United States, the executive branch shall construe section 101(c) as asking the President to request, rather than as requiring, that the Utrok political subdivision submit a plan for use of the ship to be conveyed. The Secretary of State, after consultation with the Secretary of Commerce, shall communicate on my behalf as appropriate with the Government of the Republic of the Marshall Islands to

effectuate to the extent permissible the purposes of section 101.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
April 13, 2004.

NOTE: H.R. 2584, approved April 13, was assigned Public Law No. 108–219.

The President's News Conference
April 13, 2004

The President. Good evening. Before I take your questions, let me speak with the American people about the situation in Iraq.

This has been tough weeks in that country. Coalition forces have encountered serious violence in some areas of Iraq. Our military commanders report that this violence is being instigated by three groups: Some remnants of Saddam Hussein's regime, along with Islamic militants, have attacked coalition forces in the city of Fallujah; terrorists from other countries have infiltrated Iraq to incite and organize attacks; in the south of Iraq, coalition forces face riots and attacks that are being incited by a radical cleric named Al Sadr. He has assembled some of his supporters into an illegal militia and publicly supported the terrorist groups Hamas and Hezbollah. Al Sadr's methods of violence and intimidation are widely repudiated by other Iraqi Shi'a. He's been indicted by Iraqi authorities for the murder of a prominent Shi'a cleric.

Although these instigations of violence come from different factions, they share common goals. They want to run us out of Iraq and destroy the democratic hopes of the Iraqi people. The violence we have seen is a power grab by these extreme and ruthless elements. It's not a civil war. It's not a popular uprising.

Most of Iraq is relatively stable. Most Iraqis, by far, reject violence and oppose dictatorship. In forums where Iraqis have met to discuss their political future and in all the proceedings of the Iraqi Governing Council, Iraqis have expressed clear commitments. They want strong protections for individual rights. They want their independence, and they want their freedom.

America's commitment to freedom in Iraq is consistent with our ideals and required by our interests. Iraq will either be a peaceful, democratic country, or it will again be a source of violence, a haven for terror, and a threat to America and to the world. By helping to secure a free Iraq, Americans serving in that country are protecting their fellow citizens. Our Nation is grateful to them all and to their families that face hardship and long separation.

This weekend, at a Fort Hood hospital, I presented a Purple Heart to some of our wounded, had the honor of thanking them on behalf of all Americans. Other men and women have paid an even greater cost. Our Nation honors the memory of those who have been killed, and we pray that their families will find God's comfort in the midst of their grief. As I have said to those who have lost loved ones, we will finish the work of the fallen.

America's Armed Forces are performing brilliantly, with all the skill and honor we expect of them. We're constantly reviewing their needs. Troop strength, now and in the future, is determined by the situation on the ground. If additional forces are needed, I will send them. If additional resources are needed, we will provide them. The people of our country are united behind our men and women in uniform, and

this Government will do all that is necessary to assure the success of their historic mission.

One central commitment of that mission is the transfer of sovereignty back to the Iraqi people. We have set a deadline of June 30th. It is important that we meet that deadline. As a proud and independent people, Iraqis do not support an indefinite occupation, and neither does America. We're not an imperial power, as nations such as Japan and Germany can attest. We are a liberating power, as nations in Europe and Asia can attest as well. America's objective in Iraq is limited, and it is firm: We seek an independent, free, and secure Iraq.

Were the coalition to step back from the June 30th pledge, many Iraqis would question our intentions and feel their hopes betrayed. And those in Iraq who trade in hatred and conspiracy theories would find a larger audience and gain a stronger hand. We will not step back from our pledge. On June 30th, Iraqi sovereignty will be placed in Iraqi hands.

Sovereignty involves more than a date and a ceremony. It requires Iraqis to assume responsibility for their own future. Iraqi authorities are now confronting the security challenge of the last several weeks. In Fallujah, coalition forces have suspended offensive operations, allowing members of the Iraqi Governing Council and local leaders to work on the restoration of central authority in that city. These leaders are communicating with the insurgents to ensure an orderly turnover of that city to Iraqi forces, so that the resumption of military action does not become necessary. They're also insisting that those who killed and mutilated four American contract workers be handed over for trial and punishment. In addition, members of the Governing Council are seeking to resolve the situation in the south. Al Sadr must answer the charges against him and disband his illegal militia.

Our coalition is standing with responsible Iraqi leaders as they establish growing authority in their country. The transition to sovereignty requires that we demonstrate confidence in Iraqis, and we have that confidence. Many Iraqi leaders are showing great personal courage, and their example will bring out the same quality in others. The transition to sovereignty also requires an atmosphere of security, and our coalition is working to provide that security. We will continue taking the greatest care to prevent harm to innocent civilians, yet we will not permit the spread of chaos and violence. I have directed our military commanders to make every preparation to use decisive force, if necessary, to maintain order and to protect our troops.

The nation of Iraq is moving toward self-rule, and Iraqis and Americans will see evidence in the months to come. On June 30th, when the flag of free Iraq is raised, Iraqi officials will assume full responsibility for the ministries of Government. On that day, the transitional administrative law, including a bill of rights that is unprecedented in the Arab world, will take full effect.

The United States and all the nations of our coalition will establish normal diplomatic relations with the Iraqi Government. An American Embassy will open, and an American Ambassador will be posted.

According to the schedule already approved by the Governing Council, Iraq will hold elections for a national assembly no later than next January. That assembly will draft a new, permanent constitution which will be presented to the Iraqi people in a national referendum held in October of next year. Iraqis will then elect a permanent Government by December 15th, 2005, an event that will mark the completion of Iraq's transition from dictatorship to freedom.

Other nations and international institutions are stepping up to their responsibilities in building a free and secure Iraq. We're working closely with the United Nations envoy, Lakhdar Brahimi, and with Iraqis to determine the exact form of the Government that will receive sovereignty

on June 30th. The United Nations election assistance team, headed by Karina Parelli, is in Iraq, developing plans for next January's election.

NATO is providing support for the Polish-led multinational division in Iraq. And 17 of NATO's 26 members are contributing forces to maintain security. Secretary of State Powell and Secretary of State Rumsfeld and a number of NATO defense and foreign ministers are exploring a more formal role for NATO, such as turning the Polish-led division into a NATO operation and giving NATO specific responsibilities for border control.

Iraqis' neighbors also have responsibilities to make their region more stable. So I am sending Deputy Secretary of State Armitage to the Middle East to discuss with these nations our common interest in a free and independent Iraq and how they can help achieve this goal.

As we've made clear all along, our commitment to the success and security of Iraq will not end on June 30th. On July 1st and beyond, our reconstruction assistance will continue, and our military commitment will continue. Having helped Iraqis establish a new Government, coalition military forces will help Iraqis to protect their Government from external aggression and internal subversion.

The success of free Government in Iraq is vital for many reasons. A free Iraq is vital because 25 million Iraqis have as much right to live in freedom as we do. A free Iraq will stand as an example to reformers across the Middle East. A free Iraq will show that America is on the side of Muslims who wish to live in peace, as we have already shown in Kuwait and Kosovo, Bosnia and Afghanistan. A free Iraq will confirm to a watching world that America's word, once given, can be relied upon even in the toughest times.

Above all, the defeat of violence and terror in Iraq is vital to the defeat of violence and terror elsewhere and vital, therefore, to the safety of the American people. Now is the time, and Iraq is the place, in which the enemies of the civilized world are testing the will of the civilized world. We must not waver.

The violence we are seeing in Iraq is familiar. The terrorist who takes hostages or plants a roadside bomb near Baghdad is serving the same ideology of murder that kills innocent people on trains in Madrid and murders children on buses in Jerusalem and blows up a nightclub in Bali and cuts the throat of a young reporter for being a Jew. We've seen the same ideology of murder in the killing of 241 marines in Beirut, the first attack on the World Trade Center, in the destruction of two Embassies in Africa, in the attack on the U.S.S. *Cole,* and in the merciless horror inflicted upon thousands of innocent men and women and children on September the 11th, 2001.

None of these acts is the work of a religion; all are the work of a fanatical political ideology. The servants of this ideology seek tyranny in the Middle East and beyond. They seek to oppress and persecute women. They seek the death of Jews and Christians and every Muslim who desires peace over theocratic terror. They seek to intimidate America into panic and retreat and to set free nations against each other. And they seek weapons of mass destruction to blackmail and murder on a massive scale.

Over the last several decades, we've seen that any concession or retreat on our part will only embolden this enemy and invite more bloodshed. And the enemy has seen, over the last 31 months, that we will no longer live in denial or seek to appease them. For the first time, the civilized world has provided a concerted response to the ideology of terror, a series of powerful, effective blows. The terrorists have lost the shelter of the Taliban and the training

camps in Afghanistan. They've lost safe havens in Pakistan. They lost an ally in Baghdad, and Libya has turned its back on terror. They've lost many leaders in an unrelenting international manhunt. And perhaps most frightening to these men and their movement, the terrorists are seeing the advance of freedom and reform in the greater Middle East.

A desperate enemy is also a dangerous enemy, and our work may become more difficult before it is finished. No one can predict all the hazards that lie ahead or the costs they will bring. Yet, in this conflict, there is no safe alternative to resolute action. The consequences of failure in Iraq would be unthinkable. Every friend of America in Iraq would be betrayed to prison and murder, as a new tyranny arose. Every enemy of America in the world would celebrate, proclaiming our weakness and decadence and using that victory to recruit a new generation of killers.

We will succeed in Iraq. We're carrying out a decision that has already been made and will not change: Iraq will be a free, independent country, and America and the Middle East will be safer because of it. Our coalition has the means and the will to prevail. We serve the cause of liberty, and that is always and everywhere a cause worth serving.

Now, I'll be glad to take your questions. I will start with you.

Vietnam Conflict Analogy

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, April is turning into the deadliest month in Iraq since the fall of Baghdad, and some people are comparing Iraq to Vietnam and talking about a quagmire. Polls show that support for your policy is declining and that fewer than half of Americans now support it. What does that say to you, and how do you answer the Vietnam comparison?

The President. Yes. I think the analogy is false. I also happen to think that analogy sends the wrong message to our troops and sends the wrong message to the enemy. Look, this is hard work. It's hard to advance freedom in a country that has been strangled by tyranny. And yet, we must stay the course, because the end result is in our Nation's interest. A secure and free Iraq is an historic opportunity to change the world and make America more secure. A free Iraq in the midst of the Middle East will have incredible change. It's hard—freedom is not easy to achieve. We had a little trouble in our own country achieving freedom.

And we've been there a year, Terry [Terence Hunt, Associated Press]. I know it seems like a long time. It seems like a long time to the loved ones whose troops have been overseas, but when you think about where the country has come from, it's a relatively short period of time. And we're making progress.

There's no question it's been a tough, tough series of weeks for the American people. It's been really tough for the families. I understand that. It's been tough on this administration, but we're doing the right thing.

And as to whether or not I make decisions based upon polls, I don't. I just don't make decisions that way. I fully understand the consequences of what we're doing. We're changing the world. And the world will be better off, and America will be more secure as a result of the actions we're taking.

Troop Strength/Timing of Withdrawal From Iraq

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. What's your best prediction on how long U.S. troops will have to be in Iraq? And it sounds like you will have to add some troops. Is that a fair assessment?

The President. Well, I—first of all, that's up to General Abizaid, and he's clearly indicating that he may want more troops. It's coming up through the chain of command. If that's what he wants, that's what he gets. Generally, we've had about 115,000 troops

in Iraq. There's 135,000 now, as a result of the changeover from one division to the next. If he wants to keep troops there to help, I'm more than willing to say, "Yes, General Abizaid."

I talk to General Abizaid quite frequently. I'm constantly asking him, does he have what he needs, whether it be in troop strength or in equipment. He and General Sanchez talk all the time, and if he makes the recommendation, he'll get it.

In terms of how long we'll be there: as long as necessary, and not one day more. The Iraqi people need us there to help with security. They need us there to fight off these violent few who are doing everything they can to resist the advance of freedom, and I mentioned who they are.

And as I mentioned in my opening remarks, our commanders on the ground have got the authorities necessary to deal with violence and will—will in firm fashion. And that's what, by far, the vast majority of the Iraqis want. They want security so they can advance toward a free society.

Once we transfer sovereignty, we'll enter into a security agreement with the Government to which we pass sovereignty, the entity to which we pass sovereignty. And we'll need to be there for a while. We'll also need to continue training the Iraqi troops. I was disappointed in the performance of some of the troops. Some of the units performed brilliantly. Some of them didn't, and we need to find out why. If they're lacking equipment, we'll get them equipment. If there needs to be more intense training, we'll get more intense training. But eventually, Iraq's security is going to be handled by the Iraqi people, themselves.

Let's see here—Terry [Terry Moran, ABC News].

Decisionmaking on Iraq

Q. Mr. President, before the war, you and members of your administration made several claims about Iraq, that U.S. troops would be greeted as liberators with sweets and flowers, that Iraqi oil revenue would pay for most of the reconstruction, and that Iraq not only had weapons of mass destruction, but as Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld said, "We know where they are." How do you explain to Americans how you got that so wrong? And how do you answer your opponents who say that you took this Nation to war on the basis of what have turned out to be a series a false premises?

The President. Well, let me step back and review my thinking prior to going into Iraq. First, the lesson of September the 11th is, when this Nation sees a threat, a gathering threat, we've got to deal with it. We can no longer hope that oceans protect us from harm. Every threat we must take seriously.

Saddam Hussein was a threat. He was a threat because he had used weapons of mass destruction on his own people. He was a threat because he coddled terrorists. He was a threat because he funded suiciders. He was a threat to the region. He was a threat to the United States. That's the assessment that I made from the intelligence, the assessment that Congress made from the intelligence. That's the exact same assessment that the United Nations Security Council made with the intelligence.

I went to the U.N., as you might recall, and said, "Either you take care of him, or we will." Anytime an American President says, "If you don't, we will," we better be prepared to. And I was prepared to. I thought it was important for the United Nations Security Council that when it says something, it means something, for the sake of security in the world. See, the war on terror had changed the calculations. We needed to work with people. People needed to come together to work, and therefore, empty words would embolden the actions of those who are willing to kill indiscriminately.

The United Nations passed a Security Council resolution unanimously that said, "Disarm, or face serious consequences." And he refused to disarm.

I thought it was very interesting that Charlie Duelfer, who just came back—he's the head of the Iraqi Survey Group—reported some interesting findings from his recent tour there. And one of the things was, he was amazed at how deceptive the Iraqis had been toward UNMOVIC and UNSCOM, deceptive in hiding things. We knew they were hiding things. A country that hides something is a country that is afraid of getting caught, and that was part of our calculation. Charlie confirmed that. He also confirmed that Saddam had a—the ability to produce biological and chemical weapons. In other words, he was a danger. He had long-range missiles that were undeclared to the United Nations. He was a danger, and so we dealt with him.

What else—part of the question—oh, oil revenues. Well, the oil revenues are—they're bigger than we thought they would be at this point in time. I mean, one year after the liberation of Iraq, the revenues of the oil stream is pretty darn significant. One of the things I was concerned about prior to going into Iraq was that the oilfields would be destroyed, but they weren't. They're now up and running. And that money is—it will benefit the Iraqi people. It's their oil, and they'll use it to reconstruct the country.

Finally, the attitude of the Iraqis toward the American people—it's an interesting question. They're really pleased we got rid of Saddam Hussein, and you can understand why. This is a guy who was a torturer, a killer, a maimer; there's mass graves. I mean, he was a horrible individual that really shocked the country in many ways, shocked it into kind of a fear of making decisions toward liberty. That's what we've seen recently. Some citizens are fearful of stepping up. And they were happy—they're not happy they're occupied. I wouldn't be happy if I were occupied either. They do want us there to help with security, and that's why this transfer of sovereignty is an important signal to send, and it's why it's also important for them to hear we will stand with them until they become a free country.

Elisabeth [Elisabeth Bumiller, New York Times].

Hindsight on September 11

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. To move to the 9/11 Commission, you, yourself, have acknowledged that Usama bin Laden was not a central focus of the administration in the months before September 11th. "I was not on point," you told the journalist Bob Woodward. "I didn't feel that sense of urgency." Two-and-a-half years later, do you feel any sense of personal responsibility for September 11th?

The President. Let me put that quote to Woodward in context. He had asked me if I was—something about killing bin Laden. That's what the question was. And I said, "Compared to how I felt at the time, after the attack, I didn't have that." I also went on to say, "My blood wasn't boiling," I think is what the quote said. I didn't see—I mean, I didn't have that great sense of outrage that I felt on September the 11th. I was—on that day I was angry and sad, angry that Al Qaida had—well—[*inaudible*]—at the time, thought Al Qaida, found out shortly thereafter it was Al Qaida—had unleashed this attack, sad for those who lost their life.

Your question, do I feel——

Q. Do you feel a sense of personal responsibility for September 11th?

The President. I feel incredibly grieved when I meet with family members, and I do quite frequently. I grieve for the incredible loss of life that they feel, the emptiness they feel.

There are some things I wish we'd have done, when I look back. I mean, hindsight is easy. It's easy for a President to stand up and say, "Now that I know what happened, it would have been nice if there were certain things in place," for example, a Homeland Security Department. And

why I—I say that because it's—that provides the ability for our agencies to coordinate better and to work together better than it was before.

I think the hearings will show that the PATRIOT Act is an important change in the law that will allow the FBI and the CIA to better share information together. We were kind of stove-piped, I guess is a way to describe it. There was kind of—Departments that at times didn't communicate, because of law, in the FBI's case.

And the other thing I look back on and realize is that we weren't on a war footing. The country was not on a war footing, and yet the enemy was at war with us. And it's—it didn't take me long to put us on a war footing. And we've been on war ever since.

The lessons of 9/11 that I—one lesson was, we must deal with gathering threats. And that's part of the reason I dealt with Iraq the way I did. The other lesson is, is that this country must go on the offense and stay on the offense. In order to secure the country, we must do everything in our power to find these killers and bring them to justice, before they hurt us again. I'm afraid they want to hurt us again. They're still there.

They can be right one time; we've got to be right 100 percent of the time in order to protect the country. It's a mighty task. But our Government has changed since the 9/11 attacks. We're better equipped to respond. We're better at sharing intelligence, but we've still got a lot of work to do.

Dave [David Gregory, NBC News].

President's Perspective on Decisionmaking

Q. Mr. President, I'd like to follow up on a couple of these questions that have been asked. One of the biggest criticisms of you is that whether it's WMD in Iraq, postwar planning in Iraq, or even the question of whether this administration did enough to ward off 9/11, you never admit a mistake. Is that a fair criticism? And do you believe that there were any errors in judgment that you made related to any of those topics I brought up?

The President. Well, I think, as I mentioned, it's—the country wasn't on war footing, and yet we're at war. And that's just a reality, Dave. I mean, that's—that was the situation that existed prior to 9/11, because the truth of the matter is, most in the country never felt that we'd be vulnerable to an attack such as the one that Usama bin Laden unleashed on us. We knew he had designs on us. We knew he hated us. But there was a—nobody in our Government, at least, and I don't think the prior Government, could envision flying airplanes into buildings on such a massive scale.

The people know where I stand. I mean, in terms of Iraq, I was very clear about what I believed. And of course I want to know why we haven't found a weapon yet. But I still know Saddam Hussein was a threat, and the world is better off without Saddam Hussein. I don't think anybody can—maybe people can argue that. I know the Iraqi people don't believe that, that they're better off with Saddam Hussein—would be better off with Saddam Hussein in power. I also know that there's an historic opportunity here to change the world. And it's very important for the loved ones of our troops to understand that the mission is an important, vital mission for the security of America and for the ability to change the world for the better.

Let's see—Ed [Ed Chen, Los Angeles Times].

President's Daily Briefing

Q. Mr. President, good evening. You've talked on the—I'd like to ask you about the August 6th PDB.

The President. Sure.

Q. You mentioned it at Fort Hood on Sunday. You said—you pointed out that it did not warn of hijacking of airplanes to crash into buildings, but that it warned of hijacking to, obviously, take hostages and to secure the release of extremists being

held by the U.S. Did that trigger some specific actions on your part and the administration, since it dealt with potentially hundreds of lives and a blackmail attempt on the United States Government?

The President. Ed, I asked for the briefing, and the reason I did is because there had been a lot of threat intelligence from overseas. And so—part of it had to do with Genoa, the G–8 conference that I was going to attend. And I asked, at that point in time, "Let's make sure we are paying attention here at home as well," and that's what triggered the report.

The report, itself, I've characterized as mainly history, and I think when you look at it you'll see that it was talking about '97 and '98 and '99. It was also an indication, as you mentioned, that bin Laden might want to hijack an airplane, but as you said, not to fly into a building but perhaps to release a person in jail—in other words, serve it as a blackmail.

And of course that concerns me. All those reports concern me. As a matter of fact, I was dealing with terrorism a lot as the President when George Tenet came in to brief me. I mean, that's where I got my information. I changed the way that—the relationship between the President and the CIA Director. And I wanted Tenet in the Oval Office all the time, and we had briefings about terrorist threats. This was a summary.

Now, in what's called the PDB, there was a warning about bin Laden's desires on America, but frankly, I didn't think that was anything new. Major newspapers had talked about bin Laden's desires on hurting America. What was interesting in there was that there was a report that the FBI was conducting field investigations. And I—that was good news, that they were doing their job.

The way my administration worked, Ed, was that I met with Tenet all the time. I obviously met with my principals a lot. We talked about threats that had emerged. We had a counterterrorism group meeting on a regular basis to analyze the threats that came in. Had there been a threat that required action by anybody in the Government, I would have dealt with it. In other words, had they come up and said, "This is where we see something happening," you can rest assured that the people of this Government would have responded and responded in a forceful way.

I mean, one of the things about Elisabeth's question was, I've stepped back, and I've asked myself a lot, is there anything we could have done to stop the attacks? Of course I've asked that question, as have many people of my Government. Nobody wants this to happen to America. And the answer is that had I had any inkling whatsoever that the people were going to fly airplanes into buildings, we would have moved heaven and Earth to save the country, just like we're working hard to prevent a further attack.

Let's see—Jim [Jim Angle, FOX News].

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. You mentioned the PDB and the assurance you got that the FBI was working on terrorism investigations here. The number they had used was 70. But we learned today in the September 11th hearings that the Acting Director of the FBI at the time says—now says the FBI tells him that number was wrong, that he doesn't even know how it got into your PDB. And two of the Commissioners strongly suggested the number was exaggerated. Have you learned anything else about that report since that time? And do you now believe you were falsely comforted by the FBI?

The President. Yes. No, I heard about that today, obviously, and my response to that was, I expect to get valid information. As the ultimate decisionmaker for this country, I expect information that comes to my desk to be real and valid. And I presume the 9/11 Commission will find out—will follow up on his suggestions and his recollection and garner the truth. That is an important part of the 9/11 Commission's job, is to analyze what went on and

what could have perhaps been done differently so that we can better secure America for the future.

But of course, I expect to get valid information. I can't make good decisions unless I get valid information.

Q. Has the FBI come back to you, sir?

The President. No, I haven't talked to anybody today yet. I will, though. We'll find out.

John [John Roberts, CBS News].

Reaction to September 11

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Two weeks ago, former counterterrorism official at the NSC Richard Clarke offered an unequivocal apology to the American people for failing them prior to 9/11. Do you believe the American people deserve a similar apology from you, and would you be prepared to give them one?

The President. Look, I can understand why people in my administration are anguished over the fact that people lost their life. I feel the same way. I mean, I'm sick when I think about the death that took place on that day. And as I mentioned, I've met with a lot of family members, and I do the best I do to console them about the loss of their loved one. As I mentioned, I oftentimes think about what I could have done differently. I can assure the American people that had we had any inkling that this was going to happen, we would have done everything in our power to stop the attack.

Here's what I feel about that. The person responsible for the attacks was Usama bin Laden. That's who's responsible for killing Americans. And that's why we will stay on the offense until we bring people to justice.

John [John King, Cable News Network].

Nature of the Coalition/Resolve of Coalition Leaders

Q. Mr. President, thank you. You mentioned that 17 of the 26 NATO members are providing some help on the ground in Iraq. But if you look at the numbers, 135,000 U.S. troops, 10 or 12,000 British troops, then the next largest, perhaps even the second largest contingent of guns on the ground are private contractors—literally, hired guns. Your critics, including your Democratic opponent, say that's proof to them your coalition is window dressing. How would you answer those critics? And can you assure the American people that post-sovereignty, when the handover takes place, that there will be more burden-sharing by allies in terms of security forces?

The President. Yes. John, my response is, I don't think people ought to demean the contributions of our friends into Iraq. People are sacrificing their lives in Iraq, from different countries. We ought to honor that, and we ought to welcome that. I'm proud of the coalition that is there. This is a—these are people that have—the gut leaders have made the decision to put people in harm's way for the good of the world. And we appreciate that sacrifice in America. We appreciate that commitment.

I think—one of the things you're seeing is more involvement by the United Nations in terms of the political process. That's helpful. I'd like to get another U.N. Security Council resolution out that will help other nations to decide to participate.

One of the things I've found, John, is that in calling around, particularly during this week—I spoke to Prime Minister Berlusconi and President Kwasniewski—there is a resolve by these leaders that is a heartening resolve. Tony Blair is the same way. He understands, like I understand, that we cannot yield at this point in time, that we must remain steadfast and strong, that it's the intentions of the enemy to shake our will. That's what they want to do. They want us to leave, and we're not going to leave. We're going to do the job. And a free Iraq is going to be a major blow for terrorism. It will change the world. A free Iraq in the midst of the Middle East is vital to future peace and security.

Maybe I can best put it this way, why I feel so strongly about this historic moment. I was having dinner with Prime Minister Koizumi, and we were talking about North Korea, about how we can work together to deal with the threat. The North Korea leader is a threat, and here are two friends now discussing what strategy to employ to prevent him from further developing and deploying a nuclear weapon. And it dawned on me that had we blown the peace in World War II, that perhaps this conversation would not have been taking place. It also dawned on me then that when we get it right in Iraq, at some point in time an American President will be sitting down with a duly elected Iraqi leader talking about how to bring security to what has been a troubled part of the world.

The legacy that our troops are going to leave behind is a legacy of lasting importance, as far as I'm concerned. It's a legacy that really is based upon our deep belief that people want to be free and that free societies are peaceful societies.

Some of the debate really centers around the fact that people don't believe Iraq can be free, that if you're Muslim or perhaps brown-skinned, you can't be self-governing and free. I strongly disagree with that. I reject that, because I believe that freedom is the deepest need of every human soul, and if given a chance, the Iraqi people will be not only self-governing but a stable and free society.

Let's see here, hold on. Michael [Mike Allen, Washington Post], you're next.

New Iraqi Government/Upcoming Appearance Before the 9/11 Commission

Q. Mr. President, why are you and the Vice President insisting on appearing together before the 9/11 Commission? And Mr. President, who will you be handing the Iraqi Government over to on June 30th?

The President. We will find that out soon. That's what Mr. Brahimi is doing. He's figuring out the nature of the entity we'll be handing sovereignty over.

And secondly, because the 9/11 Commission wants to ask us questions, that's why we're meeting. And I look forward to meeting with them and answering their questions.

Q. I was asking why you're appearing together, rather than separately, which was their request.

The President. Because it's a good chance for both of us to answer questions that the 9/11 Commission is looking forward to asking us, and I'm looking forward to answering them.

Let's see——

Q. Mr. President——

The President. Hold on for a minute.

Q. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. I've got some "must calls," I'm sorry.

Threat Assessment

Q. You have been accused of letting the 9/11 threat mature too far but not letting the Iraq threat mature far enough. First, could you respond to that general criticism? And secondly, in the wake of these two conflicts, what is the appropriate threat level to justify action in perhaps other situations going forward?

The President. Yes. I guess there have been some that said, "Well, we should have taken preemptive action in Afghanistan," and then turned around and said, "We shouldn't have taken preemptive action in Iraq." And my answer to that question is, is that—again I repeat what I said earlier—prior to 9/11 the country really wasn't on a war footing. And the—frankly, mood of the world would have been astounded had the United States acted unilaterally in trying to deal with Al Qaida in that part of the world.

It would have been awfully hard to do as well, by the way. We would have had to—we hadn't got our relationship right with Pakistan yet. The Caucus area would have been very difficult from which to base.

It just seemed an impractical strategy at the time, and frankly, I didn't contemplate it.

I did contemplate a larger strategy as to how to deal with Al Qaida. We were shooting cruise missiles and with little effect. And I said, "If we're going to go after Al Qaida, let's have a comprehensive strategy as to how to deal with it, with that entity."

After 9/11, the world changed for me and, I think, changed for the country. It changed for me because, like many, we assumed oceans would protect us from harm, and that's not the case. It's not the reality of the 21st century. Oceans don't protect us. They don't protect us from killers. We're an open country, and we're a country that values our openness. And we're a hard country to defend. And therefore, when we see threats overseas, we've got to take them—look at them in a new light. And I've given my explanation of Iraq.

Your further question was, how do you justify any other preemptive action? The American people need to know my last choice is the use of military power. It is something that—it is a decision that is—it's a tough decision to make for any President, because I fully understand the consequences of the decision. And therefore, we'll use all other means necessary, when we see a threat, to deal with a threat that may materialize, but we'll never take the military off the table.

We've had some success, Bill [Bill Sammon, Washington Times], as a result of the decision I took. Take Libya, for example. Libya was a nation that had—we viewed as a terrorist—a nation that sponsored terror, a nation that was dangerous because of weapons. And Colonel Qadhafi made the decision, and rightly so, to disclose and disarm for the good of the world. By the way, they found, I think, 50 tons of mustard gas, I believe it was, in a turkey farm, only because he was willing to disclose where the mustard gas was. But that made the world safer.

The A.Q. Khan bust, the network that we uncovered, thanks to the hard work of our intelligence-gathering agencies and the cooperation of the British, was another victory in the war against terror. This was a shadowy network of folks that were willing to sell state secrets to the highest bidder. And that, therefore, made the world more unstable and more dangerous. You've often heard me talk about my worry about weapons of mass destruction ending up in the hands of the wrong people. Well, you can understand why I feel that way, having seen the works of A.Q. Khan. It's a dangerous—it was a dangerous network that we unraveled, and the world is better for it.

And so what I'm telling you is, is that sometimes we use military as a last resort, but other times we use our influence, diplomatic pressure, and our alliances to unravel, uncover, expose people who want to do harm against the civilized world. We're at war. Iraq is a part of the war on terror. It is not the war on terror; it is a theater in the war on terror. And it's essential we win this battle in the war on terror. By winning this battle, it will make other victories more certain in the war against the terrorists.

Let's see here—Judy [Judy Keen, USA Today].

Iraq/2004 Elections

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Sir, you've made it very clear tonight that you're committed to continuing the mission in Iraq. Yet, as Terry pointed out, increasing numbers of Americans have qualms about it, and this is an election year. Will it have been worth it, even if you lose your job because of it?

The President. I don't plan on losing my job. I plan on telling the American people that I've got a plan to win the war on terror. And I believe they'll stay with me. They understand the stakes. But nobody likes to see dead people on their television screens. I don't. It's a tough time for the

American people to see that. It's gut-wrenching. One of my hardest parts of my job is to console the family members who have lost their life. It is a—it's a chance to hug and weep and to console and to remind the loved ones that the sacrifice of their loved one was done in the name of security for America and freedom for the world.

And one of the things that's very important, Judy, as far as I'm concerned, is to never allow our youngsters to die in vain. And I've made that pledge to their parents. Withdrawing from the battlefield of Iraq would be just that, and it's not going to happen under my watch.

The American people may decide to change. That's democracy. I don't think so. I don't think so, and I look forward to making my case. I'm looking forward to the campaign. Now is the time to talk about winning this war on terror. Now is the time to make sure that the American people understand the stakes and the historic significance of what we're doing. And no matter where they may stand on this war, the thing I appreciate most about our country is the strong support given to the men and women in uniform, and it's vital support. It's important for those soldiers to know America stands with them. And we weep when they die, and we're proud of the victories they achieve.

One of the things I'm also proud of is what I hear from our soldiers. As I mentioned, I pinned the Purple Heart on some of the troops at the hospital there at Fort Hood, Texas. A guy looks at me and says, "I can't wait to get back to my unit and fulfill the mission, Mr. President." The spirit is incredible. Our soldiers who have volunteered to go there understand the stakes, and I'm incredibly proud of them.

John [John Dickerson, Time].

Evaluation of Past Decisions

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. In the last campaign, you were asked a question about the biggest mistake you'd made in your life, and you used to like to joke that it was trading Sammy Sosa. You've looked back before 9/11 for what mistakes might have been made. After 9/11, what would your biggest mistake be, would you say, and what lessons have you learned from it?

The President. I wish you would have given me this written question ahead of time, so I could plan for it. [*Laughter*] John, I'm sure historians will look back and say, "Gosh, he could have done it better this way or that way." You know, I just—I'm sure something will pop into my head here in the midst of this press conference, with all the pressure of trying to come up with an answer, but it hasn't yet.

I would have gone into Afghanistan the way we went into Afghanistan. Even knowing what I know today about the stockpiles of weapons, I still would have called upon the world to deal with Saddam Hussein. See, I happen to believe that we'll find out the truth on the weapons. That's why we've sent up the independent commission. I look forward to hearing the truth, exactly where they are. They could still be there. They could be hidden, like the 50 tons of mustard gas in a turkey farm.

One of the things that Charlie Duelfer talked about was that he was surprised at the level of intimidation he found amongst people who should know about weapons and their fear of talking about them because they don't want to be killed. There's a terror still in the soul of some of the people in Iraq. They're worried about getting killed, and therefore, they're not going to talk.

But it will all settle out, John. We'll find out the truth about the weapons at some point in time. However, the fact that he had the capacity to make them bothers me today, just like it would have bothered me then. He's a dangerous man. He's a man who actually—not only had weapons of mass destruction—the reason I can say that with certainty is because he used them. And I have no doubt in my mind that he would like to have inflicted harm or paid

people to inflict harm or trained people to inflict harm on America, because he hated us.

I hope I—I don't want to sound like I've made no mistakes. I'm confident I have. I just haven't—you just put me under the spot here, and maybe I'm not as quick on my feet as I should be in coming up with one.

Yes, Ann [Ann Compton, ABC News].

Intelligence Reform/President's Goals

Q. Looking forward about keeping the United States safe, a group representing about several thousand FBI agents today wrote to your administration begging you not to split up the law enforcement and the counterterrorism, because they say it ties their hands, it gives them blinders—[*inaudible*]. Yet, you mentioned yesterday that you think perhaps the time has come for some real intelligence reforms. That can't happen without real leadership from the White House. Will you, and how will you?

The President. Well, you're talking about one aspect of possible—I think you're referring to what they call the MI–5. And I heard a summary of that from Director Mueller, who feels strongly that we—and he'll testify to that effect, I guess, tomorrow. I shouldn't be prejudging his testimony. But what my point was is that I'm open for suggestions. I look forward to seeing what the 9/11 Commission comes up with. I look forward to seeing what the Silberman/Robb Commission comes up with. I'm confident Congress will have some suggestions. What I'm saying is, "Let the discussions begin," and I won't prejudge the conclusion. As the President, I will encourage and foster these kinds of discussions, because one of the jobs of the President is to leave behind a legacy that will enable other Presidents to better deal with the threat that we face.

We are in a long war. The war on terror is not going to end immediately. This is a war against people who have no guilt in killing innocent people. That's what they're willing to do. They kill on a moment's notice because they're trying to shake our will, they're trying to create fear, they're trying to affect people's behaviors. And we're simply not going to let them do that.

And my fear, of course, is that this will go on for a while, and therefore, it's incumbent upon us to learn from lessons or mistakes and leave behind a better foundation for Presidents to deal with the threats we face. This is the war that other Presidents will be facing as we head into the 21st century.

One of the interesting things people ask me, now that we're asking questions, is, "Can you ever win the war on terror?" Of course you can. That's why it's important for us to spread freedom throughout the Middle East. Free societies are hopeful societies. A hopeful society is one more likely to be able to deal with the frustrations of those who are willing to commit suicide in order to represent a false ideology. A free society is a society in which somebody is more likely to be able to make a living. A free society is a society in which someone is more likely to be able to raise their child in a comfortable environment and see to it that that child gets an education.

That's why I'm pressing the Greater Middle East Reform Initiative, to work to spread freedom. And we will continue on that. So long as I'm the President, I will press for freedom. I believe so strongly in the power of freedom. You know why I do? Because I've seen freedom work right here in our own country.

I also have this belief, strong belief, that freedom is not this country's gift to the world; freedom is the Almighty's gift to every man and woman in this world. And as the greatest power on the face of the Earth, we have an obligation to help the spread of freedom. We have an obligation to help feed the hungry. I think the American people find it interesting that we're

providing food for the North Korea people who starve. We have an obligation to lead the fight on AIDS, on Africa. And we have an obligation to work toward a more free world. That's our obligation. That is what we have been called to do, as far as I'm concerned.

And my job as the President is to lead this Nation into making the world a better place, and that's exactly what we're doing. Weeks such as we've had in Iraq make some doubt whether or not we're making progress. I understand that. It was a tough, tough period, but we are making progress.

And my message today to those in Iraq is: We'll stay the course; we'll complete the job. My message to our troops is: We will stay the course and complete the job, and you'll have what you need. And my message to the loved ones who are worried about their sons, daughters, husbands, wives, is: Your loved one is performing a noble service for the cause of freedom and peace.

Let's see, last question here. Hold on for a second. Those who yell will not be asked. I'll tell you a guy who I've never heard from—Don [Don Gonyea, National Public Radio].

Q. I appreciate it.

The President. It's a well-received—[*laughter*].

Iraq/2004 Election

Q. Following on both Judy and John's questions, and it comes out of what you just said in some ways, with public support for your policies in Iraq falling off the way they have, quite significantly over the past couple of months, I guess I'd like to know if you feel in any way that you've failed as a communicator on this topic? Because——

The President. Gosh, I don't know. I mean——

Q. Well, you deliver a lot of speeches, and a lot of them contain similar phrases, and they vary very little from one to the next. And they often include a pretty upbeat assessment of how things are going, with the exception of tonight's pretty somber assessment, this evening.

The President. It's a pretty somber assessment today, Don, yes.

Q. I guess I just wonder if you feel that you have failed in any way? You don't have many of these press conferences, where you engage in this kind of exchange. Have you failed in any way to really make the case to the American public?

The President. I guess if you put it into a political context, that's the kind of thing the voters will decide next November. That's what elections are about. They'll take a look at me and my opponent and say, "Let's see, which one of them can better win the war on terror? Who best can see to it that Iraq emerges as a free society?"

Don, if I tried to fine-tune my messages based upon polls, I think I'd be pretty ineffective. I know I would be disappointed in myself. I hope today you've got a sense of my conviction about what we're doing. If you don't, maybe I need to learn to communicate better.

I feel strongly about what we're doing. I feel strongly that the course this administration has taken will make America more secure and the world more free and, therefore, the world more peaceful. It's a conviction that's deep in my soul. And I will say it as best as I possibly can to the American people.

I look forward to the debate and the campaign. I look forward to helping—for the American people to hear what is a proper use of American power. Do we have an obligation to lead, or should we shirk responsibility? That's how I view this debate. And I look forward to making it, Don. I'll do it the best I possibly can. I'll give it the best shot. I'll speak as plainly as I can.

One thing is for certain, though, about me—and the world has learned this—when

I say something, I mean it. And the credibility of the United States is incredibly important for keeping world peace and freedom.

Thank you all very much.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 8:31 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; Muqtada Al Sadr, Iraqi Shiite cleric whose militia engaged in an uprising in Iraq in early April; Lakhdar Brahimi, Special Adviser to the U.N. Secretary-General; Gen. John P. Abizaid, USA, combatant commander, U.S. Central Command; Lt. Gen. Ricardo S. Sanchez, USA, commander, Coalition Joint Task Force Seven; Thomas J. Pickard, former Acting Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation; Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi of Italy; President Aleksander Kwasniewski of Poland; Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom; Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan; Chairman Kim Chong-il of North Korea; Col. Muammar Abu Minyar al-Qadhafi, leader of Libya; and A.Q. Khan, former head of Pakistan's nuclear weapons program. A reporter referred to professional baseball player Sammy Sosa. The President also referred to the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States (9/11 Commission); and the Commission on the Intelligence Capabilities of the United States Regarding Weapons of Mass Destruction (Silberman/Robb Commission).

The President's News Conference With Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of Israel

April 14, 2004

President Bush. I'm pleased to welcome Prime Minister Sharon back to the White House. For more than 50 years, Israel has been a vital ally and a true friend of America. I've been proud to call the Prime Minister my friend. I really appreciate our discussions today. The policy of the United States is to help bring peace to the Middle East and to hope—bring hope to the people of that region.

On June 24, 2002, I laid out a vision to make this goal a reality. We then drafted the roadmap as the route to get us there. The heart of this vision is the responsibility of all parties—of Israel, of the Palestinian people, of the Arab states—to fight terror, to embrace democracy and reform, and to take the necessary steps for peace.

Today, the Prime Minister told me of his decision to take such a step. Israel plans to remove certain military installations and all settlements from Gaza and certain military installations and settlements from the West Bank. These are historic and courageous actions. If all parties choose to embrace this moment, they can open the door to progress and put an end to one of the world's longest-running conflicts.

Success will require the active efforts of many nations. Two days ago, I held important discussions with President Mubarak of Egypt, and I will soon meet with King Abdullah of Jordan. We're consulting closely with other key leaders in the region, in Europe, and with our Quartet partners, the EU, Russia, and the United Nations. These steps can open the door to progress toward a peaceful, democratic, viable Palestinian state. Working together, we can help build democratic Palestinian institutions as well as strong capabilities dedicated to fighting terror so that the Palestinian people can meet their obligations under the roadmap on the path to peace.

This opportunity holds great promise for the Palestinian people to build a modern

economy that will lift millions out of poverty, create the institutions and habits of liberty, and renounce the terror and violence that impede their aspirations and take a terrible toll on innocent life. The Palestinian people must insist on change and on a leadership that is committed to reform and progress and peace. We will help, but the most difficult work is theirs.

The United States is strongly committed, and I am strongly committed, to the security of Israel as a vibrant Jewish state. I reiterate our steadfast commitment to Israel's security and to preserving and strengthening Israel's self-defense capability, including its right to defend itself against terror.

The barrier being erected by Israel as a part of that security effort should, as your Government has stated, be a security, rather than political, barrier. It should be temporary rather than permanent, and therefore not prejudice any final status issues, including final borders. And its route should take into account, consistent with security needs, its impact on Palestinians not engaged in terrorist activities.

In an exchange of letters today and in a statement I will release later today, I'm repeating to the Prime Minister my commitment to Israel's security. The United States will not prejudice the outcome of final status negotiations. That matter is for the parties. But the realities on the ground and in the region have changed greatly over the last several decades, and any final settlement must take into account those realities and be agreeable to the parties.

The goal of two independent states has repeatedly been recognized in international resolutions and agreements, and it remains the key to resolving this conflict. The United States is strongly committed to Israel's security and well-being as a Jewish state. It seems clear that an agreed, just, fair, and realistic framework for a solution to the Palestinian refugee issue, as part of any final status agreement, will need to be found through the establishment of a Palestinian state and the settling of Palestinian refugees there, rather than Israel.

As part of a final peace settlement, Israel must have secure and recognized borders which should emerge from negotiations between the parties, in accordance with U.N. Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338. In light of new realities on the ground, including already existing major Israeli population centers, it is unrealistic to expect that the outcome of final status negotiations will be a full and complete return to the armistice lines of 1949, and all previous efforts to negotiate a two-state solution have reached the same conclusion. It is realistic to expect that any final status agreement will only be achieved on the basis of mutually agreed changes that reflect these realities.

I commend Prime Minister Sharon for his bold and courageous decision to withdraw from Gaza and parts of the West Bank. I call on the Palestinians and their Arab neighbors to match that boldness and that courage. All of us must show the wisdom and the will to bring lasting peace to that region.

Mr. Prime Minister, welcome to the White House.

Prime Minister Sharon. Thank you. Thank you so much. I want to thank you, Mr. President, for your warm welcome and your strong support and friendship for the state of Israel.

I came to you from a peaceseeking country. Despite the repeated terror attacks against us, the people of Israel continues to wish for the achievement of a viable peace in accordance with our Jewish tradition as outlined by Israel's prophets. Our people desires to be known for its achievements in the fields of culture, science, and technology, rather than in the battlefield. We are committed to make any effort to develop our country and society for our own benefit and for the benefit of the peoples of the region.

In our meeting today, I presented to you the outlines of my disengagement plan. It

will improve Israel's security and economy and will reduce friction and tension between Israelis and Palestinians. My plan will create a new and better reality for the state of Israel, and it also has the potential to create the right conditions to resume negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians.

I was encouraged by your positive response and your support for my plan. In that context, you handed me a letter that includes very important statement regarding Israel's security and its well-being as a Jewish state. You have proven, Mr. President, your ongoing, deep, and sincere friendship to the state of Israel and to the Jewish people. I believe that my plan can be an important contribution to advancing your vision, which is the only viable way to achieve the peace and security in the Middle East.

I wish to end with a personal note. I, myself, have been fighting terror for many years and understand the threats and cost from terrorism. In all these years, I have never met a leader as committed as you are, Mr. President, to the struggle for freedom and the need to confront terrorism wherever it exists. I want to express my appreciation to you for your courageous leadership in the war against global terror and your commitment and vision to bring peace to the Middle East.

Thank you, Mr. President.

President Bush. Thank you, Mr. Prime Minister. Good job, good job.

Prime Minister Sharon. Thank you.

President Bush. We will answer two questions a side, starting with the American side. The Prime Minister will call on somebody from the Israeli press at the appropriate moment.

Prime Minister Sharon. If there will be any, there's no——

President Bush. There may not be any questions from the Israeli press, that's what you're saying? [*Laughter*] It's not the case from the American press.

Terry Hunt [Terence Hunt, Associated Press].

Israeli West Bank Settlements/Final Status Negotiations

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. I'd like to go back to your opening statement and ask you, does the United States recognize Israel's right to retain some Jewish settlements in the West Bank? And if so, how does that fit with the U.S. policy that settlements are an obstacle to peace?

President Bush. First, let us recognize that the Prime Minister has made the decision to dismantle some settlements. In other words, he is beginning to implement a vision that allows for contiguous territories so that a Palestinian state can emerge.

And this is an important step today. It accelerates the process. See, I view it as creating an opportunity, an opportunity for those of us who believe that a Palestinian state should emerge, a peaceful Palestinian state, to work to put a framework for such a state to exist so that the institutions of such state are bigger than the people. See, when you have a Government where the person is bigger than the institutions, that Government will inevitably fail. It's when the institutions are bigger than the people that you're able to have continuity and people's hopes and aspirations realized and peace.

It is very important for a Palestinian state to emerge in which we have confidence, in which any Prime Minister of Israel has confidence, in which the United States has confidence, that will be a peaceful partner. And so what the Prime Minister has done is he started the process of removing settlements from the West Bank.

Your question to me is about the final status agreements. I said that the conditions on the ground have changed over time, and obviously, that must be recognized during any final status negotiations.

You know, I look forward to the moment when we're actually discussing final status

negotiations. There's a lot of work to be done prior to getting there. And what the Prime Minister has done is started the process. And now it's up for responsible Palestinians, caring Europeans, Americans, the United Nations to step in and help develop such a state that will be a peaceful state, one in which money will actually end up helping the people of the Palestinian—Palestinians to be able to grow their businesses and grow their—find wealth for their families. And then we can worry about the final status negotiations. In other words, there's a lot of work to do. What the Prime Minister has done is started the work, and we're prepared to help with the work.

Prime Minister Sharon. Thank you. The same question for me?

President Bush. Right over here.

Prime Minister Sharon. Oh, there's another question?

President Bush. You ask for one of the Israeli press. You don't have to answer their questions if you don't want to. [*Laughter*] I'm sorry, you didn't ask him one. No, it's too late. I'm protecting my friend here from the appetite of the American press.

Prime Minister Sharon. I'm afraid we have the same problem. [*Laughter*]

President Bush. It's not a problem; it's an opportunity, Mr. Prime Minister. [*Laughter*] Go ahead and ask a question from your press corps.

Prime Minister Sharon. Thank you.

Q. Mr. President, may I ask a question, please?

President Bush. It's up to the Prime Minister, but if it was up to me, of course you can.

Q. I would like to ask you, please, first.

President Bush. Please, what is it?

Prime Minister's Leadership

Q. Sharon's political future depends largely on the Americans quid pro quo, so still I'm asking on this issue, could you clarify the ambiguity surrounding few key issues, as the settlements, for example. In your eyes, Ariel is going to be on the Israeli side of the fence. I wanted to ask about the right of return, but your answer was quite clear there.

[*At this point, the journalist continued in Hebrew, and no translation was provided.*]

President Bush. Let me say this to you, his future doesn't depend upon me. His future depends upon his capacity to convince the Israeli people he's doing the right thing, and I think he is. He's a bold leader. That's what people want. They want leadership.

There is a process that got stuck, and the Prime Minister steps up and leads. And I'm confident the Israeli people appreciate that kind of leadership.

You can answer the question if you care to, but I don't buy the premise that what I say helps him get elected. What he says helps him get elected. It's his vision of Israel that the people of Israel will be looking toward.

Prime Minister Sharon. Thank you. First, I will answer in Hebrew.

[*Prime Minister Sharon answered in Hebrew and then continued in English.*]

The question was, did I take a risky decision. So my answer is that when the issue is the security of the state of Israel, which I am fully responsible to, and political and economic future of the state of Israel, I believe that personal issues like personal security is not to be taken in consideration. This is not the issue.

And I would say that what I have learned from my visit here, that the plan, disengagement plan, contributes to the security of Israel, contributes to the political situation of Israel in the world, and helps our economy. Therefore, I think that those questions of personal risk has not been taken into consideration. We have to look into the interests of the state of Israel.

President Bush. Caren [Caren Bohan, Reuters].

Q. Thank you, sir——

President Bush. Trudy [Trudy Feldman, Trans Features], I'm sorry. I've got to call on the wire services. I'm sorry.

Thrust of U.S. Policy/Responsibilities of Participants

Q. Former President Jimmy Carter said last week that he feels U.S. Middle East policy is tilted too much toward Israel. Is that a fair criticism?

President Bush. U.S. Middle East policy is tilted toward peace, and the best way to achieve peace is to fight terror. And I'm the first American President ever to have articulated the creation of a Palestinian state. And the reason I did so is because I believe a Palestinian state, when properly done, will be—provide enough hope for people, provide a peaceful avenue for those who aspire for a better future. And I also believe it's in Israel's interest that there be a Palestinian state which develops in a peaceful way.

Every statement I've said, I said all parties must assume responsibilities. The Palestinians have got to assume the responsibility of fighting off terror. If they want a state which provides a hopeful future for their people, they must fight terror. They must be resolute in the fighting of terror.

Israel has responsibilities. Today the Prime Minister stepped up to those responsibilities. He started a process that I believe can be a hopeful process. The Arab world has got responsibilities to help not only fight terror but to provide hope for a peaceful Palestinian people. Those are responsibilities. America is assuming responsibilities. My position on Middle East peace is quite clear.

Final question, from the Israeli press.

Palestinian Right of Return/Israeli Security

[*A journalist asked a question in Hebrew and then continued in English.*]

Q. And Mr. President, if I may, is what you said about the Palestinian refugee mean that you deny unconditionally the—what's it called—the right of return of Palestinian refugee to the state of Israel?

President Bush. My statement—refer back to my statement that I said, and also look at the letter that I sent the Prime Minister. It will clarify my position on the issue.

[*Prime Minister Sharon answered in Hebrew and then continued in English.*]

Prime Minister Sharon. I mentioned first that I got from you, Mr. President, a letter. And I sent you a letter. And in these letters, all those issues, all those details are very clearly described in those letters. And I suggested also on your behalf that they will read the letters.

President Bush. Thank you.

Prime Minister Sharon. That's the first thing. I was asked by the Israeli media if I would say the things they held here or we discussed here or have been concluded here will provide me a weapon against my colleagues in the Government or the members of my party in Israel.

So my answer was that I was never looking for weapons to use against my colleagues in the Government or against the members of my party. I agree that I've been using weapons for many years, being a soldier for many years, against the enemies of the state of Israel. And I never hesitated, and I will not hesitate also in the future, to use weapons if it will be needed in order to defend the citizens of Israel, their life, their normal life, their development, and so on.

And therefore, I say that I don't need for that. I believe that our discussion today providing the needed security and hope for the future of the state of Israel and the future, I would say, of the region.

President Bush. Thank you, sir.

Prime Minister Sharon. Thank you.

President Bush. Thank you all very much.

Prime Minister Sharon. Thank you so much.

President Bush. Welcome.

Prime Minister Sharon. Thank you.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 1:05 p.m. in the Cross Hall at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt; and King Abdullah II of Jordan.

Statement on the Israeli Disengagement Plan and the Middle East Peace Process

April 14, 2004

I remain hopeful and determined to find a way forward toward a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian dispute.

The Israeli Plan:

I welcome the disengagement plan prepared by the Government of Israel, under which Israel would withdraw certain military installations and all settlements from Gaza, and withdraw certain military installations and settlements in the West Bank. These steps will mark real progress toward realizing the vision I set forth in June 2002 of two states living side by side in peace and security, and make a real contribution toward peace.

I am hopeful that steps pursuant to this plan, consistent with this vision, will remind all states and parties of their own obligations under the roadmap.

The Path to Peace:

I believe certain principles, which are very widely accepted in the international community, show us the path forward:

- The right of self defense and the need to fight terrorism are equally matters of international agreement.
- The two-state vision and the roadmap for peace designed to implement it, command nearly universal support as the best means of achieving a permanent peace and an end to the Israeli occupation that began in 1967.
- United Nations Security Council resolutions have repeatedly spoken of the desirability of establishing two independent states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side within secure and recognized borders.

Having these principles in mind, the United States is able to make the following comments.

Peace Plans:

The United States remains committed to the vision of two states living side by side in peace and security, and its implementation as described in the roadmap. The United States will do its utmost to prevent any attempt by anyone to impose any other plan.

Security:

There will be no security for Israelis or Palestinians until they and all states, in the region and beyond, join together to fight terrorism and dismantle terrorist organizations. The United States reiterates its steadfast commitment to Israel's security, including secure, defensible borders, and to preserve and strengthen Israel's capability to deter and defend itself, by itself, against any threat or possible combination of threats. The United States will join with others in the international community to strengthen the capacity and will of Palestinian security forces to fight terrorism and dismantle terrorist capabilities and infrastructure.

Terrorism:

Israel will retain its right to defend itself against terrorism, including to take actions against terrorist organizations. The United States will lead efforts, working together

with Jordan, Egypt, and others in the international community, to build the capacity and will of Palestinian institutions to fight terrorism, dismantle terrorist organizations, and prevent the areas from which Israel has withdrawn from posing a threat that would have to be addressed by any other means. The United States understands that after Israel withdraws from Gaza and/or parts of the West Bank, and pending agreements on other arrangements, existing arrangements regarding control of airspace, territorial waters, and land passages of the West Bank and Gaza will continue.

The Two-State Solution:

The United States remains committed to the two-state solution for peace in the Middle East as set forth in June 2002, and to the roadmap as the best path to realize that vision.

The goal of two independent states has repeatedly been recognized in international resolutions and agreements, and it remains a key to resolving this conflict. The United States is strongly committed to Israel's security and well-being as a Jewish state. It seems clear that an agreed, just, fair and realistic framework for a solution to the Palestinian refugee issue as part of any final status agreement will need to be found through the establishment of a Palestinian state, and the settling of Palestinian refugees there, rather than in Israel.

As part of a final peace settlement, Israel must have secure and recognized borders, which should emerge from negotiations between the parties in accordance with UNSC Resolutions 242 and 338. In light of new realities on the ground, including already existing major Israeli populations centers, it is unrealistic to expect that the outcome of final status negotiations will be a full and complete return to the armistice lines of 1949, and all previous efforts to negotiate a two-state solution have reached the same conclusion. It is realistic to expect that any final status agreement will only be achieved on the basis of mutually agreed changes that reflect these realities.

Palestinian Statehood:

The United States supports the establishment of a Palestinian state that is viable, contiguous, sovereign, and independent, so that the Palestinian people can build their own future in accordance with the vision I set forth in June 2002 and with the path set forth in the roadmap. The United States will join with others in the international community to foster the development of democratic political institutions and new leadership committed to those institutions, the reconstruction of civic institutions, the growth of a free and prosperous economy, and the building of capable security institutions dedicated to maintaining law and order and dismantling terrorist organizations.

Palestinian Obligations:

Under the roadmap, Palestinians must undertake an immediate cessation of armed activity and all acts of violence against Israelis anywhere, and all official Palestinian institutions must end incitement against Israel. The Palestinian leadership must act decisively against terror, including sustained, targeted, and effective operations to stop terrorism and dismantle terrorist capabilities and infrastructure. Palestinians must undertake a comprehensive and fundamental political reform that includes a strong parliamentary democracy and an empowered prime minister.

Israeli Obligations:

The Government of Israel is committed to take additional steps on the West Bank, including progress toward a freeze on settlement activity, removing unauthorized outposts, and improving the humanitarian situation by easing restrictions on the movement of Palestinians not engaged in terrorist activities.

As the Government of Israel has stated, the barrier being erected by Israel should

be a security rather than political barrier, should be temporary rather than permanent, and therefore not prejudice any final status issues including final borders, and its route should take into account, consistent with security needs, its impact on Palestinians not engaged in terrorist activities.

Regional Cooperation:

A peace settlement negotiated between Israelis and Palestinians would be a great boon not only to those peoples but to the peoples of the entire region. Accordingly, all states in the region have special responsibilities: to support the building of the institutions of a Palestinian state; to fight terrorism, and cut off all forms of assistance to individuals and groups engaged in terrorism; and to begin now to move toward more normal relations with the State of Israel. These actions would be true contributions to building peace in the region.

Letter to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of Israel on the Israeli Disengagement Plan
April 14, 2004

Dear Mr. Prime Minister:

Thank you for your letter setting out your disengagement plan.

The United States remains hopeful and determined to find a way forward toward a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian dispute. I remain committed to my June 24, 2002 vision of two states living side by side in peace and security as the key to peace, and to the roadmap as the route to get there.

We welcome the disengagement plan you have prepared, under which Israel would withdraw certain military installations and all settlements from Gaza, and withdraw certain military installations and settlements in the West Bank. These steps described in the plan will mark real progress toward realizing my June 24, 2002 vision, and make a real contribution towards peace. We also understand that, in this context, Israel believes it is important to bring new opportunities to the Negev and the Galilee. We are hopeful that steps pursuant to this plan, consistent with my vision, will remind all states and parties of their own obligations under the roadmap.

The United States appreciates the risks such an undertaking represents. I therefore want to reassure you on several points.

First, the United States remains committed to my vision and to its implementation as described in the roadmap. The United States will do its utmost to prevent any attempt by anyone to impose any other plan. Under the roadmap, Palestinians must undertake an immediate cessation of armed activity and all acts of violence against Israelis anywhere, and all official Palestinian institutions must end incitement against Israel. The Palestinian leadership must act decisively against terror, including sustained, targeted, and effective operations to stop terrorism and dismantle terrorist capabilities and infrastructure. Palestinians must undertake a comprehensive and fundamental political reform that includes a strong parliamentary democracy and an empowered prime minister.

Second, there will be no security for Israelis or Palestinians until they and all states, in the region and beyond, join together to fight terrorism and dismantle terrorist organizations. The United States reiterates its steadfast commitment to Israel's

security, including secure, defensible borders, and to preserve and strengthen Israel's capability to deter and defend itself, by itself, against any threat or possible combination of threats.

Third, Israel will retain its right to defend itself against terrorism, including to take actions against terrorist organizations. The United States will lead efforts, working together with Jordan, Egypt, and others in the international community, to build the capacity and will of Palestinian institutions to fight terrorism, dismantle terrorist organizations, and prevent the areas from which Israel has withdrawn from posing a threat that would have to be addressed by any other means. The United States understands that after Israel withdraws from Gaza and/or parts of the West Bank, and pending agreements on other arrangements, existing arrangements regarding control of airspace, territorial waters, and land passages of the West Bank and Gaza will continue.

The United States is strongly committed to Israel's security and well-being as a Jewish state. It seems clear that an agreed, just, fair, and realistic framework for a solution to the Palestinian refugee issue as part of any final status agreement will need to be found through the establishment of a Palestinian state, and the settling of Palestinian refugees there, rather than in Israel.

As part of a final peace settlement, Israel must have secure and recognized borders, which should emerge from negotiations between the parties in accordance with UNSC Resolutions 242 and 338. In light of new realities on the ground, including already existing major Israeli populations centers, it is unrealistic to expect that the outcome of final status negotiations will be a full and complete return to the armistice lines of 1949, and all previous efforts to negotiate a two-state solution have reached the same conclusion. It is realistic to expect that any final status agreement will only be achieved on the basis of mutually agreed changes that reflect these realities.

I know that, as you state in your letter, you are aware that certain responsibilities face the State of Israel. Among these, your government has stated that the barrier being erected by Israel should be a security rather than political barrier, should be temporary rather than permanent, and therefore not prejudice any final status issues including final borders, and its route should take into account, consistent with security needs, its impact on Palestinians not engaged in terrorist activities.

As you know, the United States supports the establishment of a Palestinian state that is viable, contiguous, sovereign, and independent, so that the Palestinian people can build their own future in accordance with my vision set forth in June 2002 and with the path set forth in the roadmap. The United States will join with others in the international community to foster the development of democratic political institutions and new leadership committed to those institutions, the reconstruction of civic institutions, the growth of a free and prosperous economy, and the building of capable security institutions dedicated to maintaining law and order and dismantling terrorist organizations.

A peace settlement negotiated between Israelis and Palestinians would be a great boon not only to those peoples but to the peoples of the entire region. Accordingly, the United States believes that all states in the region have special responsibilities: to support the building of the institutions of a Palestinian state; to fight terrorism, and cut off all forms of assistance to individuals and groups engaged in terrorism; and to begin now to move toward more normal relations with the State of Israel. These actions would be true contributions to building peace in the region.

Mr. Prime Minister, you have described a bold and historic initiative that can make an important contribution to peace. I commend your efforts and your courageous decision which I support. As a close friend

and ally, the United States intends to work closely with you to help make it a success.

Sincerely,

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this letter. The letter was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 14 but was not issued as a White House press release. The Office of the Press Secretary also made available the text of Prime Minister Sharon's letter to the President.

Remarks in Des Moines, Iowa
April 15, 2004

Thank you for having me. Please be seated. Thanks for the warm welcome. Thanks for the warm weather. [*Laughter*] I really am glad to be able to come and talk to you about how to make sure people have a chance to make a living. That's what we're really here to talk about: How can people put food on the table; how can communities be vibrant and grow.

Chuck Grassley said I appreciate rural America. I do, so much so that I call Crawford, Texas, my home. That's rural America. I think we've got about 661 people—until I arrive. [*Laughter*]

I appreciate the Federal Home Loan Bank of Des Moines for hosting this. I know we've got people from States other than Iowa, like Missouri, Minnesota, South Dakota, North Dakota. Glad you all are here. Thanks for coming by and giving me a chance to visit.

My attitude about rural America is—from the President's perspective—is that if we can make the economy strong, rural America will benefit. It's hard to talk about the health of rural America unless the overall economy is growing. I mean, it's nice to have kind of visions about how to bring development to your community, but if the economy is stagnant, it's hard to get there.

So what I want to do today is talk about the economy of the United States and how we can leave lasting prosperity, to make sure that you understand what I think the role of the Federal Government is, which is to create an environment in which the farmer and rancher can make a living, in which the small-business person can realize their dreams. Because the truth of the matter is, when you really think about rural America, rural America's vitality depends upon the health of the agricultural sector. The economy of our rural America depends upon the vitality of small businesses.

Sure, you get some big businesses to move into your communities, and that's good, and I'd work hard to try to recruit them if I were you. But true economic vitality, the vitality that will last beyond just an economic spurt is one that recognizes the importance of the entrepreneur and the farmer and the rancher.

I want to thank my friend Chuck Grassley for introducing me. I've spent some quality time with Senator Grassley here in Iowa. You might remember the 2000 caucuses. He showed me a lot of the State—by car. [*Laughter*] I'll never forget driving the backroads of Iowa, and Chairman Grassley—I call him "Mr. Chairman"—he's a powerful guy, so I put a fancy title to his name—the chairman says, "I know that farmer there." And then he'd go by and say, "I remember meeting that farmer there." He knew every farmer on the back roads of Iowa. No wonder he's such a popular person in this great State. He's doing a great job, by the way. I appreciate working for him. He is—he brought some of those good Iowa values to the

Congress. And Mr. Chairman, it's great to be with you, and I want to thank you for your continued leadership.

I also had the honor of meeting Randy Newman, and I want to thank Randy for being the chairman of the FHLB board of directors. I want to thank the members of the board who are here as well and associate members from around the Midwest.

I had the honor of landing at the airport and also being greeted today by the other Senator from the State of Iowa. Senator Tom Harkin is with us. Mr. Senator, thank you for your hospitality and your graciousness for coming out to the airport. I'm pleased you're here.

I thank Congressman Tom Latham as well as Congressman Leonard Boswell. Boswell made sure I knew that I was in his district. [*Laughter*] I want to thank both Members of the Congress for serving your State.

I want to thank—I'm a member of the ex-Governors club. Those are those of us who are fortunate to be Governors of a State. I'm a member, proud alumnus. I see another member of the ex-Governors club with us today. That would be former Governor Bob Ray of the State of Iowa. Good to see you, Bob. Thank you for coming.

Also when I landed, I met an interesting person named Sarah Sindlinger. Sarah is right there. You don't know Sarah yet, but you're about to find out about this remarkable American. She is a 16-year-older. She has volunteered over 150 hours of time. See, she's a high school junior, and she said, "What can I do to make my community a better place?" And instead of just asking the question, she's actually acted on the question. She has volunteered in a daycare center. She has volunteered in a library. She understands the value of mentoring. She has worked in a hospital. She's been a best buddy to a fellow student in the special education program.

You know, the reason I bring up Sarah is this: There's a lot of talk about the strength of America, and we're strong. We're plenty strong. We're strong militarily. I will keep us strong militarily. We're strong economically, and we need to get stronger economically. But the true strength of the country is in the hearts and souls of our citizens. See, that's the really good strength of America. You know that if you live in rural America. You know what I'm talking about, the notion of people taking time out of their lives to make their community a better place.

Sarah is here because she is a soldier in the army of compassion. She's a part of the true strength of the country. She's a soul who's willing to dedicate her time to love a neighbor just like she'd like to be loved herself. My call to you as you do your work in your community is to continue to rally that compassion to help change America, one heart, one soul, one conscience at a time.

Sarah, I'm honored you're here. Thank you for setting such a fine example, and may God continue to bless your soul and your spirit.

It is nice of you all to welcome somebody from the Federal Government on tax day. [*Laughter*] There's a lot of people filling out their tax—putting in their taxes today. Laura and I put in ours a little early. See, the newspapers wanted to see what I paid. That's just part of the job. [*Laughter*] People expect that from their public servants, and I'm more than happy to participate in that aspect of public life. People also expect from their public service a wise stewardship of the taxpayers' money. People also expect that we keep the Federal tax burden as low as possible, which was one of my pledges to the American people. I take that responsibility seriously. And I want to thank Senator Grassley for his help in reducing the tax burden on the American people.

Tax day is something most people really don't look forward to. But this year, it's a little better because of the tax relief we

delivered, and the economy is stronger for it.

I mentioned small businesses as a part of the strategy to make sure rural America is strong. A major component of the tax relief was aimed at our small businesses. See, most small businesses are Subchapter S corporations or limited partnerships and, therefore, pay tax at the individual income-tax rate. And therefore, when you heard the fact that we lowered individual income taxes, I want you to think about more money in the pockets of small businesses so they can expand and hire new people.

A lot of the tax relief that we passed was aimed at our seniors. By reducing the taxes on dividends, we've helped our seniors. You've got seniors living in rural America. It's good that they have a little more money in their pocket.

A lot of the tax relief we passed was aimed at people with children. We've raised the child credit to $1,000. Some of the tax relief we passed was trying to mitigate the effects of the marriage penalty. It didn't seem like—make much sense to me that we would tax marriage in a country where we are trying to encourage marriages and stable families.

The tax relief we passed is driving—helping to drive the economy forward, and it came at about the right time—just the right time, for that matter—because we're emerging from a period of incredible economic challenges. Rural America has been challenged economically, just like the rest of America has been challenged economically. We went through a recession. The recession hurt. It hurt in all sectors of our country. Recession means that we had negative growth for three quarters. Negative growth meant it was hard for people to find work. Negative growth meant it was hard to be optimistic about the future. And yet, we overcame that recession. I will argue that the tax relief made the recession one of the most shallow in American economic history.

Right after we started recovering from that, we got attacked. The attacks hurt us all. The attacks on America hurt every single American. The attacks on America hurt our economy. We lost nearly one million jobs in just 3 months after September the 11th, 2001. Some of those jobs were in rural America.

It also affected our way of thinking about the world. We grew up thinking that oceans could protect us. We learned a horrible lesson on that day, that we were no longer immune from threats that might be gathering overseas. I vowed that day that I would take whatever action was necessary to stay on the offensive to protect America. We'll do everything we can at home to protect us. But the best way to secure the homeland is to bring the killers to justice, one person at a time. And that's exactly what the United States of America will continue to do.

We're a tough country and a compassionate country. We refuse to be intimidated by the terrorists. It took us a while to kind of figure out what was going on, but when we figured it out, this country started moving forward again. See, the people of this country are resolute, and they're strong. It doesn't matter whether you live in urban America or rural America; there's a wonderful strength, the fiber of the people of America.

Then we found out another challenge to our economy, and that is there were some people that forgot to be responsible citizens and didn't tell the truth. They were CEOs that betrayed the trust. And that affected us. It really did, when you think about it. It created a challenge that we had to overcome. I appreciate the Members of Congress from both political parties working together to pass good reforms that made it very clear that this country will not tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America. I think the American citizens now believe that the laws we passed are beginning to work. After all, you're looking on your TV screens and seeing some of those

who betrayed the trust being held to account.

And then, as you know, I made a difficult but necessary decision to help defend America and make the world more peaceful. One of the lessons of September the 11th is anytime an American President sees a gathering threat, we must deal with it. We must take it seriously. I saw a threat, based upon intelligence, in the form of Saddam Hussein. The Congress, by the way, looked at the very same intelligence and saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the same intelligence, and it saw a threat as well.

I went to the U.N., as you might remember, and said, "There is a threat. September the 11th changed—Saddam Hussein is—must be viewed in a different light, at least from the American perspective, than before. He's a serious threat to us." I based that upon the intelligence but also upon the knowledge that he had used chemical weapons against his own people, the knowledge that he was paying for suicide bombers to go kill, the knowledge that he hated our country. So I called the United Nations—at the United Nations, I called for them to collectively deal with the threat, and they agreed to, in a unanimous decision. They said, "This man is a threat." They passed a Security Council resolution that said, "Disarm, or face serious consequences."

Now, anytime an American President says, "Disarm, or face serious consequences," the American President better mean it. When the Commander in Chief speaks for the country, I believe the person ought to speak clearly and mean what he says. And so I acted on those sentiments as well. I said, "Mr. Saddam Hussein, disarm, or face serious consequences." He chose not to. He defied the world again. Given the lessons of September the 11th, I was faced with a choice, either to trust the word of a madman, a tyrant, a dictator, or defend the country. Given that choice, I will defend America every time.

That decision created an economic hurdle that we had to cross, because marching to war is not conducive for economic growth and vitality. The lenders who are here know what I mean. I mean, it's kind of hard to lend into an environment when you know the country is preparing for war. War is negative, not positive. We're now marching to peace. But that march is tough; it's hard work.

These last weeks have been tough weeks for America. We've encountered—I say "we"; it's just not American forces. It's coalition forces and innocent Iraqi citizens, by the way, have encountered serious violence in parts of Iraq. The different factions, former Saddam loyalists, some foreign fighters, Sadr, who is a radical cleric, and his gangs have a common goal. They want to stop the march to democracy in Iraq. The idea of a free society really bothers them. Freedom is something they can't stand, and they want to run us out of Iraq. That's what they want to do.

I—we're not going to be run out of Iraq. We're not going to let a ruthless power grab affect that which is important. See, it's in our national interest that Iraq be free and peaceful. It's in our national interest, the long-term interest of this country, that right in the heart of the Middle East there be a free society, one that will help spread hope and opportunity. See, I believe free societies are peaceful societies.

I also am motivated by this American value, that says freedom is not our gift to the world; freedom is the Almighty's gift to every man and woman in this world. That's what I believe. And I believe—Iraq will either be peaceful and democratic, or it will be a source of violence, a source of instability, a source of hatred, and a threat to free societies.

I'm proud of those who have served our Nation and are serving our Nation. Our military is doing incredibly good work. They've been given a hard job. They've been given a tough job, and they're performing brilliantly. See, the transition from

torture chambers and rape rooms and mass graves and fear of authority is a tough transition. And they're doing the good work of keeping this country stabilized as a political process unfolds.

We saw yesterday Mr. Brahimi from the United Nations begin to lay out the specific strategy necessary to, first, pass sovereignty and then eventually put a constitution in place and then free elections in Iraq. We're moving toward democracy, but the situation on the ground, I readily concede, is tough work. And we've got good people there working it. And some have paid the highest price of all. Some of the people there in Iraq have made the ultimate sacrifice on behalf of a more stable and peaceful world.

Tom Latham told me about coming from the funeral of Marine Lance Corporal Ben Carman from Jefferson, Iowa. My deepest sympathies go to the Carman family. I know how incredibly difficult it is for them to put their loved one into the ground. Ben Carman's father said this, he said, "He knew that America was in danger"—he, talking about his son, the dad talking about his son—he said, "He knew that America was in danger, and it was time for guys like him to step up to the plate." That's what his dad said about his courageous son.

Mr. Carman must know that our prayers are with him and with those of others who have lost a loved one in Iraq and that the mission that his son was on was a noble and important mission for peace and freedom and for the security of America. And we will stay the course in Iraq so that his son did not die in vain.

We've overcome a lot of challenges, when you think about it. Rural America has overcome a lot of economic challenges. In 3 short years, we've been through a recession and, by the way, a stock market correction. That affected people in rural America. We've been through an attack on our country, a national emergency. We've been through corporate scandals. We're making the world more peaceful and secure.

Those are challenges that are hard for any economy to overcome. But this is America. This is a country that's full of vibrancy—vibrant people. The entrepreneurial spirit is strong, and I intend to keep it that way. Tax relief helped. Here on tax day, we can say that by cutting taxes, we helped the entrepreneurial spirit of both urban and rural America.

And the facts bear me out. Economic growth in the second half of 2003 was the best in nearly 20 years. Things are improving. More manufacturers are seeing rising activity than any point in about two decades. Inflation is low. That's good for rural America. Interest rates are low. That's good if you want to buy a house. Homeownership is at the highest rate ever. That's a proud statistic for America to hold up. You know why? Because we want more people owning their own home. An ownership society is a positive society. When people own something, they have a vital stake in the future of our country, whether it be in rural America or urban America.

There was good confirmation last month about the strengthening economy: We created 308,000 new jobs in March, 750,000 since August. That's positive. People are getting hired. People are going back to work. The unemployment rate in Iowa is 4.1 percent. That's below the national average. I'm sure there's pockets of unemployment that are higher than that, but overall, this State's unemployment rate is better than the Nation, which is a credit to the entrepreneurs of the State of Iowa and the entrepreneurs, by the way, of other States here as well. You're doing well, and I appreciate that.

My job is to make sure that the environment is such that you can continue to do well. You see, I'm interested in the lasting prosperity. I want prosperity to be achieved in the out-years, and there is some uncertainty. I mean, look, people are worried about finding work. There are families wondering whether or not their loved one can find a job close to home, because this is

a changing economy. It's just different. Some things don't change: We need farmers out there planting the field, although agriculture is different from 30 years ago. We need our ranchers feeling good about things. We need to make sure, though, that this is the best place in the world to do business.

If you're really interested in making sure that people can find work at home, America has got to be the best place to do business. The environment has got to be a good place for people to make a living, is what I'm telling you.

And the first way to do so is to make sure our legal system is balanced and fair. You know, too many lawsuits run up the cost of doing business in America. Frivolous lawsuits are really hard on small businesses, and we need good legal reform. And Congress has got a responsibility, like on class-action legal reforms. We need to get it out of Congress. We need to send a message that we'll have a fair and equitable legal system, not one that is full of frivolous and junk lawsuits that make it hard for people to find work.

We need less regulations. We're working on regulatory relief at the administrative branch. Congress needs to work on regulatory relief, too, in the laws they pass. I wish I could say that every single form that people are required to fill out was read in Washington or in Des Moines or anywhere else where there's a statehouse. I don't think so. We need to streamline these regulations. We don't need our small-business people spending enormous amounts of time filling out forms that don't get read.

We also need to make sure that we can help—make sure health care is accessible and affordable. The rising cost of health care makes it difficult for people to employ people. It's hard on small businesses. I'm telling you, it's hard on rural America, and you know what I'm talking about.

So we passed some good laws that allow for health savings accounts, which are an imaginative way to help control the cost of health care for individuals and small businesses and farming families. Congress needs to pass association health care plans that allow small businesses in rural America to pool their risk with other businesses, perhaps in urban America, so that they get the same purchasing power that big businesses do in the marketplace. It's a smart way to make sure that the rural economies stay healthy, so that your small businesses out there are able to find affordable health care.

I appreciate Senator Grassley working with me on Medicare reform in order to make sure health care is available. The Medicare reform package we worked, with emphasis on rural hospitals, made a difference and will make a difference in the health care in rural America. A vibrant rural America must have the ability for people to find health care, and the Medicare reforms are going to help a lot.

As well, I appreciate Congress working on community health centers. These are places where people—low-income people can find primary care so they're not using the emergency rooms of urban or rural hospitals. There's just practical things we can do to make sure that the economy stays strong, people can find work, the rural economies are vibrant, by dealing with health care. I'm not going to allow the health care system to be federalized. I think that would be a terrible mistake to have a Federal delivery of the health care.

We need to make sure we maintain spending discipline in Washington. One way to make sure the economy, the overall economy, grows is there to be wise expenditure of people's money. It's always a battle, of course. Every idea is a good idea. Every idea requires more money. I've submitted my budget, which reduces the deficit in half by 5 years without raising taxes on the American people. It's going to require some discipline, spending discipline. Fortunately, Iowa is represented by Congressman Jim Nussle of the Budget Committee.

And so we will have an interesting battle in this election year about keeping spending down. But I think if the will is right, we can. We can meet our priorities, make sure our soldiers get what they want, make sure the homeland is defended without busting the budget.

To make sure the economy continues to grow and rural America is healthy, we need an energy plan. We need to get sound energy legislation to my desk.

If you're a businessperson thinking about hiring somebody or wanting to start a business and you're worried about getting electricity, you're not going to start your business. If you're somebody who's a manufacturer in the State of Iowa or Missouri, Minnesota, the Dakotas, and your energy supplies are disrupted, your price of natural gas goes too high, or you're worried about the reliability of electricity, you're not going to be in a mood to expand your business.

We're hooked on foreign sources of energy right now. The country needs to change its attitude. Of course, we've got to encourage conservation—that's important—and use new technologies. In my judgment, we ought to open up lands for exploration for natural gas. We can do so in an environmentally friendly way, to make us less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

We need to continue to promote clean coal technology so we become less dependent on foreign sources of energy. We need to use that which we grow right here in places like Iowa to make us less dependent on foreign sources of energy. That's why I've worked with the Senator on ethanol, which I think is an important ingredient, an important part of making sure that we have a modern energy plan as we go into the 21st century. Let's grow it, instead of depending upon foreign sources to provide it. I hope I can get an energy bill to my desk. It will be good for rural America if I do so—when I do so. Let me be optimistic.

Another thing that's important for rural America is to be confident in our trade policy. There's a lot of talk about economic isolationism in Washington right now. That means throwing up barriers to trade. That will be bad for rural America. It's not going to happen on my watch. I will resist that mightily, because I believe that when you're good at something, you ought to promote it. We're really good at growing things, and we ought to be selling things that we grow everywhere around the world. We're 5 percent of the world's population. Why don't we sell to the other 95 percent, as opposed to walling ourselves off. Good economic development policy in rural America depends upon our ability to open up markets for products made in rural America, products grown in rural America.

I'll tell you something really interesting—first off, let me take a step back. Many Presidents of both parties have made the decision that America's markets should be open. That's good for the consumers. When you have more choices to make, it's generally good for consumers. It helps with price, and the more competition there is for your demand, the better selections you will have at a better price. That's just how the markets work.

In return, countries haven't reciprocated. They haven't opened up their markets as generously as we've opened up ours. And so the choice we have to make is, do we retaliate by closing ours, and therefore, they keep theirs closed, or do we work to open up other markets? I've chosen the latter route. See, "Just treat us the way we treat you," is my message when it comes to foreign trade. "Our markets are open for you. You open up our markets to your consumers—your markets to our products."

And it's beginning to work. And if you ask any farmer, they know what I'm talking about, because farm income is at a record level in 2003, much of it thanks to the ability for our farmers to export into other markets. And it's important to keep those markets open. It's important to make sure

that we're confident about our trade policy, not pessimistic, not willing to fall prey to the false hopes of economic isolationism. Economic isolationism will hurt rural America, and it's not going to happen.

We'll be tough when we have to, to make sure we're treated fairly. I filed the first WTO case against China over unfair tax burdens it gives to its semiconductor makers. In other words, when we see inequity, we'll file a complaint; we'll take people to the court. We just want to open the fields. We just want to be treated the exact same way we treat them.

The interesting thing that happened last month is that America hit an alltime record for exports. And that's positive news, positive news throughout the country. The reason why—you know why? It's because we produce the best products. When it says, "Made in the USA," they're the best.

One of the great challenges we have is to make sure our workforce is trained for the jobs of the 21st century, make sure people growing up in rural America have got the skills necessary to become employed in the jobs that will be available as we move into the 21st century. The Workforce Investment Act needs to be reformed in a positive way, so that people are trained for jobs which actually exist.

And one of the great strengths of our country is the community college system, and it needs to be utilized in an effective, smart way, to combine those who are looking for workers and those who want to work with a place in order to learn the skills so they can get hired. That sounds pretty simple, but sometimes the system doesn't work that way. So I've laid out a Jobs for the 21st Century program that really utilizes the community college system in a way that I think is strategically important to make sure people get the skills.

Listen, you hear a lot of talk about productivity. That means one worker can produce more goods or services than before. We want people to be more productive. And oftentimes the way that that has to happen is through education. There's plenty of ways for people to find money to help with the education. We just want to make sure our workforce training programs are applicable to the 21st century.

As well we've got to make sure you get it right early in the public school system. I mean, you can talk all you want about productivity in workers, but if people can't read, it's a steep hill to climb. And I know in Iowa you do a great job at your public schools of holding people to account, of measuring so that you can determine whether or not your curriculum is working or not. And that's important. It's important in rural America as well. It's important to make sure that you set high standards, you challenge what I call the soft bigotry of low expectations, you expect nothing but excellence for every single child being educated in any public school across the State in which you live.

That's the spirit behind the No Child Left Behind Act, and it's going to make a difference. People are learning to read and write and add and subtract. We've got kind of a flaw in the pipeline in some places, where the accountability hasn't kicked in soon enough. So I've got—we've got some intermediate measures that I'd like for Congress to support me on, so that there is intensive reading and math for junior high and high school students, because we've got to solve these problems early, before they're too late, and make sure that the workforce training programs are relevant.

You know, I think one of the interesting things for rural America is going to be the spread of broadband technology. It's going to really change much of the way that education can be delivered or health care can be delivered. It's an exciting opportunity and an exciting moment for people who live in rural America. The objective of this administration is to make sure that every American has access by the year 2007 and, shortly thereafter, have more than just one deliverer of broadband. In other words,

you've got choice. Rural America needs just as much choice as urban America does in order for the consumers to benefit.

I see people nodding their heads as leaders in your communities. This is going to be a fantastic opportunity for you, and the Government's job is to make sure the regulatory environment is such, and the taxing environment is such, that broadband spreads as quickly as possible all throughout the country.

Let me talk about one other way to make sure the economic environment in both urban and rural America remains conducive to job growth and vitality, and that is, the Tax Code has got to be fair. And in my budget, I proposed a 10.7-percent increase to make sure that tax cheaters are found, make sure the IRS gets after those who don't pay taxes, make sure that the system is fair for those of us who do pay taxes. We want everybody paying their fair share. If I'm going to pay it, I want somebody else to pay it too, if they're obligated to pay. And that's why we expect the IRS to be tough, and they need the resources necessary to do so, and we'll provide them.

The other thing we need to do on the Tax Code is there needs to be certainty in the Tax Code. If you're a job creator and you're worried about what the Tax Code will look like next year, it creates uncertainty. See, it's the worry about whether the environment in which you'll be taxed is—creates enough uncertainty so that there's a lack of confidence about expanding the job base. You know, a small-business owner needs to know with certainty what the code will look like, and that's not the way the Tax Code has been structured. The tax relief that we passed about—talked about is scheduled to go away. I can't explain it very well, but that's just the way it happens, tax relief today and not tax relief tomorrow. And we need to do something about it, because there needs to be certainty in the code.

For example, the child credit will go down next year unless Congress makes the tax relief permanent. That means if you've got a child, you're going to pay a tax increase. That's what that means. The marriage penalty will go up. Once again, the Tax Code will make—say, "It's great that you're married, but we're going to penalize you for it." The 10-percent bracket, which has helped millions of low-income families, will fade away, and I think Congress needs to make it permanent. I think Congress needs to make all aspects of tax relief permanent.

See, I think the uncertainty in the Tax Code is going to make it difficult for us to confidently move out into the 21st century. Now is not the time to be raising taxes on hard-working people. With this economy growing strong and getting stronger, we don't need to raise the tax burden.

I had the honor of meeting some of your fellow citizens prior to coming in here. There's three examples, and I hope these examples will help people understand why I am insistent upon making the tax relief permanent. It will help—you see, I fully understand that when those of us in office talk—we talk about numbers, and we talk about this, and we talk about that, and that theory and this theory—the best thing to do is talk about how it affects people's—the tax relief affects people's lives.

Ted Stuart is with us. He's an entrepreneur. He owns a company called Architectural Arts. They do custom mill and cabinetry work in Des Moines, Iowa. He is what we call a Subchapter S corporation. That means they pay tax at the individual income-tax level. So when you hear "tax on the rich," that's his company. He's part of that "tax on the rich" part.

He is—most new jobs in America are created by small businesses. Seventy percent of new jobs in this country are created by entrepreneurs like Ted. Ted has added 20 workers over the past 2 years. That's a really healthy sign, see. When you've got a guy like Ted who's an entrepreneur, who's willing to add workers, it's a sign that there's a vibrancy. He said that without

the tax relief, he wouldn't have hired as many.

See, the tax relief went into Ted's small-business coffers. The individual tax cuts—when you hear that we cut the individual rates, it really helped his business. And with that money, he had confidence to expand. He said taking tax relief away from businesses like Ted's means that small businesses won't be allowed to grow. He said, "It allows us to grow the business more quickly." That's what Ted said when he talked about the tax relief. "It allows us to grow the business more quickly," which means somebody is more likely to find work. Congress should not penalize the entrepreneurial spirit by raising the taxes on Ted.

The Chenoweths are with us, Rob and Marci, and two of their four children, wherever they are. There they are. I can see them smiling. I promised the youngest son there that I wouldn't speak too long. I've already broken the promise, I guess. [*Laughter*] The lad is about to doze off. [*Laughter*]

The Chenoweths saved $2,700 on their taxes this year because of the child credit increase. That's a lot of money for a family of four. A young family of four can use $2,700. It helps them a lot. He said it helped pay for auto bills. With a family of four, you'd better have an automobile that can run. He said it helped them take a trip, which is good. And by the way, when you take the trip, you might go to a motel during the trip, in which case, the person at the motel is—receives some business, which means that the person working at the hotel might more likely keep his or her job. He also put more money aside in his retirement plan at work. He's beginning to do his duty as a citizen to save for his family's future.

The tax relief matters. If Congress does not make the parts of the Tax Code that are set to expire permanent this year, his taxes will go up by $1,300. That's the reality. So when you hear us talking about making the tax cuts permanent, think about the Chenoweths. By not making it permanent, we're taking money out of their pocket; we're making it harder for them to raise their children; we're making it harder for this good family to realize its dreams.

And finally, I met Jim and Ann Sage from Waterloo, Iowa. I remember the time—Chuck and I were laughing about this—during the 2000 caucuses, I was going to give a speech at an elementary school in Waterloo, and it was—they had the heat cranked up pretty high in the elementary school cafeteria. By the time I got there, some people were pretty wobbly. [*Laughter*] And I got up there and started to speak, and a lady dropped out over there. [*Laughter*] About a third of the way through the speech, another one hit the deck. [*Laughter*] I tried to blame it on Senator Grassley, but I was the only one talking at the time. [*Laughter*]

But anyway, these good folks are from Waterloo. They are a ninth-generation farm family—ninth generation, that goes way back in Iowa history. He wants his children to be the 10th generation to farm. It's a great Iowa tradition, and it's a great Dakota tradition. It's a great Missouri tradition among the farmers, a great Minnesota tradition, for families to take over the farm. That's what the Sages want. After all, it's their asset, isn't it? It's their farm. It's nobody else's farm. They ought to be able to leave their farm to who they want to leave their farm to without the interference of the Federal Government.

The death tax is bad for economic development in rural America because it's bad for small-business owners and farmers. We put the death tax on its way to extinction, but it—unfortunately, in the year 2011, it comes back to life. It's time to plan. If you're involved with economic development in rural America, you better be planning about things that will affect economic development in rural America. And one of the things that will affect it is for the death tax to come back to life. It makes no sense

for the Federal Government to tax a person's assets twice, once when they're living and making money, and after they depart. The death tax is bad for rural America, and Congress needs to make it extinct forever.

I want to thank our—I want to thank the three folks for joining us here and letting me use their stories as examples of what will happen, what will happen if Congress doesn't do the right thing.

Let me conclude by also talking about a contribution that rural America makes that's important for the future of our country as well. It's the spirit of rural America. I oftentimes talk about the need to change this culture of ours in America from one that has said, "If it feels good, why don't you just go ahead and do it," and, "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each of us understands we're responsible for the decisions we make in life. And it's changing. The culture is changing in America. A lot of it has to do with the culture of rural America, a culture based upon faith and family.

When I say "responsibility era," here's what I mean. I mean if you're a mother or a father, you're a responsible for loving your child with all your heart. That's your responsibility. I think people in rural America understand that well. I think it's a part of the culture of rural America. If you're in rural America or anywhere in America and you're worried about the quality of the education in which you live, you're responsible for doing something about it, see? Don't hope the faraway Government in Washington solves your problem. Do something about it. Work with your teachers and thank your teachers and get involved so that the quality of the education is what you want it to be.

Of course, you know I'm going to say this, but if you're a CEO in corporate America, you're responsible for telling the truth. That's part of what I mean by ushering in a responsibility era. You're responsible for telling the truth to your shareholder. You're responsible for telling the truth to your employees.

You know, you oftentimes hear talk about neighborliness in rural America, neighbors caring for neighbors. Part of a responsibility era is a neighbor loving your neighbor just like you'd like to be loved yourself. That's part of the responsibility era as well.

Rural America provides such strength to the American culture. It's a part of helping a culture shift to the better, so that America can realize its full potential—every citizen can be hopeful about their future. It's happening. It's happening in this country. And I want to thank those of you who are a part of making sure that the economy is strong in rural America and making sure the spirit of that important part of our country remains vibrant and hopeful and healthy.

We've overcome a lot in America. The reason we have is because the good people of this country are fabulous people—strong hearts, good souls, and hopeful characters.

God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:20 p.m. at the Des Moines Marriott Downtown. In his remarks, he referred to Randy Newman, chairman, board of directors, Federal Home Loan Bank of Des Moines; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; Muqtada Al Sadr, Iraqi Shiite cleric whose militia engaged in an uprising in Iraq in early April; and Lakhdar Brahimi, Special Adviser to the U.N. Secretary-General.

The President's News Conference With Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom
April 16, 2004

President Bush. Thank you all. Mr. Prime Minister—Tony, as I like to call you—Cherie Blair, thanks for coming. It's great to see you. Laura and I are pleased to welcome you once again to America and to the White House.

Throughout the last century, the United Kingdom and the United States have stood together when liberty was assaulted and free people were tested. And now in this century, our nations see clearly the dangers of our time, and we share a determination to meet them.

Since our two countries shared the loss of September the 11th, 2001, we've joined in a global manhunt for terrorist killers. We've removed the terrorist camps of Afghanistan and the brutal Government that sheltered them. We've enforced the demands of the United Nations in Iraq and removed a dangerous threat to the region and to the world. We've worked together to end the WMD programs of Libya and bring that country back into the community of nations. We're engaged in difficult and necessary work of helping Iraqis build their own democracy, for the sake of our security and to increase the momentum of freedom across the greater Middle East.

The stakes in Iraq are clear. Iraq will either turn back the challenges to democracy or return to the camp of tyranny and terror. Iraq will either be an example of a region that is weary of poverty and oppression or will be a threat to the region and to our own people.

Our nations face a stark choice as well. Britain and America and our allies can either break our word to the people of Iraq, abandon them in their hour of need, and consign them to oppression, or we can help them defeat the enemies of a free Iraq and build the institutions of liberty. The Prime Minister and I have made our choice. Iraq will be free. Iraq will be independent. Iraq will be a peaceful nation, and we will not waver in the face of fear and intimidation.

The past few weeks have been hard, and the days ahead will surely bring their own challenges. What we're seeing in Iraq is an attempted power grab by extremists and terrorists. They will fail. The extremists will fail because our coalition will not allow Iraq's future to be stolen by a violent few. They will also fail because they are not widely supported by the Iraqi people, who have no desire to trade one tyrant for another.

Many Iraqi leaders are showing great personal courage in helping to build a free Iraq. And we stand with them, and we appreciate their courage. And troops from our countries and other coalition friends are showing great personal courage as they help Iraq move toward democracy, and we appreciate their sacrifice and courage as well.

One of the essential commitments we've made to the Iraqi people is this: They will control their own country. No citizen of America or Britain would want the Government of their nation in hands of others, and neither do the Iraqis. And this is why the June 30th date for the transfer of sovereignty will be kept. This transfer will demonstrate to the Iraqi people that our coalition has no interest in occupation. On that date, the Coalition Provisional Authority will cease to exist, but coalition forces will remain in Iraq to help the new Government succeed.

This week, we've seen the outlines of a new Iraqi Government that will take the keys of sovereignty. We welcome the proposals presented by the U.N. Special Envoy Brahimi. He's identified a way forward to establishing an interim government that is broadly acceptable to the Iraqi people. Our

coalition partners will continue to work with the U.N. to prepare for nationwide elections that will choose a new Government in January of 2005. We thank the U.N. and Secretary-General Annan for helping Iraqis secure a future of freedom. We're grateful that Mr. Brahimi will soon return to Iraq to continue his important work.

A free Iraq will stand as an example to the Middle East, encouraging reform and hope by demonstrating what life in a free society can be like. At the same time, we must also work to end longstanding sources of bitterness and conflict in the Middle East.

Our commitment to freedom and peace in that region requires us to make every effort to help resolve the conflict between Israel and Palestine. On Wednesday, the Prime Minister of Israel presented his plan to withdraw from Gaza and some parts of the West Bank. I support that plan. It's a good opportunity. It gives the Palestinians a chance to create a reformed, just, and free government. Palestinian leadership must rise to the challenge. It gives all sides a chance to reinvigorate progress on the roadmap. I'm committed to the vision of two states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security.

As I said Wednesday, all final status issues must still be negotiated between the parties. I look forward to the day when those discussions can begin so the Israeli occupation can be ended and a free and independent and peaceful Palestinian state can emerge.

In Iraq and Afghanistan, in a future Palestinian state, and across the greater Middle East, the best hope for lasting stability, security, and peace is the advance of human freedom. When men and women live in societies that reward their hopes and recognize their dignity, they are far less likely to dwell on resentments and turn to violence. This is not an easy task. For whole nations to construct free institutions after decades of terror and tyranny requires patience and courage and the help of friends.

Yet, this difficult work is also necessary work. In the Middle East, as elsewhere, the path to peace is the path of liberty, and all who choose that path will have the strong support of the United States and the United Kingdom. In all these efforts, the American people know that we have no more valuable friend than Prime Minister Tony Blair. As we like to say in Crawford, he's a standup kind of guy. He shows backbone and courage and strong leadership. I thank him and Cherie for coming. I thank the British people for their strength and their unyielding commitment to the cause of liberty.

Mr. Prime Minister.

Prime Minister Blair. Thank you very much, Mr. President. George and Laura, thank you very much for welcoming myself and Cherie back to the White House. The many years that—particularly most recently, since September the 11th—our two countries have been friends and allies standing side by side, and we will continue to do so.

Let me restate the historic nature of what we're trying to achieve in Iraq. It is to take a state that, under Saddam Hussein and his family, was a merciless tyranny that brutalized the country over many decades, that used chemical weapons against his own people, a state that threatened its neighbors in the wider world, that caused two wars with over a million casualties, that funded and supported terrorism, a country where, already, the remains of 300,000 innocent men, women, and children have been found in mass graves in Iraq, a state that under Saddam was without human rights, civil liberties, or the rule of law. And our task is to take this state and turn it into a democracy, stable and prosperous, a symbol of hope to its own people and throughout the whole of the Middle East.

Against us in this task are ranged every variety of reactionary forces, sympathizers

of Saddam Hussein, outside terrorists, religious fanatics. We know the future that they have in mind for the people of Iraq, and we reject it utterly, as do the overwhelming majority of the Iraqi people.

It was never going to be easy, and it isn't now. I pay wholehearted tribute to the American and British troops and troops from all the different coalition countries, and to the civilians, also, from many nations. We mourn each loss of life. We salute them and their families for their bravery and their sacrifice. And our promise to them, in turn, is very clear. It is to succeed, to get the job done, to ensure their courage and their sacrifice has not been in vain. And our plan to do this is clear, and we shall see it through.

Our strategy, political and military, is as follows. First, we stand firm. We will do what it takes to win this struggle. We will not yield. We will not back down in the face of attacks either on us or on defenseless civilians. Second, we hold absolutely to the 30th of June timetable for the handover of sovereignty to the Iraqis themselves. Third, we will redouble our efforts to build the necessary capability of the Iraqis, themselves, to take increased responsibility for security and law and order. The measures for recruiting, training, and equipping Iraqi police and civil defense corps will be intensified. Fourth, we will carry forward the plan for reconstruction and investment in Iraq so that all parts of Iraq, Sunni, Shi'a, and Kurdish, know that they have a place and a future in the new Iraq that is being created. Fifth, the U.N. will have a central role, as now, in developing the program and machinery for political transition to full Iraqi democracy. And we will seek a new U.N. Security Council resolution to embody the political and security way forward.

It follows from this that the political and military strategies will reinforce each other, as they do now. The purpose of the military action is to create the security environment in which the political aims can be achieved. And of course there will be resistance. We have resistance now by assorted terrorists in Fallujah, by supporters of Muqtada Al Sadr in Najaf. We shall deal with both with the right balance of firmness in the face of terror and a clear offer to all people in Iraq, including those who might be tempted to support lawbreaking.

The new Iraq will give opportunities to all its citizens, whatever their ethnic or religious background, but it will not tolerate or compromise with those who want to wreck the future for the law-abiding majority in Iraq.

Alongside this strategy for Iraq, we will seek to broaden the agenda for international action and cooperation. The G–8 gives us the chance, under the chairmanship of the United States this year and Britain the next, to construct such an agenda, to allow us to defeat the security threat but also to confront the issues upon which the terrorists prey, to tackle the poverty, conflict, religious and ethnic strife which mar so much of the world.

In this regard, we reaffirm again the importance of a solution for the Middle East peace process. We welcome the Israeli proposal to disengage from the Gaza and parts of the West Bank. We want the Quartet to meet as soon as possible to discuss how it can support the Palestinian Authority in particular, economically, politically, and in respect of security, to respond to that offer. We reaffirm that this is part of a process to get us back into the roadmap, which we continue to believe offers the only realistic route to the two states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace.

We have, therefore, an agenda for Iraq, for change and for democracy in Iraq. We have, also, an agenda to help overcome the problems in our world, the problems not just of terrorism but the problems of the breeding grounds of terrorism. And I believe that our two countries will continue to play a role as allies and friends in securing not just a decent future for the people

of Iraq but a decent future for people everywhere in our world today.

Thank you.

President Bush. Mr. Prime Minister, thank you, sir. We will take three questions a side, and so why don't you ask one question to each of us.

You can start, Mr. Hunt [Terence Hunt, Associated Press].

Timetable for Planning Action in Iraq

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, did you ask Secretary Rumsfeld to draw up war plans against Iraq in November 2001, just as the military action was getting underway in Afghanistan? Why couldn't Iraq wait?

And Mr. Prime Minister——

President Bush. No, I thought—one question apiece, not one question or one question apiece.

You know, I can't remember exact dates that far back. I do know this, that at a key meeting at Camp David, the subject of Iraq—this was on September the——

Q. Fifteenth.

President Bush. Fifteenth. We had been attacked on September the 11th, obviously. On the 15th, we sat down. I sat down with my national security team to discuss the response, and the subject of Iraq came up. And I said as plainly as I possibly could, "We'll focus on Afghanistan. That's where we'll focus." I explained this to the Prime Minister as well in a subsequent meeting. That was about the 20th of September, I think, we came and talked about the response we were going to take in dealing with the attacks on our country.

So I don't remember in times of—what was being developed or not being developed. But I do know that it was Afghanistan that was on my mind. And I didn't really start focusing on Iraq until later on, particularly about the time I started going to the United Nations with this message—to the United Nations, I said, "Let's uphold the demands of the world, finally, after decades of—after a decade of threats to Saddam. You know, 'If you don't do this, this will happen.' Why don't we finally just say something that we mean?"

And it was at that point in time, when a President steps up in front of the United Nations and you say, "Either take care of business, or we others will," you better mean it. And I meant it when I went up in front of the United Nations at that point in time.

Q. I was asking you about November.

President Bush. I can't remember. I'd have to get back to you about a specific moment. But I can tell you, in September, I said, "Let us focus on Afghanistan. Let us make sure that we do this job and do it well."

Level of Violence and the Transition in Iraq

Q. Prime Minister, the—Prime Minister, the handover of power is just, what, 80 days away, and yet the killing is going on, there is still kidnaping. Do you accept it was an error not to involve the U.N. much more early in the process? And I wonder, Mr. President, if I could ask you if that's a mistake that you're prepared to accept as well?

Prime Minister Blair. First of all, we have been involving the U.N. throughout. And actually, the work that Mr. Brahimi has done, we've both made it clear that we welcome. And I can tell you from the conversations I had with Kofi Annan last night that I think there's a common approach. Obviously, we have to discuss the details in particular with the Iraqi groups themselves as to how this political transition is to come about.

But let me just say one thing to you about the violence and the killing there. There was always going to be resistance to transition to democracy. And in particular, as the date for transition to a sovereign Iraqi Government that's going to be broad-based—as that date draws near, there's going to be violence. There's going to be violence from people who don't want an Iraqi future different from the past, and

I don't think we should be surprised at this. There will be religious fanatics, outside terrorists, former Saddam people who will come together, and they will kill innocent civilians. They will try and kill coalition troops. They will kill Iraqis. They'll kill anyone who stands in their way. And the reason that they're doing this is because they don't want a democratic Iraq.

Now, what is the response of ourselves and, indeed, the whole of the world community, regardless of whether you support the war in Iraq or not? The response has got to be that we hold firm; we keep to the political transition; we keep to the timetable; and we do everything we humanly can to build up the capability of the Iraqis to take control of their own affairs, because in Iraq there will be all sorts of people—that vast majority of people out there who aren't terrorists, who don't want to kill people, who want to lead an ordinary life, raise their family, have a job, have some prosperity, have some freedom, as other people in the world do, and they will be sitting there, watching and waiting for one thing: Do we have the will and the determination to finish the job.

And what you're hearing from myself and the President of the United States is, we will stay there, and we will get the job done, because that's what we promised to do. And we will continue until it's finished.

Israeli Disengagement Plan

President Bush. Steve [Steve Holland, Reuters].

Q. Hosni Mubarak is saying the new U.S. policy on the West Bank could escalate violence. How do you respond to his concerns?

President Bush. I think this is a fantastic opportunity. The fact that Ariel Sharon said, "We're going to withdraw from territory," is an historic moment. And it creates a chance for the world to come together to help develop a Palestinian state based upon a solid foundation, a foundation where the institutions are bigger than the people, just like our respective Governments are founded.

It's a chance to provide a framework for international aid that will help a Palestinian economy grow. It's a chance for people to come together to work on measures that will enable people to live in peace—security measures. This is an historic moment, and I think people need to view it as such and seize the moment and help a Palestinian state become a reality, a Palestinian state that can live in peace with its neighbors.

And you know, there's a lot of talk about the final status discussions. And that's all and good. The problem is, is that people, by doing so, don't pay attention to the moment. And it's a moment we've got to seize. The final status discussions will become a lot plainer—and by the way, we're not going to prejudge the final status discussions, but the answers will become a lot plainer once there is a peaceful state that's committed to fighting off terror and a state that's capable of providing hope for its people.

I think it's possible. And the Prime Minister and I have spent a lot of time on this subject. And I'm not going to put words in his mouth, but he thinks it's possible. And we look forward to working together to make it possible. But it's going to require a commitment by the Palestinian people to find leadership that is committed to peace and hope. And it's going to require a commitment by people in the neighborhood to support the emergence of a state.

This is an historic moment, and I appreciated the Prime Minister of Israel coming here to announce it. And we intend to seize the moment and to take advantage of an opportunity.

Prime Minister Blair. I think what's happening here is that despite all the reaction—some of which I think it's expected and natural, that always rebound around the world when a statement like this is made—let's just go back and see what the

opportunity is here. If there is disengagement by Israel from the Gaza and from parts of the West Bank, that then gives us the opportunity—and this is where the international community has got to play its role—that gives us the opportunity to help the Palestinian Authority with the economic, the political, and the security measures they take, and they need to take, in order to get to the point where the concept of a viable Palestinian state becomes a real possibility, not something that's put in a document and talked about or discussed in resolutions or speeches but actually is a real, live possibility. And I see this not in any shape or form as pushing the roadmap to the side. On the contrary, I see it as a way back into the roadmap.

Now, I know there'll be all sorts of issues to do with the final status negotiations. And as the President said, no one is prejudging those. But you know, let's not look this particular opportunity in the eye and then turn away. It is an opportunity for people.

And what I want to say to, not just to the Palestinians and the Israelis but to the international community is, whatever the doubts and worries, get involved now, because there is a possibility when that disengagement happens, the Palestinian Authority have got to have the wherewithal in political, in economic, in security terms to start running the land, the territory that will be then under their control, and use that as the basis of getting back into a proper roadmap negotiation.

Because we—this is a—we deal with many difficult issues: Cyprus, we discussed earlier; Northern Ireland, that I'm dealing with. The one advantage that you have in this situation, which is as well to keep in mind, even at this difficult moment, is that there is now an agreement that there should be two states, an Israeli and a Palestinian state, and that Palestinian state should be viable. And I can assure you—and I believe this very strongly from the conversations I've had with the President—that if the Palestinians are willing to make that effort and the international community helps in doing so, then they will find all of us, then, ready to engage and ensure that the proper discussion and settlement of these issues takes place. We will be ready to step up and do that.

Yes, Mark, sorry.

Q. Mark Martel, BBC. Mr. Sharon says this agreement by the President has ended the dreams of Palestinians. Many Palestinians seem to agree with that as well. Why do you two not see it in that light? The Israelis see it as a victory for their side.

Prime Minister Blair. Well, I don't—I haven't come across those particular words, and I would like to see the context of that. But I don't think that this ends anyone's dream. I think what it does is give us at least the possibility of moving it forward.

What have people been asking for years? They've been asking for the Israelis to withdraw from the occupied territories. Now, this is not the final end of it. This is not a unilateral attempt to impose a settlement. But it does at least give the Palestinians, if they're able, then, to seize this opportunity, the ability to construct in the Gaza and those parts of the West Bank that will be under their control, with the settlements removed from there. And remember—I can't remember exactly how many people it is—it's maybe 7,000 people that there are in the Gaza part of—and those settlements withdrawn.

Now, forgive me, but I've been dealing with this for almost a decade. And it's been very, very difficult ever to get a situation where an Israeli Prime Minister is prepared to say, "We're actually going to take these settlements away," and make that not conditional on something that the Palestinians are doing but say, "We're just going to do that."

Now of course, there's a whole string of things that then have to be decided. All these issues have to be negotiated. We have to get back into the roadmap and get on a proper process towards a resolution of those issues.

But if that disengagement takes place, surely the intelligent thing, not just for the Palestinians but for the international community, is to be ready to respond. And here's where the Quartet can play a part, the other partners in this process. The European Union, for example—we put money into reconstruction in the Palestinian Authority. I believe that there is a real possibility, if we can get the right political system there, of the European Union putting money in to help reconstruct the country, to help build the proper security capability.

These are—these are things, however difficult, that offer opportunities. That's all I'm saying, and I think we should seize them.

President Bush. Let me say one quick thing about this. I haven't seen the context in which he said it, either. But I can tell you what he told me. He told me he supported a Palestinian state. He thinks it's in Israel's interest that there be a Palestinian state. Obviously there's a caveat: He wants a peaceful Palestinian state, and he wants somebody who will promote peace, not violence, somebody who's willing to join with a lot of us to fight off terror.

He also recognizes that it's important that there be hope in his neighborhood. And a peaceful Palestinian state that gets help from the world is a state that can help small businesses grow, help an education system develop, help a health care system develop that provides basic services to its people. I think this is a great opportunity. And you're going to have to ask him exactly what—whether that was in context or not.

But the impression I got from having sat with the man right upstairs here in the White House was, he views this as a hopeful moment as well and made it clear that it's a part of the roadmap process and knows what I know, that as we gain confidence in a Palestinian leadership and a Palestinian state that's committed itself to peace, further progress will be made on territory. And therefore, the final status discussions—and I repeat, which are not being prejudged by the American Government, as stated clearly on Wednesday—will be easier to deal with. And that's what's important.

We'll seize the moment, is what the Prime Minister is saying.

Let's see—April [April Ryan, American Urban Radio Networks].

2004 Election/Transition in Iraq

Q. Mr. President, some of your critics are saying that it's a political ploy by you to stand firm to this June 30th deadline, especially that you don't have an Iraqi organization to transfer power over to. What do you say to that? And for—what organization would you like to see transferred power over to, both of you, if you could answer that?

President Bush. Well, I appreciate that. I guess, it's a political year; everything I'm going to say is being—they're going to say is political. What's important is that we honor our word and honor our commitments to the Iraqi people. I suspect that if you look deep into the soul of the Iraqi people, they'd be saying, "We don't know if we can trust America and Great Britain to be tough and hang in, hang in with us." And one of the things we've said is, "We'll transfer sovereignty on June the 30th," and we're going to.

If they believe that we'll cut and run—in other words, if times get tough, and we'll just say, "See you later," nobody is going to take a stand for freedom and liberty. They're afraid of getting killed or tortured or maimed. These are—I said the other night that a year seems like a long time for Americans and people in Great Britain. But a year is not much when you're trying to shed yourself from the habits of tyranny and torture. Remember where these people came from. They came from a society where if they dared speak their mind, it's likely they'd end up in a mass grave or in a torture room. If they criticized Saddam

Hussein in any way, they would be maimed or killed. And that's a hard thing to forget.

See, it's easy for us to not recognize that fear because, fortunately, our societies are such that we don't have to live with it. They did. And if they think that we will be leaving because of politics, then they won't take a risk toward freedom. We're not leaving because of politics, April. We're standing firm on our word because it's right, and it's in the long-term interests of our countries that we stand firm, because a free Iraq is an historic opportunity to change the world for the better.

There's a lot of talk about the war on terror, and can we win the war on terror. Of course we can win the war on terror in the long run. We can do a lot of things in the short term to protect ourselves, starting with staying on the offensive. But in the long term, it's the spread of freedom that will win the war on terror.

See, the great thing about our two countries is we believe in the power of free societies. And we don't say freedom is only—is consigned to one group of people or one religion. We believe freedom is universal, and free societies are peaceful societies. And freedom will be the cure for those who harbor deep resentment and hatred in their heart. And I appreciate the Prime Minister understanding that vision as well. It's a wonderful feeling to have a strong ally in believing in the power of free societies and liberty. And that's why we're going to stay the course in Iraq. And that's why when we say something in Iraq, we're going to do it, because we want there to be a free society. It's in our long-term interests. It's in the interests of our children and our grandchildren that Iraq be free.

Q. Mr. Prime Minister——

Q. Who is going to——

President Bush. Hold on for a second. That's going to be decided by Mr. Brahimi. That's the recommendation of Brahimi. He's in the process—you're watching a process unfold, and you won't have to ask that question on July the 1st.

Prime Minister Blair. That's absolutely right. And what will happen is that there will be discussions, obviously, that Mr. Brahimi is conducting. But the idea will be to have a broad-based Government, and then next year to move to a new constitution, and then, finally, to democratic elections. And that's the—so who's going to end up governing Iraq ultimately? It's going to be the Iraqi people with a proper democratic constitution.

President Bush. One final point on this. Thank you, April, for bringing it up. Transitional Administrative Law that had been written is a—this is an historic document. And it's a wonderful opportunity. It is for the people of Iraq to say, "Here's how civilized people must live. Here's how you protect minority rights. Here's how you protect the rights of religious people. And here's how civilized people should live if they're going to provide hope for the future."

And there doesn't seem to be much focus on that, what we call the TAL these days. And yet, it is a—it is the cornerstone for what is going to be a free and hopeful society.

Go ahead, final question.

Prime Minister Blair. Adam [Adam Boulton, Sky News].

Q. If I could just ask you about Iraq again, the fact of the matter is that weapons of mass destruction have not been found, that a link between Saddam Hussein and Al Qaida has not been proved, and that a year on, troop numbers are going up, not coming down. So however determined you are to make a better Iraq, isn't the awkward fact for both of you that you misled your peoples in taking troops to war and shedding blood as a result?

Prime Minister Blair. First of all, I just remind you that when, in November of 2002, we passed the United Nations resolution calling upon Saddam to comply fully with the United Nations inspectors, we did

that on the basis of an understanding that wasn't confined simply to Great Britain and America but was right across the hall of the Security Council, that Saddam Hussein was a threat. And indeed, it would be difficult to conclude otherwise given that his was a regime that actually used chemical weapons, weapons of mass destruction against their own people.

And yes, a year on, we have faced some difficult times. We'll face difficult times again in the future. But one of the most interesting things to me is when I go and I actually talk to other leaders out in that region—and some of them have got very difficult politics over this issue, as you all know, for very obvious reasons—but I'm struck by how much more secure they feel with Saddam Hussein gone. And whatever their differences over the conflict, they know how important it is to their region and their stability and, actually, their chance of changing their own country, that Iraq does become a stable and democratic state.

And this is one of these situations where—you know, people often say to me, "Well is it—is the world safer, given all the difficulty and violence that you have in Iraq?" And I say to them, "Well, first of all, don't think that violence wasn't happening every day in Iraq under Saddam Hussein. It was." But secondly, when you take on and you deal with these issues, yes, of course, you face difficult times. You're bound to have them. But the question is, is the aim and objective you're trying to secure one that if you do secure will make the world, indeed, safer and better? And that's why—I find now, whatever the differences people have over the wisdom of the conflict—and that's a debate that will go on, and go on for many, many years, no doubt; the historians can all pour over it—but everybody should recognize the common interest today in making sure that Iraq achieves the aim that we have set out and that everybody of any sense in the international community supports, because if——

Q. [*Inaudible*]

Prime Minister Blair. No, because I believe the important thing is to make the world more secure as a result of Saddam Hussein going, as a result of that threat, then, from Saddam and his regime, the threat that they carried out in their own region. I just listed for you two wars in which there were over a million casualties, hundreds of thousands of his own people killed.

Now, this is an historic struggle, and we're at a very, very crucial moment. And I think, for many, many people in Iraq, I think what the President said just a moment ago is absolutely right. Of course they're going to be sitting there asking, "After all the decades of tyranny we've had, after all the promises that the international community gave us and, frankly, let us down on, are these people going to stay the course?"

And we are, and we want the international community to work with us in doing that. We're not setting aside the United Nations or that process at all. We're actually trying to work with the U.N. now, because everybody understands the importance of fulfilling that objective. And you just imagine an Iraq, stable and prosperous and democratic, and think of the signal that would send out. Think of the instant rebuttal of all that poisonous propaganda about America, about it all being an attack on Muslims or it being part of a war of civilization—Iraq, run by the Iraqis, the wealth of that country owned by the Iraqis, and a symbol of hope and democracy in the Middle East.

Now, for me this is a cause that any person of good will and good heart should be able to support.

President Bush. Good job, Prime Minister. Thank you, sir. Well done.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 11:57 a.m. in the Rose Garden at

the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; Secretary-General Kofi Annan of the United Nations, and Lakhdar Brahimi, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General; and Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of Israel. Prime Minister Blair referred to Muqtada Al Sadr, Iraqi Shiite cleric whose militia engaged in an uprising in Iraq in early April. A reporter referred to President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt.

The President's Radio Address
April 17, 2004

Good morning. For the past year, the September the 11th Commission has met to examine the facts surrounding the terrorist attack on our Nation. I look forward to the Commission's report, and I expect it to contain important recommendations for preventing future attacks.

One lesson our Nation has already learned is that law enforcement and intelligence personnel must be allowed to share more information, so that we can better pursue terrorists inside the United States. In the weeks after September the 11th, Congress made essential reforms by passing the USA PATRIOT Act. That vital legislation gained overwhelming bipartisan support in the House of Representatives and passed the Senate by a vote of 98 to one.

The PATRIOT Act tore down the artificial wall between the FBI and CIA and enhanced their ability to share the information needed to hunt terrorists. The PATRIOT Act also marked a major shift in law enforcement priorities. We're no longer emphasizing only the investigation of past crimes but also the prevention of future attacks. Because we passed the PATRIOT Act, FBI agents can better conduct electronic surveillance and wiretaps on suspected terrorists. And they now can apply other essential tools—many of which have long been used to investigate white-collar criminals and drug traffickers—to stop terrorist attacks on our homeland.

Our Government's first duty is to protect the American people. The PATRIOT Act fulfills that duty in a way that is fully consistent with constitutional protections. In making America safer, it has helped us defend our liberty. Since I signed the PATRIOT Act into law, Federal investigators have disrupted terror cells in at least six American cities. And since September the 11th, the Department of Justice has charged over 300 persons in terrorism-related investigations. So far, more than half of those individuals have been convicted or pled guilty.

Key elements of the PATRIOT Act are set to expire next year. Some politicians in Washington act as if the threat to America will also expire on that schedule. Yet we have seen what the terrorists intend for us, in deadly attacks from Bali to Mombassa to Madrid. And we will not forget the lessons of September the 11th. To abandon the PATRIOT Act would deprive law enforcement and intelligence officers of needed tools in the war on terror and demonstrate willful blindness to a continuing threat.

Next week, I will travel to Hershey, Pennsylvania, and Buffalo, New York, to meet with the law enforcement officers who see the importance of the PATRIOT Act in their daily duties. They know we must not let down our guard. The war on terror will be won on the offensive, so Congress must renew the PATRIOT Act.

Every hour of the day, America depends on the work of vigilant law enforcement and intelligence personnel. These men and women have difficult and dangerous jobs, and they are performing superbly. In their

mission of security, they are joined by members of the Armed Forces who are taking the fight to our enemies overseas. The American people are grateful to all who defend us, and we will continue to give them every tool and resource they need to keep America safe.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 2:31 p.m. on April 16 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on April 17. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 16 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks on Presenting the Commander in Chief's Trophy to the United States Naval Academy Midshipmen
April 19, 2004

Welcome. Please be seated. Nice going, you finally got back. [*Laughter*] I am proud of the Midshipmen of the United States Naval Academy, the proud keepers of the Commander in Chief's Trophy. Welcome. Earning the trophy says a lot about these men. It says you work hard, you set high standards, and you beat Army. [*Laughter*]

I'm honored that Tony Principi, the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs, has joined us. He is a proud graduate of the Naval Academy.

I appreciate Senator Thad Cochran from Mississippi who is with us, who is on the U.S. Naval Academy Board of Visitors. Senator, thank you for coming. You honor us with your presence.

I appreciate the Governor of Maryland, Bob Ehrlich, joining us today. Thank you for coming, Governor. He claims he was a pretty good linebacker in his day—[*laughter*]—slow but could hit hard. [*Laughter*] Also on the U.S. Naval Academy Board of Visitors is the Lieutenant Governor from Maryland, Michael Steele. Thank you for coming, Michael. Glad you all are here.

Gordon England is with us, the Secretary of the Navy. He reminded me of the time I went to the Army-Navy game in the fall of 2001. It was a miserable experience for the Naval Academy. My, times have changed. [*Laughter*] Mr. Secretary, I'll give you some of the credit.

General Hagee, Commandant of the Marine Corps, is with us. General, thanks for coming. I told the General coming in, his troops in Iraq are performing brilliantly. Thank God we're on the same side.

I want to thank Vice Admiral Rodney Rempt, the Naval Academy Superintendent, for joining us today. Coach Johnson, Paul Johnson, a winning coach, is with us. Coach, appreciate you being here. Proud you're here.

As I said, it's been a while since the Commander in Chief's Trophy was at the Academy. It turns out that the last time it was there—when Ronald Reagan was the President. And a lot of the players on this team weren't even born. [*Laughter*] That's a long time ago for them. [*Laughter*] It's not so long ago for some of us older fellows.

I—here's what I found interesting about this team and its captain, Greg Cooper, that the night after you beat Army, Cooper flies to Colorado Springs to pick up the trophy. That's called desire. [*Laughter*] It turns out that Cooper wasn't sure how big the trophy was and that it was too heavy for the flight home. So he rents a truck and drives the trophy from Colorado Springs to Annapolis. When we recruit the

finest, we look for determination in the U.S. military, and we have found it in Captain Cooper.

I've watched some of your games on TV. The first scouting report I got, however, on the mighty Midshipmen football team was from Number 41—that would be President George H.W. Bush—who went to see the Rice game. I don't know if you remember the Rice game, but Navy beat a pretty darn good team by 32 points in Houston. He said, "Prepare the grounds for the arrival of the Midshipmen this year to receive the Commander in Chief Trophy." I said, "Okay." [*Laughter*]

One of the things that the young men at the—and women at the Naval Academy learn is leadership, how important it is to be a leader, what it means to lead, how one sets standards and calls people to a higher calling. That's what we expect of the officers who wear our uniforms, and that's what Coach Johnson has taught the young men who play football for the Naval Academy. He believes in high standards. His view is: Failure is not an option; success is what we aim for.

He had some great individual stars on this team but, obviously, was able to say to those stars, "You're playing for something greater than yourself. You're playing for the team, so that perhaps, if you do what I ask you to do, and if you work hard enough, you can come to the White House and receive the Commander in Chief's Trophy."

Coach Johnson, you have set a high standard. You and your team has achieved one of the most dramatic turnarounds in NCAA football history. And it is my honor to welcome you and your team and your leadership qualities here into the East Room of this great house of the people.

You know, I know that every player works hard to work—to win on Saturday afternoons. And that's vital if you're a football player. I mean, what the heck, you might as well work hard so you can win. I don't know a lot of people who work hard so they can go out and lose. But one of the things that I know you know is taking place now is that you're preparing to lead our Nation in a time of war, that you wear uniforms of football so you can—and you'll wear a uniform of the United States of America as we fight the first war of the 21st century. It is the teamwork that you're learning on the field that will enable you to lead others to make America more secure. That's the lesson you're learning as you became great football players.

I'm proud of your predecessors. Many of the people who played football at the Academy are now serving overseas. They're serving brilliantly in zones of combat. They're doing everything they can to be as tough and as compassionate as we expect our soldiers to be. They're tough on the one hand and compassionate on the other. We have got a mission in this Nation, and that is not only to make ourselves secure from an enemy which hates our freedom but, at the same time, spread freedom so that the world will be more peaceful, so people have a chance to live with dignity and hope. And members of the classes before you, members of the great Naval Academy classes, understand that mission, and they're accomplishing it with great class and dignity.

Many of the seniors here will be given that same opportunity to serve our Nation. And I just want to tell you the Nation will be grateful for your service, be grateful for your sacrifices, will be grateful of what you do to make the world a better place for all of us to live.

And now it's my honor, Coach, to present the Commander in Chief's Trophy to winners, people who achieved the big dream, people who will represent our country in the finest of Navy traditions. May God bless them, and may God bless their families. And May God continue to bless the United States of America.

Coach Johnson.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:02 p.m. in the East Room at the White House.

Remarks Announcing the Nomination of John D. Negroponte To Be Ambassador to Iraq
April 19, 2004

The President. Today I'm announcing my intention to nominate Ambassador John Negroponte as the Ambassador to Iraq. Ambassador Negroponte now serves our Nation at the United Nations as the Ambassador there. He has done a really good job of speaking for the United States to the world about our intentions to spread freedom and peace. John Negroponte is a man of enormous experience and skill. Therefore, I'm comfortable in asking him to serve in this very difficult assignment. No doubt in my mind he can handle it. No doubt in my mind he'll do a very good job. And there's no doubt in my mind that Iraq will be free and democratic and peaceful.

So, John, thank you for agreeing to serve your country yet once again. I'm proud of your service. Good luck to you. Thank you.

Ambassador Negroponte. Thank you very much, Mr. President. Thank you.

The President. You bet.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:51 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Remarks in Hershey, Pennsylvania
April 19, 2004

Thank you all very much. Thanks for letting me come. [*Laughter*] It's good to be here in Hershey, Pennsylvania. For a fellow who likes chocolate—[*laughter*]—this is a special place. I know that Milton Hershey, who was one of the country's great entrepreneurs, would be incredibly proud of the way this community has prospered and grown. I bet he'd be especially proud of the hospital that we saw coming in. The Senators with whom I was traveling pointed out the fantastic hospital facilities. I'm told that this is a community where people really care deeply about their neighbors and the quality of life in the community in which they live. And so I want to thank the citizens from Hershey for being so gracious and warm and setting such a good example.

I want to thank the community leaders who are here from around the great Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. I appreciate your service to our country. It's a tough job to serve at the local level. [*Laughter*] When things go wrong, your name is right there in the phonebook. [*Laughter*] But we share a common calling, and that's public service, serving our Nation. I want to thank you for doing what you're doing. It's such an honor, isn't it, to serve the people of our respective communities and our Nation.

And you and I know what our first responsibility is. The first responsibility,

whether it be Washington, DC, or Washington Township, is the safety of our citizens. That's a solemn duty we have, to work together to make sure that our Nation is as secure as it can possibly be. The task, our mutual tasks, our joint obligation, changed dramatically on September the 11th, 2001. There's now an urgency to our duty. We have a urgent duty to do everything we can to fulfill our solemn obligation.

There are people here in this world who still want to hurt us. See, they can't stand America. They can't stand us because we love certain things and we're not going to change. We love our freedom. We love the fact that we can worship freely any way we see fit. We love the fact that we can speak our minds freely. We love our free political process. We love every aspect of freedom, and we refuse to change. These terrorists will not be stopped by their own conscience. They don't have a conscience. But they will be stopped. They will be stopped because our great Nation is resolute abroad, we're vigilant at home, and we are absolutely determined to prevail.

I appreciate Donna's invitation and her introduction. She handled it very well. [*Laughter*] I want to thank Keith Hite, the executive director, for having me here as well. Keith, thank you for your hospitality. I want to thank the boards of directors, the trustees, and the members of the Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors.

I appreciate the first-responders who are here today. Thank you for your service.

I've traveled in a small little limo from the airport with Senators Specter and Santorum, two really fine United States Senators from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. I flew down from Washington with Congressman Todd Platts and Congressman Bill Shuster from Pennsylvania. Thank you both for traveling with me. I am grateful that Congressman Tim Holden has joined us today. Thank you for being here, Congressman. I appreciate you coming.

Attorney General Jerry Pappert is here with us. General, I appreciate you being here today. Charlie Dent, a member of the State house, is with us; Paul Semmel—actually, Dent is in the State senate. Semmel is in the State house. These are members of the Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committees. These are people in the State legislature with whom you work to make sure the State of Pennsylvania is properly prepared for anything that may come along.

I appreciate so very much the other State and local officials who are here. Thanks for taking time to come. I appreciate Mike Lutz, who is the president of the Fraternal Order of Police Pennsylvania State Lodge, for being here. Mike, thank you for your time, and thank you for coming.

Two other people I want to mention before I get going. [*Laughter*] I had the honor of meeting Major Dick Winters. Dick Winters is a World War II veteran. There's an HBO miniseries called "The Band of Brothers." He led the platoon in World War II. I told him when I got off the airplane, it was such an honor to meet him. It's such a fine example that he and others have set for those brave souls who now wear our Nation's uniform. Major Winters, I'm glad you're here. And I also want to thank the other members of our military who joined us today as well. Thank you all for coming.

When I landed, I met a fellow at the airport named Patrick Leonard. Where are you, Pat? Oh there you are, sure. How quickly they forget. [*Laughter*] You're wondering why I mentioned Pat Leonard? I'll tell you why. The strength of America is in the hearts and souls of our citizens. That's our strength. Listen, people say America is strong because of our military. We got a strong military, and I intend to keep it that way. They say America is strong because we're the wealthiest nation. That's good. We need to keep it that way. But the real reason we're strong is because

of the hearts and souls of American citizens. That's why we're strong.

Pat Leonard volunteers. He takes time out of a busy life and a family life to volunteer at the fire department. That's what he does. He's a volunteer fireman. As a matter of fact, he is the chief of the Hershey Volunteer Fire Company. He has been doing this for 26 years. It's more than just volunteering for the fire department, though, see. He also volunteers to mentor children by being a coach at all kinds of different sports teams.

The reason I bring up Pat—and I want to thank his mom and dad for being here, by the way, and two brothers who happen to be volunteer firemen. The reason I bring him up is because I want our citizens to understand that if you really want to help America, take time out of your life and help save a soul. And you can do it all kinds of ways. You can mentor a child. You can help the elderly. You can volunteer at the fire department. You can be a Boy Scout or Girl Scout leader. There's all kinds of ways you can help. I bet most of you are doing this already. You represent the true strength of the country. We're a compassionate, decent nation, a nation of people who are willing to love their neighbor just like they'd like to be loved themselves.

As we gather this afternoon, we're 140 miles away from Shanksville, Pennsylvania. This is a place where many innocent lives ended. Shanksville is also the place where American citizens stood up to evil, charged their attackers, and began the first counter-offensive in the war on terror. Those passengers on Flight 93 showed that the spirit of America is strong and brave in the face of danger, and this Nation will always honor their memory.

The best way to secure our homeland, the best way for us to do our duty, is to stay on the offensive against the terrorist network. We began the offense shortly after September the 11th. We're carrying out a broad strategy, a worldwide strategy to bring the killers to justice. The best way to secure America is to bring them to justice before they hurt us again, which is precisely what the United States of America will continue to do.

Two-thirds of known Al Qaida leaders have been captured or killed. We're making progress. It's a different kind of war than the war that Major Winters fought in. This is a war against people who will hide in a cave, a war against people who hide in the shadows of remote cities or big cities, and then they strike and they kill. And they kill innocent people. They have no—as I said, they have no conscience. They have no sense of guilt. But they also know we're on their trail, and they will find out there is no cave or hole deep enough to hide from American justice.

We must be determined in this, and we've got a lot of really good people, a lot of good people on the move. We're also working with nations from around the world, sharing intelligence, making it clear that if you harbor a terrorist, you're just as guilty as the terrorist.

By the way, when the President of the United States says something, he better mean it. And when I said to the world, "If you harbor a terrorist, you're just as guilty as the terrorist," I meant exactly what I said. And the Taliban found out. It wasn't all that long ago that Afghanistan was a training center for Al Qaida killers. It was a safe haven. It's a country, by the way, that was run by a brutal—brutal—dictatorship. The Taliban had a perverted view of the world. They hated—they must have hated women. Women were given no rights. Young girls did not go to school. It was a barbaric regime. So not only did we uphold doctrine that said, "If you harbor a terrorist or train a terrorist or feed a terrorist, you're just as guilty as the terrorist," but we liberated people as well in Afghanistan. People are free in that country. Young girls now go to school for the first time in their life, thanks to the incredible compassion of the United States of America.

There's another very important lesson about September the 11th that we must never forget, and that is, we can no longer take threats that may exist overseas for granted. In other words, when the President and/or anybody else in authority sees a threat, we must take it seriously. Now, that doesn't mean every threat must be dealt with by military option, but every threat must be viewed as a potential problem to America. See, September the 11th changed the equation. It used to be that oceans would protect us, that we saw a threat, we didn't have to worry about it because there was two vast oceans. And we could pick and choose as to how we deal with the threat. That changed on September the 11th.

These are vital lessons for our citizens to understand what took place. See, we saw a threat, based upon intelligence, in Iraq. The intelligence said there's a threat. The very same intelligence looked at by the United States Congress caused them to reach the same conclusion. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence and said, "Saddam is a threat." And so, for about the—I can't remember how many times they said it, but they said, "Disarm. See, you're a threat. Disarm." There's a reason why a lot of people made the conclusion. It was not only based upon intelligence; it was based upon the fact that he hated America, that he was willing to pay suiciders to go kill people in Israel, that he actually used weapons of mass destruction on his own people. See, this is a guy who used it before.

And the equation changed after September the 11th. And so, you see, I was in a position where I either took the word of a madman or took the actions necessary to defend America. And given that choice, I will defend America every time.

We will defeat the enemy there so we don't have to face them here. And at the same time, we will work to see that Iraq is free, and that's really important for our long-term security. See, free nations are peaceful nations. Free nations are nations in which people can find hope and a chance to raise their families, just the way moms and dads want to raise their families here in America. That's why we love freedom, and that's why we think freedom is such an important part of a peaceful world. This is an historic mission, in my judgment. This is an historic opportunity.

I told the story, I think, at one of these endless press conferences I had last week—[*laughter*]—where—I love them, of course—where—[*laughter*]—where I had dinner with Prime Minister Koizumi of Japan. And it was at that dinner that we were talking about the situation in North Korea. And it dawned on me during the course of the conversation with my friend that, if we hadn't got it right after World War II, would I have been having this conversation with the Prime Minister about a common threat we share? And it probably wouldn't have. If we hadn't secured the peace in a proper way after World War II, I don't think—maybe I'll be wrong, but I don't think I would have been having the very kind of conversation I was having with Prime Minister Koizumi. And it dawned on me during that conversation, when we get it right in Iraq, some American President will be sitting down with a duly elected official from Iraq talking about how to keep the peace in that troubled part of the world. It's an historic opportunity to spread democracy and hope as an alternative to hatred and terror and violence for export.

And it's a difficult mission. It's tough work. It's incredibly hard, as we have seen on our television screens the last couple of weeks. There's a reason why. Freedom frightens people who are terrorists. The worst thing that can happen to a society, if you're a terrorist, is for the society to be free. And it scares them. Remember, I told you, they'll strike us because of our love for freedom. Well, they strike out because a free society is emerging in the

heart of a region that is desperate for freedom and democracy.

And we're facing supporters of the outlaw cleric, remnants of Saddam's regime that are still bitter that they don't have the position to run the torture chambers and rape rooms and get the special privileges they've had for all these years. Of course, there's foreign terrorists there, trying to prevent the rise of a free government in the heart of the Middle East. They will fail—they will fail. They will fail because they do not speak for the vast majority of Iraqis who do not want to replace one tyrant with another. They will fail because the will of our coalition is strong. They will fail because America leads a coalition full of the finest military men and women in the world.

Thousands of Pennsylvanians have given their service in the war on terror, including more than 6,000 National Guard and Reserve members on active duty today. I want to thank their families for enduring the long deployments and separations and sacrifices. I want to thank the men and women who wear the uniform. Our Nation is grateful for your sacrifice. We are grateful that you have volunteered to make America a more secure country and the world a more peaceful and free place.

The enemy is still active. Think about Bali and Istanbul. Or as we saw in the murder of 200 citizens in Madrid, the terrorists use violence to spread fear and disrupt elections. They want us to panic. That's their intent. Their intent is to say, "Let's create panic among the civilized world." They want nations to turn upon each other, civilized nations to argue and debate about the mission. You know, they're not going to shake our will. I'll say as plainly as I can to them: You'll never shake the will of the United States of America. We're not going to forget September the 11th. We are determined. We are resolute, and we will bring you to justice.

And in the process, we've made some fundamental changes in the way we defend ourself. We reorganized—or organized a new Department of Homeland Security to protect the country. It was hard work in the Senate. I want to thank Senator Specter and Senator Santorum and the Members of the House who are here. We had a big debate about it, but it was the right thing to do. It was the right thing to bring agencies involved with the protection of the homeland under one umbrella agency, so we can better coordinate and better communicate and better strategize as to how to protect the homeland.

And I picked a good man to run—become the first Secretary of Homeland Security. Looks like I don't even have to say his name. [*Laughter*] You trained him well. [*Laughter*] No, Ridge is doing a great job.

Since 2001, we've tripled funding for homeland security. That's important. We've trained and deployed screeners at airports, put thousands of air marshals on flights. We're now fingerprinting visitors when they come to America and compare the prints to those of suspected terrorists and violent criminals. In other words, we've made prevention of terror an important priority of our Government—just doing everything we can to make sure that we're as safe as we possibly can be.

The FBI now has the prevention of terrorist attacks as their number one priority. They'll still chase down criminals and make a case, but since we're at war and since this is a big, free country, the priority of the Federal Government is now the prevention of another attack. And we're making sure they got the resources necessary to do their job.

We're standing behind our first-responders. Since the moment our country was attacked, our Nation's police and firefighters and emergency service personnel have played a critical role in the defense of America against any threat of terror. They really have. It was a—we saw the incredible bravery of the first-responders in New York

City. I think it—I think those who are firefighters and police and emergency personnel gained a new degree of respect on the streets of the cities throughout our country, when they witnessed the great courage of their brothers who rushed into collapsing buildings. We appreciate the fact that these men and women understand they could be on the frontline against terror at any moment, that they have accepted great responsibilities. And we have responsibilities to you as well.

I've proposed an additional $3.6 billion for terrorism preparedness grants. This is a way to help our first-responders get ready. The money needs to make sure we don't get it stuck in the process, stuck from going from the Federal Government to the State government to the local government. This money needs to get the local communities in a timely fashion so you can put it to good work.

After September the 11th, we took another vital step to fight terror, and that's what I want to talk about today. I want to talk about the PATRIOT Act. It's a law that I signed into law. It's a law that was overwhelmingly passed in the House and the Senate. It's a law that is making America safer. It's an important piece of legislation.

First, before September the 11th, law enforcement, intelligence, and national security officials were prevented by legal and bureaucratic restrictions from sharing critical information with each other and with State and local police departments. We had—one group of the FBI knows something, but they couldn't talk to the other group in the FBI because of law and bureaucratic interpretation. You cannot fight the war on terror unless all bodies of your government at the Federal, State, and local level are capable of sharing intelligence on a real-time basis. We could not get a complete picture of terrorist threats, therefore. People had—different people had a piece of the puzzle, but because of law, they couldn't get all the pieces in the same place.

And so we removed those barriers, removed the walls. You hear the talk about the walls that separated certain aspects of Government. They have been removed by the PATRIOT Act, and now, law enforcement and intelligence communities are working together to share information to better prevent an attack on America.

And let me give you an interesting story. In late 2001, in Portland, Oregon—and today, I was briefed on this story by the—the Federal prosecutor up there in Oregon—or over there. I'm used to Texas, still. [*Laughter*] Everything was "up there." [*Laughter*]

Police in Portland, Oregon, turned up evidence about a local man who was planning attacks on Jewish schools and synagogues and on American troops overseas. The initial information was passed to the FBI and to intelligence services—quickly passed—who analyzed the threat and took action. See, the PATRIOT Act allowed for unprecedented cooperation, and because of the surveillance tools enacted by the PATRIOT Act, the FBI learned that this guy was a part of a seven-man terrorist cell. In other words, the PATRIOT Act gave local—Federal law enforcement officials, in this case—the capacity to better understand the intelligence and to better understand the nature of the terrorist cell. And now the cell has been disrupted.

I'll tell you another good thing that happened. Before September the 11th, investigators had better tools to fight organized crime than to fight international terrorism. That was the reality. For years, law enforcement used so-called roving wiretaps to investigate organized crime. You see, what that meant is if you got a wiretap by court order—and by the way, everything you hear about requires court order, requires there to be permission from a FISA court, for example. So the crime boss, he'd be on the cell phone, maybe thinking somebody is listening to him, would toss the cell

phone and get on another cell phone. And the law allowed for our drug-busters to follow the person making the calls, not just a single phone number. So it made it more difficult for a drug lord to evade the net that we were trying to throw on him to capture him with.

We couldn't use roving wiretaps for terrorists. In other words, terrorists could switch phones, and we couldn't follow them. The PATRIOT Act changed that, and now we have the essential tool. See, with court approval, we have long used roving wiretaps to lock up monsters—mobsters. Now we have a chance to lock up monsters, terrorist monsters. [*Laughter*]

The PATRIOT Act authorizes what are called delayed notification search warrants. I'm not a lawyer, either. [*Laughter*] These allow law enforcement personnel, with court approval, to carry out a lawful search without tipping off suspects and giving them a chance to flee or destroy evidence. It is an important part of conducting operations against organized groups.

Before September the 11th, the standards for these kind of warrants were different around the country. It made it hard to have kind of a national strategy to chase down what might be a terrorist group. The PATRIOT Act provided a clear national standard and now allows these warrants to be used in terrorism cases. And they're an important tool for those who are on the frontline of using necessary means, with court order, to find these terrorists before they hurt us. Look, what I'm telling you is, is that the PATRIOT Act made it easier for people we've tasked to protect America. That's what we want. We want people to have the tools necessary to do the job we expect them to do.

Before September the 11th, law enforcement could more easily obtain business and financial records of white-collar criminals than of suspected terrorists. See, part of the way to make sure that we catch terrorists is we chase money trails. And yet it was easier to chase a money trail with a white-collar criminal than it was a terrorist. The PATRIOT Act ended this double standard, and it made it easier for investigators to catch suspected terrorists by following paper trails here in America.

And finally, before September the 11th, Federal judges could often impose tougher prison terms on drug traffickers than they could on terrorists. The PATRIOT Act strengthened the penalties for crimes committed by terrorists, such as arsons or attacks on powerplants and mass transit systems. In other words, we needed to get—we needed to send the signal, at the very minimum, that our laws are going to be tough on you. When we catch you, you've got a problem, in America. See, that's part of prevention.

I just outlined five reasons why the PATRIOT Act made sense. These are practical reasons. These are ways to give our law enforcement officers the tools necessary to do their job so that we can better protect America, and we're making progress.

The last 2½ years, we've dismantled terrorist cells in Oregon and New York and North Carolina and Virginia. We prosecuted terrorist operatives and supportives in California, Ohio, Texas, and Florida. In other words, we're using these tools to do the best we can possibly do to protect our fellow citizens. We've frozen or seized about $200 million in terrorist assets around the world. When I say "we," this is now not only the United States but friends and allies. We're cutting off their money. We're following—what was that movie?—"Follow the Money." That's what we're doing, to make sure that we do our job.

I want you to keep in mind what I've just told you about the PATRIOT Act the next time you hear somebody attacking the PATRIOT Act. The PATRIOT Act defends our liberty. The PATRIOT Act makes it able for those of us in positions of responsibility to defend the liberty of the American people. It's essential law.

The reason I bring it up is because many of the PATRIOT Act's antiterrorism tools are set to expire next year, including key provisions that allow our intelligence and law enforcement agencies to share information. In other words, Congress passed it and said, "Well, maybe the war on terror won't go on very long," and therefore, these tools are set to expire. The problem is, the war on terror continues. And yet some Senators and Congressmen not only want to let the provisions expire, but they want to roll back some of the act's permanent features. And it doesn't make any sense. We can't return to the days of false hope. The terrorists declared war on the United States of America, and the Congress must give law enforcement all the tools necessary to protect the American people.

So I'm starting today to call on the United States Congress to renew the PATRIOT Act and to make all of its provisions permanent. And not only that, there are some additional things that Congress should do—must do, in my judgment—to strengthen authorities and penalties to defend our homeland.

There's something called administrative subpoenas. This is the authority to request certain types of time-sensitive records without the delay of going through a judge or a grand jury. These are critical for many types of investigations. For example, today they're used for health care fraud cases. In other words, those who investigate can use an administrative subpoena to run down somebody cheating the health care system. Yet, in terrorism cases, where speed is of the essence, officials are barred from using administrative subpoenas. That doesn't seem to make much sense to me. The American people expect us to do our jobs. It seems like we ought to have the very same tool necessary to run down a bad doc as to run down a terrorist. And so when Congress considers the PATRIOT Act, they ought to be thinking about ways to make sure that we've got the capacity of catching terrorists.

People charged with certain crimes today, including some drug offenses, are eligible for bail only in limited circumstances, but terrorist-related crimes are not on that list. Think about what that means. Suspected terrorists could be released, free to leave the country or worse, before their trial. And that doesn't make any sense. The disparity makes no sense. If a dangerous drug dealer can be held without bail, the Congress should allow the same treatment for terrorists. If we want to protect our homeland, let's make sure these good people have got the tools necessary to do so.

And there's another example I want to share with you. Under existing law, the death penalty applies to many serious crimes that result in death, including sexual abuse and certain drug-related offenses. Some terrorist crimes that result in death do not qualify for capital punishment. That makes no sense to me. We ought to be sending a strong signal: If you sabotage a defense installation or nuclear facility in a way that takes an innocent life, you ought to get the death penalty, the Federal death penalty.

The reason why Congress must act is because we have a difficult job protecting America. The reason why is because we're an open society that values freedom. We stand for the—we're a beacon of freedom, and we say you can—our country is an open country. And yet that makes us vulnerable—in itself, makes us vulnerable. We got a lot of borders to protect. We got to be right 100 percent of the time, at the Federal level and the State level and the local level. We've got to be right 100 percent of the time to protect America, and the terrorists have only got to be right one time, as 168 innocent men, women, and children found out in Oklahoma City. Different forms of terror—we've got to be vigilant against terror at all costs.

And there's only one path to safety, and that's the path of action. Congress must

act with the PATRIOT Act. We must continue to stay on the offense when it comes to chasing these killers down and bringing them to justice, and we will. We've got to be strong and resolute and determined. We will never show weakness in the face of these people who have no soul, who have no conscience, who care less about the life of a man or a woman or a child. We've got to do everything we can here at home, and there's no doubt in my mind that, with the Almighty's blessings and hard work, that we will succeed in our mission.

The reason I say that is because I have seen the spirit of this country. I've seen the resolve of our Nation. I know the nature of the men and women who proudly call themselves Americans, people who can rise to any challenge, people who are tough, people who are determined, people who are resolute, and people, at the same time, who are compassionate and decent and honorable. And it is my honor to be the President of a country full of such people.

May God bless your work. May God continue to bless our country. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:20 p.m. at the Hershey Lodge and Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Donna L. Mindek, president, and R. Keith Hite, executive director, Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors; Pennsylvania State Attorney General Jerry Pappert; State Senator Charles W. Dent and State Representative Paul W. Semmel of Pennsylvania; Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan; and Muqtada Al Sadr, Iraqi Shiite cleric whose militia engaged in an uprising in Iraq in early April. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks at a Dinner for Senator Arlen Specter in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
April 19, 2004

The President. Thanks for coming. I'm here to say it as plainly as I can: Arlen Specter is the right man for the United States Senate.

Thank you all for coming out. It's good to be back in "Knowledge City." [*Laughter*] The last time I was here, Jerome Bettis was in the crowd. [*Laughter*] Remember "Bettis the Bus"? He said, "Keep it short, President." [*Laughter*] I listened.

I do have some things I want to say. I first of all appreciate my friendship with Arlen Specter. He's been a friend for quite a while. I'm proud to campaign for him. We've got a good, frank relationship. The last time—one of the last times we flew here to the great State of Pennsylvania, as we were coming down the stairs together, I took a look at a pretty ratty looking coat he was wearing. [*Laughter*] I said, "Senator, if we're going to keep company, I'd advise you to upgrade your wardrobe." [*Laughter*] He's a frugal man. [*Laughter*] He was telling me he wore that coat back in the Korean war. [*Laughter*] Turns out, his family got the word and bought him a new coat, and you're looking awfully sharp today. [*Laughter*]

I'm proud to tell you I think he's earned another term as a United States Senator. He is a tough and principled legislator. He can get things done for the people of Pennsylvania. He's a little bit independent-minded sometimes. [*Laughter*] There's nothing wrong with that. He is dedicated to the people of this State. He truly is. We spend a lot of time together. He's always talking about what he can do for the people here.

I—let me tell you what, I can count on this man. See, that's important. He's a firm

ally when it matters most. I can look at Arlen Specter and say, "I need your help, Mr. Senator," and he'll give it.

I appreciate you coming tonight. I urge you to go back to your neighborhoods and turn out the vote. There's no doubt in my mind he'll win the primary, and he'll win the general election, and that's good for Pennsylvania.

Seems like this administration is paying attention to Pittsburgh. After all, the Vice President was here over the weekend. [*Laughter*] And I want to thank you for being hospitable to the great Vice President. He is the finest Vice President our Nation has ever had. Mother heard me say that the other day, and she said, "Wait a minute, boy." [*Laughter*]

I'm a man of strong opinions. I tell it like I see it. Laura Bush is the finest First Lady our country has ever had as well. She sends her very best to Arlen and thanks you all for coming tonight as well. She knows what kind of a good working relationship I have with Senator Specter. She's, by the way—she's just a joy to be around. She is a great comforting soul who—I'm just lucky she said yes when I asked her to marry me. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank—I'm proud to be up here with the junior Senator. [*Laughter*] He is a lot younger than we are. [*Laughter*] But he's doing a great job as well for the people of Pennsylvania, Rick Santorum. I mean it. I know that Congressman Tim Murphy is here. Tim, thank you for coming. I'm proud you're here.

We've got people running for office here. I want to thank you all for coming. I want to thank the party activists who are here. I want to thank you for what you're going to do to turn out the vote at the primary. I want to thank you for what you're fixing to do come November. See, I'm counting on you.

You need to get out and turn out that vote. This is the kind of State where you can look at your neighbor, whether he be Republican, Democrat, or independent, and convince them to be for us. You need to—you don't worry about party label when it comes to turning out the vote this November. Get people to do their duty. Get out to the grassroots, and get on the phones, and put up the signs. And tell people in this country they have a duty, as people who live in a democracy, to show up to vote.

And when you do, you can tell them this: Tell them in the last 3 years we've accomplished great things. Most importantly, tell them we've got a positive vision.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. Let me finish first, before you make up your mind. [*Laughter*]

You tell them this. You tell them the most important thing is that we have a positive vision for winning the war against terror and for extending peace and freedom throughout this world. We have a positive vision for creating jobs and promoting opportunity and compassion here at home. Arlen and I will leave no doubt where we stand, and we will win in Pennsylvania, and I'm going to win all across the country on November the 2d.

The last 3 years have brought serious challenges, and we've given serious answers. We came to office with a stock market in decline and an economy headed into recession. We worked with Arlen and Rick and Members of the United States Congress to deliver historic tax relief, and now our economy is the fastest growing of any major industrialized nation in the world.

We uncovered corporate crimes that cost people jobs and their savings. So we passed strong corporate reforms and made it abundantly clear that we will not tolerate the dishonesty in the boardrooms of America.

We saw war and grief arrive on a quiet September morning. So we pursued the terrorist enemy across the world and captured or killed many key leaders of the Al Qaida network. The rest of them will learn there is no cave or hole deep enough to hide from American justice.

We strengthened our defenses here at home. Arlen Specter helped author a bill to create the Department of Homeland Security. I proudly signed the bill into law and appointed your former Governor, Tom Ridge, as the Secretary of Homeland Security.

We confronted the dangers of state-sponsored terror and the spread of weapons of mass destruction. So we ended two of the most violent and dangerous regimes on Earth. We freed over 50 million people. Once again, America is proud to lead the armies of liberation.

When Dick Cheney and I came to Washington, we found a military that was underfunded and underappreciated. So we gave our military the resources and respect they deserve. And today, no one can question the skill and the strength and the spirit of the United States military.

It is the President's job to confront problems, not to pass them on to future Presidents and future generations.

Great events will turn on this election. The man who sits in the Oval Office will set the course of the war on terror and the direction of our economy. The security and the prosperity of America are at stake.

I'm running against an experienced Senator who has built up quite a record. He's been in Washington long enough to take both sides of just about every issue. [*Laughter*] My opponent voted for the PATRIOT Act, voted for NAFTA, voted for the No Child Left Behind Act, and for the use of force in Iraq. Now, he opposes the PATRIOT Act and NAFTA and the No Child Left Behind Act and the liberation of Iraq. If he could find a third side to an issue, I'm confident he'd take it. [*Laughter*]

When a President speaks, he must mean what he says, and he must be clear. He must be crystal clear. Someone recently asked the Senator from Massachusetts why he voted against the $87 billion funding bill to help our troops in Iraq, and here's what he said: "I actually did vote for the 87 billions, before I voted against it." End of quote. [*Laughter*]

The voters are going to have a clear choice in this campaign. It's a choice—it is a choice between keeping the tax relief that has been moving this economy forward or putting the burden of higher taxes back on the American people. It is a choice between an America that leads the world with strength and confidence or an America that is uncertain in the face of danger.

The other side hasn't offered much in the way of strategies to win the war or to grow the economy. You know, I know it's early in the campaign, but thus far, all we've heard is a lot of old bitterness and partisan anger. He's going to find out right quick that anger is not an agenda for the future of America.

I look forward to campaigning with Arlen this fall on an agenda that is based upon our optimism, our confidence, our determination, and our resolve for the future of this country.

A big issue for every family in America is the Federal tax burden. With the largest tax relief since Ronald Reagan was the President, we left more money in the hands that earned it. By spending and investing and to help create new jobs, the American people have used their money far better than the Federal Government would have.

Because of good policies and hard work, our economy is strong, and it is getting stronger. America added 308,000 new jobs in the month of March, the highest monthly job growth total in almost 4 years. Since August, our economy has added over three-quarters of a million new jobs. There's confidence being displayed by our employers. There's rising hope of workers. In the second half of 2003, the economy grew at the fastest rate in nearly 20 years. Manufacturing activity is increasing. The steel industry is strong. Business investment is rising. Disposable income is rising. Inflation is low. Homeownership is at an historic high. The tax relief we passed is working.

When I needed him, he was with me on tax relief.

My opponent took a different view of tax relief. When we passed an increase in the child credit to help families, he voted no. When we reduced the marriage penalty, he voted against it. When we created a lower, 10-percent bracket for working families, he voted against it. When we reduced the tax on dividends that many seniors depend upon it, Senator Kerry voted no. When we gave small businesses a tax incentive to expand and hire, he voted against it. We're beginning to see a pattern here. [*Laughter*]

But when tax increases are proposed, it's a lot easier to get a "yes" vote out of Senator Kerry. Over the years, he's voted over 350 times for higher taxes on the American people, including the biggest tax increase in American history. He supported higher gas taxes 11 times and once favored a tax increase of 50 cents a gallon. That would cost you another $5 or more every time you fill up your tank. For that kind of money, he ought to throw in a free car wash. [*Laughter*]

I want your neighbors to listen closely to the rhetoric of the campaign. Thus far, my opponent has proposed over a trillion dollars of new spending, and the campaign is just getting started. [*Laughter*] He says he's going to pay for this by taxing the rich.

You can't pay for a trillion dollars of new spending by taxing the rich. What that really means is, he's going to have to eliminate every one of the single tax reductions we passed, and he's still going to have to raise taxes on top of that. In order to fund his new spending programs, he's going to have to tax people who go to work. He's going to have to raise the marriage penalty. He's going to have to lower the child credit. It turns out if you have a job, if you have a child, if you have a dollar to spare, Senator Kerry thinks you're rich enough to pay more taxes. The good news is, we're not going to let him do it.

Higher taxes right now would undermine growth and destroy jobs just as this economy is getting stronger. To help grow the American economy and to create more jobs, I have a better idea: We ought to make all the tax cuts permanent.

Our future also depends on America's leadership in the world. The momentum of freedom in our time is strong, but we still face serious dangers. Al Qaida is wounded but not broken. Terrorists are testing our will in Afghanistan and Iraq. Regimes in North Korea and Iran are challenging the peace. If America shows weakness and uncertainty in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This will not happen on my watch.

This Nation is strong and confident in the cause of freedom. Today, no friend or enemy doubts the word of the United States of America. America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Afghanistan. The Taliban chose defiance. And thankfully for the women and children of Afghanistan, the Taliban are no longer in power. America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Iraq. The dictator chose defiance, and now the dictator sits in a prison cell.

September the 11th, 2001, taught a lesson we must never forget. It's a lesson I will never forget: America must confront threats before they fully materialize.

In Iraq, my administration looked at the intelligence, and we saw a threat. Arlen and his colleagues in Congress looked at the intelligence, and they saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence, and it saw a threat. The previous administration and Congress looked at the same intelligence and made regime change in Iraq the policy of our country.

In 2002, the U.N. Security Council yet again demanded a full accounting of Saddam Hussein's weapons programs. They were worried. They were worried not only because of the intelligence; they remembered that he had used chemical weapons

against his own people. As he had for over a decade, Saddam Hussein refused to comply with the demands of the world. So I had a choice to make: Either take the word of a madman, or take action to defend America. Faced with that choice, I will defend America every time.

My opponent admits that Saddam Hussein was a threat. He just didn't support my decision to remove Saddam from power. Perhaps he was hoping Saddam would lose the next Iraqi election. [*Laughter*] We showed the dictator and a watching world that America means what it says. Because of our actions, because of the actions by our coalition, Saddam Hussein's torture chambers are closed. Because we acted, Iraq's weapons programs are ended forever. Because we acted, nations like Libya have gotten the message and renounced their own weapons programs. Because we acted, an example of democracy is rising at the very heart of the Middle East. Because we acted, the world is more free. Because we acted, America is more secure.

We've had some tough weeks recently in Iraq. There are thugs and terrorists who would rather go on killing the innocent than accept the advance of liberty. There's a reason why. They know that a free Iraq, with freedom in the heart of the Middle East, will be a major defeat for the cause of terror. That's why they're reacting the way they react. They're trying to shake our will. These killers are trying to shake the will of the civilized world and America. They don't understand America. We will never be intimidated by thugs and assassins. We will strike the terrorists in Iraq. We will defeat them there so we do not have to face them in our own country.

Other nations are helping to build a free society in Iraq, because they understand what we know: It will make us all safer. And we're standing with the brave Iraqi people as they assume more of their own defense and move towards self-government. These are not easy tasks. It's not easy to go from democracy—to democracy from brutal tyranny. They're hard tasks, but they are essential tasks. America will finish what we have begun, and we will win this essential victory in the war against terror.

On national security, Americans have the clearest possible choice. My opponent says he approves of bold action in the world but only if other countries do not object. I'm all for united action, and so are more than 30 coalition partners in Iraq right now. But I will never submit America's national security needs to the rulers of other nations.

Some are skeptical that the war on terror is really a war at all. My opponent said, and I quote, "The war on terror is far less of a military operation and far more of an intelligence gathering, law enforcement operation." I strongly disagree.

Our Nation followed this approach after the World Trade Center was bombed in 1993. The matter was handled in the courts and thought by some to be settled. But the terrorists were still training in Afghanistan. They were still plotting in other nations and drawing up more ambitious plans. After the chaos and carnage of September the 11th, it is never enough to serve our enemies with legal papers. With those attacks, the terrorists and their supporters declared war on the United States of America, and war is what they got.

Our men and women in the United States military are taking great risks, and they're doing great work. At bases across our country and in the world, I've had the privilege of meeting with them, with those who defend us, with those who sacrifice for our security. I've seen their great decency and their unselfish courage. And I assure you, ladies and gentlemen, the cause of freedom and the cause of our security is in really good hands.

This Nation is prosperous and strong, yet we need to remember that our greatest strength is in the hearts and souls of our citizens. We're strong because of the values we try to live by, courage and compassion,

reverence and integrity. We're strong because of the institutions that help give us direction and purpose, our families, our schools, and our religious congregations. The values and institutions are fundamental to our lives, and they deserve the respect of our Government.

We stand for fair treatment of faith-based groups—all faith-based groups—so they can receive Federal support for their works of compassion and healing. We will not stand for Government discrimination against people of faith.

We stand for welfare reforms that require work and strengthen marriage. We have helped millions of Americans find independence and dignity. We will not stand for any attempt to weaken those reforms and to send people back into lives of dependence.

We stand for a culture of life in which every person counts and every person matters. We will not stand for the treatment of any life as a commodity to be experimented upon or exploited or cloned.

We stand for the confirmation of judges who strictly and faithfully interpret the law. We will not stand for judges who undermine democracy by legislating from the bench or judges who try to remake the values of America by court order.

We stand for a culture of responsibility in America. The culture of this country is changing from one that has said, "If it feels good, do it," and, "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each of us understands we are responsible for the decisions we make in life.

If you are fortunate enough to be a mother or a father, you are responsible for loving your child with all your heart. If you are worried about the quality of the education in your community, you're responsible for doing something about it. If you are a CEO in corporate America, you are responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And in a responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbors, just like we'd like to be loved ourselves.

For all Americans, these years in our history will stand apart. There are quiet times in the life of a nation when little is expected of its leaders. This isn't one of those times. You and I are living in a period when the stakes are high and the challenges are difficult. We're living in a period when resolve is needed.

None of us will ever forget that week when one era ended and another began. September the 14th, 2001, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers. I'll never forget the day. There were workers in hardhats shouting at me as loud as they could, "Whatever it takes." One guy looked at me and said, "Don't let me down." As we all did that day, these men and women searching through the rubble took it personally. I took it personally. I have a responsibility that goes on. I will never relent in bringing justice to our enemies. I will defend the security of America, whatever it takes.

In these times, I've also been a witness to the character of this Nation. Not so long ago, some had their doubts about the American character and our capacity to meet a serious challenge or to serve a cause greater than self-interest. But Americans have given their answer. I've seen the unselfish courage of our troops. I've seen the heroism of Americans in the face of danger. I've seen the spirit of service and compassion renewed in our country. We've all seen our Nation unite in common purpose when it mattered most.

We're going to need all these qualities for the work ahead. We have a war to win, and the world is counting on us to lead the cause of freedom and peace. We have a duty to spread opportunity to every part of America. This is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it, and we know that for our great country, the best days lie ahead.

May God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:21 p.m. at the David L. Lawrence Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Jerome Bettis, running back for the Pittsburgh Steelers of the National Football League.

Remarks in a Discussion on the PATRIOT Act in Buffalo, New York
April 20, 2004

The President. Thanks for coming. I think you're going to find this to be a really interesting discussion about how Federal, State, and local authorities are working hard to prevent a terrorist attack. That's what we're here to talk about—and why it's important for those of us in positions of authority to give Federal, State, and local authorities all the tools necessary to do the job we expect of them. That's what we're here to talk about, but I've got some things I want to say before we start talking about it.

First, I am glad to be at the home of the mighty Buffalo Bills. I traveled today with Congressman Quinn and Congressman Reynolds, two fine Members of the United States Congress from this area, who assured me this is the year. [*Laughter*] I want to thank Jack and Tom for coming today. Thank you for your strong leadership. Thanks for caring a lot about the people of the Buffalo, New York, area. Thanks for your steadfast concern about the security of our country. I appreciate your service.

I also appreciate the service of the really fine Governor of the State of New York, George Pataki. Thanks for coming.

I know we've got State and local authorities who are here. I appreciate your service. For the local authorities, my only advice is make sure you fill the potholes—[*laughter*]—empty the garbage—[*laughter*]—answer the phone calls. But thanks for coming today. This message today is aimed as much at you as it is anybody else.

Today we have got an interesting—a lot of families with us, but one that struck me as worthy of note, and that's the Conroy family. Where's Peggy Conroy? Somewhere. There she is. Good. Hi, Peggy. Thanks. The reason I brought up Peggy is, I want you to know that Peggy's husband is a staff sergeant in the National Guard, the 105th Military Police Unit in Karbala, Iraq. She represents many of the families of this area and the country who are sacrificing to see to it that the world is more free and more peaceful.

I appreciate so very much your steadfast love for your husband. You honor us with your presence today, and I'm really glad you brought Billy and Jeff and Tyler. Billy and Jeff really represent the greatest spirit of our country. Not only do they love their dad and pray for their dad, but they're collecting school supplies for the Iraqi children. In other words, they're going to their own schoolmates and saying, "How best can we not only help secure Iraq so it can become a free country, how best can we show the compassion of America?" And I want to thank you guys for honoring your dad and honoring our country.

I also met a fellow named Frank Brusino. Where are you, Frank? There he is. Frank is an interesting character. [*Laughter*] He is a retired brigadier general in the Army Reserves, a paratrooper, who is now very much involved with the Senior Corps, the Citizen Corps Council. In other words, their job is to help provide law enforcement with additional volunteers so law enforcement can better do its job. For the first-responders who are here, I think you know the valuable addition that Citizen Corps Councils have made, so you can do your work better.

The reason I bring up Frank is, you know, a lot of times they talk about the strength of America as being in our military. That's part of our strength, and we're going to keep the military strong, by the way, so the world will be more peaceful. They talk about the strength of our country being the fact that we're a prosperous nation, and we need to make sure we continue to expand prosperity so people can find work. But the true strength of the country lies in the hearts and souls of our citizens. See, Frank represents the strength of America because he volunteers to make the community in which he lives a better place. He sets such a great example for other citizens in this area. That's why I wanted to herald Frank's accomplishments. He is a soldier in the army of compassion. He takes time out of his life to see what he can do to make the Buffalo area more secure.

My call to people in this area is, see what you can do to make Buffalo a more compassionate, decent place. See, societies change one conscience, one soul a time. All it takes is for citizens to hear that universal call to love a neighbor just like you'd like to be loved yourself and mentor a child or feed the hungry or provide shelter for the homeless or love the lonely. And by doing so, you serve our Nation, and you really show the world the true compassion of a great nation.

Thank you for your service, sir. I'm proud that you're here. Thanks for coming.

September the 11th was a horrible day for our Nation, and we must never forget the lessons of September the 11th. I appreciate so very much the Governor's steadfast determination and compassion during those difficult times for the citizens of New York City and New York State and New Jersey and Connecticut. It's a time that really changed our perspective about the world. See, we never really thought America would be a battlefield. We thought oceans would protect us. That was kind of the conventional wisdom of the time, and therefore, our defenses were aligned that way, our offenses were aligned that way.

As Larry mentioned, there were threats, but most of those threats were overseas, and they attacked us overseas. But never did we dream that they would use our own airplanes as weapons to fly and mercilessly kill thousands of our citizens. From that day forward, we have changed our attitude, and we've got to make sure the laws reflect the realities of the generation—of the new generation, of the generation of those of us involved with being responsible for the security of the country.

See, we're now facing the first war of the 21st century. It's a different kind of war. Frank was a paratrooper. In those days you could measure the enemy by the number of battalions and number of tanks and number of airplanes. Now the enemy hides in caves. They lurk * in the shadows of the world. They will strike and kill innocent citizens without any conscience, because they have no conscience.

So the fundamental charge before us all in positions of responsibility is, how do we deal with the threat? First thing we do is we stay on the offense. First thing we do is we find killers before they kill us. We rally the world, which we have done and will continue to do, to cut off money, to share intelligence, to put brave troops and security personnel after these people, to find them, to rout them out. The message should be clear to them, there is no cave or hole deep enough to hide from the justice of the United States of America and our coalition partners. It's essential.

September the 11th—when the President says something, he better mean it. See, in order to make the world more peaceful, it's essential that those of us in positions of high responsibility speak clearly and mean what we say. And so when I said, "If you harbor a terrorist, you're just as guilty as a terrorist," I meant it. And we

* White House correction.

acted upon that, in order to make the world more peaceful and more secure.

The Taliban found out what we meant. Remember, those were the leaders in Afghanistan that provided safe haven and training camps for Al Qaida. And fortunately, thanks to our coalition, thanks to brave soldiers from America and others, the Taliban no longer is in power. We enforced the doctrine. The world is more peaceful because the Taliban is gone. And at the same time, please remember, the women and children in Afghanistan have a much brighter future because we removed a barbaric regime that refused to even educate young girls.

When the President speaks, he better mean it. When I went in front of the United Nations Security Council in the fall of 2002, I said, "Listen, we all have seen a threat. One of the lessons of September the 11th was when you see a threat overseas, you must act before it materializes. September the 11th said we can't wait and hope on the good intentions of terrorists who will kill innocent men and women. We've got to act. We can't hope for the best anymore." The United States must use our prestige and influence and diplomatic power and military power to protect us and others who love freedom.

I went in front of the United Nations Security Council, having looked at intelligence that said Saddam Hussein was a threat. The Congress looked at the same intelligence, by the way, and concluded Saddam was a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence and said Saddam was a threat. No wonder we thought he was a threat. After all, he had used weapons of mass destruction on his own people. Not only did the intelligence lead us to believe that, but his actions led us to believe it. He paid for suiciders. He harbored terrorists. He was paying for terrorists to kill. And so we saw a threat.

September the 11th changed the equation. So I was given a choice: Either trust the word of a madman, hope for the best with somebody who was a tyrant, or take action to defend our country. Given that choice, I will defend America every time.

It's hard work to go from a system where there was torture and rape rooms and mass graves to freedom. That's hard work, but it is necessary work. That's why I want to herald the work and sacrifice of your husband. It's important work for our future. Free societies are peaceful societies. The way to defeat terror in the long run is to provide hope, to provide hope for families, to provide hope for children, to say there is a bright future for you. That won't happen so long as there's tyranny in a part of the world that tends to breed hatred. It will happen when societies become democratic and free.

And so what we're doing right now is we're defeating the enemy there so we won't have to fight them here. But as well, we're working for freedom in the heart of a part of the world that needs freedom. You know, I can't tell you how strongly I believe that—about the power of freedom. After all, it's been a part of our national soul. We have proven how powerful freedom can be. We bring people from diverse backgrounds together under the mantel of a free society. We're such a beacon.

I believe freedom is not America's gift to the world. I believe freedom is the almighty God's gift to each man and woman in this world. And therefore, as we work to not only make the homeland more secure, we work to spread freedom, which will make the world more peaceful.

The enemy can't stand the thought of free societies. That's why they attacked us, see, and we're not going to change. That's what they don't understand. There's nothing they can do to intimidate us, to make us change our deepest belief. They're trying to kill to shake our will. We're too tough, too strong, too resolute, and too determined to ever have our will shaken by thugs and terrorists.

We live in historic times. We face a different kind of war, and one of the key victories in this battle against terror is going to be the spread of freedom throughout the greater Middle East. And we'll succeed. We'll succeed because deep in the heart of every human being is the deep desire to be free.

At home, we've got a lot of work to do. We've got a lot of work to do. We're a free nation. We're a big nation. People come and go. And we needed to change the whole attitude about how we protect the homeland. We'll do everything we can to stay on the offensive. But just remember, we've got to be right 100 percent of the time, and the enemy has only got to be right once. And so we've got a tough job.

It means we've got to coordinate between the Federal Government and the State government and the local government like never before. We've got to share information on a real-time basis so first-responders and police chiefs can move as quickly as possible. We're going to talk about that communication today.

We created the Department of Homeland Security which would allow us to better coordinate between agencies. It's kind of—what happens in bureaucracies is you get what they call stovepipes—in other words, people don't talk to each other, they kind of stay in their own lane, and they don't share information across the lanes. And therefore, vital information may show up, but it's not widely disseminated, so there's not real-time action on, say, a threat.

Part of the problem we faced was that there was laws and bureaucratic mindsets that prevented the sharing of information. And so, besides setting up the Homeland Security Department and beefing up our air travel security and making sure that we now fingerprint at the borders and take those fingerprints, by the way, and compare them to a master log of fingerprints of terrorists and known criminals, to make sure people coming into our country are the right people coming into our country—I mean, we're doing a lot of things. But we changed law as well to allow the FBI and—to be able to share information within the FBI.

Incredibly enough, because of—which Larry and others will describe—see, I'm not a lawyer, so it's kind of hard for me to kind of get bogged down in the law. I'm not going to play like one, either. [*Laughter*] The way I viewed it, if I can just put it in simple terms, is that one part of the FBI couldn't tell the other part of the FBI vital information because of law. And the CIA and the FBI couldn't talk. Now, these are people charged with gathering information about threats to the country, yet they couldn't share the information.

And right after September the 11th, the Congress wisely acted, said, "This doesn't make any sense. If we can't get people talking, how can we act? We're charged with the security of the country, first-responders are charged with the security of the country, and if we can't share information between vital agencies, we're not going to be able to do our job." And they acted.

So the first thing I want you to think about is, when you hear PATRIOT Act, is that we changed the law and bureaucratic mindset to allow for the sharing of information. It's vital, and others will describe what that means.

Secondly, there are such things as roving wiretaps. Now, by the way, any time you hear the United States Government talking about wiretap, it requires—a wiretap requires a court order. Nothing has changed, by the way. When we're talking about chasing down terrorists, we're talking about getting a court order before we do so. It's important for our fellow citizens to understand, when you think PATRIOT Act, constitutional guarantees are in place when it comes to doing what is necessary to protect our homeland, because we value the Constitution.

But a roving wiretap means—it was primarily used for drug lords. A guy, a pretty intelligent drug lord would have a phone, and in old days they could just get a tap on that phone. So guess what he'd do? He'd get him another phone, particularly with the advent of the cell phones. And so he'd start changing cell phones, which made it hard for our DEA types to listen, to run down these guys polluting our streets. And that changed. The law changed on—roving wiretaps were available for chasing down drug lords. They weren't available for chasing down terrorists, see? That didn't make any sense in the post-9/11 era. If we couldn't use a tool that we're using against mobsters on terrorists, something needed to happen.

The PATRIOT Act changed that. So with court order, law enforcement officials can now use what's called roving wiretaps, which will prevent a terrorist from switching cell phones in order to get a message out to one of his buddies.

Thirdly, to give you an example of what we're talking about, there's something called delayed notification warrants. Those are very important. I see some people, first-responders, nodding their heads about what they mean. These are a common tool used to catch mobsters. In other words, it allows people to collect data before everybody is aware of what's going on. It requires court order. It requires protection under the law. We couldn't use these against terrorists, but we could use against gangs.

We had real problems chasing paper—following paper trails of people. The law was just such that we could run down a problem for a crooked businessman. We couldn't use the same tools necessary to chase down a terrorist. That doesn't make any sense, and sometimes the use of paper trails and paper will lead local first-responders and local officials to a potential terrorist. We've got to have every tool, is what I'm telling you, available for our people who I expect to do their jobs and you expect to do their jobs.

We had tough penalties for drug traffickers. We didn't have as tough a penalty for terrorists. That didn't make any sense. The true threat to the 21st century is the fact somebody is trying to come back into our country and hurt us. And we ought to be able to at least send a signal through law that says, "We're going to treat you equally as tough as we do mobsters and drug lords."

There's other things we need to do. We need administrative subpoenas in the law. This was not a part of the recent PATRIOT Act. By the way, the reason I bring up the PATRIOT Act, it's set to expire next year. I'm starting a campaign to make it clear to Members of Congress, it shouldn't expire. It shouldn't expire, for the security of our country.

Administrative subpoenas means it is—speeds up the process whereby people can gain information to go after terrorists. Administrative subpoenas I guess is kind of an ominous-sounding word, but it is—to put everybody's mind at ease about administrative subpoenas, we use them to catch crooked doctors today. It's a tool for people to chase down medical fraud. And it certainly seems to makes sense to me that if we're using it as a tool to chase medical fraud cases, we certainly ought to use it as a tool to chase potential terrorists.

I'll tell you another interesting part of the law that needs to be changed. Judges need greater authority to deny bail to terrorists. Judges have that authority in many cases like—again, I keep citing drug offenses, but the Congress got tough on drug offenders a while ago and gave judges leeway to deny bail. They don't have that same authority to deny bail to terrorists now. I've got to tell you, it doesn't make any sense to me that it is very conceivable that we haul in somebody who is dangerous to America, and then they are able to spring bail, and out they go. It's hard to assure the American people that we've given tools to law enforcement that they need if somebody has gone through all the work to

chase down a potential terrorist, and they haul them in front of a court, and they pay bail, and it's *adios.* It just doesn't make any sense.

The PATRIOT Act needs to be renewed, and the PATRIOT Act needs to be enhanced. That's what we're talking about, and it's better for others to explain to you how this PATRIOT Act works. After all, they're charged with protecting our citizens. They're on the frontline. You see, I try to pick the best I can at the Federal Government and say, "Here's our mission. Our mission is to protect our country." I say that to the Defense Department, "Our mission is to protect the country." I say it to the Justice Department and to the FBI. After 9/11, I said to the Justice Department and the FBI, "Your job, your primary focus now is to prevent attack. Listen, I still want you chasing down the criminals. That's what's expected of you. But there's a new mindset, and that is, because of what happened on 9/11, we've got to change the way we think, and therefore, your job now is to prevent attack."

And one of the first persons I told that to was Thompson. See, when they say "Deputy Attorney General," it means he's the number two guy at the Justice Department. He's the chief—he was the chief operating officer of the Justice Department. He was there when he heard the command given that we're at war. "I want everybody at home doing everything we can to protect us, and you're job now is to prevent. Do what you can do."

And so—Larry, we miss you over there, and don't get too comfortable. He's living in Atlanta. He's living in Atlanta, Georgia. Actually, when he left he said, "You know, I've got some kids to raise." I love that spirit, by the way. I love the fact that a dad puts his family first. And that's a vital part of life, isn't it? And so, he did a heck of a good job. He's also doing a very good job as his most important responsibility, which is being a loving dad.

But I appreciate you coming up. Why don't you just say what you want to say—now that you're no longer in Government. [*Laughter*]

[*Larry D. Thompson, former Deputy Attorney General of the United States, made brief remarks and introduced Michael A. Battle, U.S. Attorney, Western District of New York, who also made brief remarks.*]

The President. Let me stop you right there. I hope the average citizen sees the dilemma. You've got people working on the criminal case, moving along, and they say, "We've got a problem with these guys." And all of a sudden, the other side of the building says, "They may be involved with a plot related to terrorism," and yet, they can't talk?

Go ahead. [*Laughter*] They could talk about Buffalo Bills football, but they couldn't talk about securing the homeland.

Mr. Battle. I couldn't have said it better myself. [*Laughter*]

The President. Now, let me ask you something, Mike. First of all, congratulations.

Mr. Battle. Thank you.

The President. We put you in there because we want you to get them and lock them up if they're harmful to America. [*Laughter*] But let me ask you something; talk about the—you did a good job. We're about to go to Pete Ahearn of the FBI, but I want to ask you a question on the bail proceedings. Do you have any thoughts—it's kind of a leading question, of course—[*laughter*]—I'm not even a lawyer. Anyway—[*laughter*]—tell me about the bail proceedings with those that you arrested.

[*Mr. Battle made further remarks.*]

The President. I appreciate you, Mike. Good job.

Mr. Battle. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Pete Ahearn is with us, with the FBI. Pete, why don't you share

with us what it was like not to talk to somebody? No. [*Laughter*]

Let me say something about the FBI. Pete's boss is Bob Mueller. He's now the Director of the FBI. Mueller is doing a fabulous job. He is a—he comes to my office nearly every morning. He sits down and brings me up to date on what the FBI is doing. What's really interesting is to follow some of the cases—we followed this case—to see how hard our agents are working, how close the coordination is. And I really want to thank you for being on the frontline of doing really incredibly important work to protect the American people.

Peter J. Ahearn. It's an honor, Mr. President. Thank you. First off, Mr. President, people have to realize—and it's not just with the FBI or our Joint Terrorism Task Force, but so many in this room have sworn to uphold and defend the Constitution of this country. The PATRIOT Act is a law. The PATRIOT Act has the judicial oversight. The rules are there. We follow the rules. The last time I checked, the terrorists don't have the rules that we have and don't have to play by them.

So when you're dealing with a situation like this and you have all the pieces of the puzzle and parts of the puzzle in one room, parts in another—we were, at the time, probably one of the first FBI offices applying the new PATRIOT Act during the outset of this investigation.

The other issue, the information that we received—and it wasn't just issues with the six individuals in Lackawanna; it was the information we were able to glean that we were able to pass to our counterparts, for example in the CIA. It's just not—it did not just deal with here. It was incumbent on us to take that information and everything we had, not just maybe some phone numbers that we got from the criminal side of the case or phone numbers that we got from the intelligence side of the case.

Even after the Lackawanna case, the PATRIOT Act provisions helped us. We were able to share the intelligence from the proffers, intelligence from the grand jury, the information that we had there, and pass it to the intel community that led to many other things that were part of this investigation that were overseas. So it was not just the cell right here——

The President. Right. Some of the people in the cell here actually were traveling overseas, as I recall. As a matter of fact, we got a couple of them overseas, isn't that right?

Agent Ahearn. Yes, sir. Yes, we did.

The President. Maybe I'm not supposed to say that. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Battle. As far as I'm concerned, Mr. President——

The President. Thank you, Attorney. [*Laughter*] He said I didn't break any rules. [*Laughter*]

The point is, is that—what he's telling you is, is that we needed to share this information throughout our Government, which we couldn't do before. And it just doesn't make any sense. We got people working hard overseas that are collecting information to better help us protect ourselves. And what 9/11 was, is that—said is that a threat overseas now must be taken seriously here at home. It's one thing to protect our Embassies, and we work hard to do so. But now a threat overseas could end up being a threat to the homeland. And in order to protect the homeland, these good people have got to be able to share information.

Those who criticize the PATRIOT Act must listen to those folks on the frontline of defending America. The PATRIOT Act defends our liberty, is what it does, under the Constitution of the United States.

Agent Ahearn. Prior to the PATRIOT Act, it is true, and no pun intended, but we were fighting with one arm tied behind our back. It was clear. [*Laughter*]

The President. Yes, it looks like you still are. [*Laughter*]

[*Agent Ahearn made further remarks.*]

The President. Joint Terrorism Task Force—you might tell the folks what that means.

Agent Ahearn. Well, clearly, the JTTF is an acronym, obviously, for the Joint Terrorism Task Force. Prior to 9/11 there were about 28 of them in the United States. We, here in Buffalo, had already established and put the paperwork in for one prior to 9/11. It was the first one approved. And it brings to the table more resources that I can, as the FBI Director here—to put into the battle in the war on terrorism.

The President. And who sits around the table—Joint Terrorism Task Force? FBI agents, U.S. attorneys, local?

Agent Ahearn. I'm sure you're going to hear more about that with the gentlemen here, but they all sit around and——

The President. Okay, good. That's what I'm leading into. See, it's kind of a——

Agent Ahearn. No, it was a good segue. [*Laughter*] There are no secrets. I mean, everybody that is cleared and is part of the investigation, they see it all.

The President. Right. This is a good segue, as we say, to Federal, State, and local cooperation. It is—in order for us to do our jobs, we've got to make sure that the Federal Government shares information with the State government, and vice versa, and that the State and Federal Government share information with the local government, vice versa. So that everybody is knitted up, as we say. And that wasn't the case before September the 11th in a lot of communities.

One of the knitter-uppers is Jim McMahon, who was appointed by the Governor. I appreciate your service. Let her go.

[*James W. McMahon, director, New York State Office of Public Security, made brief remarks.*]

The President. I appreciate that. What dawned on me when Jim was talking is that we do the same thing, by the way, for Federal emergency response. We've done a better job of coordinating FEMA, for example, which is—means Federal Emergency Management Association. But it's now part of the Homeland Security Department. And we better coordinate with State and local authorities. So not only are we doing—coordinating activities when it comes to fighting terrorists, but we're doing so when it comes to responding to emergencies as well.

I appreciate the first-responders who are here. I know New York has got fantastic first-responders. Obviously, those who rushed into burning towers set the highest of high standards for courage and bravery and really serve as great inspiration for others who wear the uniform as well as those of us who appreciate those who wear the uniform.

Speaking about wearing a uniform, one man wore one today, and that would be Chief Moslow. Thank you for coming, sir. We're honored you're here.

[*John J. Moslow, chief of police, Amherst, NY, made brief remarks.*]

The President. Yes, that's good. See, Thompson whispered, he said, "We've only got 13,000 FBI agents." That is—when you think about it—across the country, that's not a lot of FBI agents, is it? So, therefore, there needs to be cooperation.

I appreciate you, Chief. You represent those on the frontline, what we call the first-responders. The Federal Government is spending some money to help. The key is to make sure we get it to you so it doesn't get stuck in different bureaucracies, which is one of the challenges those of us in Government face, which is not getting stuck in bureaucracies. But I want to thank you, and I want to thank the men and women from this area who are on the frontlines, for doing everything in your power to uphold the oath to which you swore when you became a uniformed officer.

Here's what I think. I think that the world is going to be more peaceful and

free. I think America is now more secure, and we're working to make it even more secure. There is no doubt in my mind that this country can * achieve any objective we put our mind to. It's essential we remain steadfast and strong and courageous and determined. History has called us to this moment of time, and history has called the right nation to lead. And the reason I can say that with certainty is because I understand the character and the courage of the American people.

It's an honor to have been here today. I hope, as a result of this discussion, our fellow citizens have a better understanding of the importance of the PATRIOT Act and why it needs to be renewed and expanded—the importance of the PATRIOT Act when it comes to defending America, our liberties, and at the same time, that it still protects our liberties under the Constitution.

But more importantly, I hope our fellow citizens recognize that there are hundreds of their fellow citizens working on a daily basis to do their duty to make this country as secure as possible. And for your work, I say thank you, and may God continue to bless you.

Thank you for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:49 a.m. at the Kleinshans Music Hall. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. George E. Pataki of New York; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; and Peter J. Ahearn, Special Agent in Charge, Buffalo Division, Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Remarks at a Victory 2004 Luncheon in New York City
April 20, 2004

Thank you all. Thank you. Please be seated. The faster I speak, the quicker you eat. [*Laughter*] Thanks for coming. Thanks for the support of voter turnout efforts. I look forward to carrying the banner. I look forward to explaining what I intend to do for the next 4 years, and your help will make it easier for us to get people to the polls. That's really what we're doing here today, and I want to thank you for that.

I appreciate my friend Pataki, who is doing a great job as the Governor of this great State. If you think the President is being hard, try being the Governor of New York—[*laughter*]—or the mayor of New York. Mayor, thank you for coming. I appreciate both the fine jobs you're doing. You both are great men. Thanks for your friendship. I'm proud to know you, as we say in Crawford, Texas.

Laura is not here, obviously, and so you drew the short straw. She is a fabulous woman who is a great First Lady. And I got to tell you, it's a lot easier to be President with somebody who is—sees the ability to influence people's lives in a positive way, just like Laura does. She is making a huge difference, whether it be literacy or women's health issues. The most important thing she means to me is steadfast love. And I'm proud of her, and I wish she were here today.

I know Peter King is here. I appreciate you coming, Congressman. I'm glad—appreciate your distinguished service in the mighty New York congressional delegation. Is Vito here as well? Hey, Vito. Good to see you. Thank you for coming. Vito Fossella as well is here—two Members of the Congress. They're here for two reasons: one, they like a good meal—[*laughter*]—

* White House correction.

two, they want a nice ride back to Washington. [*Laughter*] Maybe pick up a little wisdom, too, right, Peter?

I appreciate my friend Mercer Reynolds, who is the national finance chairman. Mercer is a business guy out of Cincinnati, Ohio, and he said, "Can I help you?" I said, "You bet. Get to work." And he has. And I really want to thank Mercer for his leadership.

Al Hoffman is the RNC finance chairman from the great State of Florida. Thank you for being here, Al, and thank you for your help. See you Friday. I will be in Naples and Miami Friday. I want to thank Lew Eisenberg. I appreciate your leadership, Lew. Thanks for helping make sure this dinner went well today. Thank you very much.

I'm looking forward to the campaign. It's—probably somebody looking at me like, "Do you really mean that?" [*Laughter*] I am. I like to campaign. I'm a competitive kind of person. I've got a lot of Mother in me. [*Laughter*] But most importantly, I've got a reason to serve 4 more years. And that's what I want to share with you today.

First, I think it's—in order to say what you're going to do, particularly as an incumbent, you've got to remind people what you have done. Because by reminding people what you have done, it will help people believe that what you're going to do is something that's true.

We've taken on—first of all, I assembled a great team. I know my Chief of Staff, Andy Card, is with us somewhere—where are you? Chief Card. I think the measure of a good leader is with whom he surrounds himself, and I've got smart, capable people with me, people who care deeply about the country, people who have got access, people who can walk in and say, "You know, you're not looking so good, Mr. President," or, "Mr. President, you're doing the right thing." Whether it be Andy or Condoleezza Rice or a great national security team or a wonderful Cabinet—I know Elaine Chao's dad is here. I appreciate you're coming, Dr. Chao. Elaine is the Secretary of Labor on our team. And I think the American people should take comfort in the fact that I have put together a good team. And it's essential you do so because you never know what's going to come on your watch. You've got to have people around, if times get tough, that are capable of making good—giving you good advice when the pressure is on.

And we had some things on our watch that I don't think a lot of people would have anticipated, starting with the attacks here on September the 11th. It was a dramatic moment for our country. It's one that I will never forget of course, and it's one that really, after I got beyond the tears, lifted my spirits because I saw the incredible courage and steadfast resolve of the people of this part of the world.

There is just something so uplifting to see the courage of the firefighters and the police and their loved ones and the citizens of New York City and Connecticut and New Jersey, as they rallied to what was a horrible moment in our history. It was such an inspiring moment for those of us who saw firsthand the response.

I made a decision then and there that I would do everything we could to learn the lessons of September the 11th and respond in a forceful way. The lesson of September the 11th, for me, was twofold: one, that any time we see a threat materialize we've got to deal with it—we can't hope it goes away—that it must be viewed in a serious nature; and secondly, it was that we'll keep the terrorists on the run until we bring them all to justice, that the best way to protect the homeland was to find them before they hurt us again. And that's what we have done.

And part of the reason I want to be the President is because I want to continue that. We're at war. The terrorists declared war on the United States, and I want to continue waging that war so that children can grow up in a peaceful country.

At the same time, the economy wasn't so hot for a while here. As you might remember, there was a recession in early 2001. And we dealt with it straight up. I told the American people that in order to deal with the economy, people need to have more money in their pockets, and went to Congress, not once but several times, and convinced Congress—and I want to thank the Congressmen who are here that supported us—that tax relief would make a difference in terms of economic vitality and growth. And it did. The recession was one of the most shallow recessions in our economic history. I look forward to reminding people that the reason why was because tax relief worked.

The economy also took a blow because we had some citizens who forgot to tell the truth. They held positions of high responsibility, and they betrayed their trust. And we responded swiftly to that as well. We passed tough laws that made it abundantly clear we expect there to be honesty in the boardrooms of America.

These were issues that the administration had to deal with, and I look forward to making the case that we have dealt with them in a way that made America a better place. But that's not how—that's just not what the American people want to hear. They don't want to see what you've done; they see what you're going to do. That's what we've got to talk about. I will campaign hard to make it clear that we've got a plan to make sure that the prosperity that we have today is lasting prosperity.

I say we have prosperity today—at least the statistics say we have prosperity today. The growth last year was strong. The projected growth this year is strong—that's growth of our economy. Inflation is low. Interest rates are low. The homeownership rate is the highest ever. It's an incredibly positive statistic, isn't it, to be able to stand and say, people own more homes than ever before. That is what we want in America. We want people owning something. They ought to be able to—"This is my home. Welcome to my piece of property." More people are able to do so. More minorities own homes than ever before. We've still got a minority homeownership gap, but nevertheless, it's a positive sign that people are owning their own homes. Jobs are being created; 308,000 new jobs in the month of March was positive, 750,000 jobs since August. In other words, the economy is picking up.

And yet, the fundamental question is, how do we make sure that the prosperity lasts, not just lasts through a political cycle, but how do we make sure America stays on the leading edge of economic prosperity for a decade to come or two decades to come? How do we make sure the entrepreneurial spirit is strong and alive and well?

First, it starts with having the right philosophy. The role of Government isn't to create wealth but to create an environment where the entrepreneur can flourish and succeed. That's the role of Government.

We've got some unusual challenges to make sure America is a prosperous nation for a long time to come. One, we've got to make sure that we've got spending discipline in Washington, and it's a battle because appropriators tend to appropriate. And we just got to make sure they appropriate in the amounts of money that we can afford these days. And I put a pretty tough budget out there that said we're going to fund our troops. It said we're going to make sure we fund our homeland security challenges, but nondefense discretionary spending needs to be at less than one percent, in order to make sure that we don't overcommit our budget.

It's going to be an issue in the campaign, by the way, because the tendency is to promise a lot of things when you run for President. Already the other side has promised over a trillion dollars of new spending, and they haven't figured out how to pay for it yet. You can't provide a trillion dollars in new spending by just taxing the rich. There's not enough money when it comes to just taxing the rich. That means you're

going to have to tax everybody, which leads to the second issue, as to how to make sure that we're a competitive nation for a long time coming, and that's to make sure the Tax Code is simple, easy to understand, and the tax relief we passed is permanent.

I say "the tax relief we passed is permanent"—certainly, in the Tax Code, it's necessary for people who want to invest capital. People who invest capital, whether they be large or small businesses, must understand the rules of the game. It's a huge mistake for Congress to let the tax relief expire, and so I look forward to continuing to making the case that tax relief must be permanent.

It's essential for families that the tax relief be permanent. Remember, a key component of the tax relief was raising the child credit to $1,000. If they let that lapse, it's a tax increase on working families. We lowered the lowest tax bracket to 10 percent and expanded who could participate. If they let that aspect lapse, it's a tax on working families.

We tax marriage in America. We got what they call the marriage penalty. In my judgment, it's a little backwards. We ought not to be taxing marriage. We ought to be encouraging marriage. We reduced the penalty on marriage, and yet, if Congress doesn't act, it goes back up, sends the wrong signal. It's a bad tax.

We put the death tax on its way to extinction—that's an important tax—in order to encourage the entrepreneurial spirit to be strong. After all, we want to encourage people to pass their assets on to whoever they want and have the Government only tax it once. And if Congress doesn't act, the death tax will come back to life—2010, by the way, is going to be an unusual year. [*Laughter*]

We cut all taxes, by the way, in the tax relief package. My attitude is, if you pay taxes, you ought to get tax relief. If there's going to be tax relief, then everybody ought to get tax relief. And so we cut all taxes. It's important that those tax rates stay low, particularly for small businesses. I look forward to making the case to the American people and reminding them that tax relief helped the small-business sector immeasurably.

Most small businesses are Subchapter S corporations or sole proprietorships. And so when you cut income-tax rates, you're really affecting small-business capital formation, which has been a vital part of our recovery. The small-business sector is strong. What I'm telling you is, good tax policy is a part of keeping this country competitive. Good tax policy relative to our competition is what is necessary to make sure that there's economic vitality in the long run.

To make sure America stays competitive and to make sure jobs stay home and jobs are vibrant here, we need an energy policy in America. It's hard to project a strong and vital economy if you're not sure if you got any energy. If you're worried about a modern electricity system—we went through this before, last summer. Remember, Mayor? I called George and the mayor. It was a difficult period of time if you're in a leadership role. Imagine what it's like if you're a small manufacturing company reliant upon electricity in order to manufacture a product. If you're competing not only in the American economy but the global economy and you're not sure if you're going to get any electricity, it's an issue as to whether or not you're going to be able to stay in business. And so we need an energy policy that, first of all, allows for and encourages the modernization of our electricity grids.

The other problem we got is that we're dependent on foreign sources of energy. It's going to be hard to stay competitive so long as America is reliant upon somebody else for our energy supply. Now, I believe technology can make a huge difference in terms of consumption by encouraging conservation. I think there's great potential for renewables and alternative sources of energy. I mean, I'd love to be

the President one day to be able to stand up and say, "We've grown enough crops so we're no longer dependent upon a source of energy," and that's possible. It's just not possible for the short run.

And so we've got to have a good energy policy that gets us to where technology will change our uses of energy and the sources of energy, which means we need clean coal technology, which means we need to explore for natural gas, which means we need reasonable nuclear energy policy. In order for this country to remain competitive, we have got to become less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

Lasting prosperity means that the country must be confident with its trade policy. The tendency is to—in the country is to, if you're doubtful about our ability to compete, is to promote what I call economic isolationism, which means the willingness to either pull back from aggressive trade policy or to encourage the creation of tariffs and barriers to trade. I think that would be a huge mistake for people looking for work. I think it would be a big mistake to kind of lose our confidence in the world when it comes to trading. Listen, we're great at a lot of things, and when you're good at something, you need to be promoting it. We're great at growing things like corn and soybeans and cows and hogs. And we ought to be aggressively selling those products overseas. We're wonderful at entertainment. We're excellent at high-tech. These are our competitive advantages, and rather than losing our confidence, we ought to be more confident than ever.

And trade policy, as far as I'm concerned, really means having other nations treat us as we treat them. It's been the policy of many administrations, both Republican and Democrat, to open up our markets so that our consumers have got choice. They've got competition for their dollar, which is good for price and good for quality. The problem we face in the world is other nations haven't treated us the same, and so it's policy of this administration is, rather than retreat and be pessimistic, is to be confident and bold and insist others open up their markets. Lasting prosperity means that the country must fight off economic isolationism and open up as many markets as possible, so we can compete in a fair way.

Lasting prosperity means we've got to have reasonable medical policy. The cost of health care makes it awfully difficult for, starting with small businesses, to expand and hire new people. I've spent a lot of time with the entrepreneurs of America, and they're saying that the cost of medicine is one of the primary factors that prevents aggressive expansion of the job base, as far as their individual company is concerned.

We've addressed it this way: First, you've got to understand there's the philosophical fight in Washington; there are those who promote policies that will make it certain that the Federal Government makes the medical decisions for people. I think it's absolutely wrong. I believe in the opposite. I believe if you empower consumers and give consumers more options from which to choose, medical policy becomes more affordable and more available.

And that's why a key component of our health care vision is what's called health savings accounts. They're a new product. They're just becoming online. But they will enable individuals and small businesses to better afford health care. They will better drive price, and they'll better enhance quality.

And there are some other practical things that need to be done. Association health care plans will allow small businesses to pool risk, just like big businesses get to do, in order to be able to better afford medical care.

We need to make sure we use our technologies wisely so that we can strip out unnecessary costs and enhance quality by promoting an aggressive expansion of technology. One of the interesting things is most businesses here are very productive because they use the IT available; not so

for the medical field. I mean, there are vast improvements to be had by the expansion of information technologies in the field. And one of the roles of the Federal Government is to provide standards so that the technology and the information can be shared and exploited in a proper way.

And finally, look, we need medical liability reform in the country. If you're interested in making sure health care is available and affordable, we've got to have a system that doesn't reward trial lawyers simply for filing lawsuits.

Speaking about trial lawyers, in order that there be lasting prosperity—in other words, when I say "lasting prosperity," I mean, to create an environment so that the great entrepreneurial spirit flourishes—we better rein in the junk and frivolous lawsuits that threaten capital formation. That's why I'm strongly for the asbestos legislation that's stuck in the Senate. That's why I'm strongly for class-action lawsuit reform that's stuck in the Senate—the same place, by the way, where medical liability reform is stuck, in the Senate.

But I will continue to push the issue, not only in the campaign but should I be fortunate enough to serve 4 more years, because the idea is to create a fair legal environment and, at the same time, encourage capital formation, risktaking, and business expansion so that the prosperity which we have today will last beyond us, will last beyond this administration. I'm going to give a speech on Monday talking about the innovation society, the expansion of a broadband technology in a market-driven way, and the role of Government is to make sure we don't overtax the broadband technology so it gets spread out, and doesn't overregulate. And it will take—the market will act, if we create the environment for market forces to flourish.

And so one of the things I'm going to campaign a lot on and talk to the American people about is that, listen, we've handled a tough recession, and I recognize there needs to be more. It's given me a chance to put in place the framework for prosperity which will last for a while, so that people can find work and realize their dreams, so people who want to start their own business feel comfortable doing so.

See, one of the wonderful things about the Presidency is I get to see success stories. People have had an idea in their head; they went to their garage; they started their own business. And now they're creating jobs for people. They've got an asset to call their own. It's just—I think it's so important that the country elect a President who understands the power and the promise of the entrepreneurial spirit. I look forward to making the case that I'm the person.

Abroad, we've got issues as well. I mean, we're at war. I will make the case that I'm prepared to continue to lead the country to win the war, not just fight the war but win the war.

An American President must speak clearly, and when he speaks, must mean what he says, in order to make the world more peaceful. And that requires a clear vision about where you want to lead. I believe strongly in the power of freedom, the transforming power of freedom. I know that free societies are peaceful societies. I believe the Almighty has—believes that every person should be free. It's a gift from the Almighty, regardless of their religion or the color of their skin. I believe that as the torchbearer of freedom, the United States must lead and must never shirk our duty to lead.

America must lead when it comes to fighting the war on terror. We must continue to rally a coalition of the willing to stay tough and determined and rout out Al Qaida before they hit us again. That's our obligation. That means when we say we're going to lead, we do, without hesitation, without fear of a political poll or a focus group. If we say we're going to be steadfast and strong, we must be steadfast and strong, and I will, as the President.

I said very clearly that if you harbor a terrorist, you're just as guilty as the terrorist, and I meant every word of that. The action in Afghanistan showed the people I meant what I said. The Taliban evidently didn't believe us. They do now, and they're no longer in power, and Afghanistan is no longer a haven for terrorist training camps.

We still have a task to do in Afghanistan. Part of winning the war on terror is to make sure that countries that we have liberated are free and peaceful and prosperous and hopeful. And Afghanistan is turning that way. It's hard work there in Afghanistan. After all, they were savaged by the Taliban. Remember the—remember what these people were like. It's hard for the American citizen to understand the nature of the Taliban. These are people who wouldn't let young girls go to school.

There's a movie called "Osama." I wish you'd look at it. It's an interesting movie. It talks about what life was like in Afghanistan. It also speaks—when I talk to the American people about what it means to liberate people, the movie says it a lot better than I can, about what life was like prior to the arrival of a coalition.

So we're working hard in Afghanistan. There are people still lurking around there that we'll find. We're sharing intelligence. We're watching money trails, just like we are in other countries as well. But part of the war on terror is to fight a different kind of war and win a different kind of war. We've got over 10,000 troops there. They're doing their job, brave souls, courageous Americans, and other nations are helping as well. NATO is involved with provincial reconstruction teams. The world is getting better there.

Karen Hughes reported back the other day the difference between what she saw the first time she went and the last time she went is just—just an excitement. There's an air of hope; there's an air of promise, which is essential for a nation to grow up and be peaceful.

In Iraq, everybody knows the decision-making process. If they don't, I'll remind them that after 9/11, another lesson is that you've got to deal with threats before they become real, which is part of the reality of the world we live in today. If we see a threat gathering overseas, we can't ignore it anymore. That doesn't mean every threat will be dealt with militarily. That's the last option. A Commander in Chief worth his salt is somebody who commits troops last, not first, and it was my last option.

That's why I went to the United Nations and said, "You've looked at the intelligence, the same intelligence we've looked at, and you've seen him to be a threat. I can understand why you think he's a threat. Not only does the intelligence say he's a threat, he used weapons of mass destruction. He's a man who was willing to murder his own people, the guy who paid suiciders to go to Israel to kill. He's a person who declared his hatred for America. He's a threat. Now, let's collectively deal with him." The United Nations said, "You bet. We will."

The Security Council voted unanimously, and the message was loud and clear. It said, "If you do not disarm, you will face serious consequences." When the American President speaks—and I echoed that sentiment—we must mean it, and I meant it. And he didn't disarm. Quite the contrary. Like he had for the past decade, he thumbed his nose at the free world. He was given all the chances in the world to disarm. He was given the chances not to deceive. He was given the chances to leave peacefully. And when he didn't, we acted with a coalition of the willing. And the world is better off because Saddam Hussein is no longer in power.

Part of the war on terror is making sure that a free Iraq emerges. I want to be in office so I can work toward that moment. It's an historic opportunity. We should think about what the world will be like with a free and peaceful and democratic Iraq in the heart of the Middle East.

It's hard to envision right now because it hasn't been that way.

There are a lot of people in the world who believe that certain societies can't self-govern. That's not what Americans believe. I told you, we believe freedom is in the soul of every human being. People long for freedom. It's not easy, though, to go from being tortured and maimed and a society where there is mass graves to a free society. It's hard work. It's really hard work. But Americans are used to hard work when it comes to a cause greater than ourself. And that's what we're doing, and we'll stay the course.

As I said in this press conference the other night, it was a tough several weeks. I know it was. And a lot of families have suffered as a result of the sacrifice of their loved ones. But the sacrifice will make America more secure and the world peaceful and free. This is historic times.

The story I shared the other day is one I'll share with you again. It's the one about visiting with Prime Minister Koizumi. And we were eating Kobe beef in Tokyo, and we were talking about North Korea. It turns out most of the world's problems ends up on the desk in the Oval Office, and there's one right there. And we were talking about how we could work together to convince the dictator in North Korea to disarm, to meet the demands of the free world that the Peninsula, Korean Peninsula be nuclear-weapons free. And it dawned on me in the course of our conversation that had we not gotten it right after World War II, I wouldn't have been having the conversation, or it's likely I wouldn't have been having the conversation, with Prime Minister Koizumi.

And it was a refreshing moment when I thought about that. I thank the people who have preceded for having the vision necessary to set the conditions so that the American President and the Japanese Prime Minister could collaborate for world peace.

And that's what we're doing now. During that dinner, I also thought about making sure we fulfill the mission we're on in Iraq so that an American President could ultimately sit down with a duly elected Iraqi leader and talk about how to make the Middle East more secure or how to deal with current security problems that might be affecting the security of the American people. These are historic times.

The killers in Iraq want us to leave, and they do for a reason. They hate freedom. Freedom really troubles them. Free societies change the habits of men and women. Free societies lift the sights and hopes of people, and that scares the terrorists and scares the thug. And that's why you're seeing them react the way they are. We're not leaving. We're not leaving. When America says something, we've got to mean it. We said to the Iraqi people, "We stand with you. We stand with you as you achieve your aspirations as free people. Nothing will shake our will." The American President must mean what he says in order to make the world a more peaceful and free place.

Because we acted in Iraq, there won't be mass graves. Because we acted in Iraq, Libya changed her behavior and is now voluntarily getting rid of weapons of mass destruction. Because we acted in Iraq, freedom is arising in the heart of the Middle East. Because we acted in Iraq, America is more secure and will be more secure in the years to come.

We have great responsibilities as the country, and I look forward to explaining to the American people what I mean by that. We have a responsibility to lead the world toward peace. We have a responsibility to lead a coalition to fight terror. We have a responsibility to help those who hurt, and that's why I went before the Congress and asked them to join me in supporting a compassionate initiative to help fight HIV/AIDS in places like Africa or the Caribbean. With our power comes responsibilities to make the world a better place.

And I look forward to making my case to the American people that I understand that responsibility and look forward to assuming that responsibility on behalf of our people.

Finally, one of the things that convinced me to go into politics in the first place is that Government has a chance to help change a culture. And the culture that I aspire for America is one that I call the responsibility era, where people know clearly that there are certain responsibilities that come with citizenship. If you're a mother or a father, you are responsible for loving your child with all your heart and all your soul. I like to remind people that in a responsibility era, that if you're a CEO in corporate America, you're responsible for telling the truth. There should be no doubt in your mind—the responsibility that it's not acceptable to change the books in a way that is illegal. In a responsibility era, education, for example, is that people have got to take responsibility for their schools. Government has got to be responsible for giving people more options in schools, by the way. But there's a responsibility that comes with making sure the education systems run well. There's a responsibility to love a neighbor just like you'd like to be loved yourself.

And one of the responsibilities as President is understanding the strength of the country lies in the hearts and souls of the citizens. It's really not in the halls of our Government. See, that's not where the strength of the country is. It's in the souls of the people. And if you understand that, then you're able to utilize the great power of the Presidency to rally that strength, to call people to a higher calling.

As I look around the room here, I see people who have done fantastic work about making the communities in which they live a better place, people who have heard the call to love a neighbor by supporting good education programs or good health programs, mentoring programs. Each of us has a responsibility, in my judgment, to help feed the hungry and house the homeless, love the lonely—part of being an American. And the President must understand that, that there's a responsibility to capture the American spirit and call people to a higher calling. And I look forward to doing that for 4 more years.

I want to thank you for your help. This is an important election. A lot turns on the election. And I've got a reason for wanting to serve 4 more years, and I appreciate you supporting me in that endeavor.

God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:40 p.m. at the River Club. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. George E. Pataki of New York; Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg of New York City; Mercer Reynolds, national finance chairman, Bush-Cheney '04, Inc.; Al Hoffman, finance chairman, Republican National Committee; Lew Eisenberg, New Jersey co-chair, Bush-Cheney 2004; James Chao, father of Secretary of Labor Elaine L. Chao; Karen Hughes, former Counselor to the President; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan; and Chairman Kim Chong-il of North Korea.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting a Report on Iraq
April 17, 2004

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Consistent with the Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution of 2002 (Public Law 107–243), the Authorization for the Use of Force Against Iraq Resolution (Public Law 102–1), and

in order to keep the Congress fully informed, I am providing a report prepared by my Administration. This report includes matters relating to post-liberation Iraq under section 7 of the Iraq Liberation Act of 1998 (Public Law 105–338).

Sincerely,

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Richard B. Cheney, President of the Senate. This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 21.

Remarks to the 2004 National and State Teachers of the Year
April 21, 2004

Thank you all very much. Please be seated. Welcome to the Rose Garden.

I told you not to tell the Elvis story. [*Laughter*] She told it anyway, didn't she?

Every President since Harry Truman has presented this award, Teacher of the Year Award. And there's a good reason for that. When you're in the company of some of the Nation's finest citizens, our greatest teachers, you're in the company of people who give their hearts and their careers to improving the lives of children. You're in the company of the best of our country.

I want to congratulate the teachers who are here from around the country. It is a great experience for Laura and me to greet you in the Oval Office. I guess the word I would describe the teachers as they came through is, they're joyous people. There's such a joy that radiates on your face and in your character. And on behalf of our Nation, I want to thank you for what you do. You make a great contribution.

In spite of the fact that she told the Elvis story, the best decision I made was to marry a teacher. Laura is a great First Lady for our country, and I'm really proud of her.

Besides the distinguished teachers who are here, I see we've got some other distinguished citizens with us today. Gene Hickok is the Deputy Secretary of the Department of Education. Thank you for coming, Gene. I'm glad you're here.

From the great State of Kansas, Senator Brownback and Congressman Dennis Moore—I'm honored you both are here. Thanks for coming. I appreciate the fact that Lindsey Graham from South Carolina is here and Congressman Gresham Barrett. Thank you both for coming. I see Maria Cantwell, Senator from the State of Washington, is with us today and Congressman George Nethercutt—appreciate you all being here.

I appreciate so very much the Governor of the great State of Rhode Island, and the first lady, Sue, is with us. Thank you both for being here today—honored you took time to come. I'm confident our honoree is really pleased you're here.

I appreciate the fact that Senator Chafee—Senator Linc Chafee and Senator Jack Reed have joined us. Thank you for coming. And Congressman Jim Langevin is with us as well. Good to see you, friend. I'm glad you're back.

I also, too, want to congratulate the National Teacher of the Year finalists: Keil Hileman from DeSoto, Kansas; Jason Fulmer from Graniteville, South Carolina—you've been there, haven't you, Senator?—that's good—[*laughter*]—Dennis Griner from Palouse, Washington; and of course, our honoree, Kathy Mellor.

I also want to congratulate Kathy's family, Duke and her three children who have joined us today. I know there are some friends here with Kathy. Chris Sirr is with Kathy. She came all the way over, and I know there's other friends as well, and I'm honored that they would take time out of their lives to support their friend and honor their buddy in what is an important moment for our Nation, as we honor those who dedicate their lives to teaching.

I want to thank Tom Houlihan, who is the executive director of the Council of Chief State School Officers. Ernie Fleishman, the senior vice president of education of Scholastic, Inc., thank you for being here. I want to thank the Council of Chief State School Officers and Scholastic, Inc., for organizing this program. I also want to thank Peter McWalters, who's the chief state school officer of Rhode Island.

Welcome, everybody. Thanks for coming.

It is fitting we have this annual ceremony because teachers are charged with a great mission. You do the vital work of teaching our children. You give them the skills that will help them succeed. You lay the foundation for realizing the American Dream.

You do more than that, though. You kindle imaginations. You foster a love for learning that can last a lifetime. What a fantastic gift to give a child. The best teachers treat every child with dignity and fairness and insist that their students treat others the same way. And through your encouragement and caring, you teach the students to respect themselves. To a child, it's a special feeling when a teacher knows your name and asks your opinion, cares what you think and gives you encouragement. For some students, unfortunately, you might be the only person who does that.

Anyone who has visited the classroom can see that teaching demands poise and warmth and, oftentimes, extraordinary patience, as my fourth grade teacher had to show. [*Laughter*] Yet, only the family members of teachers know some of the other traits that define great teachers. They've seen you stay up late rewriting lesson plans. They've seen you seek new ways to advance your skills. They've seen you somehow summon the energy to make an after-school game or a play. For you, teaching is not just a profession; it's a calling you have answered. And we thank you for that. We thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

We ask a lot from our teachers, and you're right to expect a lot from society. I oftentimes say to people that if you're interested in being a responsible citizen and you're worried about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, do something about it. Support your schools. Support your teachers. Make a difference. As opposed to sitting on the outside complaining, get involved, help people search for excellence.

State government has got a responsibility as well. I used to say when I was Governor of Texas, education is to a State what defense is to the National Government. It's the most important priority. If people are worried about the quality of the education in the State in which they live, get your Governors to make education the number one priority of the State.

And finally, the Federal Government has got a role to play as well. We've increased spending here by 43 percent. The next budget will make it 50 percent over the past 4 years. In other words, there's a role for the Federal Government. Under the No Child Left Behind Act, we're making sure that Federal money actually goes to help students learn.

I love the spirit of the No Child Left Behind Act, by the way. It's what I call challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations. You see, the reason you're Teachers of the Year is because you set high expectations. You know in your heart of hearts every child can learn. You're willing to raise that bar, to set high standards.

I appreciate so very much the willingness for teachers also to use the accountability

systems to determine whether or not what you're doing is working. It's a vital part of making sure that no child gets left behind. But make no mistake about it, we understand here in Washington that the people who really make student achievement possible are the good-hearted teachers who work hard every single day to make sure that no child is left behind. And that's why we honor you here in the Rose Garden.

Our 2004 National Teacher of the Year is Kathy Mellor. She embodies the qualities that all students and parents hope for in a teacher. For nearly 20 years, Ms. Mellor has taught English as a second language in North Kingstown, Rhode Island. Kathy redesigned her district's ESL program to better integrate students with their English-speaking classmates, and the educational benefits of her innovation have been clear.

As the parent of one of Mrs. Mellor's students wrote, "My daughter's English improved unbelievably that year." Gosh, that must be the best words a teacher can hear: "My daughter's English improved unbelievably that year." At the end of the year, she was able to finish her regular class assignments. The mom said, she's able to do so alone or with a little help from her.

Ms. Mellor's creative approach extends well beyond the classroom. She applied for and received a grant to teach English to the mothers of her ESL students. What a great gift. What a caring soul. Working with two colleagues, Ms. Mellor taught a group of women for 2½ years. At the end of the program, the women's language skills and personal confidence were both vastly improved, and many went on to further education and to new jobs.

Ms. Mellor's 19 years in North Kingstown has earned her the reputation for creativity and caring and consistent success. She's humble and generous, always willing to share credit with others and committed to serving as a mentor to every colleague. Because she understands the importance of her work, her energy and her spirit have never waned. As Kathy put it, "After many years, I still look forward to Monday mornings. Working with this diverse community of learners and their supportive families is one of the most rewarding things I have ever done or ever could do." No wonder she's Teacher of the Year.

Every teacher here has chosen a rewarding and optimistic profession. And the families of America are glad that people like you show up every Monday morning. I thank each of you for your skill and dedication. I thank you for being an integral part of making sure America is a hopeful and optimistic country for all.

And now, it's my honor to introduce and to present this award to the National Teacher of the Year, Mrs. Kathy Mellor.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 11:16 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Donald L. Carcieri of Rhode Island and his wife, Suzanne; and Kathleen Mellor's husband, Duke, and children David, Adam, and Paige. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady, who introduced the President.

Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session at the Newspaper Association of America Convention
April 21, 2004

The President. Thank you all. Burl, thank you very much. I kind of like ducking those questions. [*Laughter*] I appreciate you having me. I hope this toast business becomes

a habit—[*laughter*]—if you know what I mean. [*Laughter*]

Thanks for letting me come. Tom, thank you for your invitation. Dean, thank you for having me here. Members of the Politburo—[*laughter*]—I mean, my fellow Americans. [*Laughter*]

I was thinking about what I was going to tell you when I came over here today, and I thought I'd talk a little bit about the role of the President in creating an environment so that our prosperity lasts and then the role of the President in securing America. And then I'll be glad to duck some questions—[*laughter*]—just like my mother told me to do. [*Laughter*]

We're prosperous now, which is good, particularly if you're a guy seeking the vote. New jobs are being created. I think we had 308,000 in the month of March. Industrial production rose at 6.6 percent in the first quarter of this year, which is a positive sign. Homeownership is at the highest rate ever, which is really positive for America. The more people who own something, the better off the country is. Inflation is low. Interest rates are low, and the economy is growing, which is good news.

And the question is, really, from a Presidential perspective is, what do you do to keep in place an environment so that prosperity lasts beyond just a recovery? It's amazing that we're growing in spite of the fact that we've been through a recession, a war, an emergency, and corporate scandals, which speaks to the resiliency of the American people and the strength of the entrepreneurial spirit.

The way I view the role of Government is that the Government's role isn't to create wealth. The Government's role isn't to say, "I created jobs." The Government's role is to create an environment in which entrepreneurs feel comfortable about expanding the job base and risking capital.

So here are some things that I think our country must do to make sure that we have lasting prosperity, prosperity that reflects the willingness of the American system to put in place a competitive system, competitive with other countries.

First, we've got to have a balanced legal system. I'm deeply concerned about a legal system that is fraught with frivolous and junk lawsuits which make it harder to form businesses, make it less desirable to risk capital. A competitive business environment that will encourage lasting prosperity must mean there needs to be balance in our legal system. There must be tort reform. There's a proper role for tort reform at the Federal Government. Class-action lawsuits need to be reformed, in my judgment. Asbestos reforms legislation is stuck in the Senate, ought to go forward. Obviously, there's a lot that needs to be done at the State level. The President can help nudge that along with the bully pulpit, but the Congress ought to move on tort reform.

And they ought to do so on medical liability reform as well. When I first came to Washington, I wasn't sure if a proper role of the Federal Government was to get involved with medical liability reform. Then I saw what frivolous lawsuits and the defensive practice of medicine do to the Federal budgets. They cost us a lot of money, and it's a national issue, therefore. And so Congress needs to pass medical liability reform, not only to send a message that tort reform is vital but also to help us control the cost of medicine, which is a second necessary ingredient for there to be lasting prosperity.

I'm a big promoter in what's called health savings accounts and association health care plans, because I believe that the best way to help control health care costs in the long run is to empower consumer decisionmaking in the process, as opposed to Federal Government decisionmaking in the process.

And I readily concede there's a philosophical debate here in Washington, DC, of the proper role of the Federal Government versus the marketplace. It should come as no surprise to you that I tend to side with those who believe market forces are the best way to allocate resources

and the best way to help control costs and, therefore, will continue to be a strong proponent of new ideas such as health savings accounts to empower consumers and to encourage the doctor-patient relationship that has been eroded as a result of bureaucracies, both in the private and public sectors, springing forth.

There also needs to be innovation in the health care field as well as the rest of our society. One of the interesting things about health care is, it's kind of like a cottage industry that has yet to adapt to the new technologies of the 21st century. And therefore, there are missed opportunities when it comes to helping control costs and to provide quality care.

The proper role of the Federal Government, in my judgment on this, is to help set a national standard so that the myriad of producers have something around which to make proper decisionmaking when it comes to the use of IT technology. I believe there ought to be broadband in every community and available to every house by the year 2007, in order to make sure America has lasting prosperity. And that's just the beginning. I think not only should broadband be accessible, but there ought to be ample providers available to every house and every community in America.

And two thoughts pop in my mind about making sure that the broadband technology is expanding properly. One, there needs to be good tax policy in order to encourage the spread of broadband technology, which means we shouldn't tax access. If we want it to spread rapidly and if we want it to be available in all communities, in my judgment the Federal Government should deny taxation to broadband technology access. And secondly, there needs to be good regulatory policy out of the administration so as to encourage the spread of competitive—of services throughout our country.

By being an innovative society and promoting innovation, we'll have lasting prosperity. We're lagging a little bit on broadband technology, the access of broadband technology. And I think we need to kind of accelerate it with good policy and, particularly, good regulatory policy out of the FCC. I think we're getting that from Chairman Powell. I feel comfortable he's got a good and positive vision about how to spread broadband.

You know, it's an interesting debate, of course, during a political year—and actually, almost every year—as to whether or not we ought to be a free-trading nation. I'm a big believer in free trade. If we want to have lasting prosperity, it is essential that the Nation reject the economic isolationism and promote trade.

Our markets are relatively open to other nations. It's a decision, by the way, of administrations from both political parties that it makes sense for the consumers to be able to have more choices and more decisions. When you have more choices and more decisions in the marketplace, you generally get better quality goods at a better price.

And yet, other countries haven't reciprocated. And to me, the proper role of the administration to make sure there's lasting prosperity is to insist that other countries open up their markets, as opposed to closing ours. And we'll continue to do so. We filed a WTO suit against China. We've made some noise here and there. We will insist that the trade laws be enforced.

But it's essential that the country reject economic isolationism if we want to have lasting prosperity. Trade wars will make it incredibly difficult for us to be prosperous and also, by the way, hurt countries on the continent of Africa, for example, desperate, poor little countries trying to develop markets and trying to develop a business community and small businesses. If we don't open up our markets to them, if we don't trade freely, it'll be difficult for there to be hope in impoverished parts of the world.

We need an energy plan. You know, it's—we're a country where they say, "Okay, what is your plan?" Well, I'm going

to jawbone. It's an awkward position for any President to be in. It means we don't have an energy plan, is what it means. It means we're hooked. I get, "What are you going to do about it? Are you going to pick up the phone and hope somebody produces more energy?" That says we're dependent, and we are.

I think we ought to have a full-scale debate and, in my judgment, opening up different supplies of energy. I think we need to promote nuclear energy. I think we need to make sure we've got clean coal technologies available. I think we ought to be exploring for natural gas, where we can find natural gas.

It is—this country is—in order for us to be prosperous in the long run, we can't remain hooked on foreign sources of energy. Obviously, we've got to promote conservation, new technologies. Listen, I'd love to be able to grow our way out of energy independence. There would be nothing better for an American President to say, "Okay, plant more corn, and we'll become less dependent on foreign sources of energy." I fully understand that. The idea of biodiesel makes a lot of sense. We ought to continue to promote research and development. And I'm convinced technologies will help us in the long run when it comes to becoming less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

The question is, what do we do in the next decade? How do we deal with the reality of the situation? And I would hope I can get a bill out of Congress that will encourage additional supply and, at the same time, encourage conservation and reduce demand.

The problem we have in the world, by the way, today is that China is cranking up their economy. Steel prices are high. Energy prices are high, because demand in China is really high. And that's what we're faced with. We're faced with a world economy that's beginning to recover, with supplies getting tight. And without an energy plan, without additional supply, it's going to make us hard to stay competitive as well as prosperous in the long run.

I see some people who, unfortunately, have to follow me around the country. I've been spending a lot of time recently on job training programs, because education is one really important way as to how we're going to have lasting prosperity. I think if you talk to people on the leading edge of change here in the country, they will tell you that one of their biggest concerns is to be able to find workers that are skilled in the jobs of the 21st century. Obviously, we've got to get it right through the No Child Left Behind Act, which I'll be glad to expound on, if it's one of your questions.

But there needs to be job training programs that recognizes that as technologies race through our society, workers are likely to be left behind. And that's why I have promoted—or could be left behind, is a better way to put it—that's why I have promoted the community college system as a way to make sure that willing workers are matched with employers and they have the skill base to do so. The community college system is affordable, available, and accessible. They're great things. What I like about them is that they're able to adjust their curriculum to be able to meet the demands of those who are actually hiring people.

And finally, a subject that I know that many of you here are delighted with, there needs to be permanency in the Tax Code. We don't need to be raising taxes right now if we want to have lasting prosperity. The worst thing that can happen is to start raising taxes on the American people. If you're a planner and if you're spending capital, it is essential that there be certainty in the Tax Code. And a lot of the provisions of the tax relief we've passed are set to expire. It will be a big mistake, in my judgment, to let them expire. And so I will continue this year and in further years, hopefully, to be talking about permanency with the tax relief and simplification in the Tax Code.

People say, "What do you mean?" I'll give you one example of how to simplify the code. If we can ever get rid of the death tax, forever, it will cut down on about 30 percent of the IRS Code, they tell me. By the way, the death tax is bad, in my judgment. You're taxing a person's assets twice. And if you're interested in making sure the environment for the entrepreneur is strong and vibrant, it doesn't make sense to tax a person's assets twice. My firm belief is if it's your asset, you ought to be able to leave it to whom you want to leave it, without the Federal Government making it awfully difficult to do so.

So that's—those are some ideas, and my job is to think beyond the immediate. And America must be wise about how we stay competitive because the world is really competitive, and it's changing. And the truth of the matter is, to make sure we've got jobs here at home and an expanding job base, we've got to be the best place to do business, the best place to invest capital, the best place for a small-business person to realize his or her dreams, and there are some ideas I just laid out that can help us stay that way.

Security is obviously an issue that's on my mind. It should be on yours. I know it's on yours. You write about it all the time. We're at war, and it's a different kind of war. It is a war that is different because it's hard to really see the enemy, if you know what I mean. This is an enemy that is able to inflict serious destruction on people and yet be nearly invisible most of the time. It's a war in which people are hiding in caves. They give an order, and these people will go kill on a moment's notice. And they don't care who they kill. So in other words, it's an enemy that hides, an enemy that's so ruthless, there's no such thing as innocent or guilt. And they attacked today in Basra. It was a terrorist act today. They just blew up innocent Iraqis. They attacked in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, today, and they attack all the time. They'd like to attack us again as well, by the way. Obviously, my most solemn duty and the duty of everybody involved with government is to do everything we can to protect the American people. In this war against this enemy, we must use all our assets, not some of our assets but every asset at the disposal of those of us who are in positions of responsibility. Military assets, intelligence assets—we must rely upon alliances.

And I will tell you the cooperation is good. So much has been focused on the decision in Iraq, which, of course, I'll talk about here in a minute, that people assume that there's not cooperation with nations that didn't agree with the decision in Iraq. That's just simply not the case. We're sharing information with countries that may not have agreed with us in Iraq. We're acting on information that we've passed back and forth together. Alliances are really important in the war against terror. International bodies can be important in the war against terror if they're effective. They're lousy in the war against terror if they're not effective, because this is a results-oriented game we're in right now. We've got to be effective to stop them.

The thing that's interesting and different about this—well, it's not interesting—it's frightening about this war, is America is a battlefield in the war on terror. That's what's changed. We're now a target. It used to be Americans overseas were targets. It's Americans at home are targets. And that changes the equation about how a President must view threats when I see them or when we see them. What do you do about a threat that you see gathering overseas? Do you just kind of hope it goes away, or do you deal with it? And I've obviously made the decision to deal with it.

There's no negotiations with these terrorists. These are not the kind of people you sit down and you negotiate with. You don't sign a treaty with people who are—who don't believe in rules, people who don't

have a conscience. The strategy of the terrorists—they're trying to shake our will and turn free nations against each other. And they're—these guys are tough, and they're sophisticated, and they're smart. And we just have to be tougher and smarter and more sophisticated in our approach to finding them.

Al Qaida obviously is the name everybody knows that's associated with the war on terror. And we're hunting them down. It takes a while to find them, but we're using all our assets and resources and friends and allies to bring them to justice. It's the only way you have to deal with them, and it's important that we find them before they come here again or somewhere else, for that matter.

And we're making pretty good progress. If Al Qaida were a board of directors, the chairman and vice chairman might still be out there, but the middle management is gone. That's not to say that they're not encouraging others to step forward. They are. But we're on the hunt, and we'll stay on the hunt. And it's essential that the country not yield, and lead. The world looks at us, and if we show any weakness whatsoever, there will be weakness in the world. And as I just told you, in order to win this war against these people, there has to be solid cooperation in the world.

Right after September the 11th, I said, "If you harbor a terrorist, you're just as guilty as the terrorist." I meant that. The American President, when he speaks, must speak clearly and must mean what he says. I meant what I said. The Taliban were given a notice. They didn't respond, and so we got rid of them. It just wasn't America; it was others.

The world is much better off for that decisive action by our troops and the troops of other people, and so are the people who live in Afghanistan. I would urge you to see the movie "Osama." It's hard for the American mentality to grasp how barbaric the Taliban was toward women in Afghanistan. So see the movie, and then maybe—it'll speak better than I can possibly speak. Burl is always accusing me of not being able to speak so good anyway. [*Laughter*]

We're making good progress in Afghanistan. I'm proud of Karzai. He stepped up and led. The Afghan army is functioning. Listen, there's still work to be done there. There's work to be done in most countries where tyranny reigned. See, it's hard to go from a tyrannical state to a free state. It's hard to go into a society where if you stepped out of line, you were brutalized, into a society where people take risks for peace and freedom.

And that's what you're seeing in Afghanistan, and frankly, that's what you're seeing in Iraq. In Iraq, I saw a gathering threat. The world saw a gathering threat. The United Nations saw a threat. I went to the United Nations. I said, "Listen, you've been calling upon this guy to disarm for 10 years. He's chosen not to. Now let's give him one final chance to do so." And unanimously, the Security Council stepped up and said, "Disarm, or face serious consequences," and so did the United States. And when you say, "Disarm, or face serious consequences," you better mean what you say when you say it.

And Saddam Hussein chose not to disarm. Listen, we viewed him as a threat. The intelligence said he was a threat. We all thought he had weapons. We found out—the truth will be known over time. We found out he had the ability to make weapons. He had the capability. I think the intent was clear. After all, he hated America. He paid suiciders to go kill Jews. He used weapons of mass destruction on his own people. And so he defied the world, and he's no longer in power. The world is better off for it, and so are the people of Iraq.

Because we moved, torture chambers are closed; mass graves won't be filled; and democracy is growing in the heart of the Middle East. I'm oftentimes asked, "Is there a solution for the war on terror?" Yes,

there's a long-term solution, and that's freedom. See, free societies don't promote terror. Free societies are peaceful societies. Free societies are societies that provide hope and opportunity for people.

Now look, there's a debate, I readily concede. Some people don't believe if you're a Muslim or an Arab you can be free. I just strongly disagree with that thought. I think everybody yearns to be free, and I think everybody can self-govern.

I remind you, some people thought the Japanese could never self-govern or be free. And yet, as I said in my press conference the other day, I had the honor of sitting down with—dinner with President Koizumi—or Prime Minister Koizumi, and we were talking about North Korea, which I'll get to here in a second.

It's amazing—he's a great guy, by the way. Elvis Presley is one of his favorites. [*Laughter*] His favorite movie was Gary Cooper in "High Noon." One time he walked up to me and said, "You like Cooper." [*Laughter*] I said, "I'm like Cooper?" He said, "Yes." [*Laughter*] I finally figured out what he meant. [*Laughter*]

We're talking about peace on the Korean Peninsula with a friend who is a former enemy. Some people never thought they could self-govern or be free. It dawned on me, by the way, in that conversation, someday an American President will be sitting down with a duly elected official from Iraq, talking about how to secure the peace better in the Middle East. This is an historic moment.

Times are tough. The last couple of weeks have been really rough, roughest on the families of those who lost their lives and those who wonder about the security and safety of their loved ones. And the reason why they're tough is because people want to stop the advance of freedom. That's why. They can't stand the thought of Iraq being free. The stakes are high. They view freedom as a real threat to their ambitions. And the Iraqi people are looking—they're looking at America and saying, "Are we going to cut and run again?" That's what they're thinking as well.

And we're not going to cut and run if I'm in the Oval Office. We will do our job. I believe that people yearn to be free. I believe the people of Iraq will self-govern, and I believe the world will be better off for it. I believe freedom in the heart of the Middle East is an historic opportunity to change the world, and it's essential that America show resolve and strength and not have our will shaken by those who are willing to murder the innocent.

I mentioned Korea. I think it's—different threats are dealt with in different ways. When I came to office, the relationship on the Korean Peninsula, with North Korea was like "America and North Korea." There was—we were expected to solve the problem, and it wasn't working. So I decided that—we tried another equation, and that is convince others in the neighborhood to become a party to convincing Kim Chong-il to disarm. It wasn't working, because if you can ever get the relationship between the United States and—kind of get a bilateral responsibility going with a guy like Kim Chong-il, all he's got to do is frighten everybody, and they run up to the United States and said, "Oh, go fix it." You know, "Take care of business."

The only way to convince Kim Chong-il to disarm is to get China very much involved in the process, which we have done. It wasn't easy work because the Chinese felt it was the U.S. responsibility, and they really didn't want to have equity in the process. They were—we shared the same goal. As a matter of fact, when Jiang Zemin came to Crawford, he was quick to stand up and say, "We don't want any nuclear weapons in the Korean Peninsula." He understood—he understands the stakes. The stakes are, of course, America will defend herself if we have to, and he understands that. The other thing is that he understands that if one country were to develop a nuclear weapon, other countries in the neighborhood might develop a nuclear

weapon, and that wouldn't be in his interest.

And so now the Chinese are involved with the process, as are the Russians and the Japanese and the South Koreans. And it's a steady, slow process to convince Kim Chong-il that his interests are not served by the development of a nuclear weapon that he can threaten the world with.

We've made some other progress with him, by the way, through the Proliferation Security Initiative. It's an initiative of—gosh, I think 18 countries have now signed on or something like that, some number close to that—where people are willing to interdict ships floating out of North Korea if we suspect there's cargo, illicit cargo like arms or drugs on them in order to at least stop him from exporting weapons that will be—could be used by all kinds of different people.

Part of understanding North Korea better was a great success by our team and the Brits in unraveling the A.Q. Khan network. A.Q. Khan was a nuclear scientist in Pakistan that was willing to sell state secrets in order to make money. It's real dangerous, by the way, when you have somebody who is willing to sell information purely for money, because you don't know where that information might end up. And the ambitions of the terrorist network, of course, would be to have the ultimate weapons at their disposal in order to blackmail and/or to harm.

The Libyans made a good decision to disarm. They were dangerous. We have found more than we thought they had, but they made a wise decision to do so. The reason I bring all that up is the war on terror is broader than just the Afghan or the Iraq theater. The war on terror is finding cells and routing people out before they attack. The war on terror is to stop the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The war on terror is to call people to account early, before it's too late. The war on terror is to recognize America is a part of the battlefield, and we must deal with threats before they're too late.

The long-term strategy of this Government is to spread freedom around the world. And I believe—I told you, a free Iraq will be a major change agent for world peace.

I also believe a free Palestinian state will be a major change agent for world peace. Ariel Sharon came to America and he stood up with me and he said, "We are pulling out of Gaza and parts of the West Bank." In my judgment, the whole world should have said, "Thank you, Ariel. Now we have a chance to begin the construction of a peaceful Palestinian state." You know, there was kind of silence, wasn't there? Because the responsibility is hard. It's hard to be responsible for promoting freedom and peace when you're used to something else. If you don't have the aspirations of the people firmly embedded in your soul, it's hard to take a gamble for peace by putting the institutions of a free society in place, institutions that are bigger than the people.

The Palestinian leadership has failed the people year after year after year. And now is the time for the world to step up and take advantage of this opportunity and help to build a Palestinian state that's committed to the principles of individual rights and rule of law and fairness and justice so the Palestinian people have a chance to grow a peaceful state and so that Israel has a partner in peace, not a launching pad of terrorist attacks, on her border.

And finally, the United States has got responsibilities bigger than just leading the world toward peace and freedom. We've got the responsibility of helping to relieve suffering and hunger where we see it as well. You know, I mentioned to you that—I checked with Colin; I think this is true—that we're the biggest food donor to the North Korean people. That's a fact I don't think a lot of people know. I just hope the food goes to the people and not to the generals. Part of the issue is it's hard to verify whether or not the food is actually

being distributed. But nevertheless, our heart is right.

We want to help people who are hungry. We want to help people who suffer from HIV/AIDS. We want to make sure we help lift countries out of terrible poverty by opening our markets for their goods and services. We have a responsibility beyond just being the leader in the war against terror. We have a responsibility to be the leader in the war against hunger and disease and hopelessness. And we are—and we are.

The role of the President is to think about the long term, is to think about how you put in place policy that will be historic, policies that will be—that will help change the world for the better. And I think we're doing just that.

I'm ready to answer some questions. How long was that speech? How long did I talk? Too long, right? [*Laughter*]

Response to Terrorism

Burl Osborne. Mr. President, you mentioned how difficult it is to visualize the enemy in a war on terror. And you also pointed out the long term goal of freedom and democracy as an answer. And yet, today there is an AP poll that shows two-thirds of the people in this country think it's at least somewhat likely we'll have an attack before the elections, and nearly half the people are at least considering the possibility that at this point in time, the terrorists may be winning. And my question is, how, in the interim between now and that long term, how do you persuade these people who are in doubt that they're wrong, that it won't end that way?

The President. Two-thirds of the Americans think we're going to get hit again? Well, I can understand why they think they're going to get hit again. They saw what happened in Madrid. This is a hard country to defend. We are making good progress in the defense of America. We've got a Department of Homeland Security that now enables people to better coordinate and cooperate and share information. We've got a PATRIOT Act—which needs to be renewed, by the way, and strengthened, in my judgment—that is really important to allow the criminal division and the intelligence division of the FBI to share information, which they could not do before.

And by the way, any provision in the PATRIOT Act that enables us to collect more information requires court order, just like it does when you're dealing with a mobster or a doctor that's creating criminal problems or white-collar crime.

There is—but the PATRIOT Act helps. It helps us to be able to connect the dots, is a common phrase here in Washington.

Our intelligence is good. It's just never perfect, is the problem. We are disrupting some cells here in America. We're chasing people down, but it is—we've got a big country, Burl. I'm from Texas. It is difficult to stop people coming across the Rio Grande River, whether they be people looking for work or people looking to do harm, and so I can see why people feel that way. And we've just got to stay on the offense, is what we've got to do.

And what was the other part of the question?

Mr. Osborne. You answered it.

The President. Okay, good. [*Laughter*] At least I didn't duck this one.

Mr. Osborne. We'll give you a chance to duck one.

The President. Okay, good. [*Laughter*]

International Cooperation in the War on Terror

Mr. Osborne. As you mentioned, there have been other incidents today in Iraq and Saudi Arabia. And you also mentioned the importance of our alliances. We've had some arrests in Britain, even in Spain and elsewhere. The question is, are you satisfied with the level of cooperation among the governments in combating these attacks?

The President. Well, yes, I am. I think, obviously, we've got to continue to work

to make sure people understand the threat is real. For a while, obviously, America was the most energetic in fighting terror because the memory of September the 11th was fresh in our mind and people felt like, "It couldn't happen to me." There's been a lot of attacks since September the 11th, which has convinced people that we've got to work together.

Saudi Arabia is a good example. This is a place, when they got attacked a year ago—that helped change their attitude toward chasing down Al Qaida types within their country. And the attack again today on Riyadh was a reminder that there are people that would like—I don't want to guess their intentions—I think they would like to overthrow the ruling Government. They certainly want to frighten everybody and kill as many as they can.

The attacks on Istanbul happened when I was in Great Britain, and they were devastating attacks to the Brits—a lot of Brits were there—but also to the Muslims who were killed.

And the cooperation is good. But it's an issue that you just constantly have to work on to remind people of the stakes that just—you've got to share intelligence better. And sometimes bureaucracies get in the way of the fast flow of information. I suspect governments complain that we might not be as forthcoming as quickly as they would hope us to be. I haven't heard much of that, but we're getting good cooperation. And it's—but I say it's an issue we've got to continue to work.

Pakistan, we're getting good cooperation. Just think about what life was like prior to September the 11th in Pakistan. Pakistan was friendly to the Taliban. And fortunately, our Government, thanks to the good work of Colin Powell, convinced President Musharraf that that was not in his interests. His interests were to be working with us and fighting off the terror. Of course, since then Al Qaida has tried to kill him twice. I think it confirms the fact that he's chosen the right side. We're trying to help him. And he's active in the war on terror. And he is—but he's got issues, just like any of these countries have got issues. But he's done—in my judgment, he's been a good, strong ally.

And I'm pleased with the fact that progress is now being made on the relationship between Pakistan and India. I don't know if you remember, I think it was in the year '01—I don't see many foreign policy kind of reporters here, but '01 was the year that we had shuttle diplomacy to convince Pakistan and India not to go to war with each other. Powell went, and then Straw went from Great Britain, and then Armitage went, and then whoever his equivalent is from Great Britain went, with the idea of kind of talking everybody down. And now, it's quite the opposite; they're talking with each other in a positive way and hopefully can get some sticky issues resolved, for the sake of world peace and stability in that part of the world. I think progress is being made. But we can always—we will always find ways to improve our alliances.

I mentioned to you—look, I mentioned to you the need for international bodies to be effective. We're working with the IAEA with Iran. And the Iranians need to feel the pressure from the world that any nuclear weapons program will be uniformly condemned. It's essential that they hear that message. An appropriate international body to deal with them is the IAEA. They signed an additional protocol, which was a positive development. The foreign ministers of Great Britain, France, and Germany have interceded on behalf of the civilized world to talk plainly to the Iranians. One of my jobs is to make sure they speak as plainly as possible to the Iranians and make it absolutely clear that the development of a nuclear weapon in Iran is intolerable, and a program is intolerable. Otherwise they will be dealt with, starting through the United Nations.

And hopefully we're making progress there as well. It's a tough, tough crowd

to negotiate with. They've got a classic—it's a really long answer, I know. At least I'm answering it. [*Laughter*] They've got the classic principal-to-nonprincipal negotiating strategy available for them. They've got a fellow sitting up on top, probably the decisionmaker on most matters, and yet the world goes to Khatami, so you're not really sure if the message is getting totally delivered or not. I think the message is getting delivered to them that it's intolerable if they develop a nuclear weapon. It would be intolerable to peace and stability in the Middle East if they get a nuclear weapon, particularly since their stated objective is the destruction of Israel.

Last question.

Mr. Osborne. Just for the record, I've always understood you clearly. [*Laughter*]

The President. Then why don't you write that way? [*Laughter*]

Mr. Osborne. Touche, touche.

The President. I've known him a long time. [*Laughter*]

Democracy in Iraq

Mr. Osborne. There's an editorial in the Washington Post today that opines that your opponent has changed his stance on Iraq.

The President. I'm not going to talk about my opponent here.

Mr. Osborne. We're not finished with the question.

The President. Okay. [*Laughter*] Touche back. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Osborne. And he is saying that—he no longer is saying that the outcome in Iraq has to be a democracy but rather that it has to be a stable government, and that, in their words, democracy is an option. My question is, is a democratic form of government in Iraq an option for you, or is it an imperative?

The President. It's necessary. It's what will change the world, help change the world. And you either believe people can self-govern or not, believe democracy is possible in that part of the world, and I think it is. I think it is.

Listen, thanks for letting me come. I hope you toast more often. [*Laughter*] God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:30 p.m. at the Omni Shoreham Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Burl Osborne, chairman, and Tom Curley, president and chief executive officer, Associated Press; William Dean Singleton, vice chairman and chief executive officer, MediaNews Group, Inc.; President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan; Chairman Kim Chong-il of North Korea; President Jiang Zemin of China; A.Q. Khan, former head of Pakistan's nuclear weapons program; Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of Israel; President Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan; Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs Jack Straw of the United Kingdom; former Minister of Foreign Affairs Dominique de Villepin of France; Minister of Foreign Affairs Joschka Fischer of Germany; and Ayatollah Ali Hoseini-Khamenei and President Mohammad Khatami-Ardakani of Iran.

Remarks at a Reception for the National Race for the Cure
April 21, 2004

Thank you. Welcome. Thanks for coming. Thank you, darling. [*Laughter*] What she forgot to say was "a Race for the Cure ex-runner." I'm afraid my knees hurt. [*Laughter*] But thanks for coming to the

White House. I appreciate your support in such an important cause.

I too want to thank Nancy Brinker. I picked her to be the Ambassador to Hungary because I know her to be an accomplished, smart, capable woman. And she did a fabulous job as the Ambassador, and I'm real proud to call her friend. She's a social entrepreneur. She uses her skills to advance humanity in a positive way, and she did so in the name of her sister, Susan Komen. And Stephanie, I'm glad you're here—Susan's daughter. Thanks for coming. Proud you're here. I bet you're proud of your old auntie. [*Laughter*] That's good.

I appreciate Susan Braun being here. Susan, you're doing a fine job. Nancy was up for dinner the other night, and so I was asking her about how everything was going in the foundation. I said, "Have you found anybody who can run this thing?" And she said, "Yes, Susan Braun. She's doing a heck of a job." So if you can meet her standards, you must be doing a heck of a job. [*Laughter*] Thanks for your hard work.

LaSalle, it's good to see you, sir. Dr. LaSalle Leffall is the chairman of the board. Thank you for taking time to support this meaningful cause. I want to thank the other board members and supporters who are here as well.

Some of corporate America is represented here, supporting this fine foundation. Thanks for being a good corporate citizen for our country. Thanks for doing your duty and supporting such a fine cause.

My buddy Ann Veneman, who is the Secretary of Agriculture, is with us. She's a survivor. I'm really proud of Ann. She's doing an excellent job as a member of my Cabinet. Glad you're doing well. Thanks for coming.

I'm really glad Sue Ann Thompson is here. It's great to see you, Sue Ann. She's married to Tommy, who is not here—better half of the family showed up. [*Laughter*] Thanks for coming, Sue Ann. Really good to see you.

I appreciate Congressman Sue Myrick. I'm glad you're here. She's one of the co-chair of the House Cancer Caucus, along with Steve Israel. Thank you for coming, Steve. I'm proud you both are here. Sue brought her grandson Jake, Jake Forest. I just thought I'd say his name so he would get on C–SPAN. [*Laughter*]

It's good to see two other Members of the Congress who have taken time to come out, offer their support, Joe Barton from Texas and Marsha Blackburn from Tennessee. Thank you both for being here. I'm proud you came too.

I want to honor the cancer survivors who are here. We appreciate your courage and your steadfast strength and your willingness to share your stories and your experiences with others.

The Susan G. Komen Foundation Annual Race for the Cure is now a national tradition. And it didn't take long to get there. As Laura mentioned, the race started—she said her home State—it also happens to be mine—[*laughter*]—in Dallas, Texas. And it didn't—from '83 to now, that's a couple of decades and a year, and yet when you hear the Race for the Cure, everybody knows what you're talking about. It's kind of become the brand name for saving lives. The Komen Foundation has invested nearly $500 million in the fight against breast cancer. That's really good.

Laura recognized somebody by name. I am too. Rana Kahl is with us. She participated in her first race 8 years ago. She ran 4 years before being diagnosed on her 33d birthday with breast cancer. And her first time at the race as a survivor was the day after her first chemo treatment. She's been the chairwoman of the National Race for the Cure's Survivor Committee for 3 years. She's lending her heart and her expertise.

Rana celebrated her fourth cancer-free anniversary last month, and she and her husband, Kevin, welcomed their first child last year. It's a beautiful story. She said, "Because of the work we do today, other

lives will be saved," which is the spirit of the Komen Foundation. "Because of the work we do today, other lives will be saved."

Approximately one in seven women in the United States will develop breast cancer over her lifetime. That means more than 200,000 women will be diagnosed this year. This Government is committed to helping find a cure for breast cancer, and it must be. The Department of Health and Human Services is spending $900 million on breast cancer research and preventative activities. I want to thank the Members of Congress for your strong support.

My budget has proposed an increase for next year as well. The budget includes $220 million for an early detection program, promotes mammography use, and helps low-income women afford screenings for breast cancer and cervical cancer. It also includes 768 million to aid breast cancer researchers at the National Institutes of Health. NIH is now conducting the largest trial ever of new early detection technologies. This effort will help doctors target breast cancer at its most treatable stage. Early detection is essential. We're going to continue to work with the Congress to make sure that the—there is increased access to screening services.

This country is making progress on women's health issues, and I appreciate the leadership of Tommy—Tommy Thompson at the Health and Human Services. Recently, the Komen Foundation honored Tommy—it says here, Secretary Thompson—[*laughter*]—Secretary Tommy Thompson—[*laughter*]—with the Women's Health Advocate Award for his work in the area of breast cancer. I know you're proud of him, and so am I.

Secretary Thompson, I will continue to stand by you in your cause. We'll not rest. We'll work to make sure that we do everything we can to help save lives.

The National Race for the Cure is an inspiring example. It's a good example for a lot of others to watch. It's an example of courage and hope and faith, and I want to thank you for your involvement.

Have a great race this June. I wish I could join you. [*Laughter*] God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 4:38 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Nancy Goodman Brinker, founding chair, Susan Braun, president and chief executive officer, and LaSalle D. Leffall, Jr., chairman of the board, Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation; and Sue Ann Thompson, wife of Secretary of Health and Human Services Tommy Thompson. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady, who introduced the President.

Statement on the Elections in South Africa
April 21, 2004

I congratulate President Thabo Mbeki on South Africa's third democratic national election and his party's election victory. The United States also congratulates the people of South Africa as they celebrate on April 27 the 10th anniversary of freedom and democracy replacing apartheid rule. The United States welcomes the peaceful exercise of democracy demonstrated by the Government and people of the Republic of South Africa. All competing parties deserve recognition for playing their role in a multiparty democracy. We commend their acceptance of the outcome and their use of the legal system and the rule of law to resolve disputes.

Remarks on Earth Day in Wells, Maine
April 22, 2004

So great to be here, thanks. Gosh, my outlook improved dramatically the minute I stepped on this beautiful piece of land. Thanks for having me, and thanks for coming out to say hello. It's my honor to celebrate Earth Day with you in a State that I know pretty darn well, in a State that I love, in an area that I now realize I know well because it was right off the beach here that old Number 41 and I liked to try to catch striped bass. [*Laughter*] It's a pretty good place to fish around here.

Before I start going on too long about Mother Earth, I do want to recognize my mother on Earth. Thanks for coming, Mom. I hope you're up the road making my bed. [*Laughter*]

Earth Day has become a great tradition in our country. It's a day that reminds us that we must be good stewards of the land around us. That's what this day says to us, and we're lucky to live in America, because we're blessed with such unbelievable lands. As the President, I'm fortunate to be able to travel and see a lot of our beautiful Nation, whether it be from the—from Maine to the Big Sur in California or parts of the great State of Texas that are beautiful to look at too.

The importance about Earth Day is, is that it reminds us that we can't take the natural wonders for granted. That's what Earth Day says to me, and I hope it says to you as well that we have responsibilities to the natural world to conserve that which we have and to make it even better. That's the call for Earth Day. In the years since Earth Day was established, America has made great strides in honoring the ideal of conservation and living by high standards of stewardship. We've made tremendous progress during the last 4 years. I have a responsibility as the President to put people in an administration that understands the importance of conserving our natural resources and making them better.

My administration has put in place some of the most important antipollution policies in a decade, policies that have reduced harmful emissions, reclaimed brownfields, cut phosphorus releases into our rivers and streams. Since 2001, the condition of America's land, air, and water has improved.

Today I want to talk about wetlands. The old policy of wetlands was to limit the loss of wetlands. Today I'm going to announce a new policy and a new goal for our country. Instead of just limiting our losses, we will expand the wetlands of America.

I appreciate Paul very much. He's a—obviously a good manager. First of all, he loves what he does. He cares deeply about the mission. He's got such a joyous smile on his face that he must be an easy fellow to work with. And I want to thank him for his hospitality. He didn't even complain about the size of my entourage or the imposition that we must have imposed on Paul and his great staff. I also want to thank the staff for working hard to make sure this slice of heaven is as beautiful as possible.

I appreciate so very much State Senator Paul Davis joining us today—Senator. Yes, thanks for coming. I suspect there are some local officials who are here. Thanks for being here. I like to remind local officials to make sure that you empty the garbage and fill the potholes. [*Laughter*]

I had the honor of meeting Ray and Becky Davis at the airport. They're local citizens. The reason I bring up Ray and Becky is because they're the parents of three sons who are now wearing the uniform of the United States Military. [*Applause*] Sergeant Graham Davis, Marine Corps, thank you, sir; Private First Class Stuart Davis, who is now in Afghanistan—make sure, Graham, that you—make sure

you tell your brother Stuart and brother Bradley that the people not only applauded you, but they applauded them as well.

I want to thank the Davis family for their steadfast support of working to secure this—of raising sons who are working hard to secure this country. These have been tough times for America, but we're doing the right thing. We're spreading freedom and peace so that our children can grow up in a peaceful world.

What's interesting about this year's Earth Day is that it falls in the middle of National Volunteer Week. This week we honor the 64 million Americans who volunteer. And one of my responsibilities is to call people to a higher calling. If you're not volunteering, do so. It will make somebody else's life better, including your own. But what makes this beautiful part of the world go is the 400 volunteers who work here, the 400 volunteers who are exercising their responsibility as citizens to make this beautiful part of the world even more beautiful and more meaningful.

And so, first, I want to thank all the volunteers who have taken time out of their life to make this such a special spot. Particularly, I want to thank Frank and Carol Heller. I met Frank and Carol at the airport when I landed here in Wells—in Sanford. And I gave them the President's Volunteer Service Award. I did so because of their strong commitment and work here, but I suspect they'll say they received the award on behalf of the other 398 people who make this such a special place. Thank you all for working hard here.

And I saw firsthand why you like to come. It's 1,600 acres of salt marshes and beaches and forests and freshwater wetlands. The Wells Reserve is an example of how committed people come together to not only protect but to improve the environment. It's a good example of what I'm going to talk about here in a little bit.

Community and corporate partners, along with the Federal Government, are working on the Drakes Island marsh restoration—community and corporate partners. In other words, in order to make sure the restoration works, it requires more than just Government. It requires a buy-in by community partners. It requires a buy-in by corporate America. See, corporate America has a responsibility to the communities in which they live. They've got the responsibility to tell the truth when it comes to their balance sheets, and they've got the responsibility to contribute to the quality of the communities in which they live.

The Laudholm Farm, where so much environmental education and research takes place, is supported by a private trust.

You support the private trust in Kennebunkport, don't you, Mom? So do I. Ray Bradbury—we've got Bradbury's Market. [*Laughter*] The guy who owns it has put together a land conservation trust in Kennebunkport. We're proud supporters of it. In other words, citizens can make a significant difference in improving the quality of the environment, just like those who have done so at the Laudholm Farm.

And at the Little Estuary, I saw the volunteers working on platforms that allow students and researchers to view the marsh to understand the marsh without harming the grasses or the shoreline. There are good people working together for this reserve, for the sake of wildlife, for the sake of understanding and knowledge, and for the sake of future generations of people who are fortunate enough to come here.

The work you're doing here to preserve wetlands is an important part of a national commitment. For many years, our Nation has been working to prevent the net loss of wetlands, and there's a reason why. America's wetlands are the habitat for thousands of species of wildlife. Just hang out, out in these wetlands out here, and you'll know what I'm talking about.

Up to half of all North American bird species nest or feed in wetlands. About half of all threatened and endangered species use wetlands. There's some endangered

species using the wetlands right here on this piece of property. Our wetlands help to trap pollution. What I bet a lot of people don't understand is the wetlands help to clean the water as well. They reduce the impact of floods. Wetlands stabilize shore areas. As well wetlands provide recreational opportunities for guys like me who like to fish and for people like my wife who like to watch birds.

Wetlands have been called the nurseries of life, and their well-being is vital to the health of our environment. Three decades ago, the United States was losing almost 500,000 acres of wetlands each year. Americans understood that couldn't be sustained, and so the Nation began to take action. Every level of government, joined by landowners and conservationists, worked hard to turn the situation around. In other words, it took a collaborative effort of people who cared about the environment.

Our Government began to provide substantial financial incentives for landowners to return farmland to wetlands. Taxpayer dollars have been matched by States and localities and conservation groups. It's the classic public-private partnership for the good of the environment.

Our national commitment to wetlands is showing good progress—really better than good progress when you think about the fact that we were losing a half a million acres a year not so many years ago. According to figures announced today by the Department of Agriculture, we have greatly reduced the annual loss of wetlands. And that's a positive development. We're nearing a longstanding goal of actually restoring as many acres of wetlands that are lost. The figures show that on agricultural lands, we've seen some gains for the first time, which leads me to believe we can do a better job in the Nation if we focus our attention.

So today I'm committing our Government to a new policy. We will move beyond the no net loss of wetlands in America to having an overall increase of Americans' wetlands over the next 5 years. We can achieve this goal. It is a realistic goal. To do so, we will work to restore and to improve and to protect at least 3 million acres of wetlands over the next 5 years.

First, we will restore at least one million acres of wetlands that do not exist today, through expanded incentive and partnership measures such as the Department of Ag's Wetlands Reserve Program and through the new grants under the Interior Department's North American Wetlands Conservation Act, which, by the way, was signed by your husband, my dad.

Listen, there's a lot of things we can do through these programs. We can set streams back on their natural courses, allowing wetlands to return. We can provide incentives to our farmers and ranchers to stop cultivating areas that were once wetlands and make them wetlands again. A good way to make sure we restore wetlands is to take those lands that were once wetlands and provide incentives to the landowners and say, "Here's an opportunity for you to contribute to the increase of wetlands in America for the good of the country, for the good of the habitat of our country, for the good of the wildlife of our country." All these efforts will add to the beauty of our Nation and provide habitats for millions of birds and fish.

Second, we will improve the quality of another million acres of existing wetlands through expanded public-private efforts such as the Interior Department's Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program. I know we've got some people from Fish and Wildlife here today. I want to thank you for serving you country so admirably. I appreciate your service.

As well we will use NOAA's Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Program. I know we've also got NOAA representatives here too. I thank you for coming, and thanks for your good work.

Too many wetlands are degraded and can no longer support healthy wildlife populations, so they need to be restored to

health. In other words, they need to be nurtured. They were once wetlands areas, and they need to be nurtured back to be a wetland.

Tomorrow I'm going down to Florida. I'll be seeing Brother. I'll be glad to give him your best. [*Laughter*] And we're going to go to the Everglades. It's a great wetlands area. The problem is, is that the wetland—the Everglades have been invaded by a—by certain plant species, nonnative plants, that are going to choke out the wetlands. And so one of the things we're going to do is to encourage programs that will remove these invasive species so that native vegetation can return and the wetlands can be revitalized. In other words, we can restore wetlands so they function better, so they function as the Almighty wanted them to function in the first place. As they become healthier—[*applause*].

And finally, we will protect an additional one million acres of wetlands that are currently at risk by increasing grants for land protection programs and by making it easier for farmers and other landowners to participate in these programs. We'll encourage these landowners to place easements on their wetlands, on the wetland portion of their property, so that migratory birds can rest on their long journey. In other words, with proper Government policy, we can encourage proper habits by private landowners to understand that they can do a better job with their land.

We'll do the ducks and other birds a good turn by not only improving the lands—the wetlands but also the lands near the wetlands. It's one thing to have a good wetland, but they've got to have a place for the ducks to nest as well. And so the program is to be wise about the incentive programs we put in place. I'm confident these measures will be not only appreciated by people but by birds. [*Laughter*]

To meet the goal of wetland expansion, the Government must commit money, and my administration is prepared to do so. The first thing we've done in the—2002, I signed the farm bill. And one of the most important aspects of the farm bill was the conservation titles. It was a significant expansion of Federal money available to encourage people to expand areas of their farms and ranches, like wetlands.

And secondly, the budget I proposed—or sent to Congress, proposes to spend $349 million on two key wetlands programs, which is an increase of more than 50 percent since I first took office. These monies will help. These monies will provide proper incentive for good conservation measures.

But the thing I think is very important to emphasize here is that good conservation and good stewardship will happen when people say, "I'm just not going to rely upon the Government to be the solution to the problem." I've come here because this is a great example of people seizing the initiative, a great example of where the Government can help but not stand in the way of commonsense policies that will make a significant difference to the wetlands and the native species. And it sends a clear signal to everybody else around our country that if you want to be a responsible citizen, do something about the quality of the life in the community in which you live.

It's my honor to come here today to celebrate this fantastic project, to remind our fellow citizens that we all have got responsibilities, to declare that the Federal Government has set a new, important goal of increasing the net—the wetlands all across America, and to ask God's blessings on this beautiful part of the world and the people who live here.

Thank you all for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:12 p.m. at the Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve. In his remarks, he referred to Paul Dest, manager, Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve; Thomas Bradbury, executive director, Kennebunkport Conservation Trust; and Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida. The National Volunteer Week proclamation of

April 16 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks at the President's Environmental Youth Awards Ceremony
April 22, 2004

The President. Thank you all for coming. Welcome. Please be seated. Welcome to the East Garden. We're glad you're here. This is a perfect place to honor some of America's finest young stewards of the environment. By working hard to preserve our natural surroundings, you've made important contributions to your communities and to our Nation. We're really glad you're here, and I appreciate the great example you're setting for others.

Steve, thanks for being here. I'm honored that you've accepted the assignment of becoming the Deputy Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency. That's a big job, and I'm glad you're going to do it.

Stephen L. Johnson. Thank you, sir.

The President. Thank you. I know that your wife, Debbie, and Matthew are with us here today too, and I'm glad they're here. Good to see you.

I want to congratulate the award winners from 10 EPA regions from around the country. Thanks for what you're doing. I want to thank your family members who are here with you, your teachers who are here with you, your buddies who are here with you. Thanks for coming.

I also want to thank the EPA Regional Administrators. I see a couple of recognizable faces here. I'm glad you all are here. I appreciate your hard work for the country.

The award winners today span the entire country, from Barrackville, West Virginia, to Shakopee, Minnesota, to Albuquerque, New Mexico. You've cleaned parks. You've restored wetlands, and you've organized conservation projects. As volunteers, you've given your time and talents in many different ways, and together you're helping to achieve a great national goal, to protect and pass along the great natural beauty of our country.

Showing concern for the environment is one way of showing your love for America. Americans are fortunate to be able to breathe clean air and enjoy the beautiful, diverse landscapes of our vast continent. By getting your hands dirty and helping to clean up your communities, you're putting your ideals into action, and you're making America a better place. I hope you know that.

As each of you have learned, good stewardship can be a lot of fun. Working outdoors is a chance to clear your mind or to get exercise or to be with your family and your friends. That's one of the reasons I like to go down to Crawford. I like to get outdoors. I like to clear my mind. I like to be with my family and my friends. And I like to work on our ranch to restore native grasses and to make our hardwood trees flourish.

I'm looking forward to going down to be with a family member tomorrow, as a matter of fact. See, my brother is the Governor of Florida—Jeb—and we're going down to clear out some nonnative plants from the Everglade area so that the wetlands can be more healthy and flourish more. I'm going to make sure he pulls his weight, too. [*Laughter*]

The other thing you're doing is you're setting an important example of service. I don't know if you know this or not, but this week is called National Volunteer Week. It's a time to recognize millions of

citizens who are working hard to improve the communities in which they live. After September the 11th, 2001, I called on our fellow citizens to dedicate 4,000 hours or 2 years over the course of their lives to volunteer work. That's what you're doing, and I appreciate that a lot.

I started what's called the USA Freedom Corps to provide information about volunteer opportunities in communities. And if people are interested, they ought to go on the Internet at www.usafreedomcorps.gov. And you can find out how to help if you're interested in environmental projects; they'll be listed there. If you're interested in ways to feed the hungry, you can find that too.

You've proven with your projects that many small acts taken together can add up to something big, improving the environment, while people who volunteer to love a neighbor just like they'd like to be loved themselves are part of doing small gestures, which makes America a better place. Your efforts are helping to ensure a cleaner world for future generations. I want to thank you for your hard work. I look forward to congratulating you as you come up to receive your awards.

Those of us in Government must uphold our responsibilities as well. Today I went to Maine. I saw my mother, I might add. I announced a new goal for our country, and that is to expand the wetlands of America so that we have better habitat for wildlife, wetlands that are important to trap pollution and clean water and stabilize whole areas. For decades this country was losing wetlands, and yet, with sound policy here and fostering cooperation between landowners and conservationists, we've not only slowed the loss of wetlands; I know that over the next 5 years, we can increase the number of wetlands to 3 million, over a 5-year period.

To meet this goal, we're going to have to make sure that Congress passes reasonable budgets. In my budget, I've proposed $349 million on two key wetland programs, which would be an increase of more than 50 percent since 2001. As well the farm bill I passed had a major conservation title to it, which will encourage farmers to replenish the wetlands on their lands so that we can meet an important national goal.

I'm really looking forward to saying hello to you and thanking you. I'm told this is an impressive group of young leaders. You should be proud of your achievements. You're setting a good example for your fellow citizens. It leads me to be confident about the future of the environment because you're contributing so mightily.

So thanks for coming, and now it's my honor to welcome Steve Johnson to the podium to announce the awards.

[*At this point, Acting Deputy Administrator Johnson introduced the award recipients from each region, and the President congratulated them.*]

The President. Thank you, sir. Welcome. Glad you all are here. Thanks for coming. May God bless you, and may God bless your families, and may God continue to bless our great country. Thanks for being here.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:48 p.m. in the Jacqueline Kennedy Garden at the White House. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks. The National Volunteer Week proclamation of April 16 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Message to the Congress Transmitting a Report of the National Science Board
April 22, 2004

To the Congress of the United States:

Consistent with 42 U.S.C. 1863(j)(1), I transmit herewith a report prepared for the Congress and the Administration by the National Science Board entitled, "Science and Engineering Indicators—2004." This report represents the sixteenth in the series examining key aspects of the status of science and engineering in the United States.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
April 22, 2004.

Remarks at Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve in Naples, Florida
April 23, 2004

Thank you all very much. Thanks for coming. Please be seated if you have a chair. If you don't have a chair, don't be seated. [*Laughter*] So yesterday I was in Wells, Maine, talking about the environment, and my mother showed up. [*Laughter*] So today I am in South Florida talking about the environment, and my brother shows up. [*Laughter*] And you all showed up. Thanks for coming. It's great to be here at the Rookery Bay Reserve. What a special place. I like to call it a little slice of heaven.

This week we observed Earth Day. And one way to honor the day is to honor those citizens in our country who understand the definition of stewardship, citizens who work to make sure that our environment is as clean as possible. And that's what we're here to do today.

It also happens to be National Volunteer Week. So, yes. And what is easy to understand is one of the reasons why the Rookery is such a place, is because of the volunteers who have come on a daily basis to make this a special place. My first task is to thank you for being such good stewards of Florida's natural beauty. Thank you for not only protecting it, but thank you for enhancing it. And a person who gets a lot of credit for that is my brother. Jeb has been a—[*applause*].

I spent some quality time with Gary Lytton, who is the director here, by the way. Gary, I want to thank you for your service. Gary is a joyful person—[*laughter*]—because he likes what he's doing, and he loves this part of the world. And it's clear that there's a great sense of ownership when you talk to Gary. Gary is interested in not only preserving beauty; he's interested in learning as much as possible to share the knowledge across our country.

He's also pretty good about lining up these volunteers and making sure they work. [*Laughter*] I said, "Does Gary keep you working?" He said, "You bet." [*Laughter*] That's good. That's called leadership. But Gary, thanks for what you're doing. He tells me that much of the property bought here is a result of the bonding issue that Jeb pushed to make sure that much of the great State of Florida is protected and preserved throughout the years to come. I know there's a lot of politics when it comes to the environment. But what I like to do is focus on results, and you've got yourself a results-oriented Governor

when it comes to protecting this environment.

And I know Colleen is doing good work. Good to see you again, Colleen. Thanks for coming out to say hello.

We traveled down from Washington with two Members of the United States Congress. First, from down the road and kind of over would be Mario Diaz-Balart. Where are you, Mario? Thank you. I appreciate you coming. And finally, a person who has earned a great reputation on a variety of fronts, one as a strong believer and supporter of national security and the intelligence gathering services of our country but also a man who has got a fantastic reputation for being careful and thoughtful about the environment here on the west coast of Florida, and that's Porter Goss. Thank you, Porter.

I want to thank the mayor who is here, Mayor Bill Barnett. Where are you, Mayor? Yes, thank you, buddy. Thanks for coming. I'm proud you're here. My only advice is to make sure you empty the garbage on a regular basis—[*laughter*]—maybe fill a pothole or two. [*Laughter*] But thanks for coming. I think I'd rather be President than mayor. At least my phone number isn't in the phonebook. [*Laughter*]

I appreciate all the other local officials who are here. I know you care as much as the mayor does and Porter does about making sure the environment is strong, the protection process is in place so that our natural beauty can be enhanced as this part of the world becomes more populated.

I want to thank David Eisner, who is the CEO of the Corporation for National and Community Service. Thank you for coming, David. I see David. Appreciate you coming. David is in charge of a lot of important programs, one of which is AmeriCorps. I'm a strong believer in AmeriCorps.

I want to thank the—where are my AmeriCorps buddies? There they are. Did you change shirts? [*Laughter*] You look too pretty. [*Laughter*] I was out there watching them help get rid of the invasees—invasive grasses and species that is threatening the watersheds and threatening the wetlands. They're doing good work. These are good kids from around the country who are dedicating time to help America, whether it be teaching kids how to read and write, add and subtract or out here in the hinterlands of South Florida, protecting the environment. It's really neat to be with you all. I want to thank you for your service, thank you for your hard work, and may God continue to bless you and your families as you pursue your dreams.

As Jeb mentioned, my administration is committed to conserving Florida's natural beauty. In January 2002, I joined your Governor in signing an important agreement. In order to make sure enough fresh water would go to the Everglades, the Federal Government and the State agreed to install large pumps and build canals and large freshwater storage areas. In other words, my administration recognized the importance of the Everglades to not only the State of Florida but to our country, and we will continue to work with Jeb and the State to make sure the Everglades is vibrant, alive, and available for future generations of Americans.

In 2002, the Federal Government bought back the rights to oil and gas development in parts of the Everglades and in the Destin Dome area offshore from Pensacola. This action helped to protect the Big Cypress National Preserve, the Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge, and the Ten Thousand Islands National Wildlife Refuge. As you can see, there is no ambiguity in my position on drilling off the coast of Florida.

We have done more. Working with community leaders, this State and the Federal Government in 2001 established the Tortugas Ecological Reserve, a 200-square-mile area west of the Florida Keys. This is one of the largest protected marine areas in America. This preserve of coral reefs and sea grasses is home to countless species

of fish and wildlife, and protecting it was vital to the future, as we allow the public to enjoy its beauty.

Now, we've been working with the State of Florida. We've been working hard because we share a common goal to conserve our environment, to do our duty as stewards of this beautiful part of the world.

Here at Rookery Bay, you see how important wetlands are to protecting 150 species of birds and many threatened and endangered animals. Across Florida, citizens understand that the wetlands are essential to a healthy, diverse environment and to the tourism and recreation that bring millions of visitors to your State every year. In other words, a good environment will help the tourism industry to continue to flourish. The two go hand in hand. Many people of Florida understand that dynamic. I certainly understand it as well.

Of all the coastal wetlands in the lower 48 States, 20 percent are right here in Florida. This is a legacy we need to protect and pass along. And so, today I want to talk about how the Government can do its part—that is, the Federal Government.

Yesterday in Maine, I announced an ambitious national goal. First of all, I don't set goals unless I think we can meet them, and this is an ambitious goal that we can meet. For years, our Nation has sought to slow the loss of wetlands. Now I believe we must change that goal to one that says, "We'll have an overall increase in wetlands every year. Instead of just reducing loss, the goal of this country must be to increase wetlands."

To accomplish this objective, my administration will work to restore, to improve, and to protect at least 3 million acres of wetlands over the next 5 years. First part of the strategy is to restore at least one million acres of wetlands that do not exist today. Through expanded incentive and partnership measures such as the Department of Agriculture's Wetland Reserve Program, and through new grants under the Interior Department's North American Wetlands Conservation Act, we can expand wetlands. By the way, the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, Jeb, was signed by Dad.

The idea is to provide incentives and grant money to allow wetlands to return where they once existed. And it's possible to do so. It's very feasible to do so. We can provide incentives, for example, to farmers and ranchers to stop cultivating areas that were once wetlands, and we will do just that. This is a commonsense way of expanding the wetlands across America.

Secondly, we will improve the quality of another million acres of existing wetlands through expanded public-private efforts such as the Interior Department's Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, as well as the use of NOAA's Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Program.

Before I—I'm going to expand on that—I do want to thank the NOAA folks who are here. I'm proud you're here. Thank you for your good work. Yes, I saw you over there. I thought for a minute it said NCAA, then I realized it said NOAA. [*Laughter*] I also want to thank the folks who work for the Ag Department who are here, and I want to thank the folks who work for the Interior Department who are here. Thank you for being openminded as you work in a collaborative way with State and local government.

You see, too many wetlands are degraded and can no longer support healthy wildlife populations. So they need to be restored, and that's what this aspect of the strategy will do. That's what's happening back over here. These plants invaded, these nonnatives came, and they're making it difficult for the wetlands to flourish. And so we've got to put programs in place that help Mother Nature. See, Mother Nature can't do it itself. Mother Nature can't retake the land unless there's a little help from us. And so the second phase is to make sure the wetlands that have been degraded are revitalized and restored.

The Everglades is a great wetlands area. So you hear me talking about wetlands, think Everglades, as well as other parts of this State. The problem in the Everglades—one of the problems has been that nonnative plants have invaded. And so one of the things we're going to do is encourage programs that will remove the invasive species, to allow the native vegetation to return. It sounds simple, but it's hard work, and it requires Federal Government support. And I'm willing to dedicate that support because I understand how important wetlands are.

Third, we'll protect an additional one million acres of wetlands that are currently at risk by increasing grants for land protection programs and by making it easier for farmers and other landowners to participate in these programs. We'll encourage landowners to place easements on their wetlands—on the wetland portion of their property. That'll help migratory birds find nesting areas. That'll be good for the ducks. That'll be good for other birds that are traveling long distances in their winter—on their winter flights.

It is vital that there be good education, but it's vital that there also be good incentive programs to remind landowners about a responsibility that they have and the capacity to make a difference in the wildlife of our country. Some people need to be reminded—one of my favorite phrases: If you own your own farm or ranch, every day is Earth Day, by the way.

Laura and I are doing our bit by restoring natural grasses to our ranch. She wants to become a Little Blue Stem grass seed distributor so that others will grow native grasses. It's amazing what happens when we restored our little part of heaven to native grasses. Bobwhite quail are returning. Birds are showing up that we hadn't seen before. It's a fantastic experience. It's the same thing you are doing here, and it's the same concept we've got to do to encourage others who own their land, to understand the incredible opportunity they have to make a vital contribution to the wetlands of our country and to the environmental prosperity of our country as well.

To meet the goal of wetland expansion, we've got to commit money, of course. You just can't lay out a goal unless they're willing to support, and my administration is prepared to do so, as I said. We did a good thing in the farm bill, the 2002 farm bill, which is still in place. One of the most important aspects of the farm bill was the conservation title. It was a strong expansion of Federal money available to encourage farmers to expand areas on their farms, like wetlands. It is an important part of meeting this national goal.

As well I'm sending a budget up to Congress—or have sent a budget up to Congress for 2005 that proposes a $349 million expenditures on two key wetlands programs, which, by the way, is an increase of 50 percent since 2001. In other words, we're going to help people restore wetlands. It's in our national interest we do so, and it's an important priority that we get it done.

Citizens have an important part—a role to play in this as well, and that's—it's really important for those of us in positions of responsibility to remind people that you can't have good environmental stewardship if you rely solely on the Federal Government. I mean, the Federal Government can help, but we're the land of the mighty lawsuit. [*Laughter*] There's all kinds of lawsuits up there. The best way to get things done is to be a helper and encourage people, just like he's doing here. I mean, this is a good example. It's why we came here: It's working. We came here to herald what's possible when all levels of government and local citizens decide to make a difference in the community in which they live.

And so today when I landed, in order to send a clear signal about how important voluntarism is, I presented the President's Volunteer Service Award to Neala Hoch. Where are you, Neala? Oh, there you are.

Thanks. Thanks for coming. She's taken time out of her life to be involved with Keep America Beautiful and its affiliates, for 20 years. She's a citizen who deserves our thanks, just like many of you all do.

You know, they talk about America's strength a lot of times, and they say, "Well, America is strong because of our military." And by the way, I intend to keep the military strong to keep the peace. Or they say, "We're strong because we're prosperous." And we're getting prosperous, and we need to be even more prosperous, and I think we will be. But the real strength is in the hearts and souls of our citizens. That's where our true strength is. That's why we're a strong nation.

And it happens—and that strength is displayed here, or it's displayed when somebody says to someone, "I love you. What can I do to help you?" It's displayed when people feed the hungry. It's displayed when people provide shelter to the homeless. The great strength of America is displayed when somebody mentors a child. That's the strength of the country. And the best way that happens is when volunteers step up and say, "I care about the community in which I live, and I intend to do something about it."

And so today, at National Volunteer Week, I want to thank a member of the army of compassion and all the rest of you who are soldiers in the armies of compassion. I want to thank you for what you do to make America a better place.

And by the way, if you're interested in volunteering, I've set up what's called USA Freedom Corps. It's a clearinghouse for projects—yes, there you go. It's a clearinghouse for—a place where people can find—to match their desires with what is needed in the communities all across America. You can find it at www.usafreedomcorps.gov. See, all you got to do is get on this web page, and it will link you up to different opportunities, whether it be Scouting or whether it be environmental protection. There's all kinds of opportunities across the country just asking for your help.

So on National Volunteer Week, I call upon our fellow citizens to serve our country by helping somebody in need. And by doing so, this society will change, one heart and one soul at a time. No, the strength of this country is the fact that we're a nation full of compassionate, decent, honorable, loving citizens. And it is my honor to be the President of such a country.

May God bless you, and may God continue to bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:44 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida; Gary Lytton, director, Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve; Colleen M. Castille, secretary, Florida Department of Environmental Protection; and Mayor Bill Barnett of Naples, FL. The National Volunteer Week proclamation of April 16 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks at a Victory 2004 Reception in Coral Gables, Florida
April 23, 2004

The President. Thank you all. Thank you.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. Thank you. *Vamos a ganar.* Thank you all for coming. For those who don't speak Spanish, that says: We're going to win. And one reason why is because we've got such great support here in south Florida.

I'm honored you all came out today. I can't tell you how grateful I am to see the grassroots so excited. [*Laughter*]

I picked a pretty good man to be the chairman of the State of Florida for my campaign. I consulted with my mother. [*Laughter*] I said, "Who do you think would be the best man to carry the Bush banner here in Florida?" She said, "Why don't you turn to the Governor?" [*Laughter*] I said, "Okay." You've got a great Governor in the State of Florida. He's a good man. He really makes us proud.

We had a great day today on the west coast of Florida. I was talking about how to increase the wetlands so that our environment is stronger. I reminded Jeb that when I make a promise, I meant it. When I said, "There's not going to be any drilling offshore of Florida," I meant what I said.

I want to thank my friend Armando Codina for his leadership. He's been a long-time friend, and I thank him for convincing you all to support this candidacy and this campaign. I want to thank my friend Al Hoffman and Al Cardenas.

Today I've been spending some quality time with a Member of the United States Congress, Mario Diaz-Balart. *Adonde esta, Mario? Adonde esta?* Thank you, Mario. I'm glad you brought your brother, Lincoln, here today too. Thank you, Lincoln. There's Lincoln back there. And Ileana is with us today. *Adonde esta, Ileana? Ahi.* Stand up, Ileana. [*Laughter*]

These three Members of the Congress are strong and steadfast. They're great Members of the United States House of Representatives. They care deeply for our country. They care deeply for a free Cuba. They've been strong supporters, and I'm proud to call them friends.

I'm sorry that the First Lady isn't traveling with me today.

Audience members. Aw-w-w!

The President. No, I know it—I know it. She's campaigning in Tennessee. Tennessee got the better deal. [*Laughter*]

But I'm really proud of Laura. She is a fabulous wife, a wonderful mother, and a great First Lady for our country.

I'm looking forward to the campaign. I really am. I look forward to bringing our message to the American people. It's a positive message. It's a hopeful message. It is an optimistic message of what I believe is possible. I will campaign and present a vision to the American people as to how to win the war on terror and how to continue to spread freedom and peace throughout the world.

I will continue to campaign on a positive vision to make sure that we expand prosperity to all corners of our country so every single citizen has the chance to realize the great American Dream. I'm looking forward to the campaign. There's no doubt in my mind we will carry Florida, and we will win on November the 2d.

I put together a great administration to serve the American people, people from all walks of life, men and women who care deeply about the future of our Nation. And thankfully, I have put together a good administration, because we have been tested. We've shown the American people that we know how to lead.

Once you remember the history of the last 3 years—when we came to office, this country was headed into a recession; the stock market had begun to decline. But we acted. We passed historic tax relief. We let people keep more of their own money, and as a result, the economy is strong, and it is growing stronger.

When we came into office, we had to confront corporate citizens who did not tell the truth to their shareholders and their employees. It was a problem for our Nation. But we acted. We passed tough laws. And now it is abundantly clear that we will not tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America.

When we came to office, when Dick Cheney and I came to office—Dick Cheney is the greatest Vice President our country has ever had. Mother heard me say that

one time and she said, "Wait a minute, buster." [*Laughter*] But when we came to office, our military was growing dispirited. It wasn't receiving the resources it needed. So we strengthened our defense budget, and today, no one can question the skill and the strength and the spirit of the United States military.

And we were attacked on that September day in 2001. The enemy hit us. They hit us because of what we love. See, we love freedom. They hate freedom. The enemy came to our shore. They declared war on the United States of America that day, and war is what they got. We've been on the offensive against this enemy. We're chasing them down one at a time to bring them to justice. We will use every resource at our disposal to protect America. And once again, this Nation is proud to lead the armies of liberation. Fifty million people are now free, thanks to the United States of America and our coalition.

I have made it clear where I stand. I have spoken clearly to the American people and to the world. And when I say something, I mean it. And that's important for a leader. It's also important for a leader to understand the responsibilities of leadership. My job is to confront problems, not to pass them on to future Presidents and future generations.

I'm looking forward to the campaign. I'm looking forward to it. I'm running against a fellow who has been in Congress a long, long time, so long that he's taken just about both positions possible on every issue. [*Laughter*] He was for the PATRIOT Act. He was for the No Child Left Behind Act. He was for NAFTA. He was for the use of force in Iraq. Now he's against the PATRIOT Act. He's against NAFTA. He's against the No Child Left Behind Act. He was against my decision in Iraq. He's been on both sides of just about every issue. If there was a third side possible, he'd take it. [*Laughter*]

Not only have we confronted problems; we have delivered. We've delivered results for the American people. This economy of ours is growing stronger every day—every single day. Think about what we've overcome. We've overcome attacks. We've overcome war. We've overcome scandal. We've overcome recession. Yet I can tell you, the economy is strengthening. GDP growth is strong. Manufacturing activity is up. Homeownership is at the highest rate ever in American history. More minorities own a home today than ever before, and that is positive news for America.

Our economy is adding new jobs now. Remember, we had 308,000 job increase in March; 750,000 jobs since last August. People are finding work. Things are getting better. We acted, and as a result, this economy is improving. That's good news. That's real good news.

But there's more to do. One of the things that's important for a person running for office is to constantly talk about what we intend to do. See, I've got a vision to make sure our prosperity is lasting prosperity. We've got to make sure we're a nation that doesn't wall us off from the rest of the world. We must reject economic isolationism. We must open up markets for U.S. products. Listen, if you're good at something, you want to be selling things in the world. For the sake of job creation and lasting priority and prosperity, I will work to open up markets for U.S. goods so people can find work right here at home.

In order to make sure we have lasting prosperity, we've got to have a legal system that is fair. There's too many junk and frivolous lawsuits that penalize small-business owners here in America. We need tort reform. In order to make sure that we have lasting prosperity, we've got to do something about health care, the cost of health care. What I will not do is allow the Federal Government to run the health care system of America.

I'm for—I strongly support health savings accounts to empower consumers in America. I'm for association health care plans to allow small businesses to pool risk, so

they can better afford insurance for their employees. And we need medical liability reform at the Federal Government.

We need an energy plan. We need more energy in this country, and we can do so without drilling off the coast of Florida. We're too dependent on foreign sources of energy. We need to encourage conservation. We need new technologies to make us less dependent. But one thing is for certain, we need to use the resources that are at our disposal so that we're not dependent on foreign sources of energy. For us to have lasting prosperity, the Congress needs to get me an energy bill to my desk this year.

In order to make sure we have lasting prosperity, we better make sure our folks are educated. There's all kinds of new jobs being created, and sometimes the skill sets of our workers don't match those jobs. Good education, by the way, starts in the early grades.

I passed the No Child Left Behind Act. It's a strong piece of legislation. It says that every child can learn; every child has the potential to learn. We're going to stop this business about just shuffling our children through the schools. You see, what happens is, if you just give up on kids, like oftentimes happens, you wake up at the end and people can't read and write and add. You can't be a country with lasting prosperity unless every child learns to read and write and add and subtract. In return for Federal money, we're now insisting that States measure. See, we want to know. We want to know if a child can read and write, and if they can't, they're going to get extra help early. The No Child Left Behind Act is an important part of making sure this country is literate and strong.

And as our economy grows and changes, we better make sure that our workers are reeducated. I put out what we call the Jobs for the 21st Century plan, which utilizes community colleges more actively. It says to the community colleges, "Here's some Federal help so you can train people for jobs which actually exist." Technology is changing our world. We'd better make sure our workers have the skills to fill the jobs of the 21st century. If we want to have lasting prosperity, we've got to have an education system that works, an education system that enables our workers to fill the jobs that are being created here in our country.

In order to make sure we have lasting prosperity, we need certainty in the Tax Code. Listen, we did good work on the tax relief package. We increased the child credit. If you've got a family, we made it easier for you to raise the family. We reduced the marriage penalty. What kind of Tax Code is it that penalizes marriage? [*Laughter*] We're not interested in penalizing marriage in America. We're interested in encouraging marriage in America.

If you paid taxes, you ought to get relief. Instead of trying to pick or choose winners, if you pay taxes, you get relief. The tax relief we passed helped our small businesses all across America. It was an incredibly important part of the vitality of our economy, because most new jobs are created by small businesses and entrepreneurs. No, the tax relief we passed came at the right time. It's working, and in order to make sure we have lasting prosperity, we need to make the tax relief permanent.

And finally, in order to make sure we have lasting prosperity, the Federal Government has got to be wise about how we spend your money. See, it's your money, not the Government's money. We've got to be wise about how we spend it. We need fiscal discipline in Washington, DC. We need to be willing to set priorities and meet those priorities.

The problem in the campaign, of course, is that the tendency is to overpromise. My opponent has done a good job of that. He's already promised over a trillion dollars of new spending. See, the temptation is to get in front of audiences and promise here and promise there. I've submitted a budget which cuts the deficit in half over 5 years.

He's begun to make those promises. There's no audience that he's not willing to make a promise in front of.

But we're adding up the money. There's over a trillion dollars, and he says he's going to pay for it by taxing the rich. The problem is, there's not enough money in taxing the rich to pay for the promises. You know what it means he's going to do? He's going to tax everybody in America. The good news is, we're not going to let him, because I'm going to win in November.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. There are big differences in foreign policy, during the foreign policy debates. I've got a clear vision as to how to protect America and to spread freedom and peace throughout the world. We're still at war—we're still at war. It's important for the President to understand the stakes. I understand the enemy. They're ruthless. They're coldblooded. They're trying to frighten us. They're trying to shake our will. This country must be determined, must be strong, and never relent to the killers.

I will use all the tools at my disposal to protect America. We'll work with other nations to protect America. We'll share intelligence. We'll use our great military. We'll do everything we can. My most solemn duty is to protect America from the enemy. That's why I created the Department of Homeland Security, to better share information, make sure our borders are better protected. The best way to protect America is to stay on the offensive, is to find them. There is no cave or hole deep enough to hide from justice of America.

We're making progress against Al Qaida. Two-thirds of the known leaders have been captured or killed, and we'll get the rest of them with time. It's a matter of time. It's a matter of will and strength and determination and time. I'm telling you, we've got a fabulous military. For those of you who have got a loved one in the United States military—for those of you with a loved one in the military, you tell them the Commander in Chief is incredibly proud of their service to our Nation.

Right after September the 11th, I told the world that "if you harbor a terrorist, you're just as guilty as the terrorist." When the President says something, he better mean it. I meant it, and the Taliban found out what we meant. This was this barbaric crowd that was running in Afghanistan. They were providing safe haven for Al Qaida. They were providing training camps for Al Qaida. They not only did that, but they were incredibly repressive. Young girls were not able to go to school in Afghanistan, but thanks to the United States and our coalition, not only is America more secure, not only is the world more secure, but young girls now go to school, many of them for the first time in their life.

Another lesson of September the 11th is that when we see a threat overseas, we must take it seriously. When we see a gathering threat, we can no longer hope oceans protect us from harm's way. I looked at the intelligence and saw a threat in Iraq. The United States Congress looked at the same intelligence, and they saw a threat in Iraq. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence, and it saw a threat in Iraq.

I took the threat seriously as your President. I knew the world had changed after September the 11th. I took the threat seriously because I remembered the facts—not only the intelligence said something, but Saddam Hussein used weapons of mass destruction on his own people. Saddam Hussein invaded countries in his neighborhood. Saddam Hussein paid suiciders to kill Israelis. Saddam Hussein had ties to terrorist organizations. I took the threat seriously and went to the United Nations Security Council.

I said to the United Nations Security Council, "For nearly a decade, you have said to Saddam Hussein to disarm, and now is the time for your words to mean something. But if you won't disarm him, we

will lead a coalition to do so." The United Nations Security Council, if you remember, acted. On a 15-to-nothing vote, they sent this clear message to Saddam Hussein, "Disarm, or face serious consequences." Saddam Hussein, once again, decided to deceive the world. So I was presented with a choice: Either trust the word of a madman or defend America. Given that choice, I will defend America every time.

My opponent voted for the use of force in Iraq. He just didn't support my decision to get rid of Saddam Hussein. Perhaps he was hoping that Saddam would lose the next election. [*Laughter*]

We acted. We acted, and there are no longer mass graves and torture rooms and rape rooms in Iraq. We acted. Because we acted, Libya got the message and have now voluntarily decided to disarm. Because we acted, freedom is rising in the heart of the Middle East. Because we acted, the world is more peaceful and America is more secure.

There is a debate going on about when the President must take action to defend America. Listen, we'll build coalitions, and we have. There's over 30 nations in Iraq helping us now. We've got nations in Afghanistan helping us. We're working closely with our friends and allies who understand the stakes.

But let me make this very clear to you: I will never allow leaders of other nations to determine the national security issues of America. We have tough work in Iraq. It's been tough weeks for America. It's been tough weeks for those who have got loved ones in the Iraq theater. And there's a reason why, because we're making progress toward freedom, and the enemies of freedom want to stop us. They want to shake our will. They'll kill anybody in their way in order to try to get us to leave.

But the stakes are too high for us to leave. This is an historic moment. You see, a free society will be a peaceful society. A free society in the heart of the Middle East will begin to change the world for the better. No, they're trying to shake our will, but America will never be run out of Iraq by a bunch of thugs and killers.

We will keep our word to the Iraqi people. There are thousands in Iraq who long for freedom. See, freedom is not America's gift to the world; freedom is the Almighty's gift to each man and woman in this world. That's what we believe. That's what we hold dear here in America. That's something we will never forfeit. And therefore, the United States and our brave troops and allies will continue on the offensive, continue implementing our strategy, and we will win this essential battle in the war against the terrorists.

We believe in freedom not only in Iraq, but we believe in freedom in our own neighborhood. My foreign policy—I've got two words for my policy—two words for my foreign policy for Cuba: *Cuba Libre!*

Audience members. Viva Bush! Viva Bush! Viva Bush!

The President. We will keep the pressure on the tyrant. We want the people of Cuba to hear this message loud and clear: We will make no concessions to tyranny; we believe strongly in freedom; we will insist upon their human rights, their God-given rights; we stand strongly with the freedom fighters and the island of Cuba.

As well we believe in a democratic and free Haiti. Our quest for freedom is around the world. Good foreign policy is a foreign policy that insists upon freedom in our own neighborhood. Good foreign policy is a policy that insists upon freedom in parts of the world where there's hatred and the lack of hope. That's why I will continue to work, so long as I'm President, for a vision of peace based upon the cornerstone of free societies, and we will succeed.

And finally, I will continue to work for a culture which says that each of us is responsible for the decisions we make in life. See, I want to help to change the culture from one that has said, "If it feels good, just go ahead and do it," and, "If you've got a problem, blame somebody

else," to a culture in which each of us understands we're responsible for what we do.

See, if you're a mother or a father, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart. That's your responsibility. It is your most solemn and important responsibility to love your children. If you're worried about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you're responsible for doing something about it. Just don't hope that Washington, DC, solves problems. Get involved with your schools here in Miami, Florida, and insist upon quality of education for each child. Support your teachers. If you're in corporate America, if you're a CEO, you're responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees.

And finally, in a responsibility era, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourselves. Listen, the strength of this country is the citizens of this country, the hearts and souls of the people. That's the true strength of America. We're a compassionate nation. We're a decent nation. We're a nation of many people bound by freedom and a nation of many people who care deeply about their neighbor.

I met Donna Huck today when I got to the airport. She's a volunteer. She's a soul who said, "What can I do to make my community a better place?" So she works at the Children's Hospital here. She cares about children. She's lending her love to help heal the broken heart of the sick. I call to you here in Miami, as I do around America, and say, "If you want to serve your Nation, feed the hungry, mentor children, provide shelter for the homeless, reach out to the lonely, and together, we can change America one heart, one conscience, one soul at a time." No, the strength of this country is the great people of America, and it is my high honor to be the President of such a fantastic country.

Thanks for coming. May God bless. Thank you all very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:31 p.m. at the Hyatt Regency Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida; Al Hoffman, finance chairman, Republican National Committee; Al Cardenas, former chair, Republican Party of Florida; Representatives Lincoln Diaz-Balart and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen of Florida; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; and President Fidel Castro of Cuba.

The President's Radio Address
April 24, 2004

Good morning. This week I celebrated Earth Day by traveling to Maine and Florida to visit some of this Nation's vital wetlands. From the Gulf of Maine to the Gulf of Mexico, Americans are blessed to live amid many incredible wonders of nature.

We no longer take those wonders for granted. We understand our responsibilities to the natural world to conserve and make better what we have been given. Wetlands are among our most important natural resources. They provide a habitat for wildlife, trap pollution, reduce the impact of floods, and provide recreational opportunities.

For many years, our Nation has sought to slow the loss of our wetlands. We've made tremendous progress. And on Earth Day, I was proud to announce a new goal: Instead of just limiting our losses, we will expand the wetlands of America.

To accomplish this objective, my administration will work to restore, improve, and protect at least 3 million acres of wetlands over the next 5 years. This new wetlands

policy reflects an enduring national commitment, carried forward by both parties, to protecting the environment.

We're taking action to ensure cleaner air. Since Congress passed the Clean Air Act of 1970, major air pollutants have been reduced by nearly 50 percent. My administration is building on that progress by implementing smarter ways to raise standards and improve air quality.

The clean air interstate rule, based on the Clear Skies legislation I sent to Congress last year, will reduce the major causes of ozone and fine particles by 70 percent. This rule employs a market-based approach called "cap and trade" to reduce air pollution that crosses State borders.

We're also completing an important new rule to remove sulfur from diesel fuels. Just as regulations to remove lead from gasoline have helped cut pollution in the 1970s, our new diesel rule will reduce harmful emissions from generators, tractors, and other diesel vehicles.

Finally, we are regulating mercury emissions from powerplants for the first time ever. Under our new proposal, mercury emissions will be cut by approximately 70 percent.

All these rules are based on sound science and good economics, and they will help every American breathe cleaner air.

We also have a responsibility to be good stewards of the land. Two years ago, I signed legislation to clean up more of the abandoned and polluted industrial sites known as brownfields. Between 2001 and 2003, we restored over 1,000 brownfields to usable condition, more than were restored in the previous 7 years. Our efforts have opened usable land for small businesses and residents in hundreds of communities across the country and created more than 25,000 jobs in cleanup and redevelopment.

Another critical environmental priority is the health of our Nation's forests. In recent years, millions of acres of forests, rangeland, and communities have been destroyed by wildfires. So last December, I signed the Healthy Forest Restoration Act to reduce the risk of fire, save lives and property, and improve the health of our forests. The law opens millions of acres of forest land to vital thinning projects. And by expediting the environmental review process and directing courts to consider long-term threats to forest health, the law allows us to protect more of our Nation's precious forests.

In the past three decades, America has made great strides in honoring the ideal of conservation and living by high standards of stewardship. My administration's environmental efforts uphold that legacy. In the past 4 years, America's air, land, and water have all gotten cleaner. Our new proposals build on that progress and help us advance toward our national goal of a cleaner, safer, healthier environment.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 4:35 p.m. on April 22 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on April 24. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 23 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Message on the Observance of Armenian Remembrance Day, 2004
April 24, 2004

On this day, we pause in remembrance of one of the most horrible tragedies of the 20th century, the annihilation of as many as 1.5 million Armenians through forced exile and murder at the end of the Ottoman Empire. This terrible event remains a source of pain for people in Armenia and Turkey and for all those who believe in freedom, tolerance, and the dignity of every human life. I join with my fellow Americans and the Armenian community in the United States and around the world in mourning this loss of life.

The United States is proud of the strong ties we share with Armenia. From the end of World War I and again since the reemergence of an independent Armenian state in 1991, our country has sought a partnership with Armenia that promotes democracy, security cooperation, and free markets. Today, our Nation remains committed to a peace settlement in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and is grateful for Armenia's continuing cooperation in the war on terror. By advancing understanding and goodwill, free nations can help build a brighter future for the world. Our country seeks to help Armenia expand its strategic relations with the United States and our European allies.

Generations of Armenian Americans have also strengthened our communities and enriched our Nation's character. By preserving their heritage, faith, and traditions, Armenian Americans enhance the diversity that makes America great.

I commend individuals in Armenia and Turkey who have worked to support peace and reconciliation, including through the Turkish-Armenian Reconciliation Commission, and call on Armenia and Turkey to restore their economic, political, and cultural ties. I also send warm wishes and expressions of solidarity to the Armenian people on this solemn day of remembrance.

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this message.

Remarks to the American Association of Community Colleges Convention in Minneapolis, Minnesota
April 26, 2004

Thanks for the warm welcome. Jessie, thanks for letting me come by and share some thoughts. You picked a great place to have a convention. What a great city Minneapolis is.

I—Jessie's right. I spend a lot of time at the community colleges around the country because I see the community college system in America as such a hopeful place, a place where people can gain the skills necessary to become employable, a place where people can gain the skills necessary to realize dreams. The community college system is accessible, and it's affordable, and it's flexible. It's a major asset of our country, and I want to thank those of you who are here who are leaders in the community college system around the country. I want to thank you for your dedication. I want to thank you for your spirit. I want to thank you for your vision, and I'm here to say thanks on behalf of all of America.

Not only do I want to talk about the role of community colleges in our society today, but I want to talk about the role of community colleges in the out-years as we promote a new generation of American innovation. I'm going to talk about the need for us to develop an energy policy that is based upon new technologies, new hopes, that will enable us to become less reliant upon foreign sources of energy and, at the same time, continue to improve our environment. I want to talk about the use of information technology to improve medicine and to make sure we keep the patients at the heart of the health care system. And I want to talk about affordable broadband technology so that America can stay on the leading edge of technological change.

First, Jess, thanks for leading this august group. He's *Tejano.* Nothing better to be in the presence of a *Tejano.* Jess told me coming in here that—I asked him where he was raised. He said, "Southern California." He said he didn't speak English when he came to America at age five. His dad had big dreams for him, and here he is, years later, introducing the President of the United States in perfect English. It speaks to the great hope of America, doesn't it? It speaks to our great society that says to Jess' dad, "You can realize your dream here. You can raise your son. Your son can be educated and rise to an important position in making sure America is an educated society." Jess, I appreciate your determination, but I really appreciate the determination of your good father to see that you have a chance to succeed in the greatest Nation on the face of the Earth.

I want to thank George Boggs, the president and CEO of the American Association of Community Colleges, for hosting us. I know you're going to honor my friend Rich Carmona, who is the U.S. Surgeon General. Rich is a graduate of the community college system. He's an interesting guy. He's doing a heck of a good job for us. I'm proud that he has agreed to serve our Nation, and I'm proud of the fact that you're honoring him. You've made a really wise choice. And whoever the judges are to decide that Rich was the right person, congratulations on such good judgment. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank the Governor, who has joined us today. The Governor is a backer of the community college system here in Minnesota. Governor Pawlenty is doing a great job for the people of this State, and I'm proud you're here, Governor. Thank you for coming.

I also want to thank Norm Coleman, the United States Senator. He flew down with me today on Air Force One. I'm not suggesting he was looking for a comfortable ride—[*laughter*]—but he got one. [*Laughter*] He's a good fellow who's serving the State of Minnesota well, as are Jim Ramstad and Mark Kennedy, Members of the United States Congress. I really appreciate you all taking your time to come and honor the crowd here today with your presence.

I want to thank the speaker of the house, the majority leader of the statehouse here in Minnesota for coming. I want to thank all the State and local officials who are here. It's awfully nice for you to come out and spend a little quality time with your President. [*Laughter*]

I want to congratulate the 2004 New Century Scholars who are with us today. Thanks for aiming high. Thanks for working hard. Thanks for setting standards. And congratulations on achieving one goal in what I hope is a productive and happy life.

I also met a woman—lady today named Melissa DuBose. She is a high school student. She showed up at the airport, and she's there because I love to herald soldiers in the army of compassion. I love to point out to people these heroic stories of citizens who are trying to make the community and world a better place.

You know, oftentimes we talk about the strength of America, and one of our strengths is our military. I intend to keep it strong. Another strength is the fact that

we're a wealthy nation, and that's good. That's important. But the true strength of the country is the hearts and souls of our citizens. That's the real strength of America. Our real strength is because we're a compassionate nation where people have heard a universal call to love a neighbor like you'd like to be loved yourself.

Melissa DuBose is such a person. She travels to Honduras to help people in orphanages. What a lovely spirit that is, isn't it, a high school student here in Minnesota spreading love and compassion for those who need it in Honduras. Melissa is just one example of many in this community who help feed the hungry, find shelter for the homeless, mentor a child, or helping to change our country and our world one soul at a time. I don't know where Melissa is. Where are you, Melissa? There you are. Why don't you stand up. Thanks for coming, and God bless your work.

We have the strongest economy of any major industrialized nation in the world. And that is—it's an amazing statement, when you think about what this economy and our country has been through. And the reason I bring that up is because I know how important the entrepreneurial spirit is. I know how important education is to the future of this country, and I believe it was the spirit of America and our education system, in part, that helped us overcome the challenges we face.

We faced a recession. And those are tough times, obviously. They're tough times for workers looking for work. They're a tough time for small-business owners who are worried about whether or not there will be capital available to expand. It was a very difficult period.

There will be an argument as about why the recession was shallow. Of course, I believe it was shallow because people had more money in their pocket to spend, which made the recession one of the most shallow in American history.

And then, as we were recovering from that recession and a stock market decline, the enemy hit us, and that obviously affected us. Our economy lost nearly one million jobs in just 3 months after the attacks. Remember, the stock market shut down, airplanes weren't flying. It was a very difficult period. It was also difficult for our psychology because it was the first time we realized that we were a battlefield.

For years, when we grew up—at least us baby boomers grew up—we thought that oceans would protect us from harm's way. And then we learned a solemn lesson on that day. We learned the lesson that there is an enemy which hates us because of what we stand for. Because we love freedom, because we value freedom, because we work for free societies, there's an enemy which is willing to inflict harm. The enemy also is the kind of enemy we've really never faced before because they're willing to kill innocent women and children and men of all religions in order to affect our psychology.

So September the 11th was a tough hurdle to overcome. We will overcome it because we're a strong, resolute nation, and we will overcome it by staying on the offensive and bringing these killers to justice before they harm America again.

And as we were recovering from that, we faced corporate scandal. I don't know if you remember the period—I clearly do—that we were beginning to recover, and CEOs in corporate America didn't tell the truth, which shook the confidence of this country. In other words, these people weren't responsible citizens. They didn't tell the truth to shareholders. They didn't tell the truth to employees, and it hurt. We passed tough laws. We said, "There will be a consequence if you're not a responsible CEO in corporate America." We made it clear that we're not going to tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America, and the people in America are now beginning to see justice being done.

But we've overcome that hurdle. And then, as you know, I made a decision to protect the country against further harm.

One of the lessons of September the 11th is, is that when we see threats, we must deal with them before they fully materialize. That's one of the lessons that our country must never forget about September the 11th. We can't hope a problem goes away anymore. We must deal with it.

See, my most important job is to protect the country. That's my most solemn duty, to make sure as best as we possibly can that the harm done to our citizens doesn't happen again. I saw a threat in Iraq. The Congress looked at the same intelligence and saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the same intelligence, and they said, "There's a threat."

So I went in front of the U.N. and said, "Why don't we do something about it now? The man has ignored you for 10 years. For the sake of world peace, why don't we do something about it?" People felt that way, of course, because he had used weapons of mass destruction on his own people. They remembered that. They remembered he invaded his neighborhood. They remembered he paid suiciders to go kill Jewish people. They knew that he had relations with terrorists. We all saw a threat, and he hid. He said, "No, I'm not going to listen to the demands of the free world." So faced with trusting a madman and hoping for the best or working to make sure America's more secure, I will always make the decision to keep America secure.

And that's what we're doing today. We're acting to make sure the country is secure, and it's hard work. Our military is performing brilliantly. We must defeat enemy there so we don't have to face them here. But we're working for something bigger than just security, short-term security. We're working for free society in Iraq. You see, a free society is a peaceful society. A free society in the midst of a region of the world where there's hatred and intolerance will be a historic moment for change for the better.

I shared a story the other day during a press conference where I talked about a dinner I had with Prime Minister Koizumi of Japan, and we're eating Kobe beef. I don't know whether it's grown here in Minnesota or not—real good. And it dawned on me in the course of our conversation that had we not gotten the peace right after World War II that I don't think I—it's possible I wouldn't have been sitting with the Prime Minister of Japan talking about how to make the Korean Peninsula more peaceful. See, we're talking about North Korea. We're talking about the dangers of the North Korean dictator having a nuclear weapon, what it would mean for world peace. And then it dawned on me in the course of the conversation that one of these days, an American President will sit down with a duly elected leader in Iraq—from Iraq, to talk about how to bring peace to that troubled part of the world.

These are historic times. It's a historic opportunity to spread peace and freedom. I believe that freedom is not America's gift to the world; freedom is the almighty God's gift to each man and woman in this world, and free societies will be peaceful societies.

The reason I brought that up is I want to put it in perspective, put these statistics in perspective. The economy is strong, and it's getting stronger. We've overcome a lot. I happen to believe it's because of progrowth economic issues, but I also know it's because the entrepreneurial spirit is strong, the small-business sector of America is strong, and there's great opportunities in this country. Retail sales are strong. Interest rates are low. Homeownership is at the highest rate ever, which is a fantastic statistic, when you think about it.

I mean, ours is a society in which we encourage people to own something. When you own something, you have a vital stake in the future of the country. We want more people owning their own home. The minority homeownership gap, while it still exists, is getting better. We want everybody to own a home, not just a few, not just those who live in suburban America. We want

homeownership to be a vital part of the future of our country.

Durable good orders are up. Industrial production in the first quarter rose at the fastest pace in nearly 4 years. In other words, things are getting better. There's renewed confidence. When people invest in equipment, it makes—it means it's more likely somebody is going to find work, and that's what's happening. There are new jobs available.

But the problem we face in the short term in America is some workers do not have the skills necessary to fill the new jobs. There are jobs being created during this period of economic transition. And yet, there are willing workers who don't have the skill set necessary to fill those jobs. And I think you'll find in different communities around the country, there are people looking for nurses or teaching or different technology fields of technology.

And you know who knows this best? The community college system understands it best. You know, the people closest to the situation in each community are those who can best devise a strategy to meet the growing demand for workers and the need to make sure the workers have the appropriate skill sets.

I was in Forsyth County Community College in North Carolina, where former textile workers are now getting the skills to work in biotechnology. There's these people, worked in one industry; the industry became noncompetitive; and the Government stepped in and helped. As you know, there's ample programs for worker displacement monies to help pay for community college.

But the most important thing that happened was that the community college administrators went to the local employers and said, "What do you need? If you're looking for workers, what do you need?" And they changed curriculum to meet the needs of the employers in that community, and people are now getting the skills necessary to work.

The River Community College in Florida is opening a new center next May to provide cutting-edge training in robotics, in lasers, and phototonic technology. In other words, there's a demand for these kind of workers, and what the community college system does is it provides a fantastic opportunity for job training, for new educational opportunities. In Illinois and Ohio, community colleges have joined efforts to train workers to fill high-tech jobs in the manufacturing sector.

So the first thing I want to say is, thanks for what you're doing to make America a more hopeful place. Thanks for providing an opportunity for somebody who says, "The job I used to work in is beginning to be transitioned out as our economy changes," and "Help me get the skill sets necessary to be employable."

I'll never forget meeting a lady in the Mesa Community College. And she was a graphic design artist, and she wanted to gain skills necessary to get—make more money. She understood that with education, you become a more productive worker. She also said—understood that productivity increases means higher pay. And so she went to the community college. She got an associate's degree. She got out. She got employed by a high-tech company. And she made more in her first year in her new job than she had made in her last year as a graphic artist.

See, not only does the community college system help somebody get employed, they help somebody to become a more productive worker. And there's a lot of talk about productivity in our society. Productivity provides interesting and important challenges. First of all, the more productive your workforce is, the faster your economy has to grow. See, if you've got—if a worker can produce more goods and services per hour than in the past, in order to add new workers, the economy has to grow faster than productivity. And it's a challenge.

And that's why we can't become isolated from the rest of the world. We've got to

reject economic isolationism. That's why we've got to have good legal policy. That's how we've got to make sure that the small-business sector is vibrant. That's why we've got to make sure the entrepreneurial spirit is strong.

But it also is the reason why the community colleges are important for the future. Because if productivity is necessary for employment, it is the community college which helps the citizen become more productive. But it's also the community college which helps a citizen make more money. Productivity increases lift the standard of living for citizens in our country. After all, since 2001, the after-tax income of Americans has climbed by 10 percent—over 10 percent. Part of it has to do—is our workforce is more productive and the people of the community college system are making a vital contribution.

Now, as we encourage innovation and change—and I'm going to talk about three ways to do so—but as we do so, as we make sure America can compete in the world by fostering new technologies, it is always important to remember the vital role education plays in our society. I mean, technologies change, but the vital role of education never changes.

And it starts with making sure that when somebody goes to a community college, they can actually read and write and add and subtract, which is why we've got to get it right in the early grades in America. The No Child Left Behind Act is a vital, important piece of legislation, and I'll tell you why. For the first time, in return for Federal money, we have asked this fundamental question: Can you read and write and add and subtract? Are you teaching our children the basics? We've increased Federal spending by 49 percent for public schools since I got sworn in. And what's changed is, we're now saying, "Show us whether or not a child can read, and show us early."

Now, if you believe every child can read, then you're willing to ask the question, "Show us if they can read." If you believe they can't, then you're willing to accept a system that just quits on kids early and shuffles them through. And guess who gets hurt—parents who may not speak English as a first language, inner-city black kids. It's easy to walk into a classroom full of kids—"difficult to educate," they call them—and say, "Let's don't measure. Let's just move them through and hope we get it right."

See, I think that's backwards. I think our society has got to challenge what I call the soft bigotry of low expectations. I think we've got to raise the bar for every single child. And the best way to determine whether or not we are succeeding is to insist that States measure, to show us whether or not a child is literate.

I've heard every excuse in the book about not measuring. "Oh, you can't teach the test." You can teach a child to read, and they can pass a literacy test. "Oh, you know, we're testing too much." How do you know whether or not a child is moving through the system and can't read if you're not willing to say, "Let's be accountable"?

Now, I think accountability is the cornerstone for making sure that we have a literate society. In the No Child Left Behind Act, there's money available to help students early, before it's too late. We have got to stop this business about social promotion. We've got to be able to say, "Here's a problem. Let's solve it early. Let's make sure there's additional money to focus on the kids so we don't have a pipeline full of illiterate children." No, the No Child Left Behind Act is raising the bar and raising the standards, because I believe and I know you believe every child has the potential to learn.

Now, you've got to recognize there are some kids who have been shuffled through, and that's why we need intensive intervention in middle schools and high schools. And so I'm working with Congress to pass the Striving Reader and Math Initiative program, and that's a fancy word for saying

we're going to intervene quickly with struggling middle-class—middle grade and high school students. Listen, you can't, in a community college system, expect to be able to do your job if you spend a lot of time on remedial reading programs. We've got to get it right early, and we will get it right early.

And at the same time, in order to make sure that we've got the skill sets necessary for what is a changing world and a changing economy, we need to focus on math and science in our public schools. And we've got a shortage of teachers in the public schools, and so we've laid out a program to encourage scientists and engineers from the private sector to teach in the public school.

We've got to reform the Perkins Act, which is a vocational training program, which didn't emphasize the skills necessary to fill the jobs of the 21st century; it emphasized one aspect of job training. But there needs to be math and science as a part of the Perkins Act of the vocational training, so that the citizens who are coming out of high school can be worked with to make them available for the jobs of the 21st century.

The Pell grant program is a vital part of making sure that people have the skill set necessary for the jobs of the 21st century. My budget increases the number of students receiving Pell grants. We've increased the number by a million since I took office. Four hundred thousand of those, 40 percent of those, are for the community college system here in America. Pell grants are a vital aspect of making sure that we meet our fundamental obligations to provide people the skills necessary for the jobs that will be available. I proposed an extra $1,000 per year in enhanced Pell grant scholarships for students who take a rigorous high school curriculum. In other words, there ought to be incentives for people to do better. We ought to be raising that bar, not lowering the bar.

We ought to be increasing standards. We ought to be expecting the best of every student in America. I proposed a Presidential Math and Science Scholarship Fund to give scholarships in those fields to low-income students. In other words, what I'm telling you is, is that in order for us to be a society which is able to compete, in elementary school and in high school, we must raise the standards.

As well we must support our community college systems. The community college systems provide great opportunity for people to go from high school to community college to a higher education. That's important. The community college system also provides great opportunity for people who never went to college, who have worked, to go back and get a degree in order to help make themselves more productive.

And so, as Jessie mentioned, I proposed to Congress a $250-million program to help community colleges form partnerships with local businesses. This is a practical way to help people find work. It's a practical way to make sure the skill set matches the jobs of the 21st century. I think this will help train 100,000 more people a year. It's a way to keep America on the leading edge of change. You can't change as a society if you don't have a workforce that is capable of working in the new jobs of the 21st century. That's what I'm telling you, and the community college system provides the capacity for us to have the skill sets necessary in our workers.

I know many of you have been involved with the Workforce Investment Act. It needs to be changed. Listen to this statistic. We spend $4 billion a year on the Workforce Investment Act and pay—that money paid for about—training for about 200,000 adults. It doesn't seem like we're getting—something may be wrong there. [*Laughter*] We can do a better job with the money we're spending.

So I laid out a reform package, that we've got to give States more flexibility. You see, flexibility means you're more able

to match—you hear me say that; I'm going to keep saying it until we get it right here in America, until you match the willing worker with the skill sets necessary to be employed. That's what flexibility means. If you're inflexible in your system, it means you miss opportunity; it means you're not able to design a curriculum that meets the needs of the local community. It means that opportunity goes by. There needs to be a strict cap on overhead costs. If you're spending $4 billion and 200,000 are trained, some of it is not going for the worker. It may be going to pay administrative costs. And there needs to be a strict cap.

We need to make sure there are clear results. You've heard me talk about results in the public school system. I think people need to be measured. I think we need to say, "What are the results?" If it's 200,000 for $4 billion, the results aren't good.

Right now, there are so many goals, there are no goals. If you're involved with the Workforce Investment Act, you know what I'm talking about. There's all kind of measurement standards. The primary measurement standard is: Are you using taxpayers' dollars in a good way to train people for jobs. That ought to be the standard. See, that's where our focus is.

America leads the world because of our system of private enterprise and a system that encourages innovation, and it's important that we keep it that way. See, I think the proper role for Government is not to try to create wealth but to create an environment in which the entrepreneurial spirit flourishes. That's what I love about the country, the entrepreneurial spirit.

I'm sure you've met in your communities small-business owners who had the big dream, started out with an idea in a garage, and now, are employing people. That's what we ought to encourage, and the proper role of Government is to foster that kind of environment. You've heard me talk about ways to do so, make sure that we're—we reject economic isolation and make sure tax policy encourages innovation and growth, and to make sure the legal system is fair—listen, frivolous lawsuits make it awfully difficult for people to expand their businesses and people to find work—make sure the health care system is vibrant and patient-oriented. I'll talk about that in a minute.

The Government can help as well, though, by providing research scholars. I mean, one of the things we've got to recognize is that if we want to be competitive in the future, that we've got to encourage research and development so that the next wave of technology is America's wave of technology. In other words, if we want the people to be working here at home, this country's got to stay the leader in innovation and change, and the Government can help.

I proposed raising Federal spending on research and development to $132 billion since I—from—it's a 44-percent increase since I came in office. Look, that's a big number, but what I'm telling you is, is that the Government can be a vital part of providing the research that will allow for America to stay on the leading edge of technology.

I think we ought to encourage private sector companies to do the same, to invest in research. And therefore, I believe the tax credits that are critical for encouraging of research ought to be a permanent part of Tax Code. They're set to expire. Congress ought to make tax cuts permanent.

But what I'm telling you is, there is a vital role for our country to make sure that we put investment in place that will make it easier for the country to compete in a worldwide economy and, therefore, make it more likely our citizens will find work so long as they have the skill set necessary to match the jobs.

Now, I also want to talk about three other goals of ways to make sure that we're the innovative society of the world. First, you know, we need a different energy strategy than the one we have today, a strategy

that uses technology and innovation to diversify our supplies, to make us less dependent on foreign sources of energy, and to improve the environment.

The debate in America on energy policy has been almost zero-sum, when you think about it. It's like, they say that we must protect the environment and therefore have less energy, or they say that pollution is the price of progress. See, I disagree with either of those extremes. I think that we can use our technology and innovation to get beyond the false choices of the past and that we can have an energy policy that is—meets our national objectives, which, by the way, is an innovative society. You can't be an innovative society if you're stuck on foreign sources of oil. You may be short term, but long term, I don't see how we can be the world leader if we're constantly dependent on foreign sources of oil.

So research and development is necessary to change the energy policy of the country. And you say, "What do you mean?" Well, I believe it's possible to grow our way out of some dependence on foreign sources of energy. I mean, I can't wait to see the day when Minnesota farmers are out there harvesting corn that becomes an integral mix of the energy supply of the country. So we've got research and development to encourage biomass and effective ethanol—the use of ethanol as a part of the new supplies of the American economy.

I think we have to have safe nuclear energy. I think we ought to be continuing to research and spend research dollars to make sure that we're able to properly harness nuclear energy without harming the environment. I think it's possible we do so.

I also know that we've got a plentiful supply of coal in our country, and that's why it's important for us to continue to explore clean coal technologies, so we can use the energy supply here at home in a way that is—achieves, in a national objective, diversifying away from foreign sources of energy and protecting our environment. Technology and research will enable us to do so.

I want to talk about one other aspect of promising technologies, and that is the hydrogen fuel cell, which captures energy from chemical reaction between hydrogen and oxygen. See, it captures energy from a chemical reaction between hydrogen and oxygen. That's positive because the exhaust of that engine is water. It's—and I'm confident we can achieve this technological breakthrough to the point where I've asked Congress to spend $1.2 billion, which they have, in research into developing clean hydrogen powered cars.

We are making progress on hydrogen fuel cells, and that's positive. Private companies, including automakers—see, automakers are beginning to see what the future is going to be like. They're beginning to see the need for diversification away from the current energy policy. They've already spent a billion dollars of their own money to develop hydrogen fuel powered cars and the infrastructure necessary to deliver hydrogen fuel.

See, one of the challenges is not only developing a car that works but imagine the infrastructure changes necessary to fuel cars 10 years from now. One of the things consumers like is they like to go to their neighborhood gas station. When you hear talk about development of infrastructures like go to your neighborhood hydrogen station—and that's going to be a difficult hurdle in order to make sure that we've changed behavior here in America, but it's a hurdle that we've got to overcome. It's a necessary hurdle.

Today the Department of Energy has selected recipients for $350 million of research grants. In other words, the administration is now acting upon the Congress' appropriations. They're funding research into practical hydrogen fuel storage—so not only how you distribute it, how do you store hydrogen. They're encouraging the construction of hydrogen refueling stations

around the country. We're beginning to change behavior. And they're helping scientists develop hydrogen fuel cells that can be used in heavy trucks and farm equipment and other industrialized vehicles.

See, when we get it right here, when we get the hydrogen car up and running, not only will it make America a better place, we'll become the innovator of the world. That's what we want to be. We want to be the leader in the world. We want to be the country that leads the world in innovation and technological change.

Another way we can do so is to make sure the health care system leads the world in innovation and quality and safety, always remembering, however, that the patient needs to be at the center of every medical decision. That's an important part of the—[*applause*].

Many of you have seen the advances of—close hand of medical research. Just think of some of the advances that are coming. We're using a gene chip technology to help for cancer treatments. The world is changing dramatically in the field of medicine in many exciting ways. We're using brain imaging to discover the physical causes of mental illness. We're using tissue engineering to restore damaged or diseased tissues. And these are all incredible changes, and America is on the leading edge of change in medicines. And we need to keep us that way.

But one of the things that hasn't changed very much is the way doctors and hospitals do business. The 21st-century health care system is using a 19th-century paperwork system. Doctors use paper files to keep tracks of their patients. Pharmacists have to figure out the handwriting of a doctor. [*Laughter*] Vital medical information is scattered in many places. X-rays get misplaced. Problems with drug interaction are not systematically checked. See, these old methods of keeping records are real threats to patients and their safety and are incredibly costly. Modern technology hasn't caught up with a major aspect of health care, and we've got to change that. We've got to change it.

Catch the story of a fellow name Bob Brown from Kalamazoo, Michigan. Maybe this will help people better understand why we need to change. Bob's daughter Elizabeth developed a rare form of leukemia. She had a complicated case, and she had to see a lot of doctors. All told, Elizabeth—that's the daughter's name—regularly visited three hospitals and saw more than 50 specialists. Here's what Bob said about the paperwork that he had to deal with: "Every time we saw a specialist, we answered the same questions." He got fed up, and he started getting copies of every note that a doctor added to Elizabeth's medical file. Eventually, he filled up two big binders with her medical records, which he carried everywhere he went so she didn't face delays or mistakes when she saw a new specialist. He says that fortunately, carrying those files around helped in his case. It helped get Elizabeth the treatment she needed in a faster way.

The problem is, is that he shouldn't be having to carry around the binders. The system is antiquated. It is old. They should have personal electronic medical files available that accurately and securely keep a patient's medical history and, in Elizabeth's case, her treatments. In other words, medicine ought to be using modern technologies in order to better share information, in order to reduce medical errors, in order to reduce cost to our health care system by billions of dollars. To protect patients and improve care and reduce cost, we need a system where everyone has their own personal electronic medical record that they control and they can give a doctor when they need to.

And so you say, "How do we do this?" Well, first you set a goal: Within 10 years, every American must have a personal electronic medical record. That's a good goal for the country to achieve. The Federal Government has got to take the lead in order to make this happen by developing

what's called technical standards. In other words, there needs to be standards. As you know, docs talk, like, different languages in different offices, and there needs to be—in order to have uniformity, there needs to be standards available, and it's a good role for the Federal Government. That will allow medical records such as x-rays and lab tests to be stored and sent electronically.

So step one is to set the standards. And we've done good work, and we'll try to finish the standards by the end of this year. I say "we"—it's the Department of Health and Human Services that are involved with this important project. We've set out money to encourage demonstration projects that will show to health care providers the need to use electronics to make their records system more modern.

As well there's the senior department that we've announced today at the Department of Health and Human Services to coordinate these efforts with hospitals and medical groups. In other words, a proper role for the Government is to take the lead in this case, and after all, we should. We spend enormous amounts of money in the health care field. I mean, we're a large provider—spender for health care, Medicare, Medicaid, veterans' benefits, employee benefits. And so the Federal Government must create the incentives for health care providers involved with the Federal Government to use medical records and, in doing so, will go a long way toward introducing IT, information technology, into a part of medicine that desperately needs it.

As we do so, I want to repeat what I said earlier. Patients will have control over their privacy. I fully understand there's a issue of privacy, and the people who ought to determine the extent of privacy, their privacy, of course, is the patient, the consumer.

The third goal is to make sure that we have access to the information that is transforming our economy through broadband technology. I'm talking about broadband technology in every part of our country. I was the Governor of Texas for a while. I remember talking about access to information, and there was always a group of people saying, "That's fine. Big cities get it, but rural people don't." I'm talking about broadband technology to every corner of our country by the year 2007 with competition shortly thereafter.

Educators understand the great value of broadband technology. I mean, the—I'm not surprised that people involved in the community college system, when you mention broadband technology, nod their heads. It's the flow of information and the flow of knowledge which will help transform America and keep us on the leading edge of change. And we've got to make sure that flow is strong and modern and vibrant. And by the way, we've got to make sure that there's competition for your demand. We need more than just one provider available for not only community colleges but also for consumers. In our society, the more providers there are, the better the quality will be and the better the pricing mechanism will be.

Central Piedmont Community College in Charlotte is using broadband to conduct classes for students all across their State. You know, one of the interesting opportunities for the community college system is to provide education opportunities for people who work out of their home, for example. And the expansion of broadband technology will mean education literally will head into the living rooms of students. That will even make the system more flexible and more available and more affordable.

Same with health care. Again, if you're from a State where there's a lot of rural people, there's nothing better than to be able to transfer information quickly from a rural doc to a hospital for analysis in order to save lives. It's happening all around our country. The ability to send an

x-ray image in 7 seconds and have a response back in 10 minutes with a preliminary analysis oftentimes will save lives. But you hear us talk about making sure health care is accessible and affordable. One way to do so is to hook up communities and homes to broadband. It's going to be a really good way for us to make sure the health care system works better and the education system works better. And it also is going to be an important way to make sure that we're an innovative society.

Now, the use of broadband has tripled since 2000 from 7 million subscriber lines to 24 million. That's good, but that's way short of the goal for 2007. And so—by the way, we rank 10th amongst the industrialized world in broadband technology and its availability. That's not good enough for America. Tenth is 10 spots too low, as far as I'm concerned.

Broadband technology must be affordable. In order to make sure it gets spread to all corners of the country, it must be affordable. We must not tax broadband access. If you want broadband access throughout the society, Congress must ban taxes on access.

Secondly, a proper role for the Government is to clear regulatory hurdles so those who are going to make investments do so. Broadband is going to spread because it's going to make sense for private sector companies to spread it so long as the regulatory burden is reduced—in other words, so long as policy at the Government level encourages people to invest, not discourages investment.

And so here are some smart things to do: One, increase access to Federal land for fiber-optic cables and transmission towers. That makes sense. As you're trying to get broadband spread throughout the country, make sure it's easy to build across Federal lands. One sure way to hold things up is that the Federal lands say, "You can't build on us." So how is some guy in remote Wyoming going to get any broadband technology? Regulatory policy has got to be wise and smart as we encourage the spread of this important technology. There needs to be technical standards to make possible new broadband technologies, such as the use of high-speed communication directly over powerlines. Powerlines were for electricity; powerlines can be used for broadband technology. So the technical standards need to be changed to encourage that.

And we need to open up more federally controlled wireless spectrum to auction in free public use, to make wireless broadband more accessible, reliable, and affordable. Listen, one of the technologies that's coming is wireless. And if you're living out in—I should—I was going to say Crawford, Texas, but it's not—maybe not nearly as remote. [*Laughter*] How about Terlingua, Texas? There's not a lot of wires out there. But wireless technology is going to change all that so long as Government policy makes sense.

And we're going to continue to support the Federal Communications Commission, Michael Powell—Chairman Michael Powell, under his leadership, his decision to eliminate burdensome regulations on new broadband networks availability to homes. In other words, clearing out the underbrush of regulation, and we'll get the spread of broadband technology, and America will be better for it.

I've come today to talk about practical ways to make sure we lead the world when it comes to innovation and change. And by leading the world when it comes to innovation and change, we'll make America a hopeful place for those who want to work and those who want to dream and those who want to start their own business.

And the community college system is an integral part of that strategy. That's what I'm here to tell you. It's an integral part so long as you're willing to listen to the needs of those who are looking for workers. It's an integral part so long as you continue to be entrepreneurial in the delivery of education. The community college system

is a cornerstone of good economic policy. It's a cornerstone of sound educational policy. And it's one of the reasons why I'm optimistic that America will lead—continue to lead the world when it comes to innovation and change. And that will be good for our people. That will be good for the revitalization of what I call the American spirit and the American dream.

I want to thank you for what you do. I appreciate your compassion. I appreciate your interest in the future of our country. May God continue to bless your work, and may God continue to bless our country. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:29 a.m. at the Minneapolis Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Jesus "Jess" Carreon, chair of the board, and George R. Boggs, president and chief executive officer, American Association of Community Colleges; Gov. Tim Pawlenty of Minnesota; Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan; and Chairman Kim Chong-il of North Korea.

Memorandum on Improving Rights-of-Way Management Across Federal Lands To Spur Greater Broadband Deployment
April 26, 2004

Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies

Subject: Improving Rights-of-Way Management Across Federal Lands to Spur Greater Broadband Deployment

Broadband, also known as high-speed Internet access, has the potential to bring new services and products to American consumers and businesses, fostering innovation, investment, and job-producing economic growth. My Administration has long recognized the economic vitality that can result from broadband deployment and is working to create an environment to foster broadband deployment. All Americans should have affordable access to broadband technology by the year 2007.

A key to widespread broadband deployment is ensuring that broadband providers have timely and cost-effective access to rights-of-way so that they can build out their networks across the Nation. These networks often need to cross large areas of land owned or controlled by the Federal Government. Thus, effective and efficient Federal rights-of-way policies and practices are critical for promoting broadband deployment.

To ensure that the Federal Government's rights-of-way policies and practices facilitate the aggressive deployment of broadband networks, my Administration created a Federal Rights-of-Way Working Group composed of representatives from most of the major Federal agencies with land management responsibilities. The mission of the Working Group was to identify and recommend changes in Federal policies, procedures, regulations, and practices that would improve the process of granting rights-of-way for broadband communications networks on lands under Federal jurisdiction.

Based on information gathered from the communications industry, the Federal agencies, state, local, and tribal representatives, and other stakeholders, the Working Group has produced a report entitled, "Improving Rights-of-Way Management Across Federal Lands: A Roadmap for Greater Broadband Deployment," which sets forth specific recommendations in four main areas.

(1) Information Access and Collection—to streamline and standardize applications to reduce the administrative burden and costs on broadband providers.
(2) Timely Process—to speed Federal agencies' consideration of rights-of-way applications.
(3) Fees—to ensure that fees charged by Federal agencies are reasonable and appropriate.
(4) Compliance—to ensure that Federal agencies have the proper tools to promote compliance with rights-of-way grants or permits.

These recommendations are designed to assist Federal agencies in efficiently and effectively performing their vital role as stewards of the public lands, while working cooperatively with industry to spur broadband deployment.

Therefore, I hereby direct the heads of executive departments and agencies (agencies) to take appropriate actions to implement the specific recommendations contained in the report to the maximum extent practicable and as permitted by law.

In addition, agencies should review their existing policies and procedures and identify any additional ways to improve the process for granting rights-of-way for broadband communications networks. Agencies should report to me, through the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, within 1 year of the date of this memorandum on all actions taken. The agencies shall take these actions using existing budget authority.

GEORGE W. BUSH

Remarks in a Discussion on the Benefits of Health Care Information Technology in Baltimore, Maryland
April 27, 2004

The President. Thanks a lot. Thanks for coming. Please be seated. Thanks for the hospitality. I'm really pleased to be here in the great city of Baltimore. Governor, I'm proud you're here. Thanks for greeting us at the airport—I mean, at the heliport. Thanks for bringing the first lady. Thanks for bringing the Lieutenant Governor as well. I'm proud you all are here.

I'm also proud to be with—in the presence of a man I still call Governor, Governor Schaefer. I'm proud you're here, Governor. He said he didn't care a whit about seeing me. He just wanted to make sure I gave his best to Mother. [*Laughter*] Still a plain-spoken fellow, aren't you?

But Governor, thanks, you're doing a great job for the State of Maryland, and congratulations on the newest Ehrlich.

Dutch Ruppersberger is with us today. Congressman, where are you? Oh, thanks for coming. Listen, I'm—here's the thing about the Congressman: He cares deeply about the people who wear the Nation's uniform. He's very much involved with programs to kind of lighten the load for our troops who are sacrificing and are working for a free world. Dutch, I'm proud of the job you've done. I know you've recently received the USO Merit Award. Well deserved, and congratulations. Thank you for doing that.

I want to thank George Owings and Larry Kimble, who are veterans affairs folks here for the State of Maryland. One is incoming. One is outgoing. Both care deeply about the veterans of this State. I appreciate so very much Nelson Sabatini, who is department of health and human services

here in Maryland, for caring about the health delivery systems of your State.

We're going to talk about some interesting opportunities today for our health care system to be modern, to deliver—help it deliver quality service at lower cost. This is going to be—I think you'll find it an interesting dialog. I'm certainly looking forward to it.

Before we begin, though, I want to thank the people who work here at this hospital, work for the VA. I appreciate your service to our country. I appreciate your care for those who have worn the Nation's uniform. I see we've got folks here who have worn and are wearing the Nation's uniform. For those who have worn the Nation's uniform, thank you for setting such a good example for the brave men and women. For those who are wearing the Nation's uniform, I appreciate so very much your service.

We're changing the world. We have an obligation and a duty to protect our country. And in so doing, we're changing the world for the better. We understand that freedom is the deepest need of every human heart and that free societies are peaceful societies. And a peaceful society in the heart of a region that has fostered terror and hatred is in our short-term and long-term interest. And for those who wear the uniform, thanks for what you're doing. You have stepped up at this historic time. And the country is more secure for it, and the world will be more peaceful for your service.

Yesterday I talked about ways for us to make sure America stays on the—stays a leader in the world, particularly when it comes to technology and innovation. That's what we want. We want to lead. We're not interested in following. America is a nation where the entrepreneurial spirit is strong, where the focus of the Government, in my judgment, is right. We're willing to spend research money. I see Elias Zerhouni is with us, who's head of the NIH. Elias, thanks for coming. I'm confident that when you spend research money at the NIH, we're laying the groundwork for what will be a better tomorrow.

Yesterday I talked about energy. One way for us to stay on the leading edge of an innovative society is to introduce ideas like a hydrogen-powered automobile, put money behind it and research behind it so someday, Governor, we're able to drive around with water as the byproduct, as opposed to that which is currently coming out of the tailpipes in America. It'll make us less dependent on foreign sources of energy when this technology comes to be, which is vital to make sure America is on the leading edge of technology and innovation. It'll help improve the environment.

I talked about the need for us to spread broadband technology throughout our entire society if we want to stay competitive and innovative, that we've got to have broadband in every household in America by the year 2007. And there's ways to do that with the Government having to provide all the capital. We ought not to tax access to broadband. If you want something to flourish, don't tax it.

As well we've got to make sure that regulatory policy in Washington is conducive for the spread of broadband. For example, one of the things that's probably going to need to be done is they're going to need to build towers on Federal lands in order for over-the-air Internet services to work out into the remote regions of our country. They don't need a bunch of paperwork and hassle in order to build the tower on Federal lands. There's a lot of things we can do to reduce the bureaucratic hurdles necessary to make sure that broadband is plentiful, and not only plentiful but there's competition so that you get better quality and better price.

But today we're going to talk about a third avenue that's—to make sure America is innovative and is a leader in the world, and that is how to make sure our health care system works better. And there are some fantastic ideas as to how to do that.

The way I like to kind of try to describe health care is, on the research side, we're the best. We're coming up with more innovative ways to save lives and to treat patients. Except when you think about the provider's side, we're kind of still in the buggy era. I told a story yesterday of a guy in Kalamazoo, Michigan. His young daughter has a case of leukemia, and he had to—she had to see a lot of specialists. But he had to carry her files around every time she saw a specialist in order to expedite care, to make sure she was getting the best care.

And the health care industry is missing an opportunity if patients, in order to make sure they get quality care, have to carry files from one specialist to the next. It's like IT, information technology, hasn't shown up in health care yet. But it has in one place, in one department that you're about to hear from, and that's the Veterans Department.

So here's what we're here to talk about. We're here to talk about how to make sure the Government helps the health care industry become modern in order to enhance the quality of service, in order to reduce the cost of medicine, in order to make sure the patient, the customer is the center of the health care decisionmaking process.

And we've made great progress. There's a role for the Federal Government. One thing is, the Federal Government has got to make sure the privacy rules are strong. You're going to hear us talk about electronic medical records, and that's exciting. But it's not so exciting if you're a patient who thinks somebody could snoop on your records, to put it bluntly. I'm not interested in having my—well, it's too late for me. [*Laughter*] My medical records are pretty well known.

But for those people—there's a lot of people in America who say, "Good. I want there to be good information technology in the health care field. I just don't want somebody looking at my records unless I give them permission to do so." And I fully understand that. No, your records are private if that's the way you want them to be, but there's the ways to address this, the privacy issue. And there's the ways to make sure that the Federal Government's role is helpful in expanding information technology, and that's what we're going to talk about.

Tommy Thompson is the head of the—the Secretary of Health and Human Services—is a strong advocate about the spread of IT throughout the health care industry. I think he's got—I know he's got the proper perspective of the role of the Federal Government in encouraging not only the Federal agencies but the private sector to adopt these strategies in a way that is positive for the American consumer and cost-beneficial for society.

You'll hear him talk about standards. I told him when he starts talking about standards, "Make sure it's the kind of language we all understand." See, that's part of the problem. The medical terminology is really different from English, and it's different from one office to the next. And so when Tommy is talking about standards, I think he'll help you understand how we can help with standards.

At any rate, we're doing some smart things at the Federal Government, and the Federal Government can lead because we're spending a lot of money in health care. We're a large consumer on behalf of the American people. Think about it: Medicare, Medicaid, veterans' benefits, Federal employee health insurance plans. I mean, there's a lot of money going through the Federal Government, and therefore it provides a good opportunity for the Federal Government to be on the leading edge of proper reform and change.

Tommy, thanks for your service. Let her go.

[*At this point, Secretary of Health and Human Services Tommy G. Thompson made brief remarks.*]

The President. Thanks, T, good job. It's estimated that they spend $8,000 per worker on information technology in most industries in America, and $1,000 per worker in the health care industry. And there's a lot of talk about productivity gains in our society, and that's because companies and industries have properly used information technology. If properly used, it is an industry-changer for the good. It enables there to be a better cost structure and better quality care delivered, in this case in the health field.

And yet the health care industry hasn't touched it, except for certain areas. And one area that has is the Veterans Administration. You're about to hear an example from our Secretary and the administrator of this hospital and the assets here in Baltimore about forward thinking by people who care about the patients they serve. I know the veterans who are here are going to be proud to hear that the Veterans Administration is on the leading edge of change. That's what we expect. The taxpayers' money is being well spent.

And one of the reasons why the Veterans Administration is doing so well in changing, kind of, behavior, as well as making sure the backlog for veterans cases has been reduced, is because of our Secretary, a Vietnam vet, a really decent guy, and who is doing a fabulous job, Tony Principi.

[*Secretary of Veterans Affairs Anthony J. Principi made brief remarks.*]

The President. Thanks. I'm real proud of the job that you're doing here. Our job is to set the strategy. Smith's job here is to make sure they put it in place. [*Laughter*] Dennis Smith, as I've told you, runs the show here. Tell us how this happened. I mean, first of all, how long have you been working for the Veterans Administration?

Dennis Smith. Thirty-one years.

The President. Thirty-one years?

Mr. Smith. Yes, sir.

The President. You don't look that old. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Smith. Thank you.

The President. Maybe because you don't spend a lot of time in Washington. [*Laughter*] Explain your job, explain what this means—if you can possibly share some stories with us. You're doing a great job, by the way.

[*Mr. Smith, director, VA Maryland Health Care System, made brief remarks.*]

The President. I presume it's cost effective?

Mr. Smith. It is.

The President. I mean, think about a system where you had to take each individual x-ray and put it in a shelf and get somebody to take it out of the shelf and put it back in the shelf and probably had to duplicate it just in case somebody wouldn't lose it. So when you hear him talk about cost-effectiveness and productivity increases, this is what we're talking about. This system, when it gets advanced beyond the VA, will save American consumers a lot of money. If we're wise about how we use technology, we can save money.

Anyway, sorry to interrupt. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Smith. That's quite all right. [*Laughter*]

The President. The man knows the chain of command. [*Laughter*]

[*Mr. Smith made further remarks.*]

The President. Let me ask you, was it hard to get all the records computerized in the first place? I mean, somebody is listening out there who is running a hospital in Dallas, Texas. Are they going to say, "Gosh, this is such an overpowering startup that it makes no sense to do so?"

Mr. Smith. Well, with the VA, we kind of started years ago with this. We started with physician-order entry. And we had packages. We had a lab package. So we brought lab on board, where the physicians would order their lab work, and that would be automated. And then we went to various

other systems. So it was gradual that we did it. It is a daunting task for the hospital sector to bring in a computerized medical record all at one time. So no doubt, but it has to be done, Mr. President. We have to do it.

The President. The goal I set is, most people ought to be covered within a 10-year period. It's not like in 10 days or 10 months. This is something that is going to take time to get there.

Tell me about the pharmaceuticals, the distribution of drugs, the barcoding and how that affects——

[*Mr. Smith made further remarks.*]

The President. How do you deal with the privacy issue? In other words, there's some suspicious character around that doesn't——

Mr. Smith. Well, the nurses all have codes to get into the system, so you have to have a security code to get in. So before—you can't just go up to a computer. We have these on medication cards, laptops, so they have to type in a code to get into it. So we know—the system knows that, if I was a nurse, Dennis Smith is in the system. And I'm visiting Mr. Principi in his room and click on, it will know that I'm administering the drug and who the patient is. It brings all that up. It's a very secure system. We've built security into this.

The President. Good. You're doing a great job.

Mr. Smith. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Thanks a lot. One of the things that's interesting, one of the challenges we face in our society—Governor Ehrlich understands this—is we've got to make sure we train people in the health care field who understand what they're doing when it comes to computers and information technology. There's a lot of jobs available in the health care field, and the community college system turns out to be a great laboratory for enhancing people's skills. And I appreciate your support of the community colleges here in Maryland, giving people a chance to learn a new skill to meet the challenges of the—when I say, "challenges of the 21st century," here's one: Figure out how to use IT in a constructive way to save costs and improve quality care and to save lives. I suspect 20 years ago people who were in the health care field simply could not envision the use of computers and broadband and the Internet to make the field modern. And our education system has got to reflect that, Governor. I appreciate your understanding.

So far you've only heard from the public sector. It probably makes sense to hear from the private sector today as well, since the delivery of health care in the private sector is equally if not greater part of people's—the quality of medicine here in the country.

Johns Hopkins is one of the really great hospital university systems in America. It's world renowned, and it's quality care. With us today is Marlene Miller—Dr. Marlene Miller, I might add. She is in charge of the office of quality and safety initiatives at Hopkins. Tell us what that means, and just give us a sense of the challenges you face and the challenges we face in encouraging the spread of information technology to the private sector. Is Hopkins involved with any of this, or anything else you want to say?

[*Marlene Miller, director, Quality and Safety Initiatives, Johns Hopkins Children's Center, made brief remarks.*]

The President. Yes, see, the VA has got an advantage because all the administrators work for the same outfit, the same organization. Hopkins stands alone. I suspect Hopkins doesn't do a very good job of conversing with M.D. Anderson in Houston. Two different languages—no, anyway. [*Laughter*]

And so the real challenge in the private sector is to take what the Johns Hopkins people have done intrahospital and have it be able to converse with both large and

rural hospitals all across America. And that's where the Federal Government can help, like the development of standards. I guess you support the development of standards when it comes to talking over the Internet?

Dr. Miller. Absolutely.

The President. What other challenges do you see?

[*Dr. Miller made further remarks.*]

The President. Let me ask you something. Are you saying that these systems are able to build in a kind of a safety valve—in other words, automatically kick out a prescription if it doesn't meet the logic of the computer program?

Dr. Miller. One aspect of an ideal system, in my mind, is if I prescribe you 50 milligrams of something, but the 10 prior visits I prescribed you 5, I should get a warning flag, and say, "Look, do you really mean this?"

The President. But what you said about the weight, something——

Dr. Miller. Well, it's the same issue in children.

The President. If you've got small children, it is illogical to prescribe this much dosage.

Dr. Miller. Yes, the prescription I talked to you about was an adult-sized dose. No one, had they looked in any textbook, would have ever given that child that dose.

The President. Pretty good. That's why you've got to get the standards right, Tommy.

[*Secretary Thompson and Secretary Principi made brief remarks.*]

The President. This is a big challenge for us here in the country. Think of what we're talking about. We're just talking about how hospitals talk to each other. Then we've got to get it so the docs are able to talk to each other, and they've got to buy into this.

And so the reason why we've started this process now is we want to encourage insurance companies and State governments, doctors organizations, AMA, and others to understand the great benefit for the American people by implementing information technology in the health care field.

By introducing information technology, health care will be better, the cost will go down, the quality will go up, and there's no telling whether other benefits will inure to our society. In other words, when we get this done—and we will, because America is a land of doers and entrepreneurs; our job is to set the goal and then to encourage and incent people to achieve the goal—but when we get this implemented, America will remain on the leading edge of technological change. This is the kind of innovation that's practical and makes sense, that will keep us to be the leader in the world.

And when we're the leader of the world, it means our people have a chance to make a better living. See, when you're the leader, particularly when it comes to innovation and technology, your society improves a lot. The quality of life goes up. People's pay goes up. People in America are more likely to realize the American Dream. It's essential that we be in a society of innovators and change, and this is an area where there is a huge opportunity.

And I look forward to working with people to achieve this objective. I want to thank those up here who are doing a good job. Tony, you all have made us proud. I'm giving Tony the credit, but you deserve it. [*Laughter*]

Marlene, thank you for your vision. We look forward to working with Johns Hopkins as to how—to better learn how to encourage implementation of this opportunity. And when we get it done—we will—we will—this is America, after all. [*Laughter*] And when we get it done, we'll all be able to say, "We've done our duty, job well done. Now we go on to the next issue after this." But let's get this one right.

Thank you all for coming. We've enjoyed it. I hope you found it as interesting as

I have to listen to the great opportunities in front of us, some of the challenges that have been overcome, and recognizing that we've got other challenges to overcome. But our spirits are high. Our spirits are high because this country can overcome any challenge in our way.

God bless. Thank the healers who are here. God bless the veterans as well.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:50 p.m. at the Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Robert L. Ehrlich of Maryland, his wife, Kendel, and their newborn son, Joshua; former Gov. William Donald Schaefer of Maryland; George W. Owings, secretary-nominee, and Lawrence J. Kimble, acting secretary, Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs; and Nelson J. Sabatini, secretary, Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. The related Executive order of April 27 on incentives for the use of health information technology and establishing the position of the National Health Information Technology Coordinator is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks Following Discussions With Prime Minister Goran Persson of Sweden and an Exchange With Reporters
April 28, 2004

President Bush. Okay, listen. There will be two opening statements. We'll answer a couple of questions. We'll alternate an American—not yet, a couple of opening statements. Thank you.

Welcome. Mr. Prime Minister, thanks for coming. We just had a really good discussion about common opportunities. The Prime Minister has got a clear vision about freedom and opportunity, and he's an optimistic person. He's optimistic that by working together we can achieve great things in the 21st century. We had a good discussion about bilateral relations. I reminded him there's a lot of Swedish Americans who are really proud of their heritage, proud of their home country.

So Mr. Prime Minister, welcome back. Thanks for your time. Thanks for your consideration.

Prime Minister Persson. Thank you, sir. And let me also underline that we have had a very fruitful discussion, not least with the background to improve, strengthen the transatlantic relations between U.S. and Europe. It's not only about security and foreign policy; it's also about economic relations and international cooperations, not least inside multilateral structures like United Nations. With that as a framework, we have covered a discussion about Iraq, Palestinian-Israel conflict, the situation in Afghanistan, also North Korea and European matters.

And thank you, Mr. President, for receiving me. As always, frank and friendly discussion.

President Bush. Frank and friendly. Deb [Deb Riechmann, Associated Press].

Situation in Iraq

Q. Mr. President, is it going to take an all-out military offensive to put down the insurgency in Fallujah? And can you really have a successful transfer of power in 60 days if Iraq is wracked by violence?

President Bush. First, we will have a successful transfer of power. I assured the Prime Minister that the June 30th date is a solid date, and I appreciate so very much the work by the United Nations and Mr. Brahimi to lay the groundwork for the transfer of sovereignty.

Secondly, I have laid out a broad strategy that says that Iraq will be as secure as possible, that we will deal with those who want to stop the march to freedom. And that's exactly what's happening in Fallujah. Our commanders on the ground have got the authorities necessary to take action to help the Iraqi people realize a free and peaceful society.

And what you must realize is happening in a place like Fallujah is, the closer we come to passing sovereignty, the more likely it is that foreign fighters, disgruntled Ba'athists, or friends of the Shi'a cleric will try to stop progress. That's what's happening. They want to kill innocent life to try to get us to quit. And we're not going to. And our military commanders will take whatever action is necessary to secure Fallujah on behalf of the Iraqi people.

I'm pleased to—I had a meeting with General Abizaid today. He's the commander in charge of the theater. He was reporting that there will be joint patrols with Iraqi police in Fallujah. Most of Fallujah is returning to normal. There are pockets of resistance, and we will—our military, along with Iraqis, will make sure it's secure.

Swedish Detainee in Guantanamo Bay

Q. Mr. President, what will happen to the Swedish prisoner at Guantanamo Bay?

President Bush. The Prime Minister—the first matter he brought up was the Swedish prisoner. He was very forthright, very frank, and very concerned about the prisoner. I told him we want to work closely with our friends. We have done so with other countries, and we will do so with Sweden. There is a delegation coming over so that we can fully understand the facts and the consequences, but the Prime Minister made it clear he expects this to be resolved. I made it clear to him we want to work with him.

I think that's an accurate statement.

Prime Minister Persson. It is.

Q. How do you comment on that, Persson?

Prime Minister Persson. I think it's necessary to have that time to reply, because he has been there for 2 years. He should be released or brought to trial. That is the two alternatives, and we need to come to an end with this discussion, and I've expressed it clearly and had good response from the President.

President Bush. Adam [Adam Entous, Reuters].

National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States

Q. Yes, thank you, Mr. President. What does Vice President Cheney bring to your 9/11 testimony that you couldn't provide alone? And don't you owe history and the 9/11 families a transcript or a recording?

President Bush. What he's asking about is a meeting I'm going to have tomorrow morning, talking with this 9/11 Commission about—my attitude and the attitude of the Vice President about our country, our security, what happened on that particular date, what happened leading up to that. And I look forward to the discussion. I look forward to giving the Commissioners a chance to question both of us. And it's a—it will be an ample—it will be a good opportunity for these people to help write a report that hopefully will help future Presidents deal with terrorist threats to the country.

Prime Minister Persson. The Evening Star.

President Bush. Evening Star? [*Laughter*] I've never ever heard a leader call a reporter a "star"—[*laughter*]—except what I call Roberts [John Roberts, CBS News]. I call him a star.

Discussions With Prime Minister Persson

Q. Mr. President, you're a Republican and our PM is a Social Democrat. What do you have in common? What do you not have in common?

President Bush. First of all, we have the ability to not talk politics but talk policy.

We've been given great responsibilities, and we spend a lot of time talking about our mutual desire for the world to be peaceful. And we understand that free societies are peaceful societies.

One of the great things about the Prime Minister is—I don't want to put words in his mouth; he can correct me if I'm wrong, but nevertheless—he has this great sense of optimism that people want to be free and that people have the ability to self-govern. And to me, it's a wonderful spirit, and it gives us a chance to share our strategies about how to spread freedom.

We talked about a lot of issues. We talked about the plight of the people in North Korea and the danger of the dictator in North Korea. We talked about the Palestinian-Israeli issue. I reminded him that I was the first President ever to articulate the vision of a Palestinian state. No other President has ever done that. I was pleased to do so because I believe that is the best hope for the Palestinian people and the best way to promote peace.

But no, our discussions—we don't spend any time on politics, you'll be happy to hear. We spend time on what's best for our respective countries and how we can work together.

Prime Minister Persson. We talked about all people's freedom and peace in the whole world, and then we touched upon some specific issues that is of mutual interest to us. We can discuss that because we are both democrats, and we are both strongly in favor of freedom and building democratic institutions. That what's—is what we have in common. And then, also, we realize that Europe—and Sweden is a part of Europe—and U.S. are interdependent and we need each other for the future good development in the world.

President Bush. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:45 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Lakhdar Brahimi, Special Adviser to the U.N. Secretary-General; Muqtada Al Sadr, Iraqi Shiite cleric whose militia engaged in an uprising in Iraq in early April; Gen. John P. Abizaid, USA, combatant commander, U.S. Central Command; and Chairman Kim Chong-il of North Korea.

Statement on the United Nations Security Council's Resolution on Weapons of Mass Destruction

April 28, 2004

Last September, I called on the United Nations Security Council to urge the cooperative action of all U.N. members against the illicit trafficking of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons. I commend today's unanimous Security Council resolution, which answers that call.

It now remains for all member states to act on the measures urged by this resolution. Member states should enact strict export controls, criminalize the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and secure all related materials within their borders.

Today's resolution is an important achievement. We must continue to press these efforts to ensure that the world's most destructive weapons are kept from the world's most dangerous regimes and organizations.

Remarks Following a Conversation With the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States and an Exchange With Reporters *April 29, 2004*

The President. The Vice President and I just finished a good conversation with the 9/11 Commission. It was wide ranging. It was important. It was just a good discussion, and I appreciate the members.

I want to thank the Chairman and Vice-Chairman for bringing the Commission here and giving us a chance to share views on different subjects. They had a lot of good questions. I'm glad I did it. I'm glad I took the time. This is an important Commission, and it's important that they ask the questions they ask so that they can help make recommendations necessary to better protect our homeland. It was—I enjoyed it.

Let me ask—answer a couple of questions.

President's Meeting With the 9/11 Commission

Q. Mr. President, what topic did the Commissioners want to spend most of the time on? And were there any subjects that you didn't answer or were advised by your Counsel not to answer?

The President. No, I was never advised by my Counsel not to answer anything. I answered every question they asked. Really—probably best that I not go into the details of the conversation. Let them incorporate into their report. There was a lot of interest in—about how to better protect America. In other words, they're very interested in the recommendations that they're going to lay out, and I'm interested in those as well.

And we discussed a lot of things, Terry [Terence Hunt, Associated Press], a lot of subjects, and it was a very cordial conversation. I was impressed by the questions, and I think it helped them understand how I think and how I run the White House and how we deal with threats.

John [John King, Cable News Network].

Joint Appearance With Vice President Cheney

Q. Mr. President, as you know, a lot of critics suggested that you wanted to appear jointly with the Vice President so that you two could keep your stories straight, or something——

The President. Yes.

Q. ——can you tell us what you think of the value of appearing together and how you would answer those critics?

The President. Yes. First of all, look, if we had something to hide, we wouldn't have met with them in the first place. We answered all their questions, and as I say, I think I—I came away good about the session, because I wanted them to know how I set strategy, how we run the White House, how we deal with threats. The Vice President answered a lot of their questions—answered all their questions. And I think it was important for them to see our body language as well, how we work together.

But it was—you know, the Commissioners will speak for themselves over time. They will let you know whether they thought it was a fruitful series of discussions. I think they did. I think they found it to be useful.

Yes.

Transcript

Q. Mr. President, don't you think that the families deserve to have a transcript or to be able to see what you said?

The President. Adam [Adam Entous, Reuters], you asked me that question yesterday.

Q. I'm hoping for an answer today.

The President. I've got the same answer.

Yes.

Al Qaida

Q. Mr. President, can you say with any confidence that there are no Al Qaida operatives active in the country today?

The President. No, I can't say that.

Q. Did the Commission ask you about that?

The President. No, they didn't. But I'm not going to get into any more details about what they asked me. I told you I wasn't going to get into details about what they asked me, and then I just fell into your trap.

But no, let me talk about vulnerabilities, and then I've got to get back to work. We are still vulnerable to attack. And the reason why is, Al Qaida still exists. Al Qaida is dangerous. Al Qaida hates us. And we have to be correct 100 percent of the time in defending America, and they've got to be right once. And therefore, we are vulnerable.

But people need to know, we're working—we, the government, at all levels—are working long hours to protect America. We're doing the best we can. The best way to secure America, however, is to stay on the offensive and bring those people to justice before they harm America again. And that's what we're continuing to do. But yes, so long as there's an Al Qaida enemy that is willing to kill, we are vulnerable.

Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:16 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Thomas H. Kean, Chairman, and Lee H. Hamilton, Vice Chairman, National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States (9/11 Commission).

Statement on Senate Action on Proposed Internet Tax Nondiscrimination Legislation

April 29, 2004

I commend the Senate for moving forward to expand access to broadband technology. The "Internet Tax Nondiscrimination Act" is an important step toward permanently banning access taxes on broadband that will help make high-speed Internet services more affordable, increase the number of broadband users, and enhance our Nation's economic competitiveness.

The President's News Conference With Prime Minister Paul Martin of Canada

April 30, 2004

President Bush. The Prime Minister and I will have some opening comments. We'll answer two questions per side.

Mr. Prime Minister, welcome. I'm glad you're here. I've really been looking forward to this meeting because I view it as a meeting between friends and allies.

I really appreciate the Prime Minister's clear vision about the world in which we live. He understands the danger of terror. He understands the opportunity of trade,

and he understands that we share values that will—that are so important, the values of freedom, human dignity. We care about the human condition. I appreciate your concern about working together to help heal those who hurt, provide medicines for those who suffer from a disease.

We've got a good friend in Canada. It's an important relationship. It's a crucial relationship, and it's one that I look forward to continuing to nurture with this Prime Minister.

Welcome.

Prime Minister Martin. Well, thank you, Mr. President. We really did have a very, very good discussion. We discussed a wide range of areas, and we're going to continue over lunch. And we're doing it within the context of our shared values and the fact that we share much more than a continent. We talked about national security and Canada's new national security policy, which makes it very clear that we're going to defend the northern half of North America, and we recognize our responsibility to those in the United States, with whom we share the continent.

We discussed a number of issues between us. We talked about—we talked about the whole question of BSE, mad cow, and I must say that the President was very encouraging. We also——

[*At this point, the Prime Minister spoke in French, and no translation was provided.*]

We talked about Haiti. We talked about a wide range of issues. And I must say, Mr. President, that it's very clear that Canada and the United States, working together, we can make great progress.

Situation in Iraq

Q. Mr. President, 134 soldiers have died in Iraq this month, more than any other month. A year after you declared an end to major combat, are things getting worse in Iraq rather than better?

President Bush. First, any time you talk about somebody who died in Iraq or in Afghanistan is a moment for me to thank them and their families for their sacrifice. And their sacrifice will not go in vain because there will be a free Iraq. And a free Iraq is in the interests of our two nations. A free Iraq is in the interests of world peace, because free societies do not harbor terrorists, free societies do not threaten people or use weapons of mass destruction.

Q. Mr. President—sorry.

President Bush. A year ago, I did give the speech from the carrier, saying that we had achieved an important objective, that we'd accomplished a mission, which was the removal of Saddam Hussein. And as a result, there are no longer torture chambers or rape rooms or mass graves in Iraq. As a result, a friend of terror has been removed and now sits in a jail. I also said on that carrier that day that there was still difficult work ahead.

And we've faced tough times in Iraq, Mr. Prime Minister. We've had some tough times. We've had some tough fighting, because there are people who hate the idea of a free Iraq. They're trying to stop progress, because they understand what freedom means to their terrorist ambitions.

And so we're making progress, you bet. There's a strategy toward freedom. One of it, of course, is to continue to deal with those who are trying to stop the Iraqi people from realizing their ambitions of a free society. Whether it be in Fallujah or elsewhere, we will deal with them, those few who are stopping the hopes of many.

There's a political strategy, and the Prime Minister and I will talk about that over lunch, Mr. Brahimi's mission of putting together an entity to which we will transfer sovereignty. No, there is a strategy that will help us achieve the objective, which is a free and peaceful country in the heart of the Middle East that is desperate for freedom and democracy and peace.

Mad Cow Disease

Q. Mr. President, you're a rancher. Is there any hope—what hope can you offer your fellow ranchers in Canada about when the border might be open to live Canadian cattle?

President Bush. As soon as possible. My administration is committed to a policy of free trade when it comes to beef. And we had a discussion about that today with—that subject today with our respective agricultural ministers or secretaries, as we call them here. And I assured the Prime Minister, I want to get this solution—this issue solved as quickly as possible. And it's in our nations' interests that live beef be moving back and forth. It's also in the interest to make sure we make decisions based upon sound science, which he fully understands.

Q. Mr. President——

President Bush. Hold on a second. Steve [Steve Holland, Reuters].

Treatment of Iraqi Prisoners

Q. What is your reaction to photos of U.S. soldiers abusing Iraqi prisoners? How are you going to win their hearts and minds with these sort of tactics?

President Bush. Yes, I shared a deep disgust that those prisoners were treated the way they were treated. Their treatment does not reflect the nature of the American people. That's not the way we do things in America. And so I—I didn't like it one bit.

But I also want to remind people that those few people who did that do not reflect the nature of the men and women we've sent overseas. That's not the way the people are—that's not their character—that are serving our Nation in the cause of freedom. And there will be an investigation. I think—they'll be taken care of.

Canada's Role in Iraq

Q. Mr. President, could you tell us what you'd like to see Canada doing on Iraq, both diplomatically and in terms, eventually, of getting possibly police and troops on the ground there?

President Bush. My first answer to that is, I want Canada to do what it feels comfortable doing in Iraq. That's—and that's what I've told the Prime Minister before. Canada is an independent nation. Canada makes—will make its decisions based upon her own judgment. The Prime Minister shares my deep desire for there to be peace in the world, and to the extent that the country feels comfortable in helping that, we're grateful.

Canada is doing a lot in Afghanistan. Canada is doing a lot in Haiti. Canada is a contributor to reconstruction in Iraq. And I am grateful to be able to talk to a friend who shares the same goal, which is affecting behavior in a way that's based upon our values of human rights, human dignity, and freedom. And we've got no better partner in understanding the power of free societies.

There's a lot of people in the world who don't believe that people whose skin color may not be the same as ours can be free, can self-govern. I reject that. I reject that strongly. I believe that people who practice the Muslim faith can self-govern. I believe that people whose skins aren't necessarily—are a different color than white can self-govern.

And the Prime Minister—I don't want to put words in his mouth—but I think he shares that great sense of optimism and possibility. And it's good to have a friend who shares that with us.

Would you like to have the First Ladies come on up?

Prime Minister Martin. I've got to say, though, I really do like sharing a press conference with you. You answer those questions perfectly. [*Laughter*]

President Bush. Thank you. Record that.

[*A question was asked and answered in French, and no translation was provided.*]

Prime Minister Martin. If you can give me just two seconds, I'm going to translate. They want it.

President Bush. Some of these guys understand French. [*Laughter*] Raise your hand, Gregory [David Gregory, NBC News]. [*Laughter*]

[*Prime Minister Martin provided a French translation.*]

President Bush. Listen, thank you all. Come on up, Laura.

Shelia A. Martin. How do you do?

Prime Minister Martin. Good to see you.

Laura Bush. Prime Minister, welcome. I'm so glad you're here.

Q. Will the next trip be down at the ranch, Mr. President, for the Prime Minister?

President Bush. This is a nice place, but the ranch is even nicer. [*Laughter*]

Q. You need to teach him to ride. [*Laughter*]

Prime Minister Martin. I'll invite him to the farm.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 11:53 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; Lakhdar Brahimi, Special Adviser to the U.N. Secretary-General; and Sheila Martin, wife of Prime Minister Martin.

Remarks on Signing the Executive Order on American Indian and Alaska Native Education
April 30, 2004

The President. Thanks for coming. Glad you all are here. Please be seated. Thank you for coming. Welcome. I'm so pleased to have so many distinguished leaders in this historic place. I see a lot of friendly faces here. I want you to know it's a privilege to stand with you as we take an important step toward a shared objective, improving the education of all American Indian and Alaska Native children. That's what we're here to discuss today. It's an important goal.

Two people are going to be important in this, in reaching this goal—we'll reach it, by the way. My attitude is, when America sets a goal and puts our mind to it, we'll meet the goal. And two people that are going to be very important in reaching this goal will be the Secretary of the Interior, Gale Norton, and the Secretary of Education, Rod Paige, both of whom have joined me here today. Thank you for coming.

I'm also pleased that we're joined by some mighty distinguished Members of the United States Congress, two from the Senate and three from the House, starting with the President pro tem of the Senate, Senator Ted Stevens from Alaska—thank you for coming, Senator—a member of the Senate Indian Affairs Committee, Senator Craig Thomas from Wyoming—welcome—members of the House Resources Committee—three members are with us today, Ken Calvert of California, Richard Pombo of California, and Dennis Rehberg of the great State of Montana. We're glad you're here. I want to thank you for taking time. These guys are busy people, but obviously, they're committed to this important goal.

I appreciate the tribal leaders who are here. I see leaders from all over the country. I really appreciate you coming to—you honor us with your presence. And you honor us with your strong commitment to making sure that every child learns. It's

a really important part of our mutual responsibility, isn't it? When you're a leader, you've got to set important goals and follow through on those goals. And I know you share the same goal I've got: Every child, not just a few, not just some, but every child gets the best possible education. That's what we're here to discuss today.

I want to thank the students who are with me on stage. They've set one standard, and that's the standard of excellence. And they're achieving that. They're scholars, high school scholars, soon to be university and college scholars, who are in town to participate in a science bowl. I told them we need more scientists in the country, and they picked a good area to become an expert, because there's a lot of demand for scientists here in this country that is changing because of technology.

I want to thank the teachers who are here. I appreciate you being a teacher. You know, Senator, you might not remember, but I was the Governor of Texas once. Well, of course, you remember, what the heck am I thinking. [*Laughter*] But my predecessor was Sam Houston. He was a Senator, a Congressman; he was the President of the Republic of Texas. It's a pretty big deal when you're the President of the Republic of Texas. He was the Governor of Texas. They asked him the most important thing he ever did in his life. He said, "Teacher." He didn't hesitate. He said, "Being a teacher." So for those of you who are teachers here, thank you for being compassionate citizens who care deeply about the students of our country.

We place a high value on education because we understand the importance of education to our future and the importance of education to tribal nations. It's really important we get it right. In the words of the late Sam Ahkeah, the former chairman of the Navajo Nation Council, "We must encourage our young people to go into education. We need thousands of young lawyers and doctors and dentists and accountants and nurses and secretaries," is what he said. You can't be one of those unless you're educated, if I could paraphrase what this great leader said. His vision was clear. And that's what we're here to talk about today, to make sure all our visions are clear, starting at the Federal level.

His commitment to education has been shared by American Indians and Alaska Natives through the generations. Today his granddaughter, Sharon, is with us. Where are you, Sharon? Sharon, thanks for coming. There's nothing better than being a relative of a famous person. [*Laughter*] Sharon is a leader here in Washington, DC, following in her granddad's footsteps. So thanks for being here. Welcome.

To improve education for children of every background, I was honored to sign what has been called the No Child Left Behind Act. This law challenges what I call the soft bigotry of low expectations. In other words, sometimes people walk into a classroom and see a child and say, "Well, gosh, that child can't learn." That's the lowest of low expectations. This law basically says we've got a different mindset in America. We believe every child can learn and expect every child to learn. That means we've raised standards for every child, not just a few.

You know what happens when you have low expectations and low standards? People just get simply shuffled through the system. And you know who gets shuffled through, the so-called "hard to educate," the isolated, the inner-city child. That's not good enough for America, and this law changes that attitude. We've spent more money at the Federal level. But now, for the first time, we're asking the question, "Can you show results?" If you expect every child to learn to read and write and add and subtract, if you believe every child can learn to read and write and add and subtract, it makes sense for people to show us whether or not every child is meeting those goals.

The No Child Left Behind Act challenges the soft bigotry of low expectations

because it helps raise the bar, and it helps identify problems early, before they're too late. A terrible problem we have at times is that a child can't learn to read early—doesn't learn to read early and just gets moved through the system. And then they come out of their schools, and they can't read at all. And we've got to stop it now, before it's too late. And the No Child Left Behind Act does that.

The No Child Left Behind Act is meant for every student, not just a few. It's going to improve the lives of our American Indian children and Alaska Native children. It is an important part of making sure we have a hopeful future.

It's also very important that we have people who work hard to make sure the No Child Left Behind Act works. One way to do so is for there to be teacher training. You see, if we expect children to learn to read and write, we've got to use curriculum that work, and therefore, we need people who know how to teach the curriculum that works.

An accountability system, by the way—I recognize sometimes people fear it, but my attitude is, how do you know whether or not you're succeeding unless you measure? Or how do you know whether the curriculum you're using works unless you measure? It's not worth guessing anymore as to whether or not something that you've got in place is working. We need to know, see. And one of the things—we're learning how best to teach, and we need people to teach the teachers how to teach.

And Marilyn Nichols is with us today. Where are you, Marilyn? Oh, there you are. Thanks for coming. Marilyn is a—she leads an intertribal teacher training program in the Haskell Indian Nations University in Lawrence, Kansas. She's really making a profound difference in a lot of people's lives by using her skills to train teachers on how to teach. In other words, the effort has got to be more than just measuring; the effort has got to be a unified effort to help teachers follow their hearts and to help make sure that every student has got a qualified teacher in their classroom. I really want to thank you for what you're doing. I appreciate your soul. I appreciate your hard work. I also appreciate your clear vision.

And today I'm going to sign an Executive order that will build on the No Child Left Behind Act. First, I want to thank the tribal leaders who have been involved with the writing of this order. Secondly, an Executive order is, when it's signed by the President, means something. At least it does when this President signs it. [*Laughter*] My order establishes a Federal working group, cochaired by Secretaries Norton and Paige, with this specific mission: to help American Indian and Alaska Native children meet the standards set by the No Child Left Behind Act.

This is an important mission. It's an important mission that will call together elements of our Government to put forth a strategy. This Commission will consult closely with tribal leaders. See, we believe people closest to the problem are those that can help designate the solutions to the problems. It will meet with members of my National Advisory Council on Indian Education, who were sworn in by Secretary Paige this morning. And thank you all for coming.

The Executive order calls on Secretary Paige to develop recommendations to improve the teaching of reading. I'll never forget when I was the Governor of Texas, and a woman—I was speaking in Houston—a woman walked up and said, "Reading is the new civil right." It's a powerful statement, when you think about it, isn't it? "Reading is the new civil right." If we're interested in civil rights and human condition and human improvement, our kids have got to learn to read. And there needs to be a focused strategy to make sure that that happens—that that happens.

We've got to strengthen early childhood education. What that means is, the best place to start is early in a child's education.

The truth of the matter is, the first teacher a child has is a mom or a dad. And we want our parents to understand how important it is to read to their children. But we also want the education system to focus early in a child's education. We want them reading. We want to dash the false expectations that certain children can't learn to read.

We want to improve preparation for college and the workforce. We want there to be high high school graduation rates. In other words, we're going to raise the standards. That's what this Commission is going to do. It's going to work with the leadership to say, "How can we work together to raise the standards and expect the best?"

Under this order, Secretaries Norton and Paige will organize a national conference to discuss ways to meet our goal. In other words, there's not going to be just a group of people huddled in Washington. We're going to call in citizens and get input. We want what they call community buy-in. We want people understanding the mission. We also want to make sure we achieve high academic achievement while maintaining the strong and vibrant tradition of cultural learning. Learning to read and honoring a culture go hand in hand; they're not mutually exclusive. And that's an important part—[*applause*].

I told you I'm an optimistic person. I believe when America sets a goal and puts our mind to it, we can achieve those goals. I also know that every parent of every heritage shares the great dream of a better life for their children. It's a common dream we all have, and it's an important dream to recognize as real in all communities. We will continue the Federal Government's longstanding commitment to the sovereignty of American Indians and Alaska Natives. And we will continue our government-to-government cooperation as we work to meet this very vital goal.

So thank you for coming. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to share some thoughts with you. And thank you for witnessing the signing of this Executive order. For those who are part of the authorship, I appreciate your input. I appreciate your willingness to make your views known.

And now I'm going to sign this Executive order. And if the Members of the Congress would like to come up and serve as witnesses, I'd be honored.

[*At this point, the President signed the Executive order.*]

The President. Thank you all for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:45 p.m. in Room 450 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. The Executive order is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

The President's Radio Address
May 1, 2004

Good morning. A year ago, I declared an end to major combat operations in Iraq, after coalition forces conducted one of the swiftest, most successful and humane campaigns in military history. I thanked our troops for their courage and for their professionalism. They had confronted a gathering danger to our Nation and the world. They had vanquished a brutal dictator who had twice invaded neighboring countries, who had used weapons of mass destruction against his own people, and who had supported and financed terrorism. On that day, I also cautioned Americans that, while a tyrant had fallen, the war against terror would go on.

One year later, despite many challenges, life for the Iraqi people is a world away from the cruelty and corruption of Saddam's regime. At the most basic level of justice, people are no longer disappearing into political prisons, torture chambers, and mass graves because the former dictator is in prison, himself. And their daily life is improving. Electricity is now more widely available than before the war. Iraq has a stable currency, and banks are thriving. Schools and clinics have been renovated and reopened, and powerplants, hospitals, water and sanitation facilities, and bridges are being rehabilitated. Iraq's oil infrastructure is being rebuilt, with the Iraqi oil industry already producing about 2.5 million barrels per day.

On the ground in Iraq, we have serious and continuing challenges. Illegal militias and remnants of the regime, joined by foreign terrorists, are trying to take by force the power they could never gain by the ballot. These groups have found little support among the Iraqi people.

Our coalition is implementing a clear strategy in Iraq. First, we will ensure an atmosphere of security as Iraqis move toward self-government. Our coalition supports the efforts of local Iraqis to negotiate the disarmament of the radicals in Fallujah. We've also made it clear that militias in Najaf and elsewhere must disarm or face grave consequences. American and coalition forces are in place, and we are prepared to enforce order in Iraq.

The second element of our strategy is to return sovereignty to the people of Iraq on the schedule that we agreed to with the Iraqi Governing Council. Like any proud people, Iraqis want to manage their own affairs, and that is a goal we share. On June 30th, a sovereign Iraqi interim government will take office. Iraqis will assume all administrative duties now performed by the coalition. Since February, United Nations Special Adviser Lakhdar Brahimi has been consulting with Iraqis on how best to form that interim government. The United States fully supports his mission.

As the transfer of sovereignty approaches on June 30th, we are likely to see more violence from groups opposed to freedom. We will not be intimidated or diverted. On July 1st and beyond, our reconstruction and military commitment will continue.

In the cause of a free and stable Iraq, our service men and women are working hard and sacrificing greatly. And families of the brave troops who have fallen must know that their loss is not in vain. We will finish our work in Iraq, because the stakes for our country and the world are high. The failure of Iraqi democracy would embolden terrorists around the globe, increase dangers to the American people, and extinguish the hopes of millions in the Middle East. The success of Iraqi democracy would send forth the news from Damascus to Tehran that freedom can be the future of every nation. And democracy will succeed in Iraq, because our coalition is strong, because our resolve is firm, and because the people of Iraq desire and deserve to live in freedom.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 9:57 a.m. on April 30 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on May 1. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 30 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks at the White House Correspondents' Association Dinner
May 1, 2004

Thank you all. Thanks for coming. Thank you for the invite. Thank you, Carl. I'm glad you got a taste of Mother. [*Laughter*] I was going to start off tonight telling some self-deprecating jokes. [*Laughter*] But then I couldn't think of any mistakes I had made to be self-deprecating about. [*Laughter*]

In my recent press conference, John Dickerson of Time Magazine asked the question about what I considered my biggest mistake. It's an excellent question that totally stumped me. [*Laughter*] I guess looking at it practically, my biggest mistake was calling on John. [*Laughter*] Or take that one about Cheney and me answering questions together. That was a toughie. [*Laughter*] So from now on, Dick and I will be holding joint press conferences. [*Laughter*]

We could do it that way, or we could do it this way: You could ask the question, then I could tell Bob Woodward—[*laughter*]—and he could tell you. [*Laughter*]

I thought about giving an economics speech tonight. It really gets me when the critics say I haven't done enough for the economy. I mean, look what I've done for the book publishing industry. [*Laughter*] You've heard some of the titles: "Big Lies;" "The Lies of George W. Bush;" "The Lies and the Lying Liars Who Tell Them." [*Laughter*] I'd like to tell you I've read each of these books, but that would be a lie. [*Laughter*]

Laura and I always look forward to this event because of the good spirit that brings us together. And I appreciate that, Carl, you reflecting that spirit tonight. This year, we are also mindful that our country is in a period of testing and sacrifice. As I speak, men and women in uniform are taking great risks, and so are many journalists who are being faithful to their own sense of duty.

When we think of the great war journalists, we often think of an earlier era: Edward R. Murrow reporting from wartime London; Joe Rosenthal with his camera at Iwo Jima; or Ernie Pyle, sending columns home from Europe and the Pacific and dying with the men whose stories he told.

In every field in every generation, we tend to view the best as belonging to the past. Yet, in our time, that's not right or fair. Many of us were privileged to know Michael Kelly and to read his clear words and to feel the moral conviction behind them. David Bloom passed through our midst with incredible energy, enthusiasm, and tenacity in getting the story. Others, like Michael Weisskopf, have shown incredible presence of mind and courage that won our admiration. This generation of wartime journalists has done fine work and much more, and they will be remembered long after the first draft of history is completed.

The same is true of our military. We are nearing important days of remembrance. Soon, we will mark the 60th anniversary of D-day, in the company of men who have lived long and can tell you the names of the boys who did not. Later this month, we will dedicate the World War II Memorial here in Washington and look back on a generation that saved the liberty of the world. These events will have an added meaning because America is again asking for courage and sacrifice.

As we honor veterans who are leaving us, we also honor qualities that remain. The generation of World War II can be certain of this: When they are gone, we will still have their kind wearing the uniform of the United States of America.

The loss of Army Corporal Pat Tillman last week in Afghanistan brought home the sorrow that comes with every loss and reminds us of the character of the men and

women who serve on our behalf. Friends say that this young man saw the images of September the 11th, and seeing that evil, he felt called to defend America. He set aside a career in athletics and many things the world counts important, wealth and security and the acclaim of the crowds. He chose instead the rigors of Ranger training and the fellowship of soldiers and the hard duty in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Corporal Tillman asked for no special attention. He was modest because he knew there were many like him, making their own sacrifices. They fill the ranks of the Armed Forces. Every day, somewhere, they do brave and good things without notice. Their courage is usually seen only by their comrades, by those who long to be free, and by the enemy. They're willing to give up their lives, and when one is lost, a whole world of hopes and possibilities is lost with them.

This evening, we think of the families who grieve and the families that wait on a loved one's safe return. We count ourselves lucky that this new generation of Americans is as brave and decent as any before it. And we honor with pride and wonder the men and women who carry the flag and the cause of the United States.

May God bless them, and may God continue to bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8 p.m. at the Washington Hilton Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Carl Cannon, president, White House Correspondents' Association; and journalist Bob Woodward.

Remarks With Gubernatorial Candidate Mitchell E. Daniels, Jr., in South Bend, Indiana

May 3, 2004

I am proud to be standing by the side of my friend Mitch Daniels. Mitch is going to be the Governor of the State of Indiana, and I know for certain the people of this State will love this guy as their Governor. See, I've seen him firsthand. I know what it's like to work with Mitch. He's smart. He's capable. He's well organized. He's got a fabulous sense of humor.

I gave him a lot of tough jobs, and he did each of them with great professionalism and class. I know the people are going to the polls tomorrow in the primary. I'm not a voter in this State, Mitch, but if I were, I'd be voting for you, because I'll know you'll be a great Governor.

Do you want to say something?

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:58 a.m. on his arrival at South Bend Regional Airport. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Mr. Daniels. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session in Niles, Michigan

May 3, 2004

The President. Thank you all. Thanks a lot. Thank you all very much. Thanks a lot. Thanks for coming. Thank you all. Please be seated. Thanks for coming. Do you think it's all right if I take off my jacket? We're not in Washington anymore.

We're in Michigan. Thanks for coming out. Thanks for coming out today. Laura and I are thrilled you're here.

Audience member. Four more!

The President. I'm ready for it. That's what I'm here to assure you: I know what I want to do for the next 4 years. I look forward to having a dialog about that. Sometimes there are kind of fancy speeches, and sometimes we have dialogs. This is a dialog. I want to share some thoughts with you. I'd like to answer some of your questions.

But first, I want to tell you how much Laura and I appreciate you coming out to say hello. It is awfully generous of you and the folks lining the streets to have been so friendly, and we appreciate it.

I told the people back here they had the best view. [*Laughter*] I am really proud of Laura. I love her dearly. She is a fabulous First Lady. She and I are having the time of our life. It's hard to believe this, but the Presidency and living in the White House has made a strong marriage richer, and that's because she is such a loving, calm soul. And I love the influence she's had on our country. She speaks about libraries and reading. One of the things she loves to do is encourage teachers or those who want to be teachers to join the teaching ranks. And for those of you who are teachers, thanks for doing what you're doing, on behalf of me and Laura. Probably the best reason to send me back is so Laura Bush will be the First Lady for 4 more years.

Thank you all for coming. Listen, I'm here to ask for your help. I can't win Michigan without you. I can't win Indiana without the folks in South Bend helping as well. Listen, I need you to go to your coffee shops and your community centers and your places of worship, and you tell the people, "George W. Bush has a positive, hopeful vision for everybody in this country."

The way you win elections is you count on the people. You listen to the people, and you count on the people to turn out the vote. We've got what we call georgewbush.com. We didn't have that in 1978 when we were running for Congress. We've got it now. It's an opportunity for people to get on the Internet to figure out how to help, how to become a volunteer in the campaign, how to help register the voters, how to help turn people out to the polls in November. And with your help, there is no doubt in my mind I can carry Michigan, and I will be reelected for 4 more years.

I want to thank Congressman Fred Upton for his service to the great State of Michigan. As we say out in west Texas, he's a good hand. [*Laughter*] That means he's a good Congressman. I really enjoy working with him. He cares a lot about the people—about how the people of Michigan are doing, and he's really a good, honest, honorable soul.

And I appreciate Congressman Chris Chocola coming up from Indiana today. Thank you, Chris. He's done a fine job in the Congress as well. He's what they call a freshman. That would be the first-term Congressman. But he's made his mark. He's an honorable guy. He's an effective United States Congressman, like Fred is, and I'm proud of the service you've shown. I'm glad Sarah is here. Happy birthday, Sarah. Today is Sarah Chocola's birthday. I wouldn't have known that if her thoughtful husband, Chris, hadn't have told me on Air Force One. [*Laughter*]

I appreciate the mayor. Mr. Mayor, the mayor of Niles, is with us today. Mike, thank you for coming. I like to remind mayors, fill the potholes. [*Laughter*] Thanks for coming, Mayor. Glad you're here.

Statehouse Speaker Rick Johnson is here. Mr. Speaker, thank you for coming. Members of the legislature and the State senate are here; local officials are here. But more importantly, you're here. I'm proud to have you here.

I'm proud to share with you why I'm upbeat about the future of this country.

One reason I'm upbeat is because I understand the strength and character of the American people. We're a strong nation. We're a decent nation, and we're a compassionate country. What I want to do is share with you why I want to be President for 4 more years, and it's to make sure America is a safer country, a stronger country, and a better country.

You know, I wasn't sure—when I was campaigning in Michigan in 2000, I never would have dreamt I'd be standing in front of you 4 years later saying we were at war. It never crossed my mind. But we are at war. And my most important job is to make sure America is a safe country by defeating the enemy. That's the task ahead.

We're doing everything we can in Washington to organize our Government so we can better respond to threats. I want to thank the first-responders who are here today, the local police and firefighters and emergency teams who are dedicating their lives to the service of their—of the men and women in this part of the world. I want to thank you for what you're doing. I want to thank you for your—[*applause*].

And we're talking better between the Federal Government and the State government and the local government. We're sharing information better. We're better prepared. But we've got to be right 100 percent of the time to protect the homeland, and the enemy has got to be right only once. The best way to defend the homeland is to stay on the offensive and bring the killers to justice, which is precisely what I will continue to do as the President of the United States. I've got a plan to win the war on terror.

And we're making progress in this different kind of war. See, we're dealing with individuals who will hide in caves and order attacks. They have no conscience. It's hard for Americans to understand that, but they don't care about innocent life. We do. They hate us because of what we love, and we love our freedom. And we're not going to change—we're not going to change. They won't intimidate us. They're not going to frighten us. This is America.

Audience member. We're behind you, Mr. President!

The President. Thank you, sir.

We're cutting off their money. We're—about two-thirds of their known leaders have been brought to justice. Slowly but surely, we're winning, but we must not relent. I've got a plan to defeat the enemy by better sharing intelligence, by making sure our troops have got all they need.

Listen, some have said this is just a matter of law enforcement. This isn't a matter of law enforcement. We tried that attitude before. And while we had that attitude that this was just a law enforcement matter, the enemy was planning and plotting. No, this isn't a law enforcement matter. This is a war, and the President of the United States must use all the assets of the United States to defend America.

The President must be clear-sighted and, when he says something, mean it. It's essential that the President of the United States speak clearly and mean what he says. So when I say that if you harbor a terrorist, you're just as guilty as the terrorist, I meant what I said. And the Taliban, which had harbored Al Qaida and helped train Al Qaida, found out what the United States and our friends meant. They're no longer in power. And the world is better off for it, and America is safer because of the actions we took in Afghanistan.

Part of making sure you're effective as the President and the world is more peaceful is for the President to speak clearly and not send contradictory signals to the world. I want you to know how life is significantly better for, particularly, young women in Afghanistan, thanks to America. Listen, we're a compassionate country because we love freedom. Our hearts break when we hear that young girls were literally enslaved to the ideological backwardness of the Taliban. And now, thanks to the United States' action and our coalition action in Afghanistan, a free country is emerging. We

are safer, and young girls in Afghanistan for the first time now go to school.

Those are the kinds of things Americans care about. That's what we love about our country. We're not only tough when we have to be to defend ourselves; we're compassionate toward people from all walks of life. Laura has been especially important to the women of Afghanistan because of the messages she has sent, and so have the American people. Afghanistan is far from perfect, but it's a heck of a lot better today than it was 2 years ago. And as a result, the world is a better place.

My job is also to remember lessons learned. You've got to be clear-sighted when you're the President. The lesson I learned on September the 11th is, not only are we facing an enemy that will kill at the drop of a hat, trying to shake our will, but that when we see a threat overseas, we've got to take it seriously. You know, not every threat will be dealt with with military means, but certain threats get to the point where after diplomacy has failed, the United States of America has no other option. That was the case in Iraq.

The lesson of September the 11th is oceans no longer protect us, and therefore, we cannot let threats fully materialize. In other words, we can't see a threat and hope it goes away. We can't see a threat and say, "Oh, gosh, maybe the person will change their mind and all of a sudden their hatred for America will diminish." We've got to deal with threats.

I looked at intelligence on Iraq and saw a threat. The United States Congress looked at that same intelligence; people from both political parties looked at the same intelligence I did. They saw the threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence, and it saw a threat and, therefore, voted unanimously to say to Saddam Hussein, "Get rid of your weapons and your programs, or you will face serious consequences."

Now, remember, I'm the kind of fellow that when I say something, I mean it. And I said when the United Nations Security Council—we meant it—"Disarm, or face serious consequences." Saddam Hussein, as he had for nearly a decade, defied the demands of the free world, and so I was faced with a choice. Do I trust the word of a madman who had used weapons of mass destruction, who had professed his hatred for America, who had ties to terrorist organizations, who had funded suiciders into Israel, or do I defend America? Given that choice, I will defend America every time.

The world is better off without Saddam Hussein in power. The world is better off because he sits in a prison cell. Because we acted, torture rooms are closed; rape rooms no longer exist; mass graves are no longer a possibility in Iraq. Listen, the world is better off. We've still got hard work to do. And we've been through tough times. We've been through tough times recently. We've got a lot of brave folks over there helping the Iraqis become a free society. It's in our interests we succeed.

See, not only did we make America more secure by getting rid of Saddam, we are literally changing the world by insisting that freedom and democracy prevail in a part of the world where there's hatred and violence and recruitment of suiciders.

What America loves is our freedom. But we also understand that freedom is not America's gift to the world; freedom is the almighty God's gift to each man and woman in this world.

We'll prevail—we will prevail. And when Iraq is free and democratic, that part of the world will start to change. And then those soldiers and the families who mourn for the loss will be able to look back, and they will be able to say about their loved one, "Job well done." The world is better off for it, and generations of Americans are more likely to live in peace and freedom. A secure America is my most important job, and America will be more secure when freedom prevails in parts of the world that

have never seen the freedom that we know in America.

We'll pass sovereignty on June the 30th. That's what we told the Iraqi people. There's a lot of people there wondering whether or not America will keep its word. They're wondering whether or not politics will cause politicians to change their mind in the midst of this transfer of sovereignty. I'm not changing my mind. I'm not going to change my mind at all. We're doing the right thing. We'll always honor those who have sacrificed for our freedom. We will not allow them to die in vain. Iraq will be free, and America will be more secure.

A stronger America means an America that has got a strong economy, and I fully understand there are some people in this part of the world who still hurt, people that are looking for work. My attitude is, you know, the statistics are good, but they're not good if you're somebody looking for work. My attitude is, so long as we've got people looking for work, the President has got to make sure there's an environment in which there's—jobs are being created.

And listen, we've been through a lot. They say, "How can you be optimistic—such an optimistic fellow?" I say, "Well, I'm optimistic because I know what we have been through." Think about what the economy has been through. Recession—when we first came into office, the economy was going backwards. The stock market was declining.

And then we got hit, and the attacks on September the 11th hurt our economy, if you really think about it. It shook our minds a little bit. It kind of was a tough moment, incredibly tough moment in our history, and yet we rebounded from that.

Then we had some corporate citizens forget to tell the truth. They forgot what it meant to be responsible. We passed tough laws, by the way. It's clear now that you'll get busted if you don't tell the truth to your shareholders and your employees.

Then my decision to go into Iraq obviously affected capital formation. Listen, when you're reading the TV screens that say "March to War," it's not very good for planning. If you're a small-business owner and you see "March to War," it's not conducive to risking new capital.

So we've overcome a lot because our economy is growing. The GDP growth is strong. Job creation is good, but there are certain parts of the world where they're not good. Homeownership is great. Listen, minority homeownership in America is at the highest rate ever since I've been the President of the United States. Seven hundred fifty thousand new jobs created since last August, that's positive; 5,700—or 5,900 new jobs in Michigan in the month of March. But Michigan lags behind, and I fully understand that.

But I want to remind you how we got—overcome those obstacles. See, I believe that the best way to generate economic growth is to let people keep more of their own money. There are some people in Washington who think the best way to generate jobs and growth is to grow the size of the Federal Government. No, I think it's to let people keep more of their own money. The tax cuts we passed came at the absolute right time.

I'm going to talk to a small-business owner here and a family that benefited from the tax cuts. It's probably a better way for me to describe to you what I'm talking about to let other people describe their lives and what the tax relief meant. But it made a difference.

The fundamental question is not, "What have you done," though—"What are you going to?" And the first thing I'm going to do is to continue pressing to make sure America is the best place to do business in the world. If you're interested—the question about job creation and job growth depends upon this being a good place to do business. If it's a lousy place to do business, we won't have the job growth. If it's

a good place for the entrepreneur to realize his or her dreams, it will be a great place.

And so therefore, we need tort reform in America. Listen, I'm all for people getting justice in the courts. I'm against the frivolous lawsuits that make it very difficult for business to expand.

And so if we want to be competitive and be the leader in the world in the economy, if we want to be a strong nation, we've got to have an energy policy. We don't have an energy policy. It's bottled up in the United States Congress. These two good Members of the Congress voted for one. They can't get it out of the Senate. It's stuck. But you can't have a vibrant economy unless you become less dependent on foreign sources of energy, and there's ways to do that.

Fred and I were talking about how wonderful it will be if some President sometime said, "The corn crop is up, and we're less dependent on foreign sources of energy." That requires a different attitude about alternative sources of fuel. We've got to have clean coal technology. We've got to have different kind of automobiles in the outyears—hydrogen-powered automobiles. We've got to encourage conservation, but we've also got to use the resources we have to get there. We've got to use the resources we have in an environmentally friendly way to transition to the time when technology will make us less dependent on foreign sources of energy. We need to be exploring for energy. We need to be less dependent on foreign sources of fuel if we expect this economy to be competitive and for the jobs to be created.

The cost of health care makes it hard for small business to expand and people to find work. And therefore, we've got to have reasonable policy. By the way, there's a debate in Washington as to who best to run the health care industries of America, whether it be the Federal Government or whether it be the consumers. I believe we ought to empower consumers, not the Federal Government, to make the decisions in the health care industry.

That's why I'm for association health care plans that will allow small businesses to pool risk in order to bring down the cost of health care for their employees. That's why I'm for health savings accounts, which empower consumers. These are new products. This is something that makes eminent sense for the future of our country because it puts the decisionmaking power into the hands of the consumer. It makes sure the doctor-patient relationship is central to health care.

I'm for medical liability reform at the Federal level so that we've got docs available and affordable. Listen, junk lawsuits run up the cost of medicine, and it makes it hard for people to find work in this country. We need medical liability reform in Washington, DC.

Finally, I want—I hope you understand that—how important education is to making sure that we've got jobs here in America. First of all, we're not going to be able to compete for the jobs of the 21st century if our kids can't read. It's as simple as that. If we want jobs here at home, we'd better make sure we get it right when it comes to public education. The No Child Left Behind Act is a great piece of legislation. You know why? It challenges the soft bigotry of low expectations. It raises the bar. It expects the best. It believes that every child can learn. It's got money in there to make sure that when you find problems early, that they're solved before it's too late. It says, "Why don't you show us whether or not the children can read and write and add and subtract." It is a hopeful piece of legislation that's going to change America.

We're about to talk about the community college system and how important it is to make sure the workers have the skills to fill the jobs of the 21st century. Our economy is transitioning. In other words, there's some industries that are not competitive, but there are other new industries that are

growing, and they're looking for workers. And so therefore, we've got to make sure we've got a system that is able to take a person and train that person so they can fill the new jobs.

We're about to talk to a person who went to the community college system after having worked in the manufacturing sector. I'll let him tell the story. But what I'm telling you is, is that with good job training, we can have jobs in the short run—good job training, we can have jobs in the long run.

So this is part of the way to make sure America is not only strong today but strong in the future. I have a plan. I have a plan that says basically this: The role of Government is not to create wealth; the role of Government is to create an environment in which the entrepreneurial spirit flourishes, in which innovation is strong and important, and in which our workers get the skills necessary to fill the jobs that will be coming in the 21st century.

When I came in, Laura said, "You better keep this thing short, or otherwise the bus driver is going to leave." [*Laughter*] I obviously didn't listen to her.

Finally, I want to talk about a better America. In order to understand how to have a better America, you've got to understand the relationship between Government and people. Government is not a loving organization. Government is justice and law. Love comes from the hearts and souls of the citizens. If you're interested in changing America, if you want America to be a better place, it's really important for the President and others to rally the true strength of the country, which lies in the hearts and souls of our citizens.

I've spent a lot of time talking about the examples in different communities of people who are taking time out of their lives to love their neighbor just like they'd like to be loved themselves. It's such a powerful part of our uniqueness that America is defined—if you think about it, America's compassion is defined not by Government but by loving acts that take place on a daily basis in communities all across our country. I call that the American spirit, and the job of the President is to understand that that spirit exists, to lift it up, to herald it, and to nurture it.

Today we're going to—okay, I'm through blowing off. I'm now going to ask some citizens to maybe share some thoughts with us, and then I'll answer some of your questions. First, I had the privilege of meeting Mike Welch, a small-business owner. Mike brought his family. Mike, it was nice of you to bring your family. [*Laughter*]

He is the president of Express-1. Now, it is what they call an S corp. In other words, Mike's small business pays taxes at the individual income-tax rate. So when you hear me talking about cutting individual income taxes, not only think about your own wallet but think about what individual income-tax cuts do to small businesses.

An integral part of our economic policy has been—and if I'm fortunate enough to win President, will continue to be—to make sure that the small-business sector of America is vibrant and alive. And I'll tell you why. Seventy percent of new jobs in America are created by the small-business sector. And therefore, when you hear people talking about job creation, you better hope that they understand the vitality and importance of the small business.

So, again, I repeat, we cut taxes on everybody who pays taxes. We don't want Government saying, "Okay, you have to pay more, and you don't get to pay any kind of thing. In other words, if we're going to have tax relief, the fair thing is for everybody to have tax relief, but it was especially effective for helping businesses like Mike.

Mike, first of all, welcome.

Mike Welch. Thank you, Mr. President. I'm honored to be here.

The President. Where do you live?

Mr. Welch. I live in Stevensville, Michigan.

The President. There you go.

Mr. Welch. And our business is—we started here in Niles, Michigan, with a

business incubator. It was a great help locally, and we've moved just down the street to Buchanan, Michigan. And the city of Buchanan has helped us greatly also start our business. And starting in 1989, we had two vehicles, and now our fleet has grown to over 170 vehicles.

The President. Good. What do you do? Why do you have all those vehicles?

Mr. Welch. We're an expedited transportation firm, and what that means is when manufacturers or factories or printers need something shipped right away today, we do it. So it's basically just-in-time inventory.

The President. How many employees?

Mr. Welch. In the office, we have over 50 right now.

The President. Good. And that's up from two in 1989?

Mr. Welch. It's up quite a bit, yes, and over the last 9 months, we've seen huge growth. In this quarter alone, we're up over 70 percent from last year. So things are going good.

The President. That's good, yes. It says on my notes here that you're going to invest this year.

Mr. Welch. Yes.

The President. How much are you going to invest?

Mr. Welch. We're going to invest up to $400,000. We already have currently invested over $205,000 in our Qualcomm satellite units. All our vehicles are satellite-tracked, and we plan on adding at least 50 more vehicles this year, which will hit right up to that $400,000 mark.

The President. Listen, the tax relief we passed encouraged investment. And I want you to understand the importance of the decision he has made to other people's work, the ability for other people to find work.

See, when Mike says he's going to invest, that means he's going to purchase something, in this case. And when he makes the decision to purchase something, somebody has to produce it. And when somebody produces it, it means somebody is more likely to keep a job and/or, if the orders are enough, they will expand the job base. And so when you hear that tax relief encouraged investment, I hope you really understand what that means is the tax relief encouraged somebody to spend some money, which meant somebody was more likely to find a job.

See, the decision that Mike makes—needless to say, it's optimistic to hear him say that his sales are up so strong. He's kind of a leading indicator, sounds like to me, of whether or not the economy is improving.

Are you going to hire anybody else this year? If not, I've got a suggestion for you. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Welch. Absolutely.

The President. You are?

Mr. Welch. Absolutely. We're looking for a couple people right now, so——

The President. That might not sound like a lot to some, two people or three people. But there are a lot of Mikes in this world. There are a lot of entrepreneurs in America. One of the true strengths of our system is there's a lot of small-business owners who are working hard to meet demand and are employing people. So when you hear Mike say, "Well, I'm thinking about adding three people this quarter," just think about the fact that there's a lot of people like Mike, a lot of small-business owners who are feeling much better about their future and, therefore, are confident in standing up in front of the President with all the TV cameras, saying, "I'm thinking about hiring three more people."

I appreciate you, Mike. Thank you very much.

I also had the privilege of talking to Phil and Lynn Hegg. They're a hard-working couple. They've got three beautiful girls. Is that right?

Philip Hegg. That's right, Mr. President.

The President. Proud father, I might add. So here's the thing. The tax relief meant that he and Lynn had $2,200 extra in their pocket last year and this year. Again, in

Washington terms, that's not much. In this family's terms, it's a lot. The tax relief was important to the Heggs. I'm going to tell you what they did with the money—I'm not going to try to spend it for them. That's the other avenue; that's when you raise the taxes and you spend it for them. [*Laughter*] This is where you let them keep the money. It's their money, after all—$2,200.

Some of the reason why they got to save $2,200—in other words, the child credit went up. It's going back down unless Congress acts. The marriage penalty was reduced. It doesn't make any sense, by the way, to penalize marriage. It ought to be the kind of thing we're encouraging. If Congress doesn't act, they're going to raise the taxes on these good folks. If they don't act immediately, their taxes go up by $1,000. It's the wrong time to be raising taxes, the wrong time, when the economy is getting better, for Congress to be taking $1,000 out of their pocket.

Tell us what you did with the money.

Mr. Hegg. Well, Mr. President, first I'd like to thank you for making a difference in that, because between the reduction in marriage penalty, the child tax credit, and, obviously, putting more money back into our pocket, I was able to keep a promise to my 4½-year-old daughter. When she was 2½ going through potty training——

The President. Wait a minute. We've got cameras here, and she might be watching. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Hegg. She is hiding out over there. But I did promise her that if she learned to use the potty correctly on a regular basis, I was going to take her to see Mickey Mouse's house someday. And you know, we've had a couple kids since then. So timing wasn't always great——

The President. So you haven't made the promise since? [*Laughter*]

Mr. Hegg. We didn't make the promise since, but the reality is that this year, we were able to carry through on that promise. And it was—so we were able to have those moments like at the end of the evening, we were sitting in the hotel; we were playing a game called, you know, "What's your favorite part? What did you enjoy today?" And my daughter Regan, she told me that her favorite part of the day was riding on Thunder Mountain with her father. That was pretty cool.

The President. That's great. It also says here that Lynn convinced you to maybe make some household repairs or buy some appliances. Is that right?

Lynn Hegg. We were able to go ahead and make—get a new washer and dryer.

The President. New washer and dryer. Somebody had to make the washer and dryer.

Mrs. Hegg. And we went ahead and we bought—within our community, which is—Whirlpool is right up the street from us in St. Joe there, in Benton Harbor, the world headquarters. So we would not be stoned by our friends, you have to buy within your area.

The President. That's good. You purchased locally?

Mrs. Hegg. Exactly.

The President. The reason I asked the Heggs to come today is it's really important for people in Congress to hear stories about people who have benefited from tax relief. Oftentimes, you hear—you read about statistics, or this might have made a difference or that—what matters is how it has affected people's lives. What matters about tax relief is it's made people more optimistic about their future. It's enabled them to do, in this case, a better job of being a mom or a dad, enabled this dad to fulfill a promise. He understands, like most of the people here, I suspect, understand his biggest responsibility is to be a good dad, is to love his child with all his heart.

Thank you all for coming. Part of making sure that we're prosperous in the future is to have a President who is not going to raise taxes on the American people, and that President is George W. Bush. [*Applause*] Thank you all. Thank you all.

Okay, David Mathews is with us. David is the president of the Southwestern Michigan College. That's a community college. The community colleges have got a fantastic opportunity to make sure that the workforce is educated for the jobs of tomorrow. As I mentioned, we're in a period of transition. In other words, some jobs aren't as competitive as they used to be—or industries aren't as competitive as they used to be—and therefore, the jobs are not as plentiful as they used to be. But there are some fantastic opportunities in our society today available for people who want to find work. And a great place to learn the skills necessary to fill those jobs is at the community college system.

David, tell us about some of the interesting things that are going on on your campus. People need to hear this. This is a vital part—community colleges are a vital part of Michigan. They're a vital part of the national fabric, and they provide a fantastic opportunity to help people. That's what we want. We want to help people have the skills so they can fill these jobs that are being created.

Go ahead.

[*At this point, David Mathews made brief remarks.*]

The President. Yes, let me stop you there. Did you hear what he said? He said, "We partnered with businesses." In other words, what the community college has been able to do is say, "If you've got a need for a worker, come to us. We'll provide the training ground. Help us design a curriculum that will meet your needs." In other words, it's kind—it's a market-based approach, really, isn't it, to education, which says, "If there's a demand for jobs, we'll help you fill it." And the key is the collaborative effort between the community college and those who are looking for workers.

Go ahead.

[*Dr. Mathews made further remarks.*]

The President. Good. It's a—I think the better way to describe what takes place on your campus is to call on Dan—if that's all right—unless you've got something else to say.

Dr. Mathews. No, absolutely. That's—we're very happy to hear Dan's story.

The President. Let me tell you something about Dan. He probably won't say it. I will. He got laid off from a manufacturing job. Is that an accurate statement?

Dan Hodge. Yes.

The President. Right after 9/11.

Mr. Hodge. Absolutely.

The President. Pick it up from there.

[*Mr. Hodge made brief remarks.*]

The President. Part of the vision for America has got to be to understand the power of education and to make sure the education system meets the needs of the 21st century.

A couple of points in his story. One, as you noticed, he said Government helped him go back to school. In other words, some people are probably saying, like Dan did, "I'm not so sure I can go back." He doesn't look that old, but he looks a little older, doesn't he? [*Laughter*] Let's just say he just didn't graduate from high school last year. And they're wondering whether or not there's financial help there. There's—part of making sure that America is hopeful in the future is, better have a President who understands the need for Pell grants, which I do, to make sure that people can find the assistance necessary to go back to community college.

Second, he said he made up his mind. One thing Government cannot do is make people be ambitious. That's up to Dan. That's up to Dan to make the decision. Dan made up his mind. See, our job is to help make sure the opportunities are available, is to grow the economy. But it's up to Dan to go back and get the skills necessary.

And the final point that is really important for people to understand, by going

back to school and learning new skills, his pay is a lot better. You hear a lot about productivity in our society. A productive society means that a worker is able to do more in a less period of time than before. And therefore, the more productive your society—your economy becomes, the faster it has to grow in order to increase the job base. See, if you got one person being able to put out more widgets than before, you need demand for more widgets to grow in order for somebody else to find work. And that has created a short-term problem for us in the economy. We're overcoming it now because the economy is beginning to pick up, but a productive society is an important society for the future, because you know why? People's standard of living goes up. The more productive a society is, the more likely it is people are going to be able to have better wages and better earnings. The more productive a society we have in America, the more likely it is we're the leader in the world.

And it's very important for us to be the technological leader in the world and to be the leader in innovation, and that's why we've got to have broadband technology in Niles, Michigan, for every home in Niles, Michigan.

And so you're looking at the smallest unit of productivity increase. Collectively, however, it makes America the leader in the world. Education is vital to this good man's life. It's really an important part of making sure he's got a hopeful future. Education is really important to make sure people can find the jobs which will exist, but education is also important to make sure this Nation remains the strongest economic nation in the world, which is vital. And it's vital not only so people can make a good living; it's hard to be a hopeful nation unless we've got a good economy. And by hopeful nation, I mean people—all people being able to realize the American Dream.

Some people need help, though. Some people need help beyond just education. Some people need help of the heart. Government can't fix hearts, but Government can call on people that will help heal hearts. We've got such a person here today in Michelle Dunlap. She's the project director of Southwest Michigan Faith and Community-Based Training Institutes.

I want you to describe your program, if you don't mind, Michelle. Tell people about it.

Before she begins, though, I want to tell you I believe that Government should stand on the side—not against but on the side—in other words, stand side by side with faith-based programs.

Tell us what you do.

[*Michelle Dunlap made brief remarks.*]

The President. I was talking about business entrepreneurs and educational entrepreneurs. Now, Michelle is helping to foster social entrepreneurship, and that is to encourage people of faith, in her case, to step up and to become a vibrant part of healing lives.

Listen, we've got people who are hooked on drugs. As a matter of fact, a lot of the drug abuse can be traced to serious addiction. In other words, a few using a lot is a way to maybe describe drug abuse in the country. And the question is, how do you crack the addiction? In some cases, it requires a higher being to help crack the addiction, and therefore, substance abuse programs based upon faith can be very effective.

I want to thank the folks for helping me enrich the story about the vision for an America that is safer, stronger, and better. And before we head up the road to Kalamazoo, I do want to answer some questions. If anybody has got some, now is your chance. I'm used to answering questions—[*laughter*]—maybe not in Niles, Michigan, but I am used to answering them. But I'll be glad to answer some. Step up. There's a mike right there.

Latino Vote in Michigan

Q. Hello. I would like to know, how can I help you win more Latino votes in the State of Michigan?

The President. Thank you. Now, those are the tough kind of questions. Thank you, sir. *En primer lugar, vamos a ganar.* I said, "In the first place, we're going to win." I think you need to explain to the people from all walks of life that the American vision I have is for everybody to be able to realize their dreams, not just a few people but everybody. It starts with a good education system. It starts with a system that just doesn't shuffle kids through.

See, we've changed the dynamic in Washington. We fully understand that local control of schools is essential for excellence. I fully understand that most funding is going to come from the States, as it should be. But when the Federal Government spends money, particularly for Title I students, we have now started to ask the question, can the kids read and write and add and subtract?

This never happened before. The question has never been asked from the Federal Government. That's important for Hispanic moms and dads to hear that question asked, because guess what happens sometimes? They're the easiest kids to quit on. They're the hardest to educate, supposedly. And they just get shuffled through, and they end up coming out of high school without the capacity to read.

We're using accountability to analyze curriculum to see if it's working. We're using accountability to detect problems early, so that a young child will get intensive reading instruction at an early age, so he or she can become a good reader, so he or she can learn the basics of math before it's too late.

You ought to tell your Hispanic friends that the Bush vision is challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations, believes in the hopes of, aspirations of every mom and dad in the country, regardless of their heritage, says, "If you want to own something in this country of ours, we're promoting an ownership society." We want Latinos owning their own small business if they have a dream and an inclination to do so. We want more African Americans and Latinos owning their own home, because this team understands if you own something in America, you have a vital stake in the future of our country.

You've got a question?

President's Visit

Q. Why did you come to Niles?

The President. Why did I come to Niles? [*Laughter*] Because I wanted to get out of Washington. Because there's good people here. Because I find it really fun to go to a place where people didn't expect the President to come. Right, Mayor? [*Laughter*] Thank you very much for your hospitality, Mayor. Tell your police, thanks for making sure that the bus got in all right too.

Let's see, what else? Yes, sir.

Haiti

Q. I'm from Brandywine High School here in Niles. I'm an educator.

The President. Thank you.

Q. And from the staff and the students, welcome to Niles.

The President. Thank you, sir.

Q. I have a question regarding Haiti.

The President. Sure.

Q. We do a unique thing at our school. We have two teachers who take students overseas. One goes to the Netherlands, and the other one goes to Haiti on active learning field trips. My question to you is, how long do you predict that our troops will remain in Haiti? And two, what is the United States doing to help with the economic condition in Haiti?

The President. Yes, thanks. Great question. Our troops will stay there as—until the United Nations peacekeepers will move in, which we hope is relatively quickly. In

other words, we moved in with the Canadians and the French to provide stability. The United Nations will be moving peacekeepers in to make sure that the current Government has a chance to bring a rule of law and democracy to bear in Haiti.

In terms of helping Haiti, we've got a robust aid package. The problem is you want to make sure the aid package gets spent properly. And therefore, it's important to have a stable Government. We're also helping a lot with HIV/AIDS in Haiti.

Let me talk about America and compassion. You know, oftentimes people talk about our ability to fight and win war, which is an important part of keeping the peace. But we're also a compassionate nation. Where we see hunger, we act, as a Government and as a people. We'll never use food as a diplomatic weapon, by the way. We care about people who are hungry in the world. We're the largest food donor in the world; we're providing more help for the hungry people.

We're now leading the fight against HIV/AIDS on the continent of Africa and in nations in the Caribbean that suffer from HIV/AIDS. Our aid is robust and strong because when we see people suffer from disease, we want to help.

We're the greatest nation on the face of the Earth and, therefore, have a duty not only to spread freedom and, therefore, peace but have a duty, have an obligation to help the suffering. And that's exactly what the United States of America is doing in Haiti as well as other countries around the world. And it makes me darn proud to be the President of a country that is so compassionate.

Yell it out.

Safety in Public Schools

Q. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Yes, well, I think it's a great question. I think that, first of all, the—safety in public schools is a local issue. It's up to State and local authorities to make sure the schools run well. You don't want the Federal Government running the public schools in the country. You want the Federal Government helping.

When I was the Governor of Texas, I used to say, "You can't teach self-esteem, but you can teach a person how to read and write, and they will learn self-esteem." And so to answer your question—I mean, I repeat exactly what I said before to my Latino friend here, and that is in order to keep people—the best way to keep people out of the prisons is to teach them to read and write and add and subtract early, so they realize they've got a hopeful future.

Now, again, we can't make people love one another. Many of the kids that you deal with have been, you know, hadn't had the proper amount of love. But what we can do is encouraging mentoring programs, which we're doing. We can encourage faith-based programs that have heard the call to help a child understand that he or she may be loved, even though they don't find that love oftentimes in their own home.

There are ways to help a child. But from an education perspective, and where the Government really does interplay, is to make sure the education system works well, so there's not that frustration necessary for a child who says, "I have no hope. I have no future."

Thank you for what you're doing. It's a tough line of work. But the idea is to keep—[*applause*].

Yes, sir.

Energy Prices

Q. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Yes, I appreciate that. Here's a man who started his own business 50 years ago. He's still in business, which says he's a heck of a good businessman. [*Laughter*] It's not easy to be in business, by the way. For those of you who have started your own business, you know how hard it is. And yet he is saying, after 50 years, the problem he now faces is high energy costs. The problem that people in

Michigan are now facing are energy costs at the pump. You're up to about $1.90 here, I understand. And it's—this is an issue of deep concern. Not only it's a short-term issue for America; it's a long-term issue for this country to become less dependent on foreign sources of energy. That's why we've got to get us an energy bill out.

Now, the long-term solution are actually going to change the nature of the automobile and have automobile powered by hydrogen. That's my dream. That's my vision. But we're 15 years away from that. Now, there's more research that has to be done to make sure the engines run well, to make sure consumer demand is met—I mean, people aren't going to want to get in a hydrogen automobile and not have it go very fast—and to make sure the infrastructure is available so that there's convenience for the consumer.

In the short run, we've got to increase our energy. We've got to use clean coal technologies to increase coal. We've got to relieve the pressure on the energy supplies. Now, the problem we face right now is a worldwide increase in demand. The economy in America is stronger, which increases demand for energy. But so is the world economy, and that's positive in many ways, but it also has had the negative effect of increasing demand relative to supply for world supplies of energy.

I tell you, I think this country ought to be wiser about how we use nuclear power. I know the technologies have changed so we can build safe nuclear power and store it safely. A strong effort to provide more safe nuclear power will help us on the environment, will make us less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

And so it's a—yes, you bring up a point that I made earlier. How can you be hopeful if you're worried about supply of energy and the price of energy? And that's why we need an energy plan out of the United States Congress.

Yes, sir.

Diversity in Government

Q. I'm really concerned about you sharing with America how you have chosen to make sure that African Americans, Hispanics, women, these coalitions, how you are putting them to the task and getting involved with your election. Can you talk about that?

The President. Sure, I will. First thing, there's a lot of rhetoric in politics and—sometimes empty, sometimes not. I hope people judge me on the decisions I've made.

In terms of African Americans, I've empowered many African Americans to positions of prime responsibility. I want you to think about—envision this: Sitting down with foreign leaders, and if it's a small delegation, I'll have my Secretary of State and my National Security Adviser. And guess—they are great Americans who happen to be African American.

The Secretary of Education is African American. My lawyer is a Latino. The Secretary of Housing and Urban Development is an African American. In other words, what I'm saying is that I brought people from all walks of life into my Government for a reason. These are competent, really good people, and they bring diversity into our Government, which is important.

Not only have I listened to strong women like Laura; I have done so with people like Karen Hughes, Condi Rice, Harriet Miers, Domestic Policy Adviser Margaret Spellings. I mean, I can go down the list. I am proud of the diversity that I brought into Government. I think it's important. It makes me a better President when I have people from different walks of life to listen to.

President's Goals

Q. If you're reelected President, what will be your main focus?

The President. Yes, thank you. I guess I didn't make myself very clear. [*Laughter*] Thank you. My main focus will be to win the war on terror so America is secure.

My main focus will be to continue to spread freedom, and that's an important focus.

I want to remind you about obligations and duties. I believe where we see suffering, we must help. And a lot of times, people suffer because they're not free. Freedom is so important for you to be able to—for—the spread of freedom is important for you to be able to grow up in a peaceful world. And free societies are peaceful societies, see? Free societies are more likely societies which are able to address the anger and hopelessness that we oftentimes find in societies that have spawned terror. Free societies don't threaten neighbors. Free societies don't develop weapons of mass destruction to blackmail the world.

Freedom is such an integral part of—should be an integral part of the U.S. foreign policy. Some say, "Well, let's work for stability in parts of the world." No, that's not what we're interested in. Of course, we want stability. Free societies will bring stability. The ultimate long-term objective for American foreign policy must be the spread of freedom.

Here at home, I want to make sure people can realize their dreams. You can't realize your dream if the economy is not doing very well. That's a period of—that's just a period when people don't aspire—can't aspire—they may aspire, but they can't realize their aspirations, is a better way to put it.

And the other thing I want to do is to make sure that everybody can feel the great power of love. Again, I fully understand Government's role is limited in love. Government is not a loving organization, particularly around April 15th. [*Laughter*] But people, whether it be me or the Governor or the mayor, can inspire people, call upon people to serve our Nation by loving a neighbor.

That's part of how we've got to make sure America is a hopeful country. You've just got to understand, amidst our plenty, there are people who hurt. There are people who are lonely. There are people who are hungry, and yet, those problems can be solved if the American people decide to solve them.

And one of my jobs is to set the high aspirations for the American people and call upon our citizens to fulfill a duty I think each of us have to help somebody who hurts. And it can happen. Listen, we'll change America one heart, one soul, one conscience at a time.

Funding for Volunteer Programs

Q. Mr. President, my name's Christine Van Landingham, and I have the privilege of working with 120 senior citizens in these 3 counties who volunteer as foster grandparents in our local schools, and each and every one of them touching the hearts of many, many kids. What my question to you is, this year that program funding saw a cut in Federal funding. How do you propose to support those programs and, more importantly, those volunteers?

The President. Well, was it cut at the Federal level? It was? Well, it's what you get for trying to make sure the deficit gets cut in half. I think it's very important for you to continue your work and calling on people to volunteer. These are volunteers. The good thing about volunteers, they don't cost much. I don't know the specifics about your request, but I'll look into it.

Final question. Yes, sir.

Freedom of Religion/President's Faith

Q. I'm curious to know—I hear you mention God in most of your speeches, and I'm curious to know how your faith in God affects your daily routine.

The President. Thank you, sir. First, you've got to understand, my job is never to promote a religion. My job is to promote freedom for people to worship the way they see fit. The job of the President is to make sure that America is a free society where you can worship or don't worship. You're just as strong a patriot if you worship—

than if you don't worship. That's—the job of the President is to make sure this precious aspect of our society is strong.

Personally, I do rely upon the Almighty. I'm reading Oswald Chambers. If you've read Oswald Chambers, you understand that Oswald Chambers is a pretty good gauge to test your walk. I rely upon—let me say this, I appreciate the prayers of the people. The fact that people pray for me and Laurais a powerful part of our life. It is humbling to know that people in Niles, Michigan, who I probably will never get to thank personally, say a prayer for us. And it sustains me. Somebody said to me one time, "Well, how do you know they're praying for you?" And I said, "I just do. I know it." And it's an important part of the Presidency, from my perspective.

Come on, Baby. Laura just gave me the hook. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank you all for coming. I want to appreciate your presence here. I'm counting on you. Just like you have been counting on me, I'm counting on you to help your neighbors understand the importance of this election. Peace and freedom depend upon this election. Prosperity for the people depend upon this election.

You can make a big difference. And I hope you—I hope—and I think you will—join me and Laura as we work together to make sure this country is a safer country, a stronger country, and a better country.

May God bless you. Thank you all. Appreciate you being here.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 1:45 p.m. in the gymnasium at Niles Senior High School. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Michael T. McCauslin of Niles, MI; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; and former Counselor to the President Karen Hughes. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady, who introduced the President. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

Remarks at a Bush-Cheney Reception in Kalamazoo, Michigan
May 3, 2004

The President. Thank you all. Thanks for coming. Be seated, unless you don't have a seat. [*Laughter*] I appreciate you being here. It's great to be back in Kalamazoo. It just didn't seem all that long ago that I was here. We had a great trip in 2000. I'm back here asking for the vote again, and I'm asking for your help.

I want to thank you for coming. I want to thank you for showing an interest in the future of our country. For those of you who are ready to go to work like I am, I would urge you to dial up georgewbush.com. That will give you an opportunity to volunteer. It will help you find out ways to register the vote. I'm asking you to go to your community centers and your houses of worship, to speak to your neighbors from all political parties, and tell them I've got a hopeful, optimistic, positive vision for every citizen who lives in the State of Michigan.

We've accomplished a lot in 3 years, but there's more to do. There's more to do. I have a plan to win the war on terror and to spread freedom and peace throughout the world. We have shown the country that this administration can help lead the country through tough times. But there's more to do. I have a plan to make sure this Nation is prosperous in every corner of America, so every citizen from all walks of life can realize the great promise of our country.

I understand the limitations of Government, so I have a plan to call upon the compassion of the American people, to rally the deep love Americans have for their neighbors to make sure that those who hurt find comfort, those who are hungry find food, those who look for shelter can find housing. I have a vision I look forward to laying out to our fellow citizens. With your help, there is no doubt in my mind we will carry Michigan and earn 4 more years from the American people.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. Thank you all.

The best reason for 4 more years is to make sure that Laura is the First Lady for 4 more years. I'm really proud of Laura. She is a great role model. She is steady, a calming influence when the Nation needed calm. She understands the importance of reading in the lives of our fellow citizens. She loves libraries. She loves books. She's been an inspiration to the women in Afghanistan. She has been an inspiration to women all over the world. Laura Bush is a great First Lady, and I'm lucky she's my wife.

When you're out there gathering up the vote, remind them about the team that I have put together on behalf of the American citizens. I've asked people from all walks of life to serve in my Cabinet. I've put together people who are smart and capable, people who are dedicated to the service of our country. Our country has had no finer Vice President than Dick Cheney. Mother heard me say that one time. She said, "Wait a minute." [*Laughter*]

Today I had the privilege of traveling from Washington to South Bend then to Niles and now here to Kalamazoo with a really fine Member of the United States Congress, Congressman Fred Upton.

I want to thank Secretary of State Terri Lynn Land for joining us today. Secretary, thanks for coming. A good sign when the speaker and the majority leader of the senate show up. Leader Ken Sikkema is with us as well as Speaker Rick Johnson. Thank you both for coming. I'm glad you all are here. Thank you.

And I want to thank the local officials who are here and the State officials. Thank you all for taking time out to come by to say hello. I'm proud you're here. My only advice is, fill the potholes. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank my friend Betsy DeVos, who is with us today. She represents all the grassroots activists who are here in the crowd. I want to thank you for what you're doing to make sure that people get to the polls. Thank you for coming.

I want to thank the men and women who wear our uniform who are here today. I've had the high honor of being the Commander in Chief of some of the finest citizens our country has every produced. I've been to bases all across our country and all across the world, and I can tell you, ladies and gentlemen, freedom is in the hands of some mighty fine people.

This is going to be a tough campaign. That's why I'm here asking for your help. We got a lot of work to do. We got a lot of work to do together. I'm running against an experienced candidate, somebody who spent a lot of time in Washington in the Halls of the United States Senate. I'm not going to take him lightly. He's a worthy opponent, and that's why we've got to do everything we can to convince people to go to the polls. We've got to convince people to listen to the message.

My opponent has been there long enough to develop the Washington language. I call it Washingtonitis. [*Laughter*] The other day in Washington, they asked him about what kind of car he has. [*Laughter*] Here in the State of Michigan, he was asked that question. Of course, this is the great auto-producing State. He said, "Well, we've got some SUVs." He talked about having a couple of minivans and a big Suburban. Last month on Earth Day—[*laughter*]—he had a little different description of the fleet. He said, "I don't own an SUV." To clear up the confusion, he said

this: "The family has it. I don't have it." [*Laughter*] In other words, he doesn't have an SUV except when he's in Michigan. [*Laughter*] One guy is getting a lot of mileage out of one SUV.

What this country needs is a leader who speaks clearly, and when he says something, he means it. You've got to tell the people what you intend to do and then go out and do it.

We've done a lot for the last 3 years. We've dealt with emergencies and wars and recessions. But there's a lot to do. Today I want to tell you about the course I intend to put this Nation on for the next 4 years. I want this country to be safer and stronger and a better nation.

I've come to Kalamazoo to ask for your help but also to let you know I see clearly where I want to lead this Nation. And my most important duty is to make sure this country is safe. My most important duty is to speak clearly about the challenges we face. There's still an enemy that would like to strike America. On September the 11th, our world changed. On September the 11th, we realized that oceans wouldn't protect us and that, because of what we believe, there's an enemy that wants to hurt us. That's the reality that we now face.

I have a solemn duty to do everything I can to protect America, and we made a lot of changes in Washington. The communication between the intelligence agencies and law enforcement are a lot better. The ports are better guarded. As you know, the airplanes are safer. They're even looking at your shoes. [*Laughter*] We got a lot of good people working hard. We have to be right 100 percent of the time, but the enemy has to be right only once. The best way to protect the homeland is to go on the offensive, is to stay on the offensive, and is to bring the killers to justice.

There are some who question whether America is really at war. In other words, they think that this is primarily a law enforcement and intelligence matter that confronts the country. But that's what we thought after the World Trade Center was bombed in 1993. We thought it was a law enforcement and intelligence matter. And yet the enemy was planning more sophisticated attacks. The enemy was using training bases in Afghanistan. Those who believe that way, in my judgment, are absolutely wrong. This isn't a matter of intelligence and law enforcement. This is a matter of war. The enemy declared war on the United States of America, and war is what they got.

And we're making progress—we're making progress. About two-thirds of the known Al Qaida leadership are—have been brought to justice, and we're chasing down the rest of them. We're chasing down the rest of them. Right after September the 11th, I laid out a doctrine that said, "If you harbor a terrorist, if you feed a terrorist, if you hide a terrorist, you're just as guilty as the terrorist." When an American President lays down such a doctrine, he better mean what he says. For the sake of keeping—for the sake of peace and freedom, when the American President speaks, he better mean it. I meant what I said, and the Taliban in Afghanistan found out I meant what I said.

There are no longer Al Qaida training camps in Afghanistan. In other words, America is more secure. Afghanistan is heading toward democracy and freedom. The thing I really like about our action, besides making America more safe and secure, is the fact that we liberated people. There were people in the clutches—it's hard to believe this if you're an American citizen, because of the nature of our society, but there are young girls—were young girls growing up in Afghanistan who never had a chance to go to school. It's just beyond our comprehension, isn't it, that people would be that barbaric, that backwards. These people were enslaved to a backward ideology, and thanks to America and our allies, people are now free in Afghanistan, and the world is better off for it.

The American President must be a realist. He must see the world the way it really is. And after September the 11th, I learned this lesson, and it's the lesson that we must keep in our minds as we protect our country: When we see a gathering threat, we just can't hope it goes away. If we see a threat, given the lesson of September the 11th, this Nation must lead the world to deal with that threat.

I looked at the intelligence and the history in Iraq and saw a threat. The Congress, the Members of the United States Congress looked at the same intelligence, and they saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council on my watch looked at the intelligence, and it saw a threat. But it also had seen a threat from the past and no wonder. Saddam Hussein was a man who used weapons of mass destruction against his own people and in his neighborhood. Saddam Hussein made his hatred of America well known. He was a threat. He paid suiciders to go kill innocent Israeli citizens. He had terrorist connections.

In other words, we all saw a threat. I saw a threat. The Congress saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council saw a threat—to the point where they passed a unanimous resolution that said, "Mr. Saddam Hussein, disarm, or face serious consequences."

As I just told you, when the President speaks, he better mean what he says. As he had done for year after year after year, Saddam Hussein didn't answer the request of the free world. So I was faced with a choice: Do I take the word of a madman? Do I forget the lessons of September the 11th, 2001, and hope for the best? Or do I take actions necessary to defend America? Given that choice, I will defend America every time.

Thanks to our fantastic military and thanks to over 30 other nations, Iraq is becoming a free society. Thanks to our fantastic military and thanks to friends and allies, the torture chambers in Iraq are closed. Thanks to the United States and friends and allies, the long-suffering people of Iraq now have hope. They have hope to live like we want to live, in a free society, in a peaceful society, and a chance to raise your children in a hopeful environment.

We're on a very difficult mission right now, and it's tough work. It's tough work because there are a few who want to destroy the hopes of many. It's tough work because we're dealing with people with no conscience. They're willing to kill innocent Iraqis, or they're willing to kill coalition forces in order to stop the march of freedom, in order to not allow liberty to take root and to spread its wings in a part of the world that needs freedom and needs liberty. They're doing everything in—they can to shake our will. America will not allow freedom to lose in Iraq because of a bunch of thugs and assassins.

Like you, I mourn the loss of life. Like you, I hurt when a mom or a dad loses a loved one, and I have told them when I've met them in person that the mission of their son or daughter was a vital mission to the long-term security of the United States. Because you see, a free society in the part of the world that breeds resentment will be a peaceful influence in a part of the world that needs peace. These are historic times. These are really important times in our country.

I told the story the other day at the press conference about my—Laura and my dinner with Prime Minister Koizumi. He is the Prime Minister of Japan. And we were talking about how to work together to keep the peace on the Korean Peninsula. Kim Chong-il is a danger. Kim Chong-il is developing nuclear weapons. And so, working with a former enemy, it dawned on me during the course of the conversation: What happens if we had got it wrong at the end of World War II? Would I have been talking to the Prime Minister of Japan about a way to make the world a peaceful place? It also dawned on me, when we

get it right in Iraq, when freedom and democracy take hold in that part of the world, someday an American President will be talking to an elected Iraqi leader as to how to deal with the current threat of that era. These are historic times. Our troops are performing brilliantly, and we will succeed.

There are plenty of others in the world who agree with the spread of freedom and democracy. Thank goodness. See, I understand freedom is not America's gift to the world or any other country's gift to the world; freedom is the Almighty's gift to every man and woman who lives in this world.

We have a duty to spread freedom. We have an obligation to spread freedom, and we're getting plenty of help. There's a difference, however, between leading a coalition of nations and submitting to the objections of a few. I'll always work with other countries. If I'm fortunate enough to be your President for 4 more years, we'll continue to build alliances and to work with other nations to spread freedom and make the world more peaceful. But I will never turn America's national security decisions over to leaders of other countries.

I've come to Kalamazoo to tell you, I've got a clear vision on what we need to do to make the world more free and more peaceful. I've come to let you know that a priority of mine over the next 4 years will be to do everything in our power as a nation to safeguard the American people.

I also have come to let you know that I've got a plan to make sure that America is a strong nation, and that starts with making sure that our economy is strong in every part of our country. I'm an optimistic fellow because I have seen what this Nation has been through. I'm also optimistic because I know how strong the entrepreneurial spirit is in America, how vibrant our economy is because the people are hopeful and optimistic.

Remember what our economy has been through. We've been through a recession. When we came to office, the country was headed into a recession. That's a long word for, "We're going backwards." [*Laughter*] It's a long word for, "Dismal times," where people were worried about their jobs and small businesses were worried about meeting the payroll.

We started to come out of the recession, and then the enemy hit us. September the 11th affected the economy. It hurt. It hurt us because we realized we were a battlefield in the war on terror. We lost a lot of jobs. Remember, the airlines weren't flying for a while. The stock market was shut down. It was a tough period. We came out of that. America refused to be intimidated, refused to relent.

And then we found out we had some citizens in our country that forgot what it meant to be a responsible citizen, and they didn't tell the truth. The corporate scandals affected the economy. You see, in a market-oriented economy, you've got to have faith in the balance sheet, faith in the numbers. There were some people who broke the faith. We passed tough laws. We will not tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America.

The decision to deal with Saddam Hussein also affected the economy. You might remember on the TV screens, it said "March to War." That's not a conducive environment in which to risk capital. Marching to war is an incredibly negative thought. Fortunately, now we're marching to peace.

But all those were overcome because the spirit of America is a strong spirit. And the small-business sector of this economy stepped up. People started to invest. People refused to be pessimistic. People decided to make good decisions about the economy, and I believe one of the main reasons why is because of the tax cuts we delivered for the American people.

The proper role of the Government is to make sure that the entrepreneurial spirit is strong, that the environment for taking risk is good. Cutting taxes was essential to making sure that that was the case. And

remember, we just didn't cut taxes on a few. We cut taxes on everybody who paid taxes. We raised the child credit to make it easier to raise a family. We reduced the marriage penalty. What kind of Tax Code is it that penalizes marriage? We want to strengthen families in America. Small businesses benefited. Families benefited.

The tax relief and the economic stimulus package we passed is working. The economy grew at the rate of 4.2 percent in the first quarter. We were in recession in early '01. Early '04, we're growing at the rate of 4.2 percent. Economic growth over the past three quarters has been the fastest in nearly two decades. This economy is beginning to move.

I understand that Michigan still suffers. My attitude is, when I hear one person is looking for work, we got to make sure we continue to grow the economy. And while the growth numbers, the job numbers were good in certain parts of our country, they were slower in Michigan. But the plans we put in place should help those workers. We got to make sure that we don't go backwards and undo the good works we have done. Part of the vision for the next 4 years is to make sure this economy is healthy and strong with pro-growth, pro-small-business, pro-entrepreneur economic policies.

Let me tell you a couple of people I met today, just to maybe put this economic plan in perspective. I met the O'Roarks, Tom and Beth. They're with us. There they are, right. And they got two kids, and the reason I bring them is that the tax relief plan we passed saved them $1,700. That's good. That may not seem like a lot to some. It's a lot to them. They'll save $1,700 this year too. That's their money by the way. When somebody has got more of their own money, they're going to demand additional good or a service. And when that demand goes up, somebody produces the good or a service. And when somebody produces it, somebody is likely to find work.

No, the tax relief was important for our economy, but it's also important for families all across the country like the O'Roarks. I said the other day, our tax relief is showing that Americans can spend their money far better than the Federal Government would have.

Factory orders are up. Manufacturing is coming back. I tell you a statistic I love about our Nation right now: More people own a home. See, the homeownership rate is incredibly high, and not only that, more minorities own their own home. I tell you what's beautiful about that: We want more people owning something in America. We want people owning their own business. We want people owning and managing their own retirement accounts. We want more people owning their own home because this administration understands when you own something, you have a vital stake in the future of our country.

It's very important that fiscal policy understand the importance of small businesses in our society. Seventy percent of new jobs are created by small-business owners. Good fiscal policy, good economic policy focuses on the small-business sector—should focus on the small-business sector of America. I want you to know that an inherent part of the economic plan that we put forward is creating incentives for small business to expand.

Most small businesses in America are Subchapter S corporations or sole proprietorships. Those are legal terms describing what kind of taxes they pay, basically. If you're a sole proprietorship or a Subchapter S corporation, you pay tax at the individual income-tax rate. Therefore, when you hear us saying we're going to reduce individual income taxes, we're really reducing taxes as well on small businesses. The more a small business has in its coffers, the more likely it is it's going to expand. If 70 percent of new jobs are created by small businesses and you're worried about job creation, it seems to make sense to provide

stimulus to the small-business sector of the economy.

I was talking to Jim Van Zoeren. He runs a trucking company—Big Jim—and he's an upbeat guy. He's going to invest about $4 million in trucks and trailers and forklifts this year. He's a small-business guy. He's willing to invest. "Invest" means he's going to buy something from somebody. And when he buys it from somebody, somebody has got to make it.

In other words, the economy works as a result of the decisionmaking process from people like Jim. He has already hired 20 workers in the year 2004 to meet that investment. In other words, when you hear investment is up, you hear the tax plan encouraged investment, think jobs. Because there's 20 more people working for his firm as a result of the investments that he made. He's planning to hire 10 more this year. See, when Jim hires 30 people this year, there's people like him—it says something's happening. There's people like him all across the country. There's a lot of small businesses and entrepreneurs who are optimistic and hopeful, who have had their decisionmaking helped by good tax policy. And I intend to keep it that way. One reason I need to stay in office is to make sure that we don't ruin the incentives and don't stop the momentum of economic growth by failed Washington, DC, policies.

One thing you better watch out for are spending promises on a campaign. And you've got to take these promisers for their word. My opponent is a pretty good spender. We've got 6 more months to go in the campaign, and he's easily over a trillion in new promises. And so the question that I ask is, how is he going to pay for it? He said, of course, by taxing the rich. There's not enough money to tax the rich to pay for the new promises he's made. So guess who he is going to tax? He's going to tax you. That's what's going to happen. In order to meet all the promises he's making, he's going to have to raise the taxes on the American people.

Now is not the time to be raising taxes. This economy is getting strong. This economy is getting better. A tax increase on the American people, a tax increase on small-business owners, a tax increase on moms and dads who are trying to raise their families, raising that marriage penalty up is the wrong policy at the wrong time, and we're not going to let him have a chance to do so.

There is more to do to make sure this economy is the best place to do business in the world. If you're interested in jobs growing here in America, if you're interested in jobs staying here, I got some ideas that I want to share with you right quick. First, we cannot let Congress raise taxes on you. Raising taxes on the American people will make the country less competitive and will make it harder for people to find a job.

Secondly, we've got to make sure we've got good worker training programs. Listen, technology is changing. There are—changing the workforce. And the demand for workers—there's all kinds of jobs in America, but oftentimes, workers need new skills. They need new training. The community college system in America is a fantastic place to match up workers who want to find new skills with employers looking for new workers. I've got a plan called the Jobs for the 21st Century program to do just that.

We've got to make sure that health care costs are more affordable, and we must do so without letting the Federal Government run the health care industry. That's why I'm for association health care plans and health savings accounts, and that's why I am for medical liability reform at the Federal level, to stop the junk and frivolous lawsuits which are running up the cost of medicine.

You know, most American Presidents have opened up our markets to foreign products. That's good for consumers. When you get more products to choose from, it helps on price; it helps on quality. The

problem is, a lot of American Presidents haven't said to other nations, "Open up your markets." The best way to make sure that we have jobs for the 21st century, the best way we make sure that people can find work is reject economic isolationism and make sure the playing field is level. Listen, American workers, American farmers, American ranchers can compete with anybody, any time, anyplace so long as the rules are fair.

We need to make sure we get an energy policy in this country. We want to make sure that people are able to find work in the 21st century. This Nation needs an energy policy. I've laid out a plan to encourage conservation. I've laid out a plan to develop alternative sources of energy. Listen, I want to be the person that lays the groundwork for a President to be able to say, "Hey, the corn harvest was up, and we're less dependent." We need alternative sources of energy to be developed in this country. We've got research and development—ongoing research and development to encourage that. We need clean coal technology. We need to be exploring for natural gas in our own hemisphere. We need safe nuclear energy. We need a full-scale energy plan to make us less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

I'm running because I got a plan to make sure we're the best place to do business, so people can find work. I'm running because I understand what it means to keep America competitive in the world. We live in a global economy. I'm also running because I want to keep us—I want to enable us to be the innovative society that we are. Listen, we need to have broadband technology in every home in Kalamazoo, Michigan, and every farm in rural Michigan as well.

The role of Government is not to create wealth but an environment in which the entrepreneur, the imagination, the genius of the American people can survive, and that's why I need 4 more years as your President.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. Finally, I want to talk about something that's dear to my heart because—and it's because I understand the true strength of the country, and that is, my job is to rally the compassion of America to help save lives in this country. Look, Government is not a loving organization. [*Laughter*] Government is justice. Government is law. But Government is not loving. Love exists in the hearts and souls of the American citizens. The true strength of this country is not our military, although it's an important part of keeping the peace. The true strength of the country is not the fact that we're a very strong economy relative to other nations in the world. The true strength of the country is the hearts and souls of the American people, and I understand that.

I also understand that many problems can be only solved by love. Many problems can only be solved when a decent citizen takes time out of their life and says, "How can I help you, brother? What can I do to make your life better?"

No, the job of the President is to understand the proper relationship between the Government and the strength of the country. And the job of the President is to call upon that strength and rally that strength and encourage that strength to help save America one heart, one soul, one conscience at a time.

And that's why I have pushed so hard for what I call the Faith- and Community-Based Initiative that says to people, "Let us not focus on the process in Washington, DC. Let's focus on the results." And if there's a faith community that's got the capacity to change hearts and, therefore, help an addict on drugs, we ought not to fear empowering that program. We ought to encourage that program through Government help.

I met Iris and Louie Tortorelli here today. Where are the Tortorellis? There they are. [*Applause*] Thank you all. Nice

spattering of applause there for them. [*Laughter*] They're mentors. These are people that have lived a full life, and they want to live a fuller life by taking time out to help a child learn to read—what a wonderful gift, not only a gift to the child but a gift to them.

Like many of you in the audience, they are soldiers in the army of compassion. I'm sure I'm looking at people that have heard that call to love a neighbor just like you'd like to be loved yourself, people who are willing to do simple acts of kindness and love to help brighten somebody's day. These good folks are mentoring children, elementary school children. Here's what Louie said. He said, "It's so rewarding to work with the kids. I'm excited about what I'm doing. I can't do much physical work anymore, but I can do that."

I want to thank Iris and Louie for setting such a fine example. I want to thank you all as well. It's really part of what I call ushering in a new culture—the responsibility era, I like to call it. It's a different kind of culture from one that we had been through in the country, the culture that said, "If it feels good, just go ahead and do it," and, "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else." I envision a new culture, and it's happening not because of me but because of America, where each of us understands we're responsible for the decisions we make in life.

If you're a mom or a dad, you are responsible for loving your children with all your heart and all your soul. If you're worried about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you're responsible for doing something about it. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you're responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. Each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor like we'd like to be loved yourself. It's happening here in America. It's happening because the strength of this country is the character of the American people.

On September the 14th, 2001, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers. I will never forget that day. There were workers in hardhats shouting, "Whatever it takes." A guy pointed at me and said, "Don't let me down." As we all did that day, these men and women searching through the rubble took it personally. I took it personally. You took it personally. I have a responsibility that goes on. I will never relent in bringing justice to our enemies. I will defend the security of America, whatever it takes.

I want to again thank you for coming. We have a purpose together. We have a mission. We have a war to win, and the world is counting on us to lead the cause of freedom and peace. We have a duty to spread opportunity to every part of this country. That is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it. And we know that for our country, the best days lie ahead.

May God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 4:30 p.m. at Wings Stadium. In his remarks, he referred to Speaker Rick Johnson and Majority Leader Ken Sikkema, Michigan State Legislature; Betsy DeVos, chairman, Michigan Republican Party; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan; and Chairman Kim Chong-il of North Korea. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady, who introduced the President.

Statement on the Enlargement of the European Union
May 3, 2004

I applaud the action by the European Union (EU) to welcome into their membership 10 new countries from Central Europe and the Mediterranean. This enlargement will bring opportunity and hope to millions of Europeans. Along with NATO's expansion, the EU's enlargement further unites the new and the established democracies of Europe and helps create a Europe whole, free, and at peace. We welcome the prospect of further enlargement of the EU to qualified countries, including Romania and Bulgaria, and we support Turkey's European Union aspirations.

This new European Union will more effectively play its essential role as a force for democracy, prosperity, and stability. This action strengthens the enduring partnership between the United States and Europe and marks a major advance for the common values and purposes of our transatlantic community.

Remarks in Sterling Heights, Michigan
May 3, 2004

The President. Thanks for coming. It is great to be back in Michigan. In case you haven't heard, we're on the George W. Bush bus tour. It's my way to let the people of Michigan know how much I appreciate their support, how much I'm counting on your support. It's my way of letting you know I want to win and be President for 4 more years.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. Thank you all for coming. The first thing is I'd like to ask you to volunteer in the campaign. Get your neighbors to register to vote. Put the signs up. Talk to people from all walks of life and tell them this, that I've got a positive vision for the future of this country. I've got a positive vision for winning the war on terror and to spreading peace and freedom throughout the world, a positive vision for creating jobs and opportunity for every single American, a positive vision for capturing the great spirit of this country so every citizen has a chance to realize their dreams. I've got a goal to make sure this country is safer and stronger and better. I will leave no doubt where we stand, and we will win on November the 2d.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

Audience members. U.S.A.! U.S.A.! U.S.A.!

The President. We've had a fabulous day today. It's been somewhat diminished by the fact that Laura had to go home early. No, I know, you drew the short straw. [*Laughter*] There's a lot of reasons why I think I need to be reelected, but for certain, one of the most important reasons is to make sure that Laura is the First Lady for 4 more years.

[*At this point, there was a disturbance in the audience.*]

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. I can't tell you how proud I am of Laura. She is a fantastic First Lady. She is the love of my life. I am really proud of her, and I appreciate the job she has done. She loves the children of America. She understands the importance of teaching every child to read. And she sends her very best to all our friends here in

the Detroit area of the great State of Michigan.

I picked a really good man to be the Vice President of the United States in Dick Cheney. I want to thank Congresswoman Candice Miller for being my State campaign coordinator. I appreciate so very much Congressman Joe Knollenberg for being here today. Congressman Mike Rogers is with us as well.

I want to thank the secretary of state, Terri Lynn Land, for—Terri Lynn just drove with us from Kalamazoo here to the Detroit area on the George W. Bush bus.

I want to thank all the State and local officials who are here. I want to thank all the grassroots activists who are here. I want to thank my friend Travis Tritt for coming up from Nashville. I appreciate it. Billy Cerveny—I appreciate both of these great artists for coming today. I'm honored to have your support and your friendship. It means a lot to me.

The last 3 years have brought serious challenges, and we have given serious answers. We came to office with the stock market in decline and an economy headed into recession. We delivered historic tax relief, and now our economy is the fastest growing of any major industrialized country in the world. We uncovered corporate crimes that cost people their jobs and their savings, so we passed strong corporate reforms, brought the wrongdoers to account, and made it clear we will not tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America.

We saw war and grief arrive on a quiet September morning. We pursued the terrorist enemy across the world. We have captured or killed many key leaders of the Al Qaida network. The rest of them will learn there is no cave or hole deep enough to hide from American justice.

Audience members. U.S.A.! U.S.A.! U.S.A.!

The President. We confronted the dangers of state-sponsored terror and the spread of weapons of mass destruction, so we ended two of the most violent and dangerous regimes on Earth. We liberated over 50 million people. Once again, America is proud to stand against tyranny and to set nations free.

When Dick Cheney and I came to office, we found a military that was underfunded and underappreciated, so we gave our military the resources and the respect they deserve. And today, no one can question the skill and the strength and the spirit of the United States military.

Audience members. U.S.A.! U.S.A.! U.S.A.!

The President. It is the President's job to confront problems, not to pass them on to future Presidents and future generations. The President needs to step up to make the hard decisions and to keep his commitment, and that is how I will continue to lead our Nation for 4 more years.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. Great events will turn on this election. The man who sits in the Oval Office will set the course of the war on terror and the direction of our economy. The security and prosperity of America are at stake. The stakes are high.

I'll have a tough race, and that's why I'm counting on your help. I'm running against an experienced United States Senator.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. He's been in Washington for quite a long time. He's been there long enough to take both sides of just about every issue. He voted for the PATRIOT Act. He voted for NAFTA. He voted for No Child Left Behind, and he voted for the use of force in Iraq. Now he opposes the PATRIOT Act, NAFTA, the No Child Left Behind Act, and the liberation of Iraq.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. He's been on both sides of big issues. And if he could find a third side—[*laughter*]. He recently gave us another example of his technique. Last winter, my opponent was in Michigan and somebody asked him about the cars he had.

[*Laughter*] Here in the great auto-producing State, he said, quote, "We have some SUVs." He was talking about having a couple of minivans and a big Suburban. Last month, on Earth Day, Senator Kerry had a different description of his fleet. [*Laughter*] He said, and I quote, "I don't own an SUV." To clear up the confusion he said, "The family has it. I don't have it." [*Laughter*] In other words, he doesn't have an SUV except when he's in Michigan. [*Laughter*] Now, there's a fellow who's getting a lot of mileage out of his Suburban. [*Laughter*]

Whatever he drives, the voters this year will have a clear choice. It is a choice between keeping the tax relief that is moving this economy forward or putting the burden of higher taxes back on the American people. It is a choice between an America that leads the world with strength and confidence or an America that is uncertain in the face of danger.

The other side hasn't offered much in the way of strategies to win the war or policies to help people find work. We're well into the campaign, and all we hear is bitterness and outbursts instead of calm debate. They will find out that anger is not an agenda for the future of America. I will take on the big issues with optimism and resolve and determination. And I will make it clear, we stand ready to lead this country for 4 more years.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. A big issue for every family in America is the Federal tax burden. With the largest tax relief since Ronald Reagan was the President, we have left more money in the hands of those who earned it. By spending and investing and helping create new jobs, the American people have used their money far better than the Government would have.

We've overcome some tough challenges in this country, but I'm an optimist, because I understand the entrepreneurial spirit of America. I've seen small-business owners dream big dreams. I know you're facing economic challenges here in the great State of Michigan. Manufacturing communities have been especially hard hit. There are workers who are concerned about their jobs. I understand that—I understand that. Our economy is in a time of transition, and if you're the one going through transition, it's not an easy experience.

Workers and businesses in Michigan are meeting the challenges, though, with energy and optimism because of good policy. Because of the hard work of the people of this State and other States, our economy is strong, and it is growing stronger.

The economy grew at a strong rate of 4.2 percent in the first quarter of this year. Economic growth over the past three quarters has been the fastest in nearly two decades. In March, America added 308,000 new jobs, the highest monthly job growth total in almost 4 years; 5,900 of those new jobs was created here in Michigan.

Across this country, manufacturing activity is increasing. Business investment is rising. Disposable income is up. Inflation is low. Mortgage and interest rates are low. Homeownership is at the highest rate ever. The tax relief we passed is working.

My opponent has a different view of letting the American people keep more of their own income. When we passed an increase in the child credit to help families, he voted no. When we reduced the marriage penalty, he voted against it. When we created a lower 10-percent tax rate for working families, he voted no. When we gave small businesses a tax incentive to expand and hire, he voted against it.

When tax increases are proposed, it's a lot easier to get a "yes" vote out of him. [*Laughter*] He voted for taxes over—for higher taxes over 350 times since he's been a United States Senator. He supported gas tax increases 11 times and once favored an increase of 50 cents a gallon.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. By the way, it costs you $5 every time you filled up your car. For that, he at least ought to throw in a free car wash. [*Laughter*]

He's also proposing a lot of new spending. You've got to be careful about these folks that go around the country making promises with your money. He's increased spending over a trillion dollars, and we're just getting started in the campaign. He says he's going to pay for it by raising taxes on the rich. But he's got a problem—he's got a problem. All that new spending can't raise enough money—can't be paid for by raising money on the rich. Guess who he's going to raise taxes on: You. In order to pay for that new spending he's promised, he's either going to break the promise, or he's going to have to raise the taxes on the hard-working American people. And we're not going to let him have a chance to do so.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. See, you and I understand that higher taxes would undermine growth and destroy jobs just as our economy is getting stronger. To help grow the American economy and to create more jobs for American workers, I've got a better idea: We should keep the tax rates low. We should not raise taxes on the American people.

I want to be your President for 4 more years because I got a plan to make sure our country is the strongest economy in the world so people can find work. I have a plan to protect small-business owners and employees from frivolous lawsuits and needless regulations. We got a plan to help control the cost of health care by giving people better access through health savings accounts and association health care plans. I understand what frivolous lawsuits do to the cost of medicine. We need medical liability reform at the Federal level.

In order to make sure this economy is strong over the next decade, we need to have an energy plan. We need to encourage conservation, alternative sources of energy, but we need clean coal technology. We need exploration for natural gas. We need to become less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

In order to keep this economy strong and to make sure we're the leader in the world in economic growth so people can find work, I will continue to knock down trade barriers in foreign countries. Listen, we're the best in the world at growing things and manufacturing things in the high-tech world. All our people need is a level playing field. We should reject economic isolationism and work to make sure that our workers are treated fairly in overseas markets.

Empty talk about jobs and economic isolationism won't get anybody hired. The way to make sure this country is strong and people can find work is to reelect a pro-growth, pro-entrepreneur, pro-small-business President, and that is George W. Bush.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. Our future also depends on America's leadership in the world. The momentum of freedom in our time is strong, but we still face serious dangers. Al Qaida is wounded but not broken. Terrorists are testing our will in Afghanistan and Iraq. Regimes in North Korea and Iran are challenging the peace. If America shows weakness and uncertainty in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This will not happen on my watch.

This Nation is strong and confident in the cause of freedom. And today, no friend or enemy doubts the word of the United States of America. America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Afghanistan. The Taliban chose defiance, and the Taliban are no longer in power. America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Iraq. The dictator chose defiance, and now the dictator sits in a prison cell.

Audience members. U.S.A.! U.S.A.! U.S.A.!

The President. September the 11th, 2001, taught a lesson I will never forget and America must never forget. America must confront threats before they fully materialize. In Iraq, my administration looked at the intelligence, and we saw a threat. Members of Congress looked at the intelligence, and they saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence, and it saw a threat. As a matter of fact, the previous administration and the Congress looked at the intelligence and made regime change in Iraq the policy of our country.

In 2002, the United Nations Security Council yet again demanded a full accounting of Saddam Hussein's weapons programs. As he had for over a decade, Saddam Hussein refused to comply. I remembered the history of this man. He invaded his neighbors. He hated America. He had used weapons of mass destruction against his own people. He paid for suiciders to attack Israelis. He had ties to terrorists. So I had a choice: Either take the word of a madman, or defend America. Given that choice, I will defend America every time.

Audience members. U.S.A.! U.S.A.! U.S.A.!

The President. My opponent admits that Saddam Hussein was a threat. He just didn't support my decision to remove Saddam from power. Maybe he was hoping Saddam would lose the next Iraqi election. [*Laughter*]

We showed the dictator and a watching world that America means what it says. Because we acted, Saddam's torture chambers are closed. Because we acted, Iraq's weapons programs are ended forever. Because we acted, nations like Libya got the message and renounced their own weapons programs. Because we acted, an example of democracy is rising at the very heart of the Middle East. Because we acted, the world is more free, and America is more secure.

On the ground in Iraq, we still face serious challenges. It's hard work, but it's necessary work. Illegal militias and remnants of the regime, joined by foreign terrorists, are trying to take by force the power they could never gain by the ballot. They know a free Iraq will be a major defeat for the cause of terror. These groups have found little support among the Iraqi people. And they will find no success in their attempts to shake the will of America. You see, they don't understand our country. We will never be intimidated by thugs and assassins.

Audience members. U.S.A.! U.S.A.! U.S.A.!

The President. A free Iraq is an historic opportunity to change the world for the better. A free Iraq will be a peaceful Iraq, and we're implementing a clear strategy in Iraq. First, we will ensure there's an atmosphere of security as Iraqis move toward self-government. We support the effort of local Iraqis to convince the radicals to disarm. We made it clear that militias in Najaf and elsewhere must disarm, or they will face serious consequences. American and coalition forces are in place, and we are fully prepared to bring security and order in Fallujah and Najaf and around the country of Iraq.

The second element of our strategy is to return sovereignty to the people of Iraq on the schedule that we agreed to. We must keep our word. Like any proud people, Iraqis want to manage their own affairs, and I believe they can. It's a common goal we share. So on June 30th, a sovereign Iraq interim government will take office. We will still have hard work to do. These are not easy tasks, but they are essential tasks. We will finish what we have begun, and we will win this essential victory in the war on terror.

On national security, Americans have the clearest possible choice. My opponent says he approves of bold action in the world but only if other countries do not object.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. I'm all for united action. We built strong coalitions. There are more than 30 coalition partners in Iraq right now. But I will never turn over America's national security decisions to leaders of other countries.

We have a different point of view on security matters. Over the years, my opponent has opposed many of the aircraft and weapons programs, including the Bradley Fighting Vehicle and the Tomahawk Cruise Missile you build right here in Michigan, programs that are vital to our Nation's defense and programs that are now helping us win the war on terror. Last year, he voted against funding for ammunition and supplies and body armor for our troops on the frontlines of the war on terror.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Someone recently asked Senator Kerry why he voted against the 87 billion supplemental bill to fund those essential needs for our troops, and here is what he said: "I actually did vote for the 87 billion, before I voted against it." [*Laughter*] The President must speak clearly and mean what he says.

Some are skeptical the war on terror is really a war at all. Again, my opponent says the war on terror is far less a military operation and far more an intelligence-gathering, law enforcement operation. I disagree. Our Nation followed this approach after the World Trade Center was bombed in 1993. The matter was handled in the courts and thought by some to be settled. But the terrorists were still training in Afghanistan. They were still plotting in other nations. They were still drawing up more ambitious plans.

After the chaos and carnage of September the 11th, it is not enough to serve our enemies with legal papers. With those attacks, the terrorists and their supporters declared war on the United States of America, and war is what they got.

Our men and women in the military are taking great risks, and they're doing great work. At bases across our country and the world, I have had the privilege of meeting with those who defend our country and sacrifice for our security. I've seen their great decency and their unselfish courage. And I assure you, ladies and gentlemen, the cause of freedom is in good hands.

Audience members. Bush! Bush! Bush!

The President. This Nation is prosperous and strong. Yet, we need to remember that our greatest strength is in the hearts and souls of the American citizens. We are strong because of the values we try to live by, courage and compassion, reverence and integrity. We are strong because of the institutions that give us direction and purpose, our families, our schools, our religious congregations. These values and institutions are fundamental to our lives, and they deserve the respect of our Government.

We stand for the fair treatment of faith-based groups so they can receive Federal support for their works of compassion and healing. We will not stand for Government discrimination against people of faith.

We stand for welfare reforms that require work and strengthen marriage, which have helped millions of Americans find independence and dignity. We will not stand for any attempt to weaken those reforms and to send people back into lives of dependence.

We stand for a culture of life in which every person counts and every person matters. We will not stand for the treatment of any life as a commodity to be experimented upon or exploited or cloned.

We stand for the confirmation of judges who strictly and faithfully interpret the law. We will not stand for judges who undermine democracy by legislating from the bench or judges who try to remake the values of America by court order.

We stand for a culture of responsibility in America. The culture of our country is changing from one that has said, "If it feels good, just go ahead and do it," and, "If

you got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each of us understands we are responsible for the decisions we make in life.

If you're a mom or a dad, you are responsible for loving your child with all your heart. If you're worried about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you're responsible for doing something about it. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you're responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And in this responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we like to be loved ourselves.

For all Americans, these years in our history will always stand apart. There are quiet times in the life of a nation when little is expected of the leaders. This isn't one of those times. You and I are living in a period when the stakes are high, the challenges are difficult, a time when firm resolve is needed.

None of us will ever forget that week when one era ended and another began. On September the 14th, 2001, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers. I'll never forget that day. The workers in the hardhats were shouting, "Whatever it takes." One man pointed at me and said, "Don't let me down." As we did that day, these men and women searching through the rubble took it personally. I took it personally. I have a responsibility that goes on. I will never relent in bringing justice to the enemies. I will defend the security of America, whatever it takes.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. In these times, I've also been witness to the character of this Nation. Not so long ago, some had their doubts about the America character, our capacity to meet serious challenges or to serve a cause greater than self-interest, but Americans have given their answer. I've seen the unselfish courage of our troops. I've seen the heroism of Americans in the face of danger. I've seen the spirit of service and compassion renewed in our country, and we've all seen our Nation unite in common purpose when it mattered most.

We will need all of these qualities for the work ahead. We've got work to do for this Nation. We've got 4 more years to make—[*applause*].

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. We've got 4 more years to make sure that we win the war on terror. The world is counting on us to lead the cause of freedom and peace. We have a duty to spread opportunity to every part of America. This is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it. And we know that for our country, the best days lie ahead.

I'm honored to have your support. May God bless you, and may God continue to bless America. Thank you all very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:44 p.m. in the Jerome-Duncan Theatre at Freedom Hall. In his remarks, he referred to Michigan Secretary of State Terri Lynn Land; and country music entertainers Travis Tritt and Billy Cerveny. The transcript of these remarks was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 4.

Remarks in Maumee, Ohio
May 4, 2004

The President. Thank you. Thank you all very much. Thanks for coming. Please be seated.

Audience member. Ohio is Bush-Cheney country!

The President. There you go. [*Laughter*] Thanks for coming. Nothing better than having a good pancake for breakfast—except I didn't get mine. [*Laughter*]

Audience member. Viva Bush!

The President. Vamos a ganar. That means, we're going to win. Gosh, it's exciting to be here. I'm here because I want you to know I have a reason to be your President for 4 more years. I see clearly where we need to go as a nation. I have a positive vision for our country and the world. I have a plan to win the war on terror and to spread freedom and peace. I have a plan to make sure prosperity reaches every corner of America so our citizens can realize the full promise of our country. I have a plan to tap into the deep compassion of America so the lonely will find help, so the children can be mentored, so that the hungry can be fed. I have a positive, optimistic vision for our country.

I'm here to ask for your help. I'm here to help you—I'm here to ask you to help me serve for 4 more years in the great country of America.

Here's the agenda. Together we can work together to make sure America is safer, stronger, and better. And I cannot do it without your help. And so, first, I want to thank my chairman. Bernie, thanks for your leadership. Thanks for all the people who put on this fantastic breakfast. I want to thank the grassroots activists who are here. I want to thank those who are going to put up the signs. I want to thank those who are going to go to the community centers, to the religious congregations. I want to thank those who are going to go to your neighbors, both Republicans, Democrats. I want you to thank those who are going to go to the independents, and you remind them that we have a positive vision that benefits all of America.

I'm sorry Laura is not here. Yes, I know. She was on the bus trip yesterday but had to go back to Washington because, like me, she is—she works for the country. She's got something to do. She's got a scheduling conflict. [*Laughter*] But I tell you, she sends her love and her best. She is a fabulous First Lady. One of the main reasons to put me back in there—[*laughter*]—is so that Laura has 4 more years as the First Lady.

I think when you're out there garnering the vote, convincing people to show up to vote, make sure you remind them that I put together a fantastic administration—good, solid Americans, people from all walks of life who have served our country, put their country above self-interest. I'm running with a fantastic man, a great Vice President in Dick Cheney.

I one time said to a crowd—and my mother was in the audience—I said, "Dick Cheney is the finest Vice President the country has ever had." [*Laughter*] Mother yelled out, "Wait a minute, buster!" [*Laughter*]

I want to thank your Governor, who's traveled with me today, Governor Bob Taft. I'm proud you're here, Governor. Thank you for coming. I want to thank Congressman Paul Gillmor for being here today. Congressman, I appreciate you coming. Larry Kaczala is with us, who is going to be elected to the United States Congress. I'm proud he's here. I know we got a lot of State and local officials. I'm proud you're here. I appreciate you being here. I know there's some mayors here. I like to give advice to mayors. When you're the President, you can take liberties to give people advice. Fill the potholes. [*Laughter*]

I appreciate everybody bringing their families. There's some people bringing their families here. Go ahead and use me as a convenient excuse to skip school. Just tell them the President said, give you an "A."

I'm here seeking the vote. See, I believe you have to ask for the vote. I believe you've got to ask people for their help, and I believe you've got to ask for the vote. I've come to this important part of Ohio to say, "I need your help, and I want your vote." I want your vote come November the 2d. And with your help and with your vote, Ohio will be Bush country once again, and I will be the President of the United States.

I believe we've shown the country that I can put together an administration that knows how to lead, an administration that can handle the tough times, an administration that's steady and resolute, an administration clear of vision. And it's important that we not only talk about what has happened, but as importantly in a campaign, you talk about what you intend to do. And that's what I want to share some time with you today. I want you to tell your friends and neighbors, as we seek the vote, as we garner support, that this administration has done things. And the only reason we look past—to the past is to verify what we're going to do in the future to make this country safer and stronger and better.

I want you to know it's going to be a tough campaign. I'm under no illusions, and I look forward to it. My energy level is high. My enthusiasm for the job is strong. I have a deep desire to serve the American people for 4 more years, but it's going to be a tough contest. I'm fully aware of how tough it's going to be. I'm running against an experienced United States Senator. He's been there a long time. He's been there so long, he's just about on both sides of every issue. [*Laughter*]

Ohio is going to be a contested State. He's been here seeking endorsements. As you might remember, he claims to have picked up some important endorsements from foreign leaders. [*Laughter*] He just won't give us the names. [*Laughter*] He did drop a hint the other day. He insisted—and here's what he said. "What I said is true"—this is my opponent speaking. He said, "What I said is true. I mean, you can go to New York City, and you can be in a restaurant, and you can meet a foreign leader." [*Laughter*] I got a hunch this whole thing might be a case of mistaken identity. [*Laughter*] Just because somebody has an accent—[*laughter*]—and a nice suit and a good table at a fancy restaurant in New York doesn't make them a foreign leader. [*Laughter*] But whoever these mystery men are, they're not going to be deciding this election. The American people will be deciding this election.

And the American people are going to have a clear choice in this election. It's a choice between keeping the tax relief that is moving this economy forward or putting the burden of higher taxes back on the American people. It is a choice between an America that leads the world with strength and confidence or an America that is uncertain in the face of danger. And I look forward to making these choices abundantly clear to the people of Ohio and the American people.

I know what it takes to win the war on terror. My most important job is to make America a safer place. That's my most solemn duty, is to protect us from an enemy that hates what we stand for. On September the 11th, 2001, disaster struck many families in our country and struck our Nation. It made us realize that we're no longer immune from being a battlefield in a new kind of war. It was an historic moment in our country. It's necessary for the President to see clearly the challenges that we face, to understand clearly the tasks.

My opponent and others believe this matter is a matter of intelligence and law enforcement. I strongly disagree. See, that was the attitude we had before September the 11th, after the World Trade Center

was attacked in 1993. They thought we could solve it with legal indictments. Some people thought the matter had been solved, but the enemy was plotting and planning and training. They served notice on us, and we're now serving notice on them. We're not going to just serve them with legal papers. We will use every asset at the disposal of the United States Government to bring these killers to justice.

My most solemn duty, the most solemn duty of our administration is to do everything in our power to protect the American people. We got better intelligence sharing now. Our ports and borders are better guarded. Airports are little harder to fly in. Heck, they're looking at the shoes—[*laughter*]—but we want to know. It's our job. We have to be correct 100 percent of the time to protect you. The enemy only has to be right one time. So we've got a daunting task. And we're doing everything we can to button up the homeland, but the best way to win this war on terror is to stay on the offense, never relent, never yield, and bring people to justice before they have a chance to harm Americans.

And we're making progress. We're slowly but surely dismantling Al Qaida. I like to put it this way: There is no cave or hole deep enough to hide from the justice of the United States of America and our friends.

It's very important for the President of the United States to speak clearly and, when he says something, mean what he says. In order to make the world more peaceful and the world more free, when an American President speaks he better speak with authority, clarity, and certainty. And when he does speak, he better mean it. And so when I said to the world, "If you harbor a terrorist, if you feed a terrorist, if you hide a terrorist, you're just as guilty as the terrorist," I meant exactly what I said, and the Taliban found out.

The Taliban no longer exists in power in Afghanistan, and the world is better off for it. America is more secure as a result of the actions that we took, not just America but others. America and the world is better off because the Taliban and their hatred and their barbaric ways no longer are in power.

Equally as important, the people of Afghanistan are better off as a result of the Taliban being out of power. I want you to remember—first of all, see the movie "Osama." It's an interesting portrayal, and it's a sad portrayal of what life was like for a young girl in Afghanistan under the Taliban. This child, of course, never had a chance to go to school, never had a chance to realize her potential, was literally enslaved by the barbaric behavior and attitude and ideology of these backward people. Not only did we uphold a doctrine, not only did we make America more safe and secure, this great, generous, compassionate country liberated—liberated—people from the clutches of tyranny and slavery, and I am proud of our Nation for doing so.

A President must understand that things changed on September the 11th and that when we see a threat overseas, it must not be allowed to materialize. In order to do our duty to make America safer, we must not take any threat for granted. We must never hope for the best. We must never hope that somebody might change their attitude and therefore the world will be more peaceful.

Listen, I saw intelligence, and it told me loud and clear that Saddam Hussein was a threat. The Congress, members of both political parties, looked at the same intelligence, and they saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence, and it saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council voted unanimously and said to Saddam Hussein, "Disarm, or face serious consequences." They said that, and I believed it was necessary because not only did we look at intelligence

and saw a threat, we remembered his behavior. He used weapons of mass destruction on his own people and on his neighbors. He had terrorist ties. He was paying suiciders to kill innocent people in Israel. He was a man who was a destabilizing influence in the world. He's a person who hated what America stood for.

The United Nations Security Council acted. He defied once again. This wasn't the first time that he had said to the world, "I don't care what your demands are," and he defied—my attitude is when you say something, you better mean it. When you say, "Disarm, or face serious consequences," the world, when it speaks, better mean what it says in order to make the world more peaceful. So I had a choice to make: Either to take the word of a madman, a tyrant, a hater, or to defend America. And given that choice, I will defend America every time.

Because we acted, torture chambers are closed. Because we acted, there won't be any more mass graves. Because we acted, because we kept our word, countries like Libya got the message and voluntarily disarmed. Because we acted, democracy is beginning to rise in the heart of a troubled region. Because we acted, the world is more peaceful, and America is more secure.

There's hard work left to be done in Iraq, and like you, I mourn any time an American soldier loses his or her life. It's an incredibly sad moment for our country. I met with many families, and I've assured them that their loved one will not die in vain, that the mission we're on is an historic opportunity to make this country safer and the world more peaceful.

Freedom is an essential part of my vision for the future, because I know that free countries will be peaceful countries. I know that freedom, when it takes hold in the Middle East, will change the Middle East. The doctrine up to now has been for stability in the Middle East, and look where it's got us. I think we have to have a different strategy, a different vision, a different future, and that is to promote freedom and democracy in the part of the world that desperately needs freedom and democracy. See, freedom is not America's gift to the world; freedom is the Almighty's gift to each man and woman in this world.

These are historic times. It's an historic opportunity. The Iraqi people, of course, are watching very carefully. See, most Iraqis, of course, want to be free. They want to live in a free society. Moms and dads want to raise their children in peaceful settings so their children can realize their dreams and fulfill their talents. That's what they want. And they're watching carefully the United States. They're watching to see how we react. They're watching to see whether we cut and run or whether we're good for our word. They don't have to worry about me. I don't care what the politics are. I don't care what the pressures are. We will make sure that we fulfill our mission and Iraq is free.

Either Iraq will be a camp for terror and tyranny, or Iraq will be a model for freedom and democracy. And I believe Iraq will be a model for freedom and democracy, and the world will be better off.

I love to tell the story about my dinner with Prime Minister Koizumi. He's the Prime Minister of Japan. And Laura and I were visiting him in Tokyo, and we were having Kobe beef, by the way. And we were talking about North Korea. Amongst many of the topics we discussed, one of them was how to make sure the Korean Peninsula—what we can do together to make sure the Korean Peninsula is nuclear-weapons-free. It's a vital mission. There's a tyrant in North Korea that wants to develop a nuclear weapon. And I, of course, believe that we ought to work with other nations to convince him not to have that nuclear weapon, and one of those nations is Japan.

And it dawned on me in the course of the conversation that here I was talking to the leader of a former enemy. My dad went to the theater to fight Japan in World

War II. Many of your dads—I'm sure we've got some veterans here who did the same thing—and here I am talking to the Prime Minister of Japan about how to keep the peace. And it dawned on me, what happens if we had gotten it wrong after World War II? Would I have been having this conversation? And also I realized that when we get it right in Iraq, some day an American President will be sitting down with a duly elected leader of Iraq to discuss the threat of that era, about how best to safeguard America and the world.

These are historic times. This is a time in which the world has an opportunity to change for the better. America is leading the way. America won't relent. We'll stay steadfast. We will not let thugs and assassins shake our will. We will keep our promise to the Iraqi people, and the world will be better off for it.

There's a different attitude in this race about foreign policy. My opponent says he approves of bold action in the world but only if other countries do not object. [*Laughter*] I believe in forming alliances and coalitions. I understand how important it is to share intelligence. I know how important it is to work together to cut off finances that go to terrorists. I understand how important it is to share the burden of fulfilling our mission, which we have done. There's over—about 30 countries in Iraq that share the same vision we do. Now, I'm for—all for united action, but I will never turn over America's national security decisions to leaders of other foreign countries.

I have a vision to make sure that America is a strong country, and that starts with making sure our economy is strong. In order for us to be a leader in the world, in order for people to be able to realize their dreams, this economy has got to grow. And I'm optimistic about the future of this economy because I know what we have been through, and so do you, in this part of Ohio.

Let me remind you right quick about the short-term history, the economic history of our country. We've been through a recession. That is a relatively long word for meaning we were going backwards, that there was negative growth. Recession is a really tough time for families. Recession is tough times for small-business owners. Recession is a period of uncertainty. The stock market also started to decline in March of 2000. That makes people feel pitiful—not pitiful—it makes them feel more poor when you see your asset base drop, when you open up your retirement accounts and all of a sudden, the value is less.

We started to recover from that. Then the enemy hit us, and that affected our economy. It affected our national psyche, and it affected the economy. Remember, we had to shut down Wall Street; airplanes didn't fly. It was a traumatic time for the American economy.

We started to recover from that, and then we had some citizens who failed us because they didn't tell the truth. They forgot what it meant to be responsible in their work. There was corporate scandals. That affected our economy. We passed tough laws. People are now being held to account. We will not tolerate dishonesty in any boardroom in America.

And then I made the decision, as we just discussed, about securing America and liberating Iraq. And as you might remember, on the TV screens for a period of time it said "March to War." That's not a positive thought. It's a—if you're a small-business owner and you're thinking about investing and you hear the country is marching to war, it is a—it's the kind of thing that dampens enthusiasm for capital investment.

But we've overcome all that. We're now marching to peace. But we've overcome all that, and the economy is strong. The economy is getting better. We're in a time of transition as well. The nature of the job base is beginning to shift, which provides

opportunity. But if you're somebody whose job is being transitioned, it provides anxiety.

And I know there's a lot of people in this part of the State who are anxious about their job future. I clearly understand that, but because of the optimistic outlook of our society, because the entrepreneurial spirit is strong, because we refuse to relent in the face of hardship, this country—this economy is strong, and it is getting stronger. And the people of Ohio are going to feel the economic vitality that's occurring across the country.

I say that because in the month of March, there were 7,900 new jobs created in Ohio—7,900 out of the 308,000 new jobs that were created in the month of March. In other words, 7,900 in March in Ohio, part of the 308,000. In other words, the job picture is improving. It's getting better. Economic vitality is strong. The first quarter growth rate was at 4.2 percent. The economic growth rate over the past three quarters has been nearly the fastest in two decades. Things are getting better.

The unemployment rate here has dropped from 6.3 percent to 5.7 percent. That's across the State of Ohio. I understand there are pockets of frustration and disappointment. But one thing is clear—and by the way, homeownership, the rate of homeownership is the highest it's ever been in our Nation's history. In other words, things are improving. The pro-growth, pro-entrepreneur agenda that we passed in Congress is working. Tax relief has made a difference to the economy.

Tax relief means people have got more money in their pocket. Tax relief means you've got more money to spend or save or invest. Tax relief means there's an increase in demand for goods and services. And in our society, when there's an increase of demand, somebody produces a good or a service to meet that demand, and when that happens, somebody is more likely to keep a job or find work.

The tax relief has made a huge difference in families, like Jeff and Katie Seevers' family. Where are Jeff and Katie? There they are. Thank you for coming. This good family—they've got three children. The tax relief provided them $2,200 last year and $2,200 this year of additional money for them to spend. I said—the other day I made a comment—I'll probably say the same thing tonight in Cincinnati—that the growth in our economy has shown that the American people are spending their money far better than the Federal Government would have.

Jeff and Katie can spend their money better than the Congress, in our opinion. It's the cornerstone of our economic policy to trust them with their own money. They said they're going to build a new playroom in their house. That's good for the economy. In other words, they have made a different decision than they would have had they not gotten the tax relief. Somebody has got to build the playroom, unless old Jeff decides to do it himself. [*Laughter*] But when he hires somebody to build the playroom, somebody has got to buy the materials. When somebody buys the materials, somebody has got to manufacture the materials. In other words, when he makes a decision, it begins to ripple throughout the economy.

There are million of decisions being made in America as a result of the tax relief that is encouraging economic growth and economic vitality. Remember how the tax relief was structured. We said, "If you have a child, you're going to have your child credit increased." In other words, we want people to be able to better raise their families. We said, "We're going to try to reduce the effects of the marriage penalty." I mean, think about a Tax Code, by the way, that discourages marriage. It's the wrong signal. We want to encourage families in America. We want our families to be strong in this country.

We've created a 10-percent tax bracket to help people at the lower end of the economic ladder. In other words, we expanded opportunities by decreasing taxes

on the American people, and that, of course, created a huge debate in Washington. There are some up there that would rather have your money to increase the size of Government. Our policy, our progrowth policy says the way to make sure people can find work is to increase your ability to spend your own money, your ability to make your own decisions with your own money, and it's a difference in this campaign.

An important point—when you're out there gathering the vote, explain to them our vision about economic growth. A lot of it has to do with making sure the small-business sector of our economy is vibrant and strong. An integral part of creating new jobs is to make sure the small-business owner and the entrepreneur have gotten more resources to spend. After all, 70 percent of new jobs in America are created by small-business owners and entrepreneurs. They're a vital part of any economic recovery.

So we did a couple of things in the tax relief package, in the progrowth package to encourage small businesses to grow. First, we've provided incentive for people to invest. In other words, when you invest, the Tax Code says you get a little extra tax break because we want people investing. We want people buying things. When a small business buys a piece of equipment, somebody has to manufacture that piece of equipment. And when somebody manufactures it, somebody is likely to find—to keep a job, and/or, if there's enough orders, they're going to expand the job base to make the new equipment that the small-business owner is trying to buy.

The other thing we did—and it's very important for our citizens to understand this—is that we cut the taxes on everybody who pays taxes. See, the tendency is to say, "Well, you're deserving tax relief, and you're not deserving of tax relief." My attitude is, if you're going to have tax relief, everybody ought to get tax relief, and so we cut all rates.

Most small businesses are Subchapter S corporations or sole proprietorships. That's legal terminology for meaning that small businesses pay tax at the individual income tax rate. So when you hear us talking about cutting all rates, I want you to connect that with small-business vitality. If you're a sole proprietorship and a Subchapter S, and all rates have been cut, it means you got more money as small-business owner to expand your business. If 70 percent of new jobs are created by small businesses, it makes eminent sense. It's logical. It is important that the small-business sector of America receive benefits from tax relief, which is precisely what we did.

Mike McAlear is with us. He runs a manufacturing commission in Millbury. Where are you, Mike? There you go. He is—this has been a family business. There's a lot of family businesses. There's a lot of people who started their business in a garage and passed it on from one generation to the next—another reason we need to get rid of the death tax, by the way, is so he can pass his assets on to whoever he wants to. Mike hired 13—last year, he hired 13 workers, because he's optimistic about the future. He's going to invest $200,000 in new equipment. He'll save about $40,000 more because of the tax relief package we passed. In other words, there was an incentive for Mike to make the decision to buy $200,000 worth of equipment. He's going to need workers to run that equipment.

So when you hear that Mike is optimistic enough to hire 13 people, new workers last year and is thinking about hiring workers this year, that's a good sign. It means tax relief is working. It means there's a vitality alive here in the American economy. The best way for people of this part of the world to find a job is to make sure the small-business sector, businesses like Mike, are vibrant and strong and able to compete and willing to hire new workers, and that's precisely what's happening around America.

This campaign is going to be based upon understanding whose money we spend in Washington, DC, and how to make sure we're fiscally responsible enough in Washington so we don't raise your taxes. See, the economy is beginning to grow. The worst thing to do is to take money out of the people's pockets. The worst thing to do right now is to raise the taxes on the American people. I'm steadfast in my support of letting the people keep more of their own money. I have a question about my opponent's steadfastness, and I'll tell you why. Thus far in the campaign, he's proposed over a trillion dollars in new spending.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. That's a lot of promises, and we're just getting started. I mean, we're 6 months away; there's no telling how much more money he'll be putting out on the table. [*Laughter*] And he said he's going to pay for it by taxing the rich. That's an old slogan we've heard before, isn't it? Yes. But guess who the rich is? That's you. Because there's not enough money when it comes to taxing the rich to pay for all these promises. So my——

Audience member. Is he going to tax his wife? [*Laughter*]

The President. Behave yourself. [*Laughter*]

See, he laid out all these promises, and he said he's going to do it by taxing the rich, but there's a huge funding gap. Either he's going to break his promises on spending, which I doubt, or he's going to raise your taxes, which I believe. And raising your taxes right now would be an economic disaster for America. We're not going to give him a chance to raise your taxes.

The job—the vision of this campaign is to make sure America is the leader in the world when it comes to the economy. That's the vision. The vision is to make sure we're the best place to do business in the world, in order for people to find work. The vision is to put practical, commonsense policies in place to make sure that we're on the leading edge of change.

I tell you what's important, is to make sure that we've got good tort reform in America. These frivolous and junk lawsuits make it awfully hard for small businesses. We're for people being able to have their day in court, but we fully understand the costs and the effects and how difficult it is for small businesses and others to be able to survive on the onslaught of junk and frivolous lawsuits.

Junk and frivolous lawsuits also affect the cost of health care. When you're a doc and you're afraid you're going to get sued, you practice defensive medicine, which runs up the cost to your health care. And in some places, docs just decide to quit practicing medicine. We need medical liability reform at the Federal level.

In order for people to be able to find work, we've got to make sure that we have practical policies to control the cost of health care. If you're a small-business owner, you're concerned about making sure your employees have got health care. Association health care plans will enable small businesses to better compete. In other words, what we're saying is small businesses can pool their risk just like big businesses can, so they can afford better health care for their employees.

We need health savings accounts so customers are the decisionmakers in health care, not the Federal Government. The big debate in Washington, DC, is who best to control the health care. We believe consumers and patients and Americans ought to be the decisionmakers. Our opponent believes it's the Federal Government that ought to be making the health care decisions for America.

We've got to make sure we have an energy policy. Listen, if we want to be competitive in the 21st century, if we want our workers to be able to find jobs, we need an energy policy, an energy policy that encourages conservation, an energy policy that encourages alternative sources

of energy, an energy policy that promotes clean coal technology, an energy policy that promotes safe nuclear policy, an energy policy that encourages exploration of natural gas in our own hemisphere and our own lands, an energy policy that makes us less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

In order to make sure people are able to find work and America is the leading country in the world when it comes to economic growth, we need to promote an innovation society. We need to make sure we're on the leading edge of innovation. I'm a strong supporter in research and development. I believe there ought to be broadband technology in every home by the year 2007. And shortly thereafter, there ought to competing services so you get a better price and better quality. Broadband technology is going to be one of the important parts about changing America and to make sure we're on the leading edge.

But one of the things that's interesting, if you're the most innovative country in the world and—one of the real challenges we face is to make sure people are educated. You see, technology can race through an economy and literally change how we do business and create fantastic opportunities. But if people are not educated, if they don't have the skills to fill the jobs of the 21st century, America will not be the leading nation in the world.

We started by changing the whole way we run our public schools in America. First, we haven't changed the decisionmaking process. Local control of schools must be an integral part of any government policy when it comes to public education. But for the first time, in return for Federal money, mainly aimed at Title I students, the poorer students, we're saying, "Show us, Ohio, or any other State, whether or not the children can read and write and add and subtract." You see, we believe in high expectations. We believe every child can learn, regardless of the color of their skin. We expect every child to learn.

We oppose a system which simply shuffles children through. In other words, there are some places where, if your parent doesn't speak English as a first language, the school says, "You're too hard to educate. Let's move you through." There's some school districts where a roomful of inner-city kids are—"It's too tough to teach you to read. Let's just move through." Those days are ended. We're challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations. And if the schools don't perform, the parents ought to have other options. And we're going to get it right early. We're going to get it right early, before it's too late.

But the economy changes; there's older workers that need help. I've got a robust plan to make sure that they get the training they need to fill the jobs of the 21st century. Some manufacturing jobs are going away. They're being replaced by high-tech jobs or jobs in the health care field. And the challenge to make sure America is competitive is to make sure those workers in the industries that are shrinking have an opportunity to be retrained for the jobs of the 21st century.

It's happening all across America, mainly at community colleges. One of the greatest assets we have in America and a part of my vision for making sure we provide productivity training—where we increase the productivity of our workers through training—is to use the community college system to match employers who are looking for workers with willing workers, so they get the skills they need to become a more productive worker for higher pay and a better standard of living for their families.

This is going to be a debate about the future of the country and the future of our economy. A strong America means that we have a strong economy today and are able to compete tomorrow. That's the whole debate. It's essential that we reject economic isolationism. It's essential we be a confident nation. Listen, most trade policy in the past has been to open up our markets to foreign goods. That's good for

consumers. You see, when you've got more products from which to choose, you get better price and better quality. It's a market-oriented approach to goods coming in. The problem is we haven't been opening up markets overseas.

Listen, we're really good at things here in America. We're great at growing things. We're great at manufacturing. We're great at high-tech. Our policy ought not to be to wall ourselves from—off from the rest of the world. Our policy is to be optimistic and confident and demand that other countries open up their markets just like we have done for theirs, and we can compete with anybody.

This is the way to make sure that our economy is strong and people can find work. It starts with a philosophy: The role of Government is not to create wealth; the role of Government is to create an environment where the entrepreneur—the entrepreneurial spirit is strong, where small businesses can grow to be big businesses. The role of Government is to think out in the future. It is important that we reelect this administration because we're pro-growth, pro-entrepreneur, pro-small-business, and pro-worker in America.

Finally, let me talk about a better America. It's important to understand—I think it's important for a President to understand where the true strength of America lies. If you're the President, you've got to understand the strengths of the country. And the strength of this country is not our military, although I intend to keep it strong. And for those of you who have got a loved one in the military, you tell them the Commander in Chief is incredibly proud of their service to our country.

The strength of the country is—"a" strength of the country but not "the" strength of the country is the fact that we're a wealthy nation, and that's good. The strength of the country is the hearts and souls of the American people. That's the strength of this country, when you think about it.

It's important to have a President who understands that if we're to have a hopeful future, it's important to understand the strength of America, because the job of the President is to rally that spirit, is to call people to serve their Nation by loving their neighbor just like they'd like to be loved themselves.

Government is not a loving organization. Government is—to me, Government is law and justice. Love comes from hearts and souls. Love oftentimes is inspired from above. Love is an essential part of helping solve some of the problems that seem impossible to solve. Amidst our plenty, there is loneliness and hunger and people lacking shelter. But those problems can be solved by rallying the armies of compassion, by encouraging people to serve their Nation by loving their neighbor.

Scott Dietsch is with us today. Where are you, Scott? Scott is a Big Brother in the Toledo area. See, he's taking time out of his life to mentor a child. His "little brother" Lance isn't here. He doesn't know his dad. Lance doesn't know his dad. Lance has got—now, however, has been surrounded by love because of Scott. Lance has had something happen in his life that's so incredibly positive and hopeful and uplifting because Scott has stepped up and said, "I want to be a soldier in the army of compassion." Scott is taking time out of his life. Here's what he says: "It helps fulfill me,"—Scott's words—"It helps fulfill me to know I'm doing something for the better good. If I can change the route of one kid, at least I'll have done something."

That's the spirit of a compassionate, better America. You see, together we change America one heart, one soul, one conscience at a time. That's why I think it's so important for the Government to encourage community-based and faith-based programs to flourish, to encourage their creation, to say to the social entrepreneurs of America, we welcome your works of kindness and compassion. We will not discriminate against people of faith. We will

stand side by side with people of faith as they perform their duty as they see it, to make America a hopeful and compassionate place.

No, one of the key, important parts about this campaign for President is to make sure that we have a better tomorrow—we not only have a safer America, a stronger America, but a better America that will enable each of our citizens to realize the God-given talents that they have been given. And it is possible to do so because this—America's strength, true strength, important strength is in the hearts and souls of our citizens.

On September the 14th, 2001, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers. It was an amazing day for me. I will remember—I remember clearly a guy in a hardhat as I was walking through the rubble. He said, "Don't let me down," and then people were shouting, "Whatever it takes." That's what they were shouting. And like we all did that day, I took it personally, what happened to America. I have a responsibility that goes on. I will never relent to bringing justice to our enemies. I will defend America, whatever it takes.

I am here to ask for your help because I understand the task ahead for the country. I see clearly where we need to go. We have a war to win, and the world is counting on us to spread freedom and peace. We have a duty to spread opportunity and hope to every part of this country. That is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it, and we know that for our country, the best days lie ahead.

Thank you for coming. May God bless you, and my God bless America. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:30 a.m. at a pancake breakfast at the Lucas County Recreation Center. In his remarks, he referred to Bernadette Restivo Noe, chairman, Lucas County Republican Party; Gov. Bob Taft of Ohio; Larry A. Kaczala, candidate for Congress in Ohio's Ninth Congressional District; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan; and Chairman Kim Chong-il of North Korea.

Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session in Dayton, Ohio
May 4, 2004

The President. Thank you all. Please be seated. Mind if I take off my coat? I think I will. Listen, thank you all for coming. I'm thrilled to be here. I'm sorry I'm a little late. I got a little windy up in Toledo. [*Laughter*] But I appreciate you coming by for what we call a conversation. I'm going to talk a little bit. Some fellow citizens here are going to talk a little bit about their lives in order to better illustrate our vision for an America that is safer and stronger and better. And if we've got some time, I'll answer some questions. Then I've got to get on the bus. [*Laughter*] The bus driver said, "If you talk too long, I'm pulling out of here." [*Laughter*]

I'm here to let you know that I want to serve as your President for 4 more years. [*Applause*] Thank you all. And I want to tell you why. I'm here to explain the reason why. We've got a job to do, a job to make sure this country is as safe as it can be, as strong as it should be, and as compassionate as it will be.

I'm also here to let you know that I need your help, that I need your help in convincing your neighbors to register to vote, to do their duty as Americans to vote.

And don't be afraid to talk to people from the other party or people who may not be affiliated with any party, because our message is positive and optimistic and hopeful for every single American.

The good news is Laura W. Bush wants to serve for 4 more years as well. I regret she's not here. I talked to her on the plane earlier this morning. She said to send her very best. She is a—I'm a lucky guy. She's a great wife, a wonderful mother, and a fabulous First Lady of the United States. She's come to recognize what I know about the job, is that we can make a difference in people's lives, a positive difference. She is very much involved with encouraging teachers to teach, saying to people, "Look, if you're looking for a second career, say, if you served in the military and you're looking for something to do, get into the classroom and make a difference in some child's life." She understands the importance of reading. She was a public school librarian when I met her. She didn't like politics, and she didn't like politicians. [*Laughter*] Look where she is. [*Laughter*]

She can speak to freedom and the importance of freedom in societies like—she has the ability to speak to the women of Afghanistan like she did on a radio broadcast. Listen, Laura understands what I know: It's a high privilege to serve the people of this country, and it's a fantastic opportunity to make the country as best as it can possibly be. She sends her best. She is—look, the best reason to put me back in there is so she's got 4 more years. [*Laughter*]

When you're out talking to your neighbors, remind them that I have put together a really good team to serve the country, people from all walks of life, men and women in positions of high responsibility, people from different backgrounds, people who are honorable citizens who have come to serve not their self-interest but to serve our country.

I got a great Vice President I'm running with in Dick Cheney. I remember being at a rally with my mother—Mother is still, you'll be happy to hear, a little feisty and outspoken at times. [*Laughter*] I said, "Dick Cheney is the finest Vice President our country has ever had." [*Laughter*] You can imagine what Mother said. [*Laughter*]

I appreciate Congressman Dave Hobson for being here today. Where are you, Big Dave? Thank you, sir. Glad you're here—a fine Member of the House, a strong ally, and a good man. Appreciate you coming, Dave. I want to thank Congressman Mike Turner. I see you, Mike. I'm proud you're here, Mike.

I know Jennette Bradley is with us, and Joe Deters, members of the State—there they go. Good to see you all. Thanks for coming, Governor and Joe. Majority Whip Jeff Jacobson and State Rep. Jon Husted—where are you both? Oh, there they go. Thought you'd get a better seat than that. [*Laughter*] Sign up a few more volunteers. [*Laughter*]

Listen, I want to thank Bob Bennett, the Ohio party chairman. I want to thank all the grassroots activists that are here. I need your help. I'm going to say it again. I'm here really to say, let's get after it. I want to win. I want to do everything I can to make sure this country is as safe as it can possibly be, and that's my most solemn duty. It was a duty that came home loud and clear on September the 11th, 2001. My job is to rally our Government to protect Americans from harm.

And we're working hard to do so. We changed the whole attitude in Washington about sharing intelligence between agencies, buttoning up the country as best as we possibly can. I think they're doing a darn good job at the airports. I know it's inconvenient, but it's all part of doing our duty to make this country secure. We have to be correct 100 percent of the time in order to protect America. The enemy has got to be right once, which really says that the best way to secure the homeland is to chase these killers down, one at a time, and bring them to justice.

I've got a plan to win the war on terror. We're making progress. We're not in this battle alone. First, just understand the nature of the war. Some say, "Well, this is just a matter of law enforcement and intelligence." No, that's not what it is. It's an issue that requires all our assets. It's an issue that requires the nature of the enemy if we're going to be able to solve the problem. These are coldblooded killers. They could care less about innocence or guilt. They have no conscience. There's no need to negotiate with them. You can't convince them of the error of their ways. This country must be strong and resolute, and we must never falter in the face of this enemy if we expect to secure the homeland.

It is essential that America lead through strength on this issue, lead by using all the assets we have at our disposal, not just some. It is important that when an American President speaks, he means what he says. It's important for the President to be clear in his language and resolute in the intention. That's when I said that—for example, when I said, "If you harbor a terrorist, you're just as guilty as the terrorist"—once you say that, you better be willing to act on it. We were willing to act on it, and now the Taliban is no longer in power in Afghanistan.

Part of the war on terror is chasing Al Qaida down, and about two-thirds of their known leaders have been brought to justice, which is positive. The rest of them know we're breathing down their neck. Part of the war is to make sure there's no safe haven. And so, by removing the Taliban out of Afghanistan and introducing democracy into this country, Al Qaida lost safe haven.

But something else happened that's incredibly important for particularly the young to understand. The Taliban were incredibly barbaric people. They were so backward that many young girls never got to go to school. That's hard to envision, isn't it, for an American to say, "Gosh, what is it like to live in a country where young girls are denied an education?" But that's the way they were. So not only did we deny safe haven, not only did we do what we said we're going to do, but now young girls have a chance to succeed in Afghanistan, thanks to the United States of America and our friends and allies. We're liberators. We care deeply about human freedom and the human condition.

The President must always remember the lessons learned from September the 11th. And here's the lesson learned for this country, that when we see a threat, we cannot let it gather, that if we see a threat to our security, we can no longer hope it goes away. We can no longer say, "Gosh, maybe the tyrant will change his mind." We don't have that luxury anymore. September the 11th taught us that we must deal with threats before they fully materialize.

I saw a threat in Iraq and—by looking at the intelligence. Congress, by the way, looked at the same intelligence, the same intelligence I looked at. They saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence, and it saw a threat. The threat we saw was based upon not only the intelligence but based upon the prior behavior of Mr. Saddam Hussein, a person who clearly hated America. He's a person that had used weapons of mass destruction against his own people and against people in his neighborhood. He's a person that had terrorist ties. After all, he's the person that paid suiciders money to blow up innocent lives in the Middle East. He was a tyrant to his own people.

No, we saw a threat, and the United Nations Security Council, if you remember, said, "Disarm, or face serious consequences." That's what the U.N. Security Council said, with America's vote. When America says something, it better mean it. And so when we said, "Disarm," to Saddam Hussein, we meant it. He chose defiance once again. He refused to comply with the demands of the free world. Given his history, given the fact that he was a madman,

I was faced with the choice of whether to take his word or defend America. I will defend America every time.

First of all, if any of you have a loved one in the military, I want to thank you for your patience and your understanding. And I want to thank them for their sacrifice and service.

The world is better off without Saddam Hussein in power, and so are the Iraqi people. They long to be free. They want to be free. Moms and dads in Iraq want to raise their children in a peaceful world. They want their children, just like we want our children, to grow up and realize dreams and aspirations. That's what they want. There's a few people there who are trying to stop the advance of freedom, and that's what we're facing.

It's tough work. It's been a hard couple of months for the American people. But I want you to know what I've told family members of—who have lost a loved one: Your son or daughter sacrificed for something incredibly important, which is freedom and peace. A free society in Iraq will lead to a more peaceful world. Not only have we removed a threat to America, but we now have a chance to spread freedom into a part of the world that is desperate for freedom. Free societies are peaceful societies. Free societies are hopeful societies. The long-term interest of this country, the long-term interest of the world revolve around whether or not we have the courage and the resolve and the determination to spread freedom in the Middle East, starting in Iraq. We have that resolve.

We have a plan. We have a plan to make Iraq more secure. Our troops will get what they need to do their job. Our troops will receive the help. And we have a plan to turn over sovereignty to the Iraqi—to an Iraqi entity. That's what we said we're going to do. When America speaks, it's got to mean what it says. Everybody is watching us—everybody is watching.

I love to tell the story about a dinner with Prime Minister Koizumi. Maybe this will help put this in perspective. Prime Minister Koizumi is the Prime Minister of Japan. And we were having dinner in Tokyo, and we were talking about how we can work together to make the world more peaceful, starting with how to make sure that the Korean Peninsula is peaceful by keeping pressure on Kim Chong-il not to develop a nuclear weapon. See, the mutual goal is not to—is to keep the Korean Peninsula nuclear-weapons free. That's important. You can imagine. Kim Chong-il is a tyrant. He's a danger. Here I was talking to the Prime Minister of a country that was at war with the United States, had attacked our country, and it dawned on me that if we had gotten it wrong after World War II, I might not have been having this conversation about how to keep the peace. Also during the conversation, I realized that when we get it right in Iraq—and we will—when Iraq is free, someday an American President will be having the discussion with the duly elected official of Iraq about how to work together to bring peace in a troubled region of the world.

What we're doing is historic in nature. We have a chance to change the world for the better. We have a chance to spread freedom in parts of the world that are desperate for freedom. And as a result, America will have short-term security and long-term security.

Let me tell you something about freedom. It's a cornerstone of our foreign policy. One of the reasons I believe I need to be your President for 4 more years is because I understand that freedom is not America's gift to the world; freedom is the almighty God's gift to each man and woman in this world, and we have an obligation—[*applause*]. Thank you all.

A stronger America is also important for our future. I have a vision, a clear vision as to how to keep our country strong. It starts with making sure the economy is strong, and I've got to tell you, I'm one optimistic fellow about our economy. And

the reason why is I know what we have overcome. We've overcome a lot.

Think about what this country has been through in the last 3 years. We've been through a recession that started in early 2001. That means we were going backwards. It's hard to be a worker in an industry that has been beset by recession. It's hard to be a small-business owner if you're worried about the future. It was a negative period of time.

We started overcoming that, and the enemy hit us, and that hurt our economy too. It not only changed how we've got to view the world; it hurt our economy. It just did.

And then we started coming out of that, and we realized there were some citizens in our country who forgot what it meant to be responsible citizens. In other words, they didn't tell the truth. We had some corporate wrongdoers. We had a corporate scandal that shook our confidence. When you can't believe the numbers you're reading, if you're an investor or a worker, an employee, or an officer, it shakes your confidence about the American system. We dealt with it. We passed tough laws and made it clear we're not going to tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America.

As well the march to war in Iraq affected capital markets and affected the optimism of the country. Imagine seeing on your TV screens the words "March to War." "America is marching to war." And if you're a planner or a small-business owner or somebody looking for work, it's a pretty negative environment in which to be making decisions. No, marching to war is not a positive thought. We're now marching to peace, and yet, we've overcome all those obstacles in a short period of time.

This economy of ours today is strong, and it's getting stronger. And the question is, how do we keep it strong as we go into the next decade? I say it's strong—first quarter growth was 4.2 percent. That's strong. That's good. Well, I say it's strong—we increased jobs nationwide by 308,000 in the month of March. New jobs here in Ohio are increasing in the month of March. I say it's strong—today there's a report out that showed that factory orders is up by 4.3 percent, the largest order increase in 2 years. In other words, there's indication after indication—it's strong. More people—the homeownership rate is the highest it's ever been in our Nation's history. That's good. We want more people owning something. This administration understands that if you own something, if you own your business, if you own your home, you're going to have a vital interest in the future of this country.

No, the indications are good. There are still people who hurt, and I understand that. There are people in parts of Ohio who haven't felt the recovery yet, but we're getting better. And we've got to make sure we have progrowth policies. I'm running because I want to make sure the progrowth agenda doesn't get disrupted.

What do you mean by that? Well, I believe strongly that one of the reasons why this economy is as strong as it is, is because we cut taxes, because the more people—we're going to hear from some couples in a minute about what—a couple—about what it meant to cut taxes. But we cut taxes. Let me tell you, when you have more money in your pocket, it generally increases demand for a good or a service. And when demand goes up, somebody is going to meet that good or a service, which means somebody is more likely to have a job or to find work. That's what that means. It was an important part—I like to tell people that this economic growth we're seeing is the result of tax relief—partially because of tax relief, and it shows that the American people are spending their money far better than the Federal Government would have.

Some in Washington don't like that rhetoric. They think the Federal Government can spend it better than you can. That's just a difference of opinion. You better be careful in a campaign if somebody starts promising spending. Heck, we've got 6

months to go, and the fellow I'm running against is already over a trillion dollars in new programs. We're counting them up. He says he's going to pay for it by tax on the rich. You can't tax the rich enough to pay for all his promises. So guess who's going to pay? You're going to pay. And we're not going to let him do that, though. That would be terrible for the economy. The American people don't need a tax increase.

The question is, who has got the vision to make sure this country is the strongest economic nation in the world? I'm going to argue I do. See, the way to make sure we're strong and people can find work is to make sure this is the best place to do business in the world; this is the best place for people to risk capital; this is the best place for people to realize their dreams by starting their own business. That's what this campaign is about in the future—means we better get tort reform, better make sure that we do not have frivolous or junk lawsuits that make it difficult for people to be able to make a living.

And that includes medical liability reform. In order to make sure that we can grow our economy, in order to make sure people are able to feel comfortable about expanding their job base, we've got to do something about the cost of health care. Frivolous and junk lawsuits run up the cost of health care. They make health care more—less affordable and less accessible. The Congress needs to act. You need a President who is willing to push for medical liability reform in Washington, DC.

We need to continue to promote health savings accounts, which make sure that customers and docs have got the—patients and docs have got the proper relationship. We want the patient-doctor relationship to be the center of decisionmaking in health care, not Federal bureaucracy. We want to promote association health care plans to make sure small businesses are able to better afford health care.

Listen, the vision has got to be to make sure this is a good place to do business and that the ingredients are available for the entrepreneurial spirit to be strong. That's why we need an energy plan. We don't have an energy plan. It's stuck in the United States Congress.

We need a plan that promotes alternative sources of energy. Look, I'd love to be the President someday to be able to say, "The corn crop is good. Therefore, we're less dependent on foreign sources of energy." I'd like to be able to grow energy, but it's going to take a while to get the research and development to kick in.

We need alternative sources of energy. We need to promote clean coal technology. We need to use the resources we've got. We ought to be exploring for more natural gas at home. We ought to be using our technology to encourage the spread of safe nuclear power. We ought to be, on all fronts, making sure we—but my point is this—my point is this: We can encourage conservation; we can encourage reliable supplies of energy; and we must do so to become less dependent on foreign sources of energy. If we expect to be competitive, we've got to have an energy plan.

Two other things I want to talk about right quick. One is, there's a lot of talk about trade. I'm going to tell you something: I need to be President to reject economic isolationism from taking hold in America. We should not isolate ourselves from the world. That would be bad for workers. It would be bad for long-term economic growth.

Presidents before me have made the decision to open up our markets so consumers benefit from trade. You see, if you're a consumer here in America and you've got different options from which to choose, you're generally going to get better price and better quality. That's the way the economy works. But what hasn't happened is, foreign markets haven't opened up like ours have.

The message I give to the American people is, in order for us to grow our job base and to stay competitive and stay strong, is for us not to fear competition but to welcome it, so long as there's a level playing field. We can compete with anybody. Our workers are productive. Our farmers and ranchers are great. Our high-tech industry is imaginative and strong. The policy of Government ought to be to open up new markets for American entrepreneurs and businesspeople and farmers and ranchers. We can compete with anybody, anytime, anywhere.

Government must put good policy in place that encourages the spread of innovative technology. My dream is for everybody in America to have broadband technology in their home by the year 2007. This is—broadband technology, if done right, is going to revolutionize education and health care. It will make this society more entrepreneurial, make the people of America more productive. It's a great way—a great opportunity. We had a good break. The Senate passed a moratorium on access taxes to broadband. My view is there ought to be not any taxes on broadband. If you want it to spread across the country, don't tax it. Plus we've got to get rid of regulatory hurdles so that it spreads around. Innovative society—an innovative society is one that's necessary for us to compete, but there are problems with an innovative society. We're going to talk a little bit about the opportunities and the challenges that an innovative society provides.

Let me put it to you this way: Technology races through our economy, and it makes us more competitive. There are new ideas, but workers lag. Some industries are old. Some new industries spring up. But the transition from the old industry to the new industry is a difficult transition for many of our workers. We will not be a productive leader in the world if we don't get our education systems right.

On the one hand, we've got to make sure our youngsters learn to read and write and add and subtract early, before it is too late. And that's why the No Child Left Behind Act that I had the honor of signing is a really good start. We're challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations. We're shutting down this business of simply shuffling kids through the system. We're making sure they learn to read early, before it's too late, and they're getting help if they need help. We're going to raise the bar. We're going to make sure every child from every background gets as good an education as possible.

But you've got to also understand there are workers in this world who are working for companies that—where the job base is dwindling. And yet, there are also jobs in the neighborhood, and we need to use the community college system in a wise way to make sure that we train people for the jobs of the 21st century. We'll talk about this in a minute. But what I'm telling you about—a vision that understands America's role in the world is one that says, "Education is the cornerstone—practical education to make sure the workers get the training they need to be productive workers as our economy transition to the 21st century economy."

Finally, let me tell you about how to make America a better place. The President has got to understand the proper role between Government and compassion—between—the proper role between Government and the strength of the country. The strength of this country is the hearts and souls of the American citizens. That's our strength.

The Government is not a loving organization. I'm sure there's loving people in Government. I'm one. [*Laughter*] But Government, itself, is not loving. Government is law and justice. Love comes when somebody—a soul says, "What can I do to make my community a better place? What can I do to mentor a child? What can I do to love my neighbor just like I'd like to be loved myself?" I need to be President for 4 more years to rally that spirit, to

call upon that great strength of America so our society changes, one heart, one soul, one conscience at a time.

Let me talk a little bit about some of the people I've had the honor of meeting. I met the Berkeys, Kim and Becky. They're with us today. Kim is a cargo handler at Menlo Forwarding. Is that right?

Kim Berkey. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Yes. And Becky is with him, his wife. They—they're a tax—I call them a tax family. The reason why is because they saved money, $1,900, from the tax cut. That's $1,900 of their own money they get to keep, not like the Government—and it's 1,900 this year too.

See, we raised the child credit to $1,000, which helped people raise families. It's an important part of the tax relief. We reduced the marriage penalty. We got a Tax Code that penalizes marriage. It seems to me it sends the wrong signal. We ought to be encouraging marriage and family, not penalizing marriage.

They saved $1,900. It's a lot of money to them—at least that's what they told me. If Congress doesn't act, there's going to be a tax increase on these folks. It doesn't make any sense, does it, to be raising taxes on them at this point when the economy begins to grow. And $1,900, it gives them more money to pay down credit. It gives them more money to take care of their family.

Is that right? What did you do with all that money?

Mr. Berkey. Well, mostly we used it just to pay off some bills, much like most of our friends, because raising a family is very expensive nowadays. I brought my three children, and as you can see, just feeding them guys took most of that $800. [*Laughter*]

The President. Good-looking family you got there. Thanks for coming.

If they don't move—Congress doesn't move, they're going to have an increase of about $900 taxes. I don't know what that would do to you. I'm not a lawyer, but that's a leading question, isn't it? [*Laughter*] Go ahead. Speak up, Mom.

Becky Berkey. Any kind of an increase is just going to make things tighter. You know, I like to have the money here.

The President. See, we've got money in Washington. We just have to set our priorities. I've laid out a plan to cut this deficit in half in 5 years, but Congress is going to have to be careful about how they spend your money. It's a plan that prioritizes the military, prioritizes defending the homeland, but it's a plan that says to Congress, you know, "Be wise about using the people's money." I don't have to worry about these two Congressmen. They're wise about the money.

But we don't need to be taking money out of these people's pockets, see? We don't need a bunch of promisers in Washington, DC, who say, "Well, I better fulfill my promise by taxing these good folks." It's not only bad for them; it's bad for the overall economy. Taking $900 out of their pocket affects the economy. And we're beginning to grow, and it requires—what this Nation needs is a person who understands how economies grow. Governments don't make economies grow. People make economies grow, and these people need to get their money.

Thank you all for coming.

When you're talking to your friends and neighbors about the tax rhetoric, remind them that an essential part of a vibrant economy is the small-business sector. Seventy percent of new jobs are created by small-business owners in America. That's pretty good, isn't it? So if you're worried about job creation in Ohio, you better stay focused on small-business owners.

And we've got an owner with us. Dave Dysinger owns his own business. Isn't that exciting to hear, "I own"—can you imagine saying, "I own my own business?" It's exciting words for the entrepreneur, "I own my business—it's my business." He owns his. And I just want to—you've just got to tell

your neighbors the truth about the tax relief. When you cut rates, overall rates for everybody, you're really affecting small business, because most small businesses are sole proprietorships or Subchapter S corporations. So when you hear people say, "I'm going to tax the rich," really what they're saying—they may try to tax the rich. The rich generally have good accountants so they don't get taxed much, and the small businesses will take the brunt of the tax-the-rich scheme. And that hurts our economy.

Dave, tell us about your business.

[*Dave Dysinger, president, Dysinger, Inc., Dayton, OH, made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

Mr. Dysinger. We are back in a growth cycle. We're up to 21 employees now. We expect to hire 10 more and 20 next year.

The President. There you go.

Mr. Dysinger. So we're moving.

The President. We care about outsourcing in America. We want people working here, but the wrong policy would have been, "Let's go through economic isolationist policy. Let's wall us off from the world." Instead, the right policy was to stimulate growth at home.

See, he's helping make my point. My point is, let us be confident about ourselves. Let's put the right policies in place that encourage growth at home. Here's a fellow that—his business dropped, and it's now on the upswing. Did you notice he said he's going to hire 10 people this year? There's a lot of Daves in America. There's a lot of small businesses who are feeling the way he's feeling. Seventy percent of new jobs are created by the small-business sector of the economy, and you just heard an entrepreneur say 10 this year, 15 next year? Twenty next year?

Mr. Dysinger. Twenty next year.

The President. Do I hear 25?

Mr. Dysinger. I hope.

The President. Not yet. I want Dave to explain his investment strategy. Are you going to make any investments?

Mr. Dysinger. Yes, to make room for the people, we're going to have to add facility, so we expect to double our facility size this year. And we need to buy—we're going to buy some used machinery and some new machinery. We expect to spend probably $2 million over the next 12 months.

The President. Right. Let me tell you about the connection between what he just said—and by the way, part of his decision-making was because he's optimistic about expanding. I suspect part of his decision-making had to do with the bonus depreciation you got in the tax bill. In other words, there was an incentive to encourage people to invest.

Mr. Dysinger. That's right.

The President. Yes, see. That's a leading question. I already knew the answer. But let me—[*laughter*]—but the reason I bring that up is that when you hear Dave say he's going to buy some equipment or invest, somebody has got to make the equipment. In other words, he said, "I want to—I'm increasing demand for equipment." And somebody is going to respond to his demand, and when they make the equipment, somebody has got to be employed to do so. And if the person making the equipment has got more orders than the previous year, it may mean that he is expanding as well.

So here is Dave saying, "I'm expanding. I need to invest." The person who he is buying from also may be now in a position to—and that's how the economy works. It starts with influencing the decision—in this case, of a small-business entrepreneur—by good tax policy, and I think it happens to be good economic policy to be optimistic and confident about our future. And it's his decision, not the Government's decision. It's his decision that stimulates further economic growth and vitality.

I want to thank you for being an entrepreneur. I wish you all the best in your business.

Mr. Dysinger. I'd like to thank you also. The fact is, I'm proud and grateful to be an American. And I am very thankful for the leadership you bring to us here in these hard times.

The President. Thank you, sir. [*Applause*] Thank you all. Thank you all. Let me—thanks. Thanks a lot, Dave. I'm glad I invited you. [*Laughter*]

I mentioned the role of community colleges. We've got a plan called the Jobs for the 21st Century, and an integral part of that is to make sure the Workforce Investment Act actually gets money to people who are looking for work. And a key component of a job strategy has got to be to rely upon your asset base. And we've got a great asset base at the community colleges. Community colleges are flexible. They're affordable. They're available. And the thing I love about community colleges, when they're run right, they're able to match employer demand with employees that want to work. In other words, they're able to train somebody for jobs which actually exist. And part of our focus is to empower community colleges to enter collaborative efforts with local employers.

If you happen to be on the chamber of commerce, by the way, and you've got a community college around, use it to attract industry. People want to make sure they've got trained workers. Use your community colleges.

We've got Steve Johnson with us. You probably think I'm going to pick him because he got his Ph.D. from the University of Texas. No, that's not why we got him. We got him because he's running Sinclair Community College in Dayton, Ohio.

My fellow Texan—no—tell us about your community college.

[*Steven Lee Johnson, president, Sinclair Community College, made brief remarks.*]

The President. What he's telling you is, is that—notice he mentioned Dave's name. He is available to design a curriculum that helps Dave and, at the same time, helps the workers.

One of the interesting areas—one of the things I find around the country is that there's great demand in the health care field in America today. In other words, old jobs are being replaced by new jobs.

Is that the case here or not?

Dr. Johnson. That's the case. In fact, a lot of the support that Sinclair has received over the years from Federal grants, National Science Foundation, Department of Labor grants, Department of Education grants, has allowed us to revamp and overhaul our curriculum, has allowed us to put in technology training programs that are for today and for tomorrow.

The President. Yes. The Federal Government helps. It sets priorities. You know, there's displaced workers—money to help displaced workers. If a community gets hit hard by a layoff, there's money available to help the community colleges train people for jobs which exist. Part of the problem we have in America is there are jobs that are available, and people just aren't trained to meet them.

The other interesting thing about our country and the economy today and where the community colleges provide a very important role is that we're becoming a more productive society. In other words, there's the premium on being a productive worker, which requires different kinds of skill sets than you had in the past. In other words, envision going from the shovel to the backhoe. You had to learn how to drive the backhoe, and when you did, you were incredibly more productive than you were with a shovel. It's that same equivalent that's taking place throughout our economy right now. We're in a time of transition, and community colleges help workers become more productive.

But productivity increases for a worker means higher pay. The more productive a

society you are, the more your standard of living goes up. And so one of the things that we're going to talk about here in a minute is how a particular individual can become more productive through going to the community college and then enhance her standard of living.

Have you got anything else you want to offer, Steve?

Dr. Johnson. Just one other thing, President Bush——

The President. I thought you had something on the tip of your tongue.

Dr. Johnson. I just have one thing. You know how we are. I just want to say that you are very—we really appreciate your support of community colleges and of Sinclair Community College. And you are very complimentary, and you do know—I want to point out that it's the community leaders in this room that built Sinclair Community College, maintain Sinclair Community College. And that's the story across America, local leaders building colleges to serve the needs of today and tomorrow.

The President. Yes, and that's the way it should be, by the way. The Federal Government can help on targeted assistance. We can help with collaborative efforts, but like public schools, community colleges need to be run by the local folks. You don't want to Federalize education.

Thank you.

Ready? Okay, I want you to hear, I think, an amazing story. Nancy Scott is with us. Nancy, thank you for coming. Mother of three—I think she's got the toughest job in America. She's a single mother of three. That's hard work. Nancy, tell us what you did, where you went to school, and what you're doing, please.

[*Nancy Scott made brief remarks.*]

The President. Okay, let me stop you. I know you're just getting wound up, and there's nothing worse than—[*laughter*]. She goes back to school. First of all, Government can't make Nancy Scott go back to school. She's got to want to succeed, herself. She has a great spirit.

There's help available. Pell grants are important. I'm a big supporter of Pell grants. It makes sense to help people go back to school.

And the third thing that you just heard her say is her income doubled. In other words, she became a more productive worker. She gained new skills, skills that are more applicable to the 21st century jobs that are now being created, and her income doubled. People have got to understand that helping a worker become more productive not only helps fill jobs but, more importantly, helps the worker and her family, in this case, to double her income.

Go ahead.

Ms. Scott. I would just like to add that, other than that, my family and friends here and in New York are praying for you, Mr. President.

The President. Thank you. I appreciate you saying that.

Ms. Scott. And we stand behind you.

The President. Thanks a lot. I'm honored. Thank you for coming. I appreciate you.

That's—isn't that a fabulous story? See, that's the story of the 21st century. We need to continue stories like this as we—as our economy changes. There are a lot of people like Nancy who want to meet their obligations and their responsibilities and want to be helped so they can become productive. I love the story of Nancy Scott. I meet people like that all the time. The community college is an essential part of making sure that we're competitive in the future by enabling our workers, who are the best in the world, to have the skills necessary to compete. That's what we're talking about.

Let me—I'm fixing to go to—fixing to get on the bus. I do want to answer some questions before I get out of here. Here's your chance.

Yes, ma'am.

Support for Troops in Iraq

Q. Yes—my husband is serving in Iraq——

The President. Your husband is in Iraq now?

Q. Right.

The President. Thank you. What's he doing?

Q. He's with the civil affairs, and he supports you 100 percent for being there. And I support you, and his family supports you for being there. My question is, is there any plans of getting out the personnel vehicles from the Vietnam era to help with the protection from the—until the Humvees get——

The President. Yes.

Q. ——for their—protection for the soldiers?

The President. Right. The plan is to continue to upgrade the Humvees and to bring in more Strykers. Look, I want you to know—and, first of all, thank your husband. But I want our troops to have the very best. This—you hear—this is politics. It's kind of a political season, so you hear things that—people say things like we don't want our soldiers to have the best. But we put an $87 billion supplemental out there. A big chunk of that money was to make sure we upgraded the equipment our soldiers were getting to make them safe. That's a lot of money. It takes a while to get the Kevlar vests, the latest Kevlar vests manufactured. We're distributing it. I supported the 67 billion for the troops—87 billion overall.

I want to remind you what my opponent said about that. [*Laughter*] He said he voted for the 87 billion, right before he voted against it. [*Laughter*] Look, we just need strong support for our troops. And I have a solemn duty to say to you as clearly as I can, we will do the very best we possibly can to make your loved one safe. That's what we owe the family members, and that's what we owe the troops.

Yes, sir.

Education

Q. Mr. President, I consider it a great honor to be here today to be with you. I am a retired educator, and as you know, many of the people in my profession profess to be very opposed to the things that the Republicans are proposing. And I made a comment here earlier today to some friends that if the educators will speak the truth, the real truth, we can teach every child and not leave them behind. But it takes not just money. It takes the backing of the family. It takes backing of the school. It takes backing of everyone to make that child want to learn, and it's not dollars that's going to pull him out the way the NEA says it is.

So as the retired principal of West Carrollton Junior High School, I support your plan 100 percent, and I know many, many educators that support it as well. They're not all on the side of the NEA.

The President. Well, I appreciate you. Thanks for being in education. Thank you.

Let me say something. Look, the key is that we use curriculum that works. The key is that we encourage our teachers. The key is we don't federalize public schools. The key is, where we find failure, we address it. In order to address failure, you've got to figure it out in the first place. That's why measuring is so important.

There was a big battle over measuring when I was Governor of Texas. There's a battle over measuring when it comes to Federal dollars. People don't want to measure—some people don't. How do you know if you don't measure? How can you tell whether a child is just being shuffled through the system, unless you're willing to say, "See if you can read?" Early, by the way—you've got to test early to determine whether or not a child has got the skills necessary to become a productive citizen, which is reading. And if you find there's a deficiency, we've got money in the budget to correct it early, before it's too late.

The whole cornerstone of the No Child Left Behind Act is this great sense of possibility for every child. If you do not believe every child can learn to read and write, then you say it's okay not to measure. If you believe every child can learn to read and write, you want to measure to determine if they can. And if so, you reward the schools that are meeting expectations, and if not, you change. [*Applause*] I appreciate that.

Request for Autograph

Q. Mr. President, would you please sign this? [*Laughter*]

The President. Yes. In a minute. [*Laughter*]

Yes, sir.

Steel Prices

Q. The question is, due to your administration, our business has turned around phenomenally. The last 2 months have been record months, but where we're taking a hit at is the steel industry. The prices are skyrocketing.

The President. Yes. Well, I understand. And the reason why is because the world is recovering. You see, when demand—worldwide demand was depressed for steel because there was slowness in the world, there was an oversupply. And what's happened is, is that demand has outstripped supply because countries like China are now demanding more steel. They're beginning to grow. The whole world is beginning to grow. The United States is beginning to grow.

And I understand the pressures. Obviously, in a market-oriented world, which I believe the world should be, there will be price-driven expansion. In other words, there will be more steel producers or more steel coming on to meet the increased demand. And I understand what you're going through, but just remember, it wasn't all that long ago that the price of steel was at the bottom end of the pricing structure. And we're going through a cycle now because the world is expanding. Our exports are up, by the way. We want the world to expand. We want there to be prosperity around the world. It makes—it gives us a better chance to sell what we make into other markets.

And so I understand where you're coming from. And I guess what I'm telling you is there's cyclicality in the economy, particularly when it comes to steel pricing.

Yes? Go ahead and bring that plate over here. I can listen and sign at the same time.

Yes, ma'am.

The Presidency

Q. My name is Erica Keene. I'm 8 years old. And what's the funnest thing to be—about being President? [*Laughter*]

The President. The funnest thing is this: Making decisions that make the world a better place. I've got to make a lot of decisions—some of them you'll see, and some of them you don't see—which means that in order to make good decisions, you better know what you believe; you better stand on principle.

Secondly, in order to make good decisions, I've got to listen to smart people. I like to be around smart, intelligent, capable people. I like to walk into a room full of people like Condi Rice or Dick Cheney or Don Rumsfeld or Colin Powell.

I like to tell people the Oval Office is a powerful place. People will stand outside the Oval Office, and they say, "I can't wait to get in there and tell him what for." And then they open the door, and they walk in this majestic shrine to democracy, and they're overwhelmed by the atmosphere. And they say, "Man, you're looking beautiful, Mr. President"—[*laughter*]—which means you better have people around you who tell you the truth. [*Laughter*]

A decisionmaker must be willing to listen, must be willing to count on others to give good, solid advice. As you go out and gather the vote, remind people I've

put together a really fantastic team of citizens. And they're good and honest folks who are smart and capable.

No, the best thing about this job is making decisions that I think will influence the world and the country in positive ways.

Let me talk to you real quick about history. I don't think a President, if he does big things, will be around to see the history of his administration. Oh, yes, there will be the subjective history. There will be the political history. There will be the short-term history about an administration. But you won't be able to see the big things that have changed, the momentum of freedom in parts of the world that's desperate for freedom or a cultural change in the country, to see the ultimate effects of a cultural change from one that—a culture that said, "If it feels good, just go ahead and do it," and, "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each of understands we're responsible for the decisions we make in life.

So the idea—the best part of this job is to set in motion big changes of history. It's unbelievably exciting to be in a position to do that. That's why I want to be the President for 4 more years. I see clearly where I want to lead the country. I see the obligations we have as a great nation. We have an obligation, where we see tyranny and slavery, to act. I don't mean militarily. I mean using our influence to free people. We have the obligation to free people from tyranny, and we have the obligation to free people from disease. One of the things this country has done that I'm incredibly proud of is we're leading the fight against HIV/AIDS on the continent of Africa, for example. It is an incredibly important mission for this great and compassionate country.

Yes. You've written this question down. That's dangerous.

Q. Yes, but that's because I'm a little nervous.

The President. Okay, well, don't worry. It's just the President and a huge press corps. [*Laughter*]

Q. First of all, I want to say I'm very honored to be here with you today. I brought my wife and my daughter with me.

The President. Good. How old is the daughter? I'll just try—I'm trying to get you relaxed.

Q. My daughter is 14. She's right here.

The President. Do not introduce a 14-year-old daughter. I keep telling you. [*Laughter*]

Q. My daughter—my wife, Debbie, is over here.

The President. Hi, Debbie. How are you? How is he doing so far? Okay, good.

President's Faith/2004 Election

Q. First of all, Mr. President, thank you. I want to thank you for being a man of faith. And as a fellow—[*applause*].

The President. Thank you. Okay. He may have a question back there. [*Laughter*]

Q. Wow. Anyhow, as a fellow man of faith, how has the faith, first, affected you as a man? How has your faith affected you as President? And further, how do you think faith will affect the outcome of the 2004 election? Thank you.

The President. Yes. That's a good question. First, let me make this abundantly clear to you: The job of the President is to promote a society in which people are free to worship as they see fit. A valuable and cherished tradition of America is that you can worship an Almighty if you want to, and you're just as patriotic if you choose not to, that if you choose to worship, you can worship any religion that you choose. My job is to make sure that that is a absolute part of the American society in the future.

From an individual perspective, as a person, I rely upon faith to give me the strength necessary to do my job. One of the interesting parts of the job, something that I discovered as President, is the fact that a lot of people pray for me. That's

a very humbling thought when you think about little old me. People pray for George W. and his family. I don't ask. People just do, and for that I'm grateful, incredibly grateful. I believe in prayer, and I appreciate the prayers of people.

I think the 2004 election will be determined by the American people's decision as to who best can lead the country. That's what I think will determine the 2004 election. I think it's the collective will of the people which make that determination. Some people of faith will participate. Some who don't necessarily agree with faith will participate. The question of the outcome of the race is who best can describe as clearly as possible a positive and hopeful and optimistic future for every single citizen of this country regardless of their political party, regardless of their background, regardless of their economic status. That's what I think will determine the outcome of this election.

Yes, little guy way up there. My favorite dog is Barney. [*Laughter*] That wasn't your question, okay. I think this is going to have to be the last question. I know, I'm sorry. Come on down the road to Lebanon. [*Laughter*]

The Presidency

Q. Mr. President, do you like your job? And is it difficult at times?

The President. Yes. I love my job, and that's why I want to do it for 4 more years. I believe that—a lot of jobs are tough, but that's what makes them worthwhile. My job is the kind of job that you better know who you are and where you're going in order to do it the right way. You can't kind of fumble around with your value system on the people's time. You've got to be rock solid in what you believe.

I tease and say I'm listening to my mother, as the President. Well, that's part of what it means to be rock solid in your values. You get raised a certain way, and that's just the way you are. And you show up, and you do your job. You tell people what you think, make the best decisions you can possibly make. You just can't worry about politics. I'm worried—I am in the political arena. I'm obviously anxious about this election; otherwise, I wouldn't be here asking for the vote. I'm anxious for it to get started. I like to campaign. I like to be with people. But I'm not going to change. I'm not going to change my principles. I'm not going to change my value system in order to win the vote.

I want to thank you all for coming. May God bless. Thank you all. Thanks for being here. Yes. Thanks, everybody. Glad you're here.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:32 p.m. at the Hara Complex. In his remarks, he referred to Lt. Gov. Jennette Bradley and State Treasurer Joseph T. Deters of Ohio; State Senator Jeff Jacobson and State Representative Jon Husted of Ohio; Robert T. Bennett, chairman, Ohio Republican Party; Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan; and Chairman Kim Chong-il of North Korea.

Remarks in Lebanon, Ohio
May 4, 2004

Thank you all for coming. I'm proud to be the first sitting President to have visited here. I am—actually, I'm a standing President today. [*Laughter*]

I'll tell you why I'm here. I want to—I'm here to tell you I want to be your President for 4 more years. I see clearly where we need to go in order to make this country safer and stronger and better,

and I need your help. I need you to find people to register to vote. I need you to turn out the vote. I need you to put up the signs. I need you to do your duty as Americans and vote, and when you do, I'll be reelected, thanks to your help.

Rob told me 11 other Presidents have visited the Golden Lamb. None of them came on a bus like this. [*Laughter*] I don't think so, do you?

I really appreciate my friends here in Ohio. This is an important State. And it's the State that we're going to work hard to earn the confidence of the people from all walks of life. But it's going to require a good grassroots effort in order for us to get the message out. I want you to make sure you tell your friends and neighbors—it doesn't matter what their political party is—that our message and our vision is one that is positive and hopeful and optimistic for every single American. That's what we believe.

I regret that Laura is not here today. I know it. You drew the short straw. [*Laughter*] You know, I really got lucky when she said yes. She is a fabulous wife, a great mother, and she's doing a wonderful job as the First Lady of this country. I think she deserves 4 more years.

I want—as you get out and gather the vote, remind people that it's the President's job to surround himself with excellence, to put a good team together on behalf of the American people. I've assembled a great Cabinet and a great administration, people from all walks of life, people from different backgrounds, people who have come to Washington, DC, to serve our Nation and not their self-interest. We've had no finer Vice President of the United States than Dick Cheney. Mother heard me say that one time. She said, "Wait a minute, Buster." [*Laughter*]

No, I'm proud of my team. And I'm proud of working with the Members of Congress. You got a fine Congressman in Rob Portman. I didn't know he was an innkeeper. [*Laughter*] But he's a great guy, an honest fellow, a smart person, a person who cares deeply for the people of Ohio. I traveled today down from Dayton with Congressman Mike Turner, who's doing a fine job as well. I appreciate you coming, Congressman Turner.

I appreciate Lieutenant Governor Jennette Bradley, who is with us today, and State Treasurer Joe Deters. I want to thank the members of the statehouse who are here.

I appreciate the mayor came out today, Amy Brewer. Madam Mayor. She didn't ask for any advice, but I'm going to give her some. [*Laughter*] Fill the potholes, Mayor. [*Laughter*] And thank you for your service.

I want to thank my friend Jo Ann Davidson, who is my regional chairman, a former speaker of the house of Ohio.

I understand Anthony Munoz is here. Where is Anthony? Anthony, *como esta?* Good to see you again, buddy. Thank you for coming. What a class act he is. He's a person who understands that a responsible citizen is somebody who puts something back in the community in which they live. And I'm proud to call you friend, Anthony. Thank you for coming.

I want to thank all the people who care about your country and decided to participate in the political process. It's really important. It's important for citizens to understand we have a duty in democracy to participate. I hope you go out and gather people to the polls. You might suggest they vote for me when you do, and tell them I've got a reason. Look, I'm here asking for the vote. The reason I've come here is I want people to know I want to be your President. I take nothing for granted. I'm here to say I need your help and want your help to lead this country for 4 more years.

I'm seeking the endorsement of the people. I'm running against the—and it's going to be a tough campaign, by the way. We're not going to take anything for granted, and neither should you. I'm running for a fellow who's got a lot of experience. He's been

in Washington an awful long time—so long, he's taken about—both sides of just about every issue. [*Laughter*] That's called Washingtonitis.

And he's seeking the endorsements too. As you might remember, he claims to have picked up some important endorsements from foreign leaders. He just won't give us their names. Here's what he said about that one question. He said, "What I said is true." He said, "I mean, you can go to New York City, and you can be in a restaurant, and you can meet a foreign leader." That's what he said when one of the big-time reporters asked him about it. I've got a hunch this whole thing might be a case of mistaken identity. [*Laughter*] Just because somebody has an accent or a nice suit or a good table in New York City, it doesn't make him a foreign leader. Whoever these mystery men are, they will not be deciding the election. I'm here to ask for the endorsement not of foreign leaders but of the American people.

And I've got a reason. I've got a job to make this country a safer country. My job is to do everything in our power to protect the American people from an enemy which is coldblooded, an enemy that has no conscience, an enemy which struck us on September the 11th. We have rallied together as a Nation. We're doing everything we can to protect our homeland. Our ports are more secure. The borders are better off. It's harder to get through an airport these days, I fully understand. After all, they're looking inside your shoes, but it's for a reason. It's to make sure that we do everything we can to protect the homeland. But the best way to protect America is to stay on the offensive and bring these killers to justice, one person at a time.

It's important for the President and future President to understand the nature of the war we face. This is more than a war that requires law enforcement and intelligence. That's what some people have said. That's the attitude we took after the World Trade Center was bombed in 1993. We served some legal papers, and some thought the matter was settled. But the enemy was still planning, and they were plotting, and they were training. After the carnage of September the 11th, you need to have a President who understands you can't win this war with legal papers. We've got to use every asset at our disposal.

The terrorists declared war on the United States of America, and war is what they got. And we're making good progress. We're chasing them down. We've got a lot of friends on the hunt. We're cutting off their money. We're sharing intelligence. We've got some fantastic military troops on the hunt for them. Two-thirds of known Al Qaida leaders have been brought to justice, and the rest of them can feel us breathing down their neck.

You've got to have a President who understands the nature of the war. It's essential that we not show any weakness. We must be determined and strong and unrelenting in our search for those who would do harm to the American people. The war on terror is more than just chasing down Al Qaida. The war on terror is enforcing doctrine. It's essential that when an American President speaks, he speak clearly and, when he says something, means what he says.

When I said, "If you harbor a terrorist, you're just as guilty as the terrorist," I meant what I said. When a President says something, it must be clear, and it must be meaningful. In order to keep the peace, there must be truth in the words of the President. The Taliban found out what I meant. Thanks to our troops and our coalition members, we routed the Taliban from power. And Afghanistan is no longer a training base for Al Qaida.

Part of the war on terror was making sure Al Qaida couldn't train there. Part of the war on terror is to spread freedom in places like Afghanistan. I want you to remember what life was like for little girls in Afghanistan before we arrived. The Taliban were so barbaric and so backwards,

so corrupt in their vision, that young girls—many young girls never received an education. Thanks to the United States of America and our brave troops, thanks to our friends and our coalition, not only did we rout the Taliban and America is more safe, we routed out a Government. And now young girls have got hope and optimism for their future.

A President must understand the world the way it is. And after September the 11th, this country needs to have a President who understands that when we see a threat, we must take it seriously before it materializes. When a President sees a threat, he just can't hope it goes away. He just can't hope that somehow the—a tyrant will change his mind.

I saw a threat in Iraq.* I looked at the intelligence and saw a threat. The Congress looked at the intelligence. Members of both political parties looked at that same intelligence and saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence, and it saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council, like me, remembered—we saw more than a threat. We remembered that Saddam Hussein had used weapons of mass destruction against his own people and against his neighborhood, that Saddam Hussein professed hatred for America, that he had terrorist ties, that he paid suiciders to kill innocent citizens in the Middle East. We remembered all that.

And so we went to the United Nations, and the United Nations agreed with America when, unanimously, the Security Council said, "Disarm, or face serious consequences." When America speaks, we must mean what we say. We said, "Disarm, or face serious consequences." Saddam Hussein, as he had for a decade, defied the demands of the free world. So I had a choice to make: Either trust the word of a madman, or defend America. Given that choice, I will defend America every time.

The world is better off without Saddam Hussein in power. Because we acted, torture chambers are closed. Because we acted, democracy is rising in the heart of the Middle East. Because we said something and did what we said, countries like Libya got the message and voluntarily disarmed. Because we acted, America is more secure, and the world is more peaceful.

There's hard work still to do, and like you, I mourn the loss of every life. And like you, I recognize how difficult the work in Iraq is. It's essential that we implement our strategy for the sake of long-term peace and freedom. You see, free societies are peaceful societies.

I also know that freedom is in the soul of every human being. Freedom isn't America's gift to the world; freedom is the Almighty God's gift to every man and woman in this world.

The Iraqi people long to be free. The Iraqi people want to self-govern. But there are thugs and assassins who want to stop the march to freedom. That's what you're seeing on your television screens. You're seeing a few killers trying to halt the progress of freedom because they understand that freedom will be a major defeat in the cause against terror. Terrorists can't stand free societies. Terrorists understand the power of freedom just like Americans understand the power of freedom. This country will finish what we have begun. We will see that Iraq is free and self-governing and democratic. We will accomplish our mission. We will win this essential victory in the war on terror.

I'm running because I understand the historic opportunity we have. It's an historic moment to help change the world. I believe, as the strongest nation on the face of the Earth, we have a duty and an obligation to spread freedom, to resist tyranny, to help people from all walks of life realize their ambition. And I know that by fulfilling that duty, by using our strength and our

* White House correction.

influence, by spreading freedom, that we will leave behind a legacy of peace for our children and for our children's children. This is the course that history has put before us, the challenge that history has put before us. We welcome it. We do not shirk our duty. We welcome our duty.

There is a difference of opinion, when it comes to that duty, in foreign policy. My opponent says he approves of bold action in the world but only if other countries do not object. I believe strongly in alliances. I believe strongly in working with other nations that share the same values we share, that understand the need for freedom and peace to be spread throughout the world. But I will never turn over America's national security decisions to leaders of other countries.

I'm running because I have a vision for a stronger America that's based on a strong economy. I understand the role of Government is not to create wealth but an environment in which the entrepreneurial spirit flourishes. I understand the job of Government is to empower people to realize their dreams. You see, we have a difference of opinion in this race, the role of the Federal Government versus the role of the private individual.

We went through tough economic times. We've been through a recession and a war and a national emergency and corporate scandals. But I understood that in order to come out of these tough economic times, the best thing to do is not to increase the size and scope of the Federal Government, but the best thing to do is to let people keep more of their own money. In order to grow the economy, when people have more money, they demand—the cornerstone of our pro-growth economic policy is to trust the people of America with their own money. We're not spending the Government's money in Washington, DC. It's your money, and when you have more money in your pocket, this economy will grow and expand.

I like to say that the numbers look good. First quarter economic growth was strong. Jobs are now being created in Ohio. They're being created nationwide. More people own their home than in a long period of time. Homeownership rate is the highest ever. More minorities are owning their own home. People are starting their own business. It is clear that the economic stimulus package we passed is working. It is clear that people are spending their money far wiser than the Federal Government would have.

And the fundamental question in this campaign is how do we make sure the economy continues to grow? How do we make sure America is the best place in the world to do business? How do we make sure we're the leader in the world? Let me give you some ideas.

First, we've got to make sure we're wise with the people's money. We've got to make sure that we don't run your taxes up. The worst time to raise taxes on the American people would be right now. I'm running against a fellow who's made over a trillion dollars of promises in this campaign, and we're only getting started. We've got 6 months to go, and he's already over a trillion. I can't imagine what it's going to be like next October. And the problem is, he said he's going to pay for it by taxing the rich. That's code word. That's the way they talk in Washington. There's not enough money. You can't tax the rich enough to pay for his promises. Guess who he's going to tax? He's going to tax me and you. You're going to pay for this. He's either going to break his promises on these new spending increases, which I don't think he'll do, or he's going to tax the American people, which I will think he'll do.

This is a terrible time to raise taxes on the American people. You need to put me in office for 4 more years so your taxes won't go up.

We've got to make sure that we've got good trade policy in this country. You hear a lot of talk about ideas that would isolate

us from the world. I think that would be a disaster. If we want to be competitive in the long run, we don't want to be isolated. We just want to have a chance to compete.

Presidents before me have opened up the United States for foreign goods because it's good for consumers. If you've got more goods coming in, it gives you more products from which to choose and helps you get a better price for something you want to buy. The problem is we haven't had other countries open up their markets like ours. In order for us to be competitive, in order for us to be—for people to be able to find work in the short term and the long term, you need you a President who will continue to open up foreign markets so we can compete. Just give us a chance to compete. We've got the best workers in the world. We've got the best farmers in the world. "Open up those markets," is what we're saying, "and give us a chance to compete, and this economy will continue to grow and expand."

If we want to compete in the long term, we need tort reform. There's too many frivolous and junk lawsuits that are making it hard for small businesses to expand and grow. We need medical liability reform in this country in order to control the cost of health care. We need health savings accounts and association health care plans. Look, we need to make sure the patient and the doctor are the center of the health care system in the world, not Federal bureaucracies.

If we want to be competitive and strong, if we want our people to be able to find work, you better get you a President who understands we need to become less dependent on foreign sources of energy. I've laid out a strong energy strategy that's stuck in the United States Senate. It's an energy policy that encourages alternative sources of energy. It's an energy policy that encourages conservation. But it's an energy policy that's realistic too. We need clean coal technology. We need clean nuclear power. We need to become less dependent on foreign sources of energy if we want this economy to grow.

Finally, if we want to be smart, if we want to be the leading country in the world when it comes to growth so people can work, we got to be better—we've got to be smarter about how we educate our people. I mean, this No Child Left Behind Act I signed is a good start. I look forward to debate on educational excellence. See, this bill is one that says we're going to raise the standards, not lower the standards. This is a bill that says we believe every child can learn, not just a few. This is a bill that says we expect the very best. This is a bill that says we're going to challenge the soft bigotry of low expectations.

You see, if you believe every child can learn, then you want to know; you want to see. This is a bill that says, "For increased Federal dollars, you measure. You get to run your schools"—I believe in local control of schools—"but you measure." You show us whether or not every child is learning to read. And if we find they're not, parents need different choices. When we find that children aren't learning to read, we'll change the curriculum. When we find children stuck in schools that won't teach and won't change, we can demand something better. We've got to insist that no child be left behind in America.

And good policy also understands a vision for the future sees clearly the need to use our community college system to train workers for the jobs which actually exist. You see, we've got a lot of people who want to work, and there are new jobs being created in our economy, what they call the jobs of the 21st century. But they don't have the skills necessary to fill those jobs. This country must expedite, must help, must pay for through Pell grants and other assistance programs, training—programs to train workers for jobs which actually exist.

Sure, there's some jobs leaving, and that breaks our hearts. But there's new jobs being created—better paying, higher-quality

jobs. And we have a duty to help train workers to meet those jobs. No, a vision for the future is one that understands that in order for us to compete, we've got to be the best place for people to do business. And the best place means good tax policy, good regulatory policy, and an educated workforce to fill the jobs of the 21st century.

And finally, you need to put me back in office because I understand the true strength of this country is in the hearts and souls of our citizens. We talk a lot about our military being the strength of America, and it's an important part of our strength. And by the way, I intend to keep the military strong. And if you have a loved one in the military, you thank him on behalf of a grateful Commander in Chief. And we'll continue to push progrowth policies so that we're a wealthy nation. But the strength of this country is the fact that we've got citizens who are willing to love a neighbor just like they'd like to be loved themselves. The strength of this country is the fact that there are thousands and thousands of citizens who are willing to take time out of their life to help somebody who hurts, to help the lonely, to feed the hungry, to find shelter for the homeless.

You see, the great fabric of America is made up of the thousands acts of kindness and generosity that take place on a daily basis, not because Government has said to do so but because they've heard a call that is bigger than Government. They understand that a responsible citizen is one that reaches out to somebody who hurts. The job of the President is to capture and lift that spirit, is to call people to a service greater than self, is to help change this country one heart, one soul, one conscience at a time by rallying and tapping the true strength of the country, which is the hearts and souls of the American people.

Linda Rabolt is here today. She works for the Interfaith Hospitality Network. [*Applause*] That's good. Some of you heard about Linda. They work at churches in this community to serve 41 families. You see, they saw somebody who hurt, and they reached out to them. They're showing what it means to love a neighbor.

Here's what she said about serving the homeless: "It's not that they don't have needs and desires and dreams. They're just down on their luck." See, Linda sees a better day—a better day. She sees a bright future. "It's rewarding to be a part of their lives," she says, "and to watch them to grow and change and move on."

That's the spirit of this country, isn't it? What a fabulous country we have, a country that's resolute and determined, a country that's resolute never to give in to an enemy that hates us, determined to do what it takes to make the world more peaceful, a country that is compassionate and decent when it comes to making sure the future is bright for every single citizen. And it is such an honor—such a high honor—to be the President of such a fantastic land.

I thank you for your support. I thank you for your friendship. May God bless you, and may God continue to bless the United States of America. Thank you all very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:43 p.m. at the Golden Lamb Inn. In his remarks, he referred to Lt. Gov. Jennette Bradley and State Treasurer Joseph T. Deters of Ohio; Mayor Amy Brewer of Lebanon, OH; Jo Ann Davidson, Ohio Valley regional chairman, Bush-Cheney '04, Inc.; pro football Hall of Famer Anthony Munoz; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Remarks in Cincinnati, Ohio
May 4, 2004

The President. Thanks for coming. It is exciting to end what has been a great bus trip across Ohio right here in a wonderful city, Cincinnati, Ohio. Thanks for coming out tonight. I appreciate you coming out. I appreciate you giving me a chance to thank you for what you're going to do as we come down the stretch in this campaign in 2004.

I'm here asking for your vote, and I'm here asking for your help.

Audience member. Viva Bush!

The President. Vamos a ganar. That means, we're going to win. We set up a web site called georgewbush.com. It will give you a chance to find out how to volunteer, how to register voters, how to turn them out. We need your help. And when you're talking to people, talk to people from all walks of life about this campaign. Talk to people who may never have voted before about this campaign. Talk to people from different parties about this campaign, because, see, we've got a positive vision. We've got a positive vision for everybody who lives in America. We've got a vision to make sure America is safer and stronger and better. We have a mission to make this country as hopeful as it can possibly be. Put out the word, and we will win in November of 2004.

I wish Laura were here to see this crowd. Listen, a good reason to put me back in there is so she will have 4 more years as the First Lady. She's a great First Lady. She's a fantastic wife and a great mom and a wonderful First Lady. I'm really proud of her. She sends her best. She sends all her best—she sends her best to all her friends here in Cincinnati.

By the way, a measure of a good President is whether or not he surrounds himself with excellence. I do. I put together a fantastic team to serve the American people, people from different backgrounds, people from different walks of life, smart and capable people, all of whom have come to Washington to serve a cause greater than themselves, the United States of America. Our country has got a great Vice President in Dick Cheney.

I want to thank the elected officials who have come here today. Your Governor, Bob Taft, is with us. And Governor, I'm honored you're here. Thank you for coming. Congressman Rob Portman is with us today. I appreciate Congressman Portman. Congressman Steve Chabot is with us today. I'm honored you're here. I mean, we've got statewide officials. We've got elected—local officials. We've got all kinds of people who are here, and I'm proud you've come.

I appreciate the grassroots people who are here. Listen, you've got to work hard to turn out the vote, and that's what we call grassroots. I want to thank you. I'm here to fertilize the grassroots today. I'm here to ask you to grow.

I want to thank our entertainers who are here. I'm proud you've come, Billy. It's good to see you again. I appreciate you coming. My friend Billy Cerveny was with us yesterday, as well as Steven Chapman. I'm honored that Steven was here as well.

The last 3 years have brought serious challenges, and we have given serious answers. We came to office with a stock market in decline, an economy headed into recession. We delivered historic tax relief. And now, our economy is the fastest growing of any major industrialized nation in the world.

We uncovered corporate crimes that cost people their jobs and their savings, so we passed strong corporate reforms. We brought the wrongdoers to account, and we made it clear, we will not tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America.

We saw war and grief arrive on a quiet September morning, so we pursued the terrorist enemy across the world. We have captured or killed many key leaders of the Al Qaida network, and the rest of them will learn there is no cave or hole deep enough to hide from American justice.

We confronted the dangers of state-sponsored terror and the spread of weapons of mass destruction, so we ended two of the most violent and dangerous regimes on Earth. We liberated over 50 million people. Once again, America is proud to stand against tyranny and to set nations free.

When Dick Cheney and I came to Washington, we found a military that was underfunded and underappreciated, so we gave our military the resources and respect they deserve. And today, no one can question the skill and the strength and the spirit of the United States military.

It is the President's job to confront problems, not to pass them on to future Presidents and future generations. A President needs to step up and to make the hard decisions and to keep his commitments, and that is how I will continue to lead our great Nation.

I'm so glad you're here, because great events will turn on this election. The man who sits in the Oval Office will set the course of the war on terror and the direction of our economy. The security and prosperity of America are at stake. I'm running against an experienced United States Senator. He's been in Washington a long period of time.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. No, he's been there quite a while. He's been there long enough to take both sides of just about every issue. He spent some time here in Ohio looking for the vote, just like I'm looking for the vote, and he's looking for endorsements, just like I'm looking for endorsements. But you know, he's claimed he's picked up some important endorsements from foreign leaders. He just won't give us their names. [*Laughter*] He did drop a hint a few days ago. He insisted, quote, "What I said is true"—what he said on national TV about the foreign leaders—"What I said is true. I mean, you can go to New York City, and you can be in a restaurant, and you can meet a foreign leader." End of quote. [*Laughter*] I've got a hunch this whole thing might be a case of mistaken identity. Just because somebody has an interesting accent, a nice suit, and a good table at a New York restaurant doesn't make him a foreign leader. Whoever these mystery men are will not be deciding the election. The American people will be deciding this election.

The people of this State and the people of this country have an unmistakable choice in this election. It's a choice between keeping the tax relief that is moving this economy forward or putting the burden of higher taxes back on the American people. It's a choice between an America that leads the world with strength and confidence or an America that is uncertain in the face of danger. The other side hasn't offered much in the way of strategy to win the war or policies to expand our economy. We're into this campaign and all we hear is old bitterness, but they're going to learn something from the American people. Anger is not an agenda for the future of this country.

I will take on the big issues with optimism and resolve and determination, and I will make it clear to the American people I stand ready to lead this Nation for 4 more years.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. A big issue for every family in America is the Federal tax burden. With the largest tax relief since Ronald Reagan was President, we have left more money in the hands that earned it. By spending and investing and helping create new jobs, the American people have used their money far better than the Federal Government could have. Our economy is getting better.

I know there are still people in this important State who hurt. There are still people looking for work. That's a reason to be—that's not a reason to fall into pessimistic policy. We've got to be optimistic, and there's reason to be optimistic. The entrepreneurial spirit is strong. Small businesses are vibrant. We're going through a time of transition, but things are getting better. Just look at the facts. The economy grew at a strong rate of 4.2 percent in the first quarter of this year. Economic growth over the past three quarters has been the fastest in nearly two decades. In March, the economy added 308,000 jobs; 7,900 of those were created right here in Ohio.

No, there's been some tough times for people in Ohio. But listen to this: The unemployment rate has dropped from its high of 6.3 percent last summer to 5.7 percent in March. Manufacturing activity is increasing. Business investment is rising. Disposable income is up. Homeownership is at the highest rate ever. The tax relief we passed is working.

My opponent has a different view of tax relief. When we passed an increase in the child credit to help families, he voted no.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. When we reduced the marriage penalty, he voted against it.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. When we lowered a 10-percent break for working families—or created the 10-percent rate, he voted no.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. When we voted to reduce the taxes on dividends that seniors depend on, he voted against it. When we gave small businesses tax incentives to expand and hire, he voted no.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Are you getting the picture? But when tax increases are proposed, it's a lot easier to get a "yes" out of him. Over the years, my opponent has voted over 350 times for higher taxes——

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. ——including the biggest tax increase in American history. He supported raising the gas tax. He won't even give you a free car wash. [*Laughter*] There is a trend here. He's got a record. In this campaign thus far, he has proposed a lot of Government spending, over a trillion dollars thus far. And there's 6 more months to go. [*Laughter*] And yet, he says he's going to pay for it by taxing the rich. You can't tax the rich enough to pay for all the spending promises he's made. So guess who's going to pay? You're going to pay. But the good news is, we're not going to let him raise your taxes. The tax relief we passed must be permanent. We don't need to be raising taxes on the American people.

In order to make sure this economy grows and people can find work, we've got to make sure we protect small-business owners and employers from frivolous and junk lawsuits. We need tort reform. We've got to help control the cost of the increasing medicine by medical liability reform. We've got to make sure the doctor-patient relationship is central to decisionmaking in health care through association health care plans and health savings accounts.

In order for us to grow and make sure we're the leading economy in the world so people can find work, Congress needs to pass an energy plan. We need an energy plan that encourages conservation, an energy plan that helps develop alternative sources of energy. We need an energy plan that has clean coal technology as a part of its supply. We need to make sure that we explore for natural gas in environmentally friendly ways. We need to become less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

We need to have trade policy that is confident and optimistic. We need to reject economic isolationism. See, we're good at things here in America. We're good at growing crops. We're good at raising cows. We're good at high-tech. We're good at manufacturing. We've got the most productive workforce in the world. Rather than

walling ourselves off from the world, we need a President who will open up markets. We can compete with anybody, any time, anywhere if the playing field is level.

This economy is strong, and it's getting stronger. And I've got a plan to keep us on the path to economic vitality and strong growth so people can find work, because I understand the role of Government is not to create wealth; the role of Government is to create an environment in which the entrepreneurial spirit can flourish, in which small businesses can grow to be big businesses. I need 4 more years to make sure a pro-growth, pro-small-business agenda—[*applause*].

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. Our future also depends on America's leadership in the world. The momentum of freedom in our time is strong, but we still face serious dangers. Al Qaida is wounded but not broken. Terrorists are testing our will in Afghanistan and Iraq. Regimes in North Korea and Iran are challenging the peace. If America shows weakness and uncertainty in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This will not happen on my watch.

This Nation is strong and confident in the cause of freedom. And today, no friend or enemy doubts the word of the United States of America. America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Afghanistan. The Taliban chose defiance, and the Taliban are no longer in power. America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Iraq. The dictator chose defiance, and now the dictator sits in a prison cell.

September the 11th, 2001, taught a lesson I will never forget. America must confront threats before they fully materialize. In Iraq, my administration looked at the intelligence, and we saw a threat. Members of Congress looked at the intelligence, and they saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence, and it saw a threat. The previous administration and Congress looked at the intelligence and made regime change in Iraq the policy of our Government.

In 2002, the United Nations Security Council yet again demanded a full accounting of Saddam Hussein's weapons program. As he had for over a decade, Saddam Hussein, the man who had used weapons of mass destruction before, the man who had terrorist ties, the man who paid suiciders to go kill innocent Israelis, refused to comply.

So I had a choice to make: Either take the word of a madman, or take action to defend America. Faced with that choice, I will defend America every time.

My opponent admits that Saddam Hussein was a threat. He just didn't support my decision to remove Saddam from power. Maybe he was hoping Saddam would lose the next Iraqi election. [*Laughter*]

We showed the dictator and a watching world that America means what it says. Because our coalition acted, Saddam's torture chambers are closed. Because we acted, Iraq's weapons programs are ended forever. Because we acted, nations like Libya have gotten the message and have voluntarily disarmed. Because we acted, an example of democracy is rising at the very heart of the Middle East. Because we acted, the world is more free and America is more secure.

On the ground in Iraq, we still face serious and dangerous challenges. Illegal militias and remnants of the regime, joined by foreign terrorists, are trying to take by force the power they could never gain by the ballot. They know that a free Iraq will be a major defeat in the cause of terror. These groups have found little support among the Iraqi people. They will find no success in their attempts to shake the will of America. They do not understand this country. America will never be intimidated by thugs and assassins.

Our coalition is implementing a clear strategy in Iraq. We will ensure an atmosphere of security as Iraqis move toward self-government. We support the efforts of local Iraqis to disarm the radicals in Fallujah. We made it clear that militias in Najaf and elsewhere must disarm or face serious consequences. American and coalition forces are in place, and we will enforce order in Iraq.

We will return sovereignty to the people of Iraq on the schedule that we agreed to. Like any proud people, Iraqis want to manage their own affairs, and that is a goal we share. On June 30th, a sovereign Iraqi interim government will take office.

These are tough days. We honor the sacrifice of those who have fallen. We appreciate their families. We ask for God's blessing. These are tough times. They're difficult tasks, but they're essential tasks. America will finish what we have begun, and we will win this essential victory in the war on terror.

On national security, Americans have the clearest possible choice. My opponent says he approves of bold action in the world, but only if other countries do not object. I'm all for united action, and so are our more than 30 coalition partners in Iraq. I will never turn over America's national security decisions to leaders of other countries.

We've got fantastic troops. They've got to have the best supplies, best equipment, best body armor. And that's why I proposed an $87 billion supplemental last fall. Someone recently asked my opponent why he voted against that bill. Here is what he said: "I actually did vote for the 87 billion, before I voted against it." The American President must speak clearly and mean what he says.

We have a difference of opinion. We have a difference of opinion about whether the war on terror is really a war at all. My opponent said, and I quote, "The war on terror is far less of a military operation and far more of an intelligence-gathering, law enforcement operation." I disagree—I disagree. Our Nation followed that approach after the World Trade Center was bombed in 1993. The matter was handled in the courts and thought by some to be settled, but the terrorists were still training in Afghanistan, plotting in other nations, and drawing up more ambitious plans.

After the chaos and carnage of September the 11th, it is not enough to serve our enemies with legal papers. With those attacks, the terrorists and their supporters declared war on the United States of America, and war is what they got.

Our men and women in the military are taking great risks, and they're doing great work. At bases across our country and the world, I've had the privilege of meeting with those who defend our country and sacrifice for our freedom. I've seen their great decency and unselfish courage. And I assure you, ladies and gentlemen, the cause of freedom is in really good hands.

This Nation is prosperous and strong. Yet, we need to remember that our greatest strength is in the hearts and souls of our citizens. We're strong because of the values we try to live by, courage and compassion, reverence and integrity. We're strong because of the institutions that help give us direction and purpose, family and schools and religious congregations. These values and institutions are fundamental to our lives, and they deserve the respect of our Government.

We stand for the fair treatment of faith-based groups so they can receive Federal support for their works of compassion and healing. We will not stand for Government discrimination against people of faith.

We stand for welfare reforms that require work and strengthen marriage, which have helped millions of Americans find independence and dignity. We will not stand for any attempt to weaken those reforms and send people back into lives of dependence.

We stand for a culture of life in which every person counts and every person matters. We will not stand for the treatment of any life as a commodity to be experimented upon or exploited or cloned.

We stand for the confirmation of judges who strictly and faithfully interpret the law. We will not stand for judges who undermine democracy by legislating from the bench and try to remake the values of America by court order.

We stand for a culture of responsibility in America. The culture of this country is changing from one that has said, "If it feels good, do it," and, "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each of us understands we are responsible for the decisions we make in life. If you're fortunate enough to be a mother or a father, you are responsible for loving your child with all your heart. If you're worried about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you're responsible for doing something about it. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you are responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And in the new responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourselves.

For all Americans, these years in our history will always stand apart. There are quiet times in the life of a nation when little is expected of the leaders. This isn't one of those times. You and I are living in a period where the stakes are high, the challenges are difficult, a time when firm resolve is needed.

None of us will ever forget that week when one era ended and another began. On September the 14th, 2001, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers. I'll never forget that day. I'll never forget the workers in the hardhats who were shouting, "Whatever it takes." I'll never forget the firefighter that pointed at me and said, "Don't let me down."

As we all did that day, these men and women searching through the rubble took it personally. I took it personally. I have a responsibility that goes on. I will never relent in bringing justice to our enemies. I will defend the security of America, whatever it takes.

In these times, I have also been a witness to the character of this Nation. Not so long ago, some had their doubts about the American character, our capacity to meet serious challenges or to serve a cause greater than self-interest. Americans have given their answer. I've seen the unselfish courage of our troops. I've seen the heroism of Americans in the face of danger. I've seen the spirit of service and compassion renewed in our country, and we've all seen our Nation unite in common purpose when it mattered most.

We will need all these qualities for the work ahead. You see, I'm running for 4 more years because we have a war to win, and the world is counting on us to lead the cause of freedom and peace. I'm asking for your help because we have a duty to spread opportunity to every part of America. This is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it. And we know that for our country, the best days lie ahead.

May God bless you all. May God continue to bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:48 p.m. at the Cincinnati Gardens Arena. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Bob Taft of Ohio; entertainers Billy Cerveny and Steven Curtis Chapman; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Interview With Alhurra Television
May 5, 2004

Abuse of Iraqi Prisoners at Abu Ghraib Prison

Q. Mr. President, thank you for agreeing to do this interview with us.

Evidence of torture of Iraqi prisoners by U.S. personnel has left many Iraqis and people in the Middle East and the Arab world with the impression that the United States is no better than Saddam Hussein regime. Especially when this alleged torture took place in the Abu Ghraib prison, a symbol of torture of——

The President. Yes.

Q. What can the U.S. do, or what can you do to get out of this?

The President. First, people in Iraq must understand that I view those practices as abhorrent. They must also understand that what took place in that prison does not represent America that I know. The America I know is a compassionate country that believes in freedom. The America I know cares about every individual. The America I know has sent troops into Iraq to promote freedom—good, honorable citizens that are helping the Iraqis every day.

It's also important for the people of Iraq to know that in a democracy, everything is not perfect, that mistakes are made. But in a democracy as well those mistakes will be investigated, and people will be brought to justice. We're an open society. We're a society that is willing to investigate, fully investigate in this case, what took place in that prison.

That stands in stark contrast to life under Saddam Hussein. His trained torturers were never brought to justice under his regime. There were no investigations about mistreatment of people. There will be investigations. People will be brought to justice.

Media Coverage/Investigations

Q. When did you learn about the—did you see the pictures on TV? When was the first time you heard about——

The President. Yes, the first time I saw or heard about pictures was on TV. However, as you might remember, in early January, General Kimmitt talked about a investigation that would be taking place about accused—alleged improprieties in the prison. So our Government has been in the process of investigating.

And there are two—more than two investigations, multiple investigations going on, some of them related to any criminal charges that may be filed. And in our system of law, it's essential that those criminal charges go forward without prejudice. In other words, people need to be—are treated innocent until proven guilty. And facts are now being gathered.

And secondly, there is investigations to determine how widespread abuse may be occurring, and we want to know the truth. I talked to the Secretary of Defense this morning, by the way. I said, "Find the truth, and then tell the Iraqi people and the world the truth." We have nothing to hide. We believe in transparency, because we're a free society. That's what free societies do. They—if there's a problem, they address those problems in a forthright, upfront manner. And that's what's taking place.

Accountability

Q. Mr. President, in a democracy and a free society, as you mentioned, people investigate, but at the same time, even those who are not directly responsible for these events take responsibility. With such a problem of this magnitude, do we expect anyone to step down? Do you still have confidence in the Secretary of Defense?

The President. Oh, of course I've got confidence in the Secretary of Defense, and I've got confidence in the commanders on the ground in Iraq, because they and our troops are doing great work on behalf of the Iraqi people. We're finding the few that wanted to try to stop progress toward freedom and democracy. We're helping the Iraqi people stand up a government. We stand side by side with the Iraqis that love freedom.

And—but people will be held to account. That's what the process does. That's what we do in America. We fully investigate. We let everybody see the results of the investigation, and then people will be held to account.

Human Rights Abuses/International Red Cross

Q. If your State Department issues a human rights report about practices around the world and abuses, and we call upon countries every once in a while to——

The President. Right.

Q. ——try to put pressure on them to allow International Red Cross to visit prisons and detention center, would you allow the International Red Cross and other human rights organization to visit prisons under the control of the U.S. military?

The President. Of course we'll cooperate with the International Red Cross. They're a vital organization, and we work with the International Red Cross. And you're right, we do point out human rights abuses. We also say to those governments, "Clean up your act," and that's precisely what America is doing.

We've discovered these abuses. They're abhorrent abuses. They do not reflect—the actions of these few people do not reflect the hearts of the American people. The American people are just as appalled at what they have seen on TV as the Iraqi citizens have. The Iraqi citizens must understand that. And therefore, there will be a full investigation, and justice will be served. And we will do to ourselves what we expect of others.

And when we say, "You've got human rights abuses, take care of the problem," we will do the same thing. We're taking care of the problem. And it's—it is unpleasant for Americans to see that some citizens, some soldiers have acted this way, because it does—again, I keep repeating, but it's true—it doesn't reflect how we think. This is not America. America is a country of justice and law and freedom and treating people with respect.

Cooperation Within Iraq

Q. Transferring control of Fallujah in Iraq to former army officers under Saddam Hussein led many people in Iraq and even in the Arab world to believe that the U.S. is lowering its expectation.

The President. Yes.

Q. How would you respond?

The President. Quite the contrary. We're raising expectations. We believe the Iraqi people can self-govern, and we believe the Iraqi people have got the capacity to take care of people who are willing to terrorize innocent Iraqi citizens. And that's what you're seeing in Fallujah. As a matter of fact, the general in charge of the operation in Fallujah had been imprisoned by Saddam Hussein. So he felt the vindictiveness of the Hussein regime.

And I've got confidence that Iraq will be a peaceful, self-governing nation. And I also have confidence that, with help, the Iraqi security forces will be strong against foreign terrorists and others who are willing to kill and criminals who are willing to try to wreak havoc in this society. Listen, there are thousands of Iraqi—innocent Iraqis who are dying at the hands of these killers. And we want to help decent, honorable Iraqi citizens bring peace and security to Iraq.

Q. So there is no reversal in policy of de-Ba'athification?

The President. Oh, no. There are citizens, for example, in the—amongst the

teacher ranks in Sunni—parts of Sunni Iraq that were denied the right to teach because they may have been affiliated with the Ba'athist Party in the past but who are very important to the future of Iraq because they're teachers. And of course, they are now being let back in the classroom, not to spread political propaganda but to teach, to teach children.

And obviously, there is a process of balancing those who may have been affiliated with the Ba'ath Party and those who are terrorists and killers. And obviously, terrorists and killers and extremists will not be a part of the Government, but people who are by and large peaceful people, who care deeply about the future of Iraq, will be. And that's what you're seeing taking place now.

Progress in Iraq/Transfer of Sovereignty

Q. It's been over a year since Saddam Hussein's regime has toppled down, and U.S. allies are in place right now in Iraq. What is your assessment, today, of U.S. allies and the Governing Council and the various factions of the Iraqi Government?

The President. Yes, well, first, I think we've made a lot of progress in a year.

Q. Do you still trust them? Do you still——

The President. Well, I trust the Iraqi people, let me put it to you that way. I believe the Iraqi people want to be free. By far, the vast majority of Iraqi citizens want to have a life that is peaceful, so they can raise their children, see that their children are educated, have a chance for their children to succeed. The businesspeople of Iraq just want a stable environment for them to be able to run their businesses and make a living. People want jobs. I mean, there are normal aspirations in Iraq that give me great confidence in the future of Iraq. People aspire for the same thing in Iraq as we do in America, a chance to succeed.

I also have confidence that the process we're under will work, which is to transfer sovereignty on June 30th. The people of Iraq must understand, sovereignty will be transferred on June 30th. And there's a process now in place to make sure that there's an entity to which we transfer sovereignty. And then there will be elections. And I think the timetable we're on is a realistic timetable. It's one that will be met, and I believe that the elections will help the Iraqi citizens realize that freedom is coming.

Israeli Disengagement Plan

Q. If I may ask you my final question on the issue of the peace efforts that you are conducting, you supported Prime Minister Sharon's plan to withdraw from Gaza, and you sent senior officials to Israel, and Israeli officials came to Washington and negotiated that plan. Do you think it was a mistake to support a plan before the Prime Minister secured the support of his own party?

The President. I think when you see a step toward peace, it's important for a peaceful nation like America to embrace it. And I felt that a withdrawal from the Gaza by the Israeli Prime Minister as well as the withdrawal from four settlements from the West Bank by the Israeli Prime Minister was a step toward peace. And at the time he did so, I called for the United States and others to seize this moment—the Quartet and the European Union and Russia and the United Nations and, hopefully, the World Bank, to seize this moment and to help the development of a Palestinian state that will be at peace with its neighbors, a Palestinian state that will provide hope for long-suffering Palestinian people.

I think this is an historic moment for the world. I think this is a good opportunity to step forth. I am confident that a peaceful Palestinian state can emerge. I'm the first President ever to call for the establishment of a Palestinian state. I still feel strongly that there should be one. I also recognize that we have got a duty, all of us, to fight

off the terrorists who are trying to stop the spread of a peaceful Palestinian state or the creation of a Palestinian state.

And now is the time to make progress, and I believe we can. There was a good statement yesterday out of the Quartet that confirmed our desire for a Palestinian state to emerge. And it's—what the Prime Minister of Israel did was—took a political risk; obviously he did. I mean, his own party condemned the statement—condemned the policy. However, I still believe it was the right thing for him to do, and we support peace in the Middle East. And we support the vision of two states living side by side in peace.

Q. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

The President. Good job.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 10:18 a.m. in the Map Room at the White House for later broadcast. In his remarks, the President referred to former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; Brig. Gen. Mark T. Kimmitt, USA, deputy director of operations, Coalition Joint Task Force Seven; Iraqi General Mohammed Latif; and Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of Israel.

Interview With Al Arabiya Television
May 5, 2004

Abuse of Iraqi Prisoners at Abu Ghraib Prison

Q. Mr. President, thank you for giving us this chance here in Al Arabiya. Regarding the alleged abuse of Iraqi prisoners, six U.S. soldiers are being reprimanded. Do you think that's enough?

The President. First, I want to tell the people of the Middle East that the practices that took place in that prison are abhorrent, and they don't represent America; they represent the actions of a few people. Secondly, it's important for people to understand that in a democracy that there will be a full investigation. In other words, we want to know the truth.

In our country, when there's an allegation of abuse—more than an allegation in this case, actual abuse, we saw the pictures—there will be a full investigation, and justice will be delivered. We have a presumption of innocent until you're guilty in our system, but the system will be transparent. It will be open, and people will see the results.

This is a serious matter. It's a matter that reflects badly on my country. Our citizens in America are appalled by what they saw, just like people in the Middle East are appalled. We share the same deep concerns, and we will find the truth. We will fully investigate. The world will see the investigation, and justice will be served.

Middle East Reaction

Q. And you just—you've said this is reflected badly here, in United States of America. How do you think this will be perceived in the Middle East?

The President. Terrible. I think people in the Middle East who want to dislike America will use this as an excuse to remind people about their dislike. I think the average citizen will say, "This isn't the country that I've been told about." We're a great country because we're a free country, and we do not tolerate these kind of abuses.

The people of the Middle East must be assured that we will investigate fully, that we will find out the truth. They will know the truth, just like the American citizens will know the truth, and justice will be served.

Secondly, it's very important for the people of the Middle East to realize that the

troops we have overseas are decent, honorable citizens who care about freedom and peace. They are working daily in Iraq to improve the lives of the Iraqi citizens, and these actions of a few people do not reflect the nature of the men and women who serve our country.

U.S. Response to Abuse of Prisoners

Q. After these pictures came out, some people in the area started talking about another alleged abuse. Could you tell us about what's being done just to prevent this from happening and just to improve the situation?

The President. Absolutely. I have told our Secretary of Defense, and I have instructed him to tell everybody else in the military, I want to know the full extent of the operations in Iraq, the prison operations. We want to make sure that if there is a systemic problem—in other words, if there's a problem system-wide—that we stop the practices.

Again, it's very important for people, your listeners to understand, in our country that when an issue is brought to our attention on this magnitude, we act, and we act in a way where leaders are willing to discuss it with the media. And we act in a way where, you know, our Congress asks pointed questions to the leadership. In other words, people want to know the truth. That stands in contrast to dictatorships. A dictator wouldn't be answering questions about this. A dictator wouldn't be saying that the system will be investigated and the world will see the results of the investigation. A dictator wouldn't admit reforms needed to be done.

And so the people in the Middle East must understand that this was horrible, but we're dealing with it in a way that will bring confidence to not only our citizens, which is very important, but confidence to people of the world that this situation will be rectified and justice will be done.

Situation in Fallujah

Q. We are going to Fallujah—the way the situation is being resolved, is being considered in some parts of Iraq as a defeat to U.S. How do you address that, or do you have anything to address that issue?

The President. Yes, of course. The strategy in Fallujah is to empower Iraqis to step up and take control of the security situation, that we're on our way to the transfer of sovereignty. And people who feel like that they can wreak havoc on innocent Iraqis will be brought to justice in Iraq, either by Iraqi citizens and/or by coalition forces. And we're making progress.

There are a few people there in Iraq that want to claim credit for any situation on the ground, but the people in Fallujah are tired of foreign fighters and radicals and extremists preventing them from living a normal life. And those who remain in Fallujah will be taken care of. And the Iraqi forces that have been stood up are now in the process of patrolling the streets and bringing law and order to the streets.

Muqtada Al Sadr

Q. June the 30th is approaching. How do you think—still Mr. Sadr in defense with U.S., how do you think this person should be dealt with?

The President. I think he ought to be dealt with by the Iraqi citizens who are getting tired of him occupying the holiest of holy sites. And we are very respectful for the holy sites in Iraq. We understand their importance to the Iraqi citizens. Mr. Sadr is occupying those sites as if they're his, and I think the Iraqi citizens are getting tired of that.

We will deal with his militias, as will the Iraqi forces deal with his militias. Militias are people who are willing to kill, intimidate, and try to take matters into their own hands, which is not the way democracy functions. Free societies do not allow thugs to roam streets and hold people hostage to their whims. The Iraqis will deal with Mr. Sadr.

Transfer of Sovereignty

Q. June the 30th, do you think your administration is really prepared right now to have a very, very nice day—in that day to give the power to Iraqis?

The President. Absolutely. We're prepared to do so. When we say we're going to do something, we're going to do it. As you know, the United Nations, the coalition, as well as Iraqi citizens are preparing the entity to which sovereignty will be passed. There will still be a lot of hard work to do, and we want to help.

The Iraqi citizens must understand America is not going to leave until the job is complete. We want to help Iraq. We've made a commitment, and the United States will keep that commitment because we believe in freedom and we believe the people of Iraq want to be free. We believe they want to raise their children in a peaceful world. We believe they want to educate their children in good schools. We want to—we believe they want to realize their own personal ambitions. If they're a businessman or a businesswoman, they want to build their own business in peace. That's what we believe.

And therefore, we stand side by side with the people of Iraq who are peaceful. And there's a lot of peaceful people that look for a better day. I'm very proud of the brave Iraqis who've stood up, and I'm very proud of our own men and women in uniform who are helping Iraq to become free.

Al Qaida

Q. Mr. President, critics are saying that by your action in Iraq actually invited Al Qaida and other terrorists to do business with you over there. Could you address that?

The President. Sure. Do you remember September the 11th, 2001? Al Qaida attacked the United States. They killed thousands of our citizens. I will never forget what they have done to us. They declared war on us, and the United States will pursue them. So long as I'm the President, we will be determined, steadfast, and strong as we pursue those people who kill innocent lives because they hate freedom.

And of course, Al Qaida looks for any excuse. But the truth of the matter is, they hate us, and they hate freedom, and they hate people who embrace freedom. And they're willing to kill innocent Iraqis because Iraqis are willing to be free. Iraqis are sick of foreign people coming in their country and trying to destabilize their country, and we will help them rid Iraq of these killers.

Democracy in the Middle East

Q. Mr. President, you went to Iraq as a part of your project in the Middle East, and flourish democracy over there. To which extent you are willing to go further to flourish a democracy? Are we going to see in the future more action against some other countries to flourish democracy over there, like Syria?

The President. No, I think it's—first of all, you've got to understand, sir, that military options are always my last option, not the first option, and that we can promote freedom without use of military. There are ways to stand with reformers and encourage reform and hold up examples of where societies are more stable and more free as a result of democracy and freedom.

Secondly, it's very important for the people of the Middle East to understand that freedom doesn't have to look like America. A free society doesn't have to look like an American society. Free societies will develop according to the cultures of the people in the regions and the Middle East. And reform and freedom take time. I understand that. It takes time for a free society to emerge. And so America can affect freedom in different kinds of ways.

But inherent in your question was, you know, am I anxious to use military power? Iraq was a unique situation because Saddam Hussein had constantly defied the world and had threatened his neighbors, had used weapons of mass destruction, had

terrorist ties, had torture chambers inside his country, had mass graves. It was a very unique situation. And he was given a chance to meet the demands of the free world in a peaceful way, but he chose war.

We can make progress with freedom and peace because I believe deep in the heart and soul of every human being is a desire to be free. And America will continue to speak to those aspirations.

Peaceful Palestinian State

Q. My last question, Mr. President. You gave assurance to Sharon Government. From Al Arabiya, in these last questions, what kind of assurance are you going to give to Palestinian today?

The President. I stood up in front of the world and said that the Palestinian people ought to have their own state. I'm the first President to have ever said that. And my assurance is, is that I have not changed my vision of two states living side by side in peace. And that—Prime Minister Sharon made a decision to withdraw from the Gaza and from settlements on the West Bank, which I thought was a very strong decision and an important decision, because it now gives us a chance to move in and to say to the Palestinians, "Here's your chance to build a state, to put the institutions in place for a state to emerge, that speaks to the aspirations and hopes of the Palestinian people, that is a peaceful state."

And we want to help. And that's why yesterday you saw a statement coming out of the Quartet, which is a part of the roadmap process that says, "Let's work together to give the Palestinians hope." And my commitment to the Palestinian people is, when peaceful leaders emerge, when people are willing to fight off terror, they will have a great opportunity to see this state emerge. And America will help.

Q. Mr. President, thank you so much for discussing. Enjoy your day. It's sunny, so I hope you have a good day.

The President. Thank you, sir. It is a sunny day. Welcome.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 10:33 a.m. in the Map Room at the White House for later broadcast. In his remarks, the President referred to Muqtada Al Sadr, Iraqi Shiite cleric whose militia engaged in an uprising in Iraq in early April; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; and Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of Israel.

Remarks at a Cinco de Mayo Celebration
May 5, 2004

Thank you all for coming. Thanks for being here. Thank you all. Please be seated. *Sientese.* [*Laughter*] *Bienvenidos.* Welcome to the *Casa Blanca.* This is the people's house, and we're glad you're here to celebrate Cinco de Mayo. Laura and I are thrilled so many came today. We're pleased to celebrate this important day with you.

This day marks an important victory for freedom in Mexico. That's what the day marks, and that victory can be celebrated by all who love freedom. We honor freedom today. We also proudly observe Cinco de Mayo because we honor the ideals of liberty. We value the heritage and the contribution of Mexican Americans in our country, and we respect our friend and neighbor, the great nation of Mexico.

I want to thank Gaddi Vasquez for his service to our country as the Director of the Peace Corps. I think he is incredibly well suited to take on this important job of spreading peace and freedom and liberty throughout the world. Plus, you're a darn good introducer. [*Laughter*]

I'm proud that my longtime friend Tony Garza is with us today, the *Embajador a Mexico de los Estados Unidos.* Mr. Ambassador, thank you for coming. Roger Noriega is with us, who is the Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs. That means he's at the State Department in charge of affairs particularly with people who speak Spanish. It's a big job, and he's doing a heck of a good job. Thank you for coming.

My lawyer is here, the White House Counsel—*el juez*—Judge Al Gonzales. Thank you, Judge, for coming. I appreciate you being here. Hector Barreto, who is the Administrator of the Small Business Administration. Hector, *como esta?* Thank you for coming. *El Embajador de Mexico a los Estados Unidos*, Carlos de Icaza. Ambassador, thank you for coming.

And finally, we're very fortunate to have the Attorney General of Mexico with us today. Rafael Macedo de la Concha is with us. I'm so proud you're here, General. Thank you for coming, and thank you for the close cooperation. Delighted you're here.

I want to thank the Members of Congress who have joined us. I see we've got two strong Members of the House of Representatives. These brothers—the Diaz-Balart boys, I call them—[*laughter*]—Lincoln *y* Mario. They're from Miami, and they're great Members. Thanks for coming. Devin Nunes from California is with us. Congressman, thank you for coming. And finally, Congressman Steve Pearce from New Mexico—I appreciate you coming, Steve. I'm honored you're here.

Bishop, thank you for lending such grace to this occasion. I appreciated your strong words, and I really appreciate your faith, and I love your background. You're doing a heck of a job.

Marco, thank you as well. *Adonde esta,* Marco? Oh, Marco. [*Laughter*] I think you'd have gotten a better seat after all that work. [*Laughter*] Thank you for what you do. I appreciate you. And I want to thank Jimena. Thank you for coming. Your grandmother would be proud. I want to thank Banda El Recodo for a very good job. And what a fabulous voice on Marco Antonio Solis. Thank you, Marco—very good job, appreciate you.

I've got to thank my friend Emilio Estefan for putting the show together again. I want to thank you, Emilio. And I always like to remind Emilio, both of us married really well—[*laughter*]—didn't we? [*Laughter*]

I know we've got leaders from around the country—Hector Flores of LULAC is with us. Manny Lujan is with us. I want to thank the representatives from other grassroots organizations for coming today, for representing the Mexican American population so well in the Halls of Congress and throughout.

I see that the administrator of NASA is with us today, Sean O'Keefe. And with the administrator—I know I'm not supposed to be talking about the Mexican American astronaut that's with you—[*laughter*]—but you shouldn't have worn the uniform like that. [*Laughter*] You stand out. [*Laughter*] I'm proud you're here, Commander. Thank you for coming.

Somebody said don't introduce him, because there's supposed to be, like, a special announcement tomorrow. [*Laughter*] Something along those lines. [*Laughter*] Well, keep it off the record. [*Laughter*] Appreciate your service. Congratulations. It's a proud day for the Mexican American culture to know that you're—[*applause*].

The great triumph of Mexican forces on May the 5th, 1862, has inspired liberty-loving people everywhere, and it's helped shape the character of modern Mexico. Against great odds, a small and under-equipped army defeated the skilled army of a European power. We've had that experience in America too. [*Laughter*]

Our two nations have very different histories, but our journeys have led us in the same direction. We believe in the rights and dignity of everyone. We believe that

liberty is always worth defending. The ideals we share are among the many ties between our nations. Twenty-four million people of Mexican ancestry live in the United States today. It's almost 10 percent of our population, and America is better off for it.

Mexican Americans have brought many strengths to our Nation, a culture built around faith in God, a deep love for family, a belief that hard work leads to a better life. Every immigrant who lives by these values makes our country better and makes our future brighter.

Many Mexican and Hispanic Americans have shown their belief in this country by defending it. More than 600,000 of our veterans are of Mexican descent. Hispanic Americans have fought bravely in all our wars, including our own fight for independence. And for their valor, over three dozen have received the Congressional Medal of Honor.

On Cinco de Mayo, 2004, more than 130,000 Hispanic Americans are serving in the United States Armed Forces. Several of these fine men and women are with us today. Please rise so we can thank you for your service to our country.

Hispanic Americans serve our country in all kinds of ways. With us today are also firefighters from communities close by. They're part of the brave brotherhood of firefighters who answered the alarms and come to the aid of their neighbors against all hazards. We want to thank you for your service. We want to thank you for your sense of duty. We want to thank you for your contributions to our country. Welcome to the White House, and thanks for being here.

On this holiday, we also look with pride to the vital and enduring friendship between the United States and Mexico. We share the busiest border in the world. We share a growing trade relationship that amounts to more than $230 billion per year. We share a commitment to freedom and prosperity throughout our neighborhood.

In March, I hosted Vicente Fox—or we hosted Vicente Fox—[*laughter*]—at our ranch in Crawford, Texas. Our years of working together and our mutual respect are a reflection of the strong partnership between our two nations. Mexico and America have come a long way in 142 years, and we face the future as trusted partners, strong allies, and close friends.

Across Mexico and America today, there will be a great many celebrations of Cinco de Mayo, none of them quite like here in the White House—[*laughter*]—none of them with the fantastic entertainers we had here today. And I know we're starting a little early here, and I'm honored you could join us.

Happy Cinco de Mayo. May God bless Mexico, and may God continue to bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:31 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to entertainers Marco Antonio Solis, Jimena, and Emilio Estefan; Hector M. Flores, national president, League of United Latin American Citizens; Manuel Lujan, Jr., chairman, Hispanic Alliance for Progress; and President Vicente Fox of Mexico. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Message on the Observance of Cinco de Mayo, 2004
May 5, 2004

I send greetings to those celebrating Cinco de Mayo.

On May 5, 1862, Mexican soldiers held back an invading army at the Battle of Puebla. This victory played a decisive role in the eventual expulsion of foreign forces from Mexico in 1867. Led by Texas-born Mexican General Ignacio Zaragoza, a small outnumbered militia of freedom-loving soldiers halted the invasion of their country. One hundred forty-two years after this victory, Cinco de Mayo pays tribute to the bravery and victory of General Zaragoza's soldiers and the strong, independent spirit of the Mexican people.

This observance is also a time to celebrate the strong friendship between the United States and Mexico. More than neighbors, we are partners in building a safer, more democratic, and more prosperous hemisphere. The United States continues to share close ties of family, culture, and history with Mexico and the Mexican people, and we recognize the vital role Mexican Americans play in shaping our Nation. We look forward to a future of continued friendship and collaboration with Mexico as we work to advance peace and democracy in the world.

Laura joins me in sending our best wishes for a joyous celebration.

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this message.

Statement Announcing a Request to Congress for the Establishment of a Contingency Reserve Fund
May 5, 2004

This morning, Secretary Rumsfeld and I discussed recommendations from our commanders in Iraq and Afghanistan about additional resources that they may require.

While we do not know the precise costs for operations next year, recent developments on the ground and increased demands on our troops indicate the need to plan for contingencies. We must make sure there is no disruption in funding and resources for our troops.

I am requesting that Congress establish a $25 billion contingency reserve fund for the coming fiscal year to meet all commitments to our troops and to make sure we succeed in these critical fronts in the war on terror. As my administration has previously said, we will pursue a full FY 2005 supplemental request when we can better estimate precise costs.

Our troops in Iraq are performing superbly in their efforts to help the Iraqi people realize a free and peaceful future. I have pledged to our troops that they will have all the resources they need to get the job done, and I look forward to working with Congress on this high priority.

Remarks at a Republican National Committee Dinner
May 5, 2004

The President. I'm ready. I'm here to tell you I appreciate your support and I want your vote. I stand ready and eager to lead this Nation for 4 more years.

I've recently come off a bus tour in Michigan and Ohio. The crowds were big. The enthusiasm was high. Our support is strong. We're rolling on our way to victory in November of 2004.

There's going to be many turns in this campaign, but this will remain constant: I will offer a positive, optimistic, and hopeful vision to the American people. I have a plan to win the war on terror and to spread peace and freedom throughout the world. I have a plan to help create an environment so more jobs are created and every single citizen of this country can realize the great promise of our country. I have a plan to promote the compassion and spirit of this country, so all citizens—all citizens—can realize their dreams.

I will leave no doubt where I stand. I will leave no doubt that after 4 more years, this country will be safer and stronger and better. And with this message and with your help, I am confident that Vice President Cheney and I will be reelected.

A good reason to put me back in office is to make sure Laura has 4 more years as the First Lady.

Audience member. We love Laura!

The President. Yes, you love Laura, and I love Laura. [*Laughter*]

When you're out there gathering the vote, make sure you tell people that I put together a fantastic administration to serve the American people, people from all walks of life, people who have come to our Nation's Capital to serve the people, not their self-interest. I'm proud to be running with a fine Vice President, Dick Cheney.

And I appreciate the team we put together, starting with the RNC chairman, Ed Gillespie. He's a fine guy. I told Ed when he took the job, I said I want him reaching out to people from all walks of life. I want him to understand our message is so optimistic and hopeful that people, regardless of their political party, are going to like what they hear, that we've got to keep working with everybody in this country. I appreciate the fact that his wife, Cathy, has taken a strong lead in the campaign as well. She's working for "W Stands for Women."

I appreciate so very much the leadership that Al Hoffman has provided to make sure that the Republican National Committee is well funded. I want to thank Ann Wagner as the cochairman. I appreciate my friend Mercer Reynolds for being the Victory 2004 finance chairman. He got bumped up. He was the finance chairman for Bush-Cheney. He did such a good job that we moved him up to the Victory committee.

I want to thank all my friends who are seated on the stage here for working hard. I want to thank you all for coming. As Ed said, this is a record night. It wouldn't have happened without you. It's important to have enough fuel to make sure that the grassroots are activated as we come down the stretch next fall. That's what we're here to talk about.

I've got some members of my administration here tonight—fine Cabinet Secretaries Gale Norton, Ann Veneman, Tommy Thompson, and Spence Abraham. These people are doing a superb job on behalf of the American citizens, and I'm proud to call them Cabinet members in the Bush administration.

We've got a fantastic Congress right now. We've got great leadership in Bill Frist and Speaker Denny Hastert. I'm proud to be working with them. I not only want to make sure I find work after November—[*laughter*]—but I want them in power too. They made a big difference to this country.

I know that Senator George Allen is with us tonight from the great State of Virginia. I know my friend from the great State of Texas, Tom DeLay, is with us tonight. Majority Whip Roy Blunt from Missouri is with us. I want to thank Roy for being here. Congresswoman Deborah Pryce is with us as well, as are many other Members of the United States Congress.

I also want to thank my friend Collin Raye, a fantastic artist who has agreed to entertain, and I'm proud that he has come as well.

These last 3 years have brought serious challenges to this Nation, and we have given serious answers to those challenges. When we came to office, the stock market was declining, and this economy of ours was headed into a recession. But we acted. We delivered historic tax relief for the American people, and now our economy is the fastest growing of any major industrialized nation.

We saw war and grief arrive on a quiet September morning, so we pursued the terrorist enemy across the world. We've captured or killed many of the key Al Qaida leaders, and the rest of them will learn this: There is no cave or hole deep enough to hide from American justice.

We confronted the dangers of state-sponsored terror and the spread of weapons of mass destruction, so we ended two of the most violent and dangerous regimes on Earth. We liberated over 50 million people. And once again, America is proud to stand against tyranny and to set nations free.

When Dick Cheney and I came to office, we found a military that was underfunded and underappreciated, so we acted. Along with the Congress, we gave our military the resources and respect they deserve. And today, no one can question the skill and the strength and the spirit of the United States military.

It is the President's job to confront problems, not to pass them on to future Presidents and future generations. Great events will turn on this election. The man who sits in the Oval Office will set the course of the war on terror and the direction of our economy. The security and prosperity of America are at stake.

I'm running against a tough opponent. We should not take him lightly. He's an experienced Senator who has built up quite a record. [*Laughter*] He's been in Washington long enough to take both sides on just about every issue. [*Laughter*] He voted for the PATRIOT Act, for NAFTA, for the No Child Left Behind Act, and for the use of force in Iraq. Now he opposes the PATRIOT Act, NAFTA, the No Child Left Behind Act, and the liberation of Iraq. My opponent's positions on these issues reminded me of a saying we have in Texas about the weather. [*Laughter*] If you don't like it, just wait a few minutes, and it will change. [*Laughter*]

He has an interesting way of saying things. You know we're both out looking for votes and endorsements. As you might know, he claims he picked up some important endorsements among foreign leaders. [*Laughter*] He just won't tell us who they are. [*Laughter*] He did drop a hint a few weeks ago on TV. He said, "What I said is true. I mean, you can go to New York City, and you can be in a restaurant, and you can meet a foreign leader." End quote. [*Laughter*] I got a hunch this whole thing might be a case of mistaken identity. [*Laughter*] Just because somebody has an accent—[*laughter*]—and a nice suit—[*laughter*]—and a good table—[*laughter*]—it doesn't make him a foreign leader. [*Laughter*] Whoever these mystery men are, they won't be deciding the election. The voters will be deciding the election.

The voters will have a clear choice in this campaign. It's a choice between keeping the tax relief that is moving this economy forward or putting the burden of higher taxes back on the American people. It's a choice between an America that leads the world with strength and confidence or an America that is uncertain in the face of danger.

You know, thus far in the campaign we haven't heard much in the way of strategies from the other side to win the war on terror or to expand our economy. So far we've heard bitterness and outbursts instead of calm debate. The American people understand that anger is not an agenda for the future of America. I will take on the big issues with optimism and resolve and determination, and I will make it clear that we stand ready to lead this Nation for 4 more years.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. A big issue for every family in America is the Federal tax burden. With the largest tax relief since Ronald Reagan was the President, we have left more money in the hands that earned it. By spending and investing and helping to create new jobs, the American people have used their money far better than the Government would have.

The entrepreneurial spirit in this country is strong. The economy grew at a strong rate of 4.2 percent in the first quarter. The economic growth over the past three quarters has been the fastest in nearly two decades. In March, the economy added 308,000 new jobs, the highest monthly job growth total in nearly 4 years. Since August, our economy has added over three-quarters of a million jobs. Across America, manufacturing activity is increasing. Business investment is rising. Disposable income is up. Mortgage and interest rates are near historic lows. Homeownership is at the highest rate ever. The tax relief, the pro-economic stimulus plan we passed is working.

There's a clear difference in this campaign about taxes. My opponent opposed the child—increase in the child credit, reducing the marriage penalty. He voted "no" when it came to creating a lower 10-percent rate for working families. He was against the stimulus package for small businesses. Yet, when it comes to increasing taxes, he's got a real record. [*Laughter*] It's a clear record. He's voted over 350 times for increased taxes on the American people. He supported higher gas taxes 11 times. He once favored an increase of 50 cents a gallon at the gas pump on the American people. That would cost the average driver $5 or more every time you fill up your tank. For that kind of money, you'd think he'd throw in a free car wash. [*Laughter*]

Campaigns can be dangerous when it comes to spending somebody else's money. It's easy to make promises. My opponent thus far has promised $1.9 trillion of new money, new expenditures. And we're just getting started in the campaign. [*Laughter*] Six months ago, he said he's going to pay for it by raising taxes on the rich. But that wouldn't even get him half the money he needs. He's got what I call a "tax gap." [*Laughter*] He needs a lot of money to pay for his promises. And given his record, we know where that money will come from. It will come from working people in America. It will come from people trying to raise their families. It will come from small-business owners. The good news: He's not going to have that chance to raise taxes on the American people.

I have a better idea. We must keep taxes low. We should not raise taxes on the American people. We must do more to keep this economy growing, to create jobs. We need spending discipline here in the Nation's Capital. I look forward to working with Congress to bring much-needed discipline when it comes to spending your money. I have a plan to protect small-business owners and employees from frivolous lawsuits and needless regulation.

We must help control the cost of health care by giving people better access to affordable health care through association health plans and tax-free health savings accounts. Congress needs to pass medical liability reform to make sure that costs are lower.

In order to make sure we're strong, in order to make sure we can grow, in order to make sure people can find work, we

need an energy policy in America, an energy policy that promotes conservation, alternative sources of energy, an energy policy that promotes clean coal technology, an energy policy that encourages environmentally friendly exploration for natural gas. One thing is for certain: We need to become less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

In order to make sure we grow and people can find work, this country must be confident about our ability to compete in the world. We need to knock down trade barriers. We need to open up new markets around the world for America's entrepreneurs and farmers and ranchers. Empty talk about jobs and economic isolationism will not get anyone hired. The way to create jobs is to reelect a pro-growth, pro-small-business, pro-entrepreneur President, George W. Bush.

Our future also depends on America's leadership in the world. The momentum of freedom in our time is strong, but we still face serious dangers. Al Qaida is wounded but not broken. Terrorists are testing our will in Afghanistan and Iraq. Regimes in North Korea and Iran are challenging the peace. If America shows weakness and uncertainty in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This will not happen on my watch.

This Nation is strong and confident in the cause of freedom. Today, no friend or enemy doubts the word of the United States. America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Afghanistan. The Taliban chose defiance, and the Taliban are no longer in power. America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Iraq. The dictator chose defiance, and now the dictator sits in a prison cell.

September the 11th, 2001, taught a lesson I will never forget and America must never forget: America must confront threats before they fully materialize. In my administration, we looked at the intelligence, and we saw a threat in Iraq. The United States Congress looked at the intelligence, and they saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence, and it saw a threat.

In 2002, the U.N. Security Council yet again demanded a full accounting of Saddam Hussein's weapons programs. You see, we all understood that he had used weapons of mass destruction before. We remembered that he had terrorist ties. We remembered that he attacked countries in his neighborhood. We remembered clearly that he paid suiciders to go kill innocent Israelis. We remembered the nature of Saddam Hussein. But he chose defiance. He defied the demands of the free world. So I had a choice to make: Either take the word of a madman, or defend this country. Given that choice, I will defend America every time.

My opponent admits that Saddam Hussein was a threat. He just didn't support my decision to remove Saddam from power. Maybe he was hoping Saddam would lose the next Iraqi election. [*Laughter*] We showed the dictator and a watching world that America means what it says. Because our coalition acted, Saddam's torture chambers are closed. Because we acted, Iraq's weapons programs are ended forever. Because we acted, nations like Libya got the message and have voluntarily disarmed. Because we acted, an example of democracy is rising at the very heart of the Middle East. Because we acted, the world is more free, and America is more secure.

We still face serious and continuing challenges in Iraq. These have been tough times for the American people. I understand that. See, we're facing illegal militias and remnants of a regime who are joined by foreign terrorists. They're trying to take force by power that they could never gain by the ballot. They know that a free Iraq will be a major defeat in the war on terror. They hate freedom. They can't stand the thought of free societies growing up in the Middle East. These groups find little support among the Iraqi people, and they will

find no success in their attempts to shake the will of America. They don't understand our country. America will never be intimidated by thugs and assassins.

We have a clear strategy in Iraq. We're working hard to ensure an atmosphere of security as Iraqis move toward self-government. We support the efforts of local Iraqis to disarm the radicals in their country. We stand with those brave souls who want their country to be free and peaceful. We made it clear to militias in Najaf and elsewhere to disarm or face grave consequences. Our forces are in position. Our forces are on the move. Our forces are on the offense. We will enforce order in Iraq.

And as we do so, we will return sovereignty to the people of Iraq on a schedule that we agreed to. Like any proud people, Iraqis want to manage their own affairs. On June 30th, a sovereign Iraqi interim government will take office. We will pass sovereignty. We will stay and stand with those people as a free country emerges. These aren't easy tasks for our country, but they're essential tasks. America will finish what we have begun, and we will win this victory in the war on terror.

On national security, Americans have a clear choice. My opponent says he approves of bold action in the world, but only if other countries do not object. [*Laughter*] I'm for united action. We've put together coalitions to help bring the peace in Afghanistan. More than 30 coalition partners are in Iraq right now. But I will never turn over America's national security decisions to leaders of other countries.

We have a difference about this war on terror. My opponent said the war on terror is far less of a military operation and far more of an intelligence-gathering, law enforcement operation.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. I disagree. Our Nation followed this approach after the World Trade Center was bombed in 1993. The matter was handled in the courts and thought by some to be settled. Yet, the terrorists were still training in Afghanistan. They were still plotting in other nations. They were drawing up more ambitious plans.

After the chaos and carnage of September the 11th, it is not enough to serve our enemies with legal papers. With those attacks, the terrorists and their supporters declared war on the United States of America, and war is what they got.

Winning this war requires steadfast resolve. Winning this war requires clear purpose. Winning this war requires us to give our troops the best equipment in the world. That's why I proposed an $87 billion supplemental last fall. I want our troops to have the best. My opponent voted against that bill, and here's what he said: "I actually did vote for the 87 billion, before I voted against it." [*Laughter*] The American President must speak clearly and mean what he says, if the world is to be more peaceful.

We've got a great military. We've got fantastic men and women serving our Nation. They're taking great risks, and they're doing excellent work. At bases across our country and the world, I have had the privilege of meeting with those who defend our country and sacrifice for our security. I've seen their great decency and unselfish courage, and I assure you, ladies and gentlemen, the cause of freedom is in good hands.

This Nation is prosperous and strong. Yet we need to remember that our greatest strength is in the hearts and souls of the American people. We are strong because of the values we try to live by, courage and compassion, reverence and integrity. We're strong because of the institutions that help give us direction and purpose, families and schools and our religious congregations. This is a fabulous nation because of the people of this Nation. I'm constantly amazed by the generous acts of kindness and decency and compassion that take place on a daily basis in our country.

We've got people mentoring children, feeding the hungry, finding shelter for the homeless, providing love for the lonely. And it all happens not because of government but because of the compassion of the American people.

I see the culture of our country changing. It's changing from one that has said, "If it feels good, do it," and, "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each of us understands we are responsible for the decisions we make in life. If you're fortunate enough to be a mother or a father, you are responsible for loving your child with all your heart. If you're worried about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you are responsible for doing something about it. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you are responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And in the responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourselves.

For all Americans, these years in our history will always stand apart. There are quiet times in the life of a nation when little is expected of its leaders. This isn't one of those times. You and I are living in a period when the stakes are high, when challenges are difficult, a time when firm resolve is needed.

None of us will ever forget that week when one era ended and another began. On September 14, 2001, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers. It's a day I will never forget. I remember a guy pointed at me and said, "Don't let me down." Workers in hardhats, policemen, and firefighters were shouting, "Whatever it takes." As we all did that day, these men and women searching through the rubble took it personally. I took it personally. I have a responsibility that goes on. I will never relent in bringing justice to our enemies. I will defend our country, whatever it takes.

In these times, I have also been witness to the character of this Nation. Not so long ago, some had their doubts about the American character, our capacity to meet serious challenges or to serve a cause greater than self-interest. Americans have given their answer. I've seen the unselfish courage of our troops. I've seen the heroism of Americans in the face of danger. I've seen the spirit of service and compassion that runs so deep in our country. We've all seen our Nation unite in common purpose when it mattered most. We will need all these qualities for the work ahead.

I'm running because there's more work to do. We have a war to win. And the world is counting on us to lead the cause of freedom and peace. We have a duty to spread opportunity to every part of America. We have an obligation to work together to make this country safer and stronger and better. This is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it. And we know that for our great land, the best days lie ahead.

Thank you for coming. May God bless. Thank you all. Thank you all very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:40 p.m. at the Marriott Wardman Park Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Ed Gillespie, chairman, Republican National Committee, and his wife, Cathy; Al Hoffman, finance chairman, Ann Wagner, cochair, and Mercer Reynolds, Victory 2004 national finance chairman, Republican National Committee; country music entertainer Collin Raye; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Remarks Following a Meeting With the Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba
May 6, 2004

Mr. Secretary, thank you for the report you've just given me. I've received a Commission for the Assistance of a Free Cuba. It's a report from a Commission that I have put together in my administration to hasten the day that Cuba will be a free country.

We believe the people of Cuba should be free from tyranny. We believe the future of Cuba is a future of freedom. It's in our Nation's interest that Cuba be free. It's in the neighborhood's interest that Cuba be free. More importantly, it's in the interest of the Cuban people that they be free from tyranny.

This strategy is a strategy that encourages the spending of money to help organizations to protect dissidents and to promote human rights. It is a strategy that encourages a clear voice of the truth being spoken to the Cuban people through Radio and TV Marti. It is a strategy that will prevent the regime from exploiting hard currency of tourists and of remittances to Cubans to prop up their repressive regime. It is a strategy that says we're not waiting for the day of Cuban freedom; we are working for the day of freedom in Cuba.

The Commissioners did good work. I appreciate it, Mr. Secretary. Thank you for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:20 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of State Colin L. Powell. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

The President's News Conference With King Abdullah II of Jordan
May 6, 2004

President Bush. Your Majesty, welcome once again to the White House. I appreciate your friendship, and I appreciate the opportunity to hear your thoughts on a range of issues that face your country and mine at this time of challenge and opportunity in the Middle East.

The economic relationship between our two countries has never been stronger. We continue to increase the ties of trade and investment, creating new opportunities for both our people. The free trade agreement between Jordan and the United States is a model for the region, as my Government works to build a Middle East free trade agreement.

The United States is committed to helping Jordan along the path to prosperity through our strong support at the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. And we're proud to support Jordan through our support for Jordan's social and economic transformation program.

His Majesty and his team are reform-minded individuals who care deeply about the citizens of the Kingdom of Jordan. We spent quite a deal of time—quite a bit of time talking about lasting prosperity in Jordan and our desire to help Jordan achieve lasting prosperity. We also know that lasting prosperity requires lasting security and peace in the region. Our two countries are working closely to ensure that the Middle

East becomes safer and more prosperous and more free.

The fall of Saddam Hussein removed a source of instability and intimidation from the heart of the Middle East. All of Iraq's neighbors, including Jordan, are safer now. And the emergence of a peaceful, prosperous, and free Iraq will contribute to Jordan's security and prosperity.

The United States strongly supports the efforts of U.N. Secretary * General's Special Adviser Brahimi to work with Iraqis to develop an interim government. His Majesty and I talked about the fact that on June 30th, a sovereign Iraqi Government will take office. Our coalition partners will continue to work with the United Nations to prepare for nationwide elections that will choose a new Government in January of 2005.

Jordan and the United States share a vision for a free, stable, and prosperous Middle East. Under the King's leadership, Jordan has become a force for reform and positive change in the region. This month, Jordan will be hosting a meeting of the World Economic Forum, another important milestone on the Middle East journey to greater openness and opportunity and liberty. Next June, G–8 nations will discuss ways that we can support reform in the Middle East. We will look to the results of your World Economic Forum, Your Majesty, as a guide for future actions.

His Majesty and I also discussed our ongoing quest for a just and durable peace between Israel and Palestine. I commend the King's personal commitment to peace and justice for all parties. I remain committed to the vision I laid out here in the Rose Garden on June 24, 2002, of two states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security and to the establishment of a Palestinian state that is viable, contiguous, sovereign, and independent.

I support the plan announced by Prime Minister Sharon to withdraw settlements from Gaza and parts of the West Bank. This bold plan can make a real contribution to peace, particularly if reform-minded Palestinians will step forward and lead toward the establishment of a peaceful Palestinian state.

As I have previously stated, all final status issues must be negotiated between the parties in accordance with U.N. Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338. And the United States will not prejudice the outcome of those negotiations. The roadmap is the best path to realizing the two-state vision. That is why the roadmap is the plan endorsed by the Palestinians, Israel, the United Nations, the European Union, Russia, the United States, and many other nations. That's why my administration is committed to making it a reality.

Today the King had some suggestions about how to explain our position to the Palestinians. And I appreciated your advice, Your Majesty. He advised that I make sure the Palestinians understand my desire for a just peace, my desire for there to be a prosperous country, my desire that the Palestinian people have a chance to realize their hopes and aspirations. I told His Majesty I will shortly send Mr. Korei, the Palestinian Prime Minister, a letter that will explain my views, and we will expand dialog between the United States and Palestinians. I want to appreciate your wise counsel, Your Majesty.

We also talked about what has been on the TV screens recently, not only in our own country but overseas, the images of cruelty and humiliation. I told His Majesty as plainly as I could that wrongdoers will be brought to justice and that the actions of those folks in Iraq do not represent the values of the United States of America.

I told him I was sorry for the humiliation suffered by the Iraqi prisoners and the humiliation suffered by their families. I told him I was equally sorry that people who have been seeing those pictures didn't understand the true nature and heart of America. I assured him Americans like me

* White House correction.

didn't appreciate what we saw, that it made us sick to our stomachs. I also made it clear to His Majesty that the troops we have in Iraq, who are there for security and peace and freedom, are the finest of the fine, fantastic United States citizens who represent the very best qualities of America, courage, love of freedom, compassion, and decency.

Your Majesty, I'm proud you're here. I appreciate you coming. Jordan is a friend of the United States, and friends look out for one another. I understand your country and your people have important interests at stake in the Middle East. Your country has important interests at stake when it comes to a Palestinian-Israeli peace agreement. You've got important interests in the emergence of a new Iraq. I assure you, my Government views Jordan's security and prosperity and territorial integrity as vital. We will oppose any developments in the region that might endanger your interests.

I look forward to working closely with you to achieve peace and freedom. We'll work with you to assist you in your historic efforts to lead Jordan to greater peace and freedom and prosperity.

Welcome.

[*At this point, King Abdullah responded in Arabic, and no translation was provided. He then continued his remarks in English.*]

King Abdullah II. Mr. President, thank you for this opportunity to meet with you today and discuss vital issues of mutual interest to both our countries.

I remain very concerned about the critical phase our region is passing through. It is very important for the moderate voices seeking peace in our region to prevail so that we can break out of the cycle of violence which has held us back for too long and put the region on the new path to stability and prosperity.

I'd like to outline the Jordanian position on the peace process, particularly the view of recent developments. We feel that any unilateral Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and the West Bank should be part of the roadmap and should lead to the achievement of your vision of a two-state solution. Let me stress that a viable, sovereign, and independent Palestinian state on the basis of the 1967 borders is also in Jordan's national interest. Failing to achieve such an outcome would invoke other options, all of which would endanger my country's interests and that of the region. This is one of the reasons why Jordan insists on a two-state solution and why it supports the roadmap as the mechanism to get there.

Jordan remains committed to a final and comprehensive permanent status agreement based on the foundations of the Madrid Conference; the principle of land for peace; U.N. Security Council Resolutions 242, 338, and 1397; agreements reached by the parties; and the Arab initiative endorsed by the Beirut Arab League Summit.

Jordan also believes all final status issues, including borders, refugees, Jerusalem, and settlements, should be a matter for the parties to decide. I am encouraged by what I've heard from you today, sir, that these issues are not to be prejudiced and should be mutually agreed by the parties.

In the context of the roadmap, I want to assure you, Mr. President, that Jordan is ready to do its part in assisting the Palestinian Authority to rebuild its capability and assume full control of the security situation.

Jordan stands shoulder-to-shoulder with the United States and the international community in our common fight against terrorism. We cannot allow the terrorists' political agenda to succeed, and we assure you that Jordan will continue to do its utmost to help win this cause.

Jordan is committed to support Iraqis in their quest to regain their sovereignty, rebuild their institutions, and establish a society based on freedom and democracy. The stability, unity, and territorial integrity of Iraq is an objective we both share, and we are determined to achieve it.

Jordan is also committed to a process of political and economic reform in the region. We have adopted a far-reaching plan that addresses the key areas of good governance, political freedoms, women's rights, judicial reform, economic reform, educational reform, and the liberalization of the economy. We also are strongly committed to a key role by civil society. Our aim is to move towards a system that respects diversity and guarantees pluralism at all times so that democracy is not used by any who might opt to subject to it once and then deny it to others.

Mr. President, the leadership of the United States is crucial in all our efforts to reach a just and lasting peace of the Middle East. I want to thank you again for the opportunity, and I am determined to work with you to achieve this goal in a timely manner.

President Bush. Thank you, Your Majesty.

We'll take a couple of questions apiece per side. Scott [Scott Lindlaw, Associated Press].

Defense Secretary Rumsfeld/Abuse of Iraqi Prisoners

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Senator Harkin said today that for the good of the country, the safety of our troops, our image around the globe, Secretary Rumsfeld should resign; if he doesn't resign, the President should fire him. We know you weren't happy with him yesterday. Should he keep his job?

And for Your Majesty, how much damage did these images do in your country?

President Bush. Secretary Rumsfeld is a really good Secretary of Defense. Secretary Rumsfeld has served our Nation well. Secretary Rumsfeld has been the Secretary during two wars. And he is—he's an important part of my Cabinet, and he'll stay in my Cabinet.

King Abdullah II. Thank you. Mr. President, I think—the reaction in Jordan as well as the reaction here in the United States was the same. I think we're all horrified by the images. But as has been clearly explained here in Washington, that an immediate investigation has been asked for to bring the people who perpetrated these heinous crimes to justice. And we hope that that will happen very quickly and that it doesn't reflect on the morals, the values that the United States stands for. I am quite convinced that once the investigation is underway, those who were guilty of these crimes will be brought to justice.

Roadmap for Peace

Q. Your Majesty, are you optimistic in regard to the movement of the roadmap?

And for you, President, in light of your discussion today with His Majesty, do you see U.S. involving itself soon in the actual implementation of the roadmap?

King Abdullah II. Well, I am very encouraged by what I've always seen as a dedicated position from the President of the United States. He was the first President to articulate a viable, independent Palestinian state and created a mechanism, the roadmap, to be able to achieve that. Our meetings today reaffirmed the American position as it always has been, and I think that definitely we are reassured in Jordan, and we hope that the President's statements will reassure everybody else in the Middle East.

President Bush. Yes, we support the roadmap. As a matter of fact, the Secretary of State was recently meeting with the Quartet, which is an integral part of the roadmap. Here's what I believe has to happen: The world must recognize the possibility of a Palestinian state. I mean, the development of a Palestinian state is—that's free and democratic—and by the way, the democracy doesn't have to look like America or Europe; it's got to be attuned to the cultures and to the Palestinian people. It's what they want. But nevertheless, the development of a state that's free and peaceful will change the dynamic of the Middle East.

I mean, the Palestinians are people who need hope—hope for a better life, hope to be able to make a living, hope to raise their families in a peaceful situation. That's what they want, and the best opportunity for that to happen is for there to be a state that emerges that provides the framework for a peaceful coexistence in the Middle East. And that requires not only the United States being involved, and the European to be involved and Russia and the United Nations to be involved; it requires that reform-minded Palestinians step up and work with the world to develop the institutions necessary for a state to evolve. That's what has to happen. That's roadmap. In other words, that's how you head down the road to peace.

And as a peaceful Palestinian state grows, one that earns the confidence of not only His Majesty or the United States or other countries in the world, the final status issues become easier to solve. And so what we must do now is take advantage of an opportunity to begin the process of the development of a Palestinian state. And that's where the world must focus. And I believe we can achieve that. And I believe that by achieving it, it will be a very hopeful moment for people. And it's possible; it just takes vision and will.

Steve [Steve Holland, Reuters].

Investigation of Prisoner Abuse/President's Reaction to Abuse

Q. Mr. President, if this problem at the prisons was first noticed late last year, why has it taken this long for actions to be taken? And what did you tell Secretary Rumsfeld yesterday?

President Bush. I tell him I should have known about the pictures and the report. And as I understand it, the—General Kimmitt declared to the press corps, in Iraq, I believe it was, that there was an ongoing investigation. In other words, he made it clear. The Army said, "We've discovered something. We've discovered an issue, and therefore, we're now going to investigate it." It was a declaration to the world that there was an issue, and then there is a process.

But part of what this ongoing investigation will do, will answer that question, answer your questions, so we better understand the process, the procedures, and more importantly, to make sure that it doesn't happen again. So as I told His Majesty, I said we will—people will be brought to justice in a way commensurate with how our system works.

We also want to make sure there's not a larger problem. And that's what the Secretary has assured me will happen. In other words, we will take a good, full look at a variety of issues to make sure it doesn't happen.

The acts were abhorrent, Steve. They sickened my stomach. I know they sickened yours, too. You're a decent American. Any decent soul doesn't want a human being treated that way. And it is—it's a stain on our country's honor and our country's reputation. I fully understand that, and that's why it's important that justice be done.

But it's also important for people—and I explained this to His Majesty, and I think he understands this, that the actions of the people in that prison do not reflect the nature of the men and women who wear our uniform. We've got brave souls in Iraq, sacrificing so that somebody can be free. And helping that Iraqi citizen be free, it helps America be more secure. There are thousands of acts of kindness and decency taking place every day in Iraq, because our soldiers, our men and women in uniform, are honorable, decent, loving people.

And we'll find out the truth. We'll take a good look at the whole system to determine—make sure this doesn't happen again. But I am sickened by what I saw and sickened that somebody gets the wrong impression of people who are serving this country and this world with such dignity.

One more question.

Q. Your Majesty?

President Bush. Wait, you're not a Jordanian.

King Abdullah II. We already asked a question.

President Bush. You want to call on an American? That's very noble of you, Your Majesty. [*Laughter*] Very thoughtful.

Jordan's Role in Iraq

Q. Mr. President, are you asking Arab nations to send troops to Iraq?

And Your Majesty, would you send Jordanian troops to Iraq?

President Bush. I've never asked a nation to do that which they aren't comfortable doing. Jordan has been a loyal friend. They've contributed in so many ways to peace and stability. We did discuss Afghanistan, but we have not discussed sending troops to Iraq.

I'll tell you, His Majesty has got good advice, though, about Iraq. He's in the neighborhood. He hears from people. He's constantly aware of what's going on on the ground, and his advice has been very good. And part of the advice is to make sure that Sunni Iraqis have got a bright future. In other words, people aren't going to be buying into the transfer of sovereignty if they don't think tomorrow is going to be a better day. And he gave me very good advice about making sure that there's a distinction between those who are violent, those who are corrupt, those who are—would not serve a new country well and the thousands who will be honorable citizens at working together to make sure Iraq emerges as a free, contiguous country.

And I told His Majesty—I think he gets the sense from me—we have an historic opportunity to begin to change a part of the world that needs to be changed in some areas. And here is a chance to take what was a threat and a destabilizing force and convert it into a force for good and reform and hope.

And I appreciate your vision and your understanding of that, Your Majesty.

King Abdullah II. I think that we in Jordan are too close, as other countries to Iraq are also, to send troops. I think it would be very difficult for Jordanians to be objective in committing troops to Iraq. We do have a long history of U.N. peacekeeping operations all over the world, but at this stage, I think the politics of the issue does not make sense for Jordanians to send troops at this time.

President Bush. Thank you, Your Majesty. Good job. Good job.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 2:03 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; Lakhdar Brahimi, Special Adviser to the U.N. Secretary-General; Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of Israel; Prime Minister Ahmed Korei of the Palestinian Authority; and Brig. Gen. Mark T. Kimmitt, USA, deputy director of operations, Coalition Joint Task Force Seven.

Remarks on the National Day of Prayer
May 6, 2004

Thank you all. Please sit down. Please be seated. Thank you all. Thanks for coming. Good afternoon, and welcome to the White House. I'm honored to join you at this important annual event.

Since the Continental Congress sat in Philadelphia, America has, from time to time, set aside a national day of prayer. Under a law signed by President Ronald Reagan, that day comes every year on the

first Thursday in May. That would be today. [*Laughter*]

Today in our Nation's Capital and around the country, we pause to acknowledge our reliance on Almighty God, to join in gratitude for His blessings and to seek His guidance in our lives and for our Nation.

Prayer and songs of praise go together, and we're really thankful this afternoon for the beautiful music of the Washington Bach Consort, led by J. Reilly Lewis. Thank you all for being here. And we are thankful for the voice of Beth Cram Porter. I mean, what a voice. [*Laughter*] Thank you.

We are as grateful as well to all the organizers of the National Day of Prayer and especially for the gracious leadership of Shirley Dobson. We're also glad you brought Jim with you. [*Laughter*]

Colonel Oliver North is the 2004 National Day of Prayer Honorary Chairman. Thank you for taking on the job. I appreciate it. I appreciate Dr. Barry Black, the Chaplain of the United States Senate. I asked him if he had any one-liners before I came up here. [*Laughter*] I appreciate Father Daniel Coughlin, who will join us shortly. And Rabbi, thank you for coming. Rabbi Weinreb, I'm honored that you're here. I appreciate your reading. I also want to welcome Vonette Bright, the former National Day of Prayer Task Force chairman. Vonette, we're honored you're with us. Thank you for coming.

At so many crucial points in the life of America, we have been a nation at prayer. Abraham Lincoln, from this house, called the Nation to prayer in the darkest days of the Civil War. Franklin Roosevelt, 60 years ago on D-day, led the Nation in prayer over the radio, asking for God to watch over our sons in battle.

A prayerful spirit has always been a central part of our national tradition, and it remains a vital part of our national character. Americans of every faith and every tradition turn daily to God in reverence and humility. We bring our cares to Him knowing He is our help in ages past, our hope for years to come.

It was Lincoln who called Americans "the almost chosen people." [*Laughter*] And at—that word "almost" makes quite a difference. [*Laughter*] Americans do not presume to equate God's purposes with any purpose of our own. God's will is greater than any man or any nation built by men. He works His will. He finds His children within every culture and every tribe. And while every human enterprise must end, His kingdom will have no end.

Our part, our calling is to align our hearts and action with God's plan, insofar as we can know it. A humble heart is not an indifferent heart. We cannot be neutral in the face of injustice or cruelty or evil. God is not on the side of any nation, yet we know He is on the side of justice. And it is the deepest strength of America that from the hour of our founding, we have chosen justice as our goal.

Our greatest failures as a nation have come when we lost sight of that goal, in slavery, in segregation, and in every wrong that has denied the value and dignity of life. Our finest moments have come when we have faithfully served the cause of justice for our own citizens and for the people of other lands. And through our Nation's history, we have turned to prayer for wisdom to know the good and for the courage to do the good.

Many people in every age have made the same request of the wise and the holy: Teach us to pray. One of the answers begins with "Our Father, who art in Heaven." That answer has guided people through two millennia. In that example, we learn to give praise where it is due. We recognize that all that we have and all that we are come as gifts, and it is natural to be grateful to the Giver.

Americans, on this National Day of Prayer, are thankful. We're thankful for our freedom, for so many blessings, large and small, and we're thankful for this wonderful land we call home.

In prayer, we offer petitions, because the Maker of the Universe knows our cares and our needs. For our Nation today, the need is great, as young men and women face danger in our defense, for the sake of freedom, and for the sake of peace. We pray that God's hand will protect them and deliver them safely home. We pray for the loved ones who anxiously await their return. And we pray for the families that have known great loss, that they might receive God's peace in the midst of their sadness.

Prayer also teaches us to trust, to accept that God's plan unfolds in His time, not our own. That trust is not always easy, as we discover in our own lives, but trust is the source of ultimate confidence. We affirm that all of life and all of history rests entirely on the character of our creation and our Creator. And His love and His mercy extend to all and endure forever.

May God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:15 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to J. Reilly Lewis, music director and founder, Washington Bach Consort; Shirley Dobson, chairman, National Day of Prayer Task Force, and her husband, James; Rev. Daniel P. Coughlin, Chaplain, U.S. House of Representatives; and Rabbi Tzvi Hersh Weinreb, executive vice president, Orthodox Union. The National Day of Prayer proclamation of April 30 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives Transmitting Fiscal Year 2005 Budget Amendments

May 6, 2004

Dear Mr. Speaker:

I ask the Congress to consider the enclosed FY 2005 budget amendments for the Departments of Agriculture, Defense, Education, Energy, Homeland Security, Housing and Urban Development, the Interior, Labor, and the Treasury; the Corps of Engineers; the National Aeronautics and Space Administration; and the Securities and Exchange Commission. In addition, I ask the Congress to consider the enclosed FY 2004 language proposals for the Departments of Health and Human Services and the Treasury. Overall, the discretionary budget authority proposed in my FY 2005 Budget would not be increased by these requests.

This transmittal also contains FY 2005 budget amendments for the legislative branch. As a matter of comity, appropriations requests of the legislative branch are commonly transmitted without change.

The details of these proposals are set forth in the enclosed letter from the Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

Sincerely,

GEORGE W. BUSH

Interview With Al-Ahram International
May 6, 2004

U.S. Goals in the Middle East

Q. I have learned that President Mubarak sent you, recently, two important messages. I don't know, I mean, the contents of these messages, but I assume that of course it be linked by the situation in Iraq and Palestine. I would like to ask, in the beginning, one general question about how do you look at this vision of the Middle East.

The President. Well, first of all, I communicate with President Mubarak a lot, because I value his judgment, and we've got a frank relationship where if he thinks things are going badly, he'll tell me. In other words, he doesn't gloss over.

I think that things in the Middle East for the United States are difficult right now. I think they're difficult because people don't really understand our intentions. I think they're difficult because some people ascribe bad values and bad motives to the American people and the American Government.

Our intentions are to work for free societies and peaceful societies. Our intentions are to protect our own security, on the one hand, but also enable people to live in peace. Obviously, our reputation has been damaged severely by the terrible and horrible acts, inhumane acts that were conducted on Iraqi prisoners. Today I can't tell you how sorry I am to them and their families for the humiliation.

I'm also sorry because people are then able to say, "Look how terrible America is." But this isn't America. That's not—Americans are appalled at what happened. We're a generous people. I don't think a lot of people understand that, so I've got to do a better job of explaining to people that we're for a lot of things that most people who live in the Middle East want. We want there to be peace. We want people to have a living. We want people to send their kids to schools that work. We want there to be health care. We want there to be a Palestinian state at peace with its neighbors. We want there to be reform. We want people to have a chance to participate in the process.

But I'd say right now times are tough for the United States and the Middle East.

Q. I have four topics, Mr. President: Iraq, the Israeli-Arab issue, the so-called greater Middle East, and bilateral—which one do you choose of them, Mr. President?

The President. Whatever you want to do, sir. You're the distinguished journalist.

Arab-Israeli Conflict

Q. Thank you very much, indeed. Okay, I will shoot for the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The President. Okay.

Q. Many Arabs feel that after the letter of assurances you gave to Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, any future Palestinian state would exist on less than half what the partition plan offered them in '47. How do you reconcile this with a moral concept of justice?

The President. First of all, I made it very clear in my letter that I recognized circumstances had changed, but I made it very clear of a couple of very important points: One, that any final status would be negotiated by the parties—that would be the Israelis and the Palestinians—not the United States. We won't prejudge final status.

Secondly, I made it clear that I supported what the Prime Minister had done, because I think it's a great opportunity for the establishment of a Palestinian state. I'm the first President ever to have articulated the vision of a Palestinian state.

Q. I'm writing here, and I wanted to appreciate that very highly.

The President. Well, I'll tell you, and I'm somewhat amazed, sir, that the debate has

already started about what the end results are going to look like, when we haven't even really begun yet to establish a state. I think the focus ought to be on putting the institutions in place for a Palestinian state that is peaceful and prosperous to emerge.

I think it's very important for reform-minded Palestinians to step up and ask the world for help in order to build the security apparatus needed for a state to grow; ask for education help; ask for help to stimulate the entrepreneurial class so businesses will grow. I believe it'll happen. And when it does happen, the final status issues will be much easier to solve.

In other words, when there is a state that's up and running and prosperous and has the confidence of Egypt and Israel and America and the EU and the rest of the world, it'll be much easier for these final—these tricky issues to be solved between the two parties. And so now is the time not to be arguing over what the world will look like down the road. We ought to be arguing about what the world can look like this year. And that's why the roadmap is so important.

The United States is firmly committed to the roadmap. I'm sending a letter to the—I announced today I'm going to send a letter to the Palestinian Prime Minister explaining that I'm committed to the roadmap, committed to two states living side by side in peace, but also reminding him it's now time to step up and show leadership, show leadership against the terrorists and show leadership in putting the institutions in place for a state to emerge.

Palestinian Right of Return

Q. The right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homeland and to be provided with compensation is legally assured in several U.N. resolutions.

The President. Right.

Q. The United States has also traditionally supported the right of refugees to return in recent major conflicts. How would you then justify making the Palestinian refugees an exception for accepted international laws under human rights conventions?

The President. My comment, again, was this, that—and the right of refugees is a final status issue. And that's to be negotiated on between the Palestinians and the Israelis. When I said what has changed and what will change is when there's a Palestinian state to which Palestinians can go. There hasn't been one. And my point was, was that when a state is set up and the institutions are in place and people have a chance to make a living and it's peaceful, the entrepreneurial class is growing, small businesses, people are participating in the political process, that that's going to change the dynamic on the ground.

I fully concede there's a lot—the compensation issue is an issue that's still being negotiated. The rights of—you know, the rights of Palestinians to return to Israel will be negotiated, but what I'm telling you is when a state emerges, it'll change the dynamic. And that's all I said in my comment.

Again, I'll repeat to you, people want to focus on the future, when I think we ought to be focused right now on the right now, which is what is necessary to put a Palestinian state in place so people can have a chance to live in a hopeful society. And I'm frustrated, I must tell you, a little bit, because I think that there needs to be better leadership in saying, "What can we do to help the Palestinian people develop a state?" And there needs to be a new constitution, it seems like to me.

And some of these reforms stalled. Heck, we've been talking about them for about 2 years, unfortunately, but now is an opportunity. And I think Prime Minister Sharon created an interesting dynamic, I really do, and that is withdrawal from the West Bank. You know, it wasn't all that long ago if an Israeli Prime Minister stood up and said, "We're out of Gaza and parts of the West Bank," people would have said, "That's fantastic." And so the Prime Minister makes

the decision to get out and, of course, his own party rejects it, which speaks to—it speaks to his leadership, in my judgment, that he's willing to do what he thinks is right, in face of political opposition.

Israeli Disengagement Plan/Palestinian State

Q. But do you really agree that pragmatic realities mean annexation of other lands?

The President. Do I think——

Q. Do you agree on that, I mean, that pragmatic realities which, I mean, being said repeatedly here in the States, pragmatic realities—pragmatic realities——

The President. You mean, with the conditions on the ground?

Q. Does it mean annexation of other people's land?

The President. I think what it means is, I think you're going to see over time with the emergence of a Palestinian state that the West Bank will be occupied by Palestinians. And to the extent to what the final border looks like is up for negotiations.

Q. Again, we very much appreciate the fact that you were the first U.S. President to call for the creation of an independent Palestinian state. But in all the recent proposals that are being circulated, including the latest disengagement plan, we did not see any specific timetable. What happened to your pledge to create a Palestinian state by 2005? And do you still believe that this could be possible?

The President. Well, 2005 may be hard, since 2005 is right around the corner. I readily concede the date has slipped some, primarily because violence sprung up. When I laid out the date of 2005, I believe it was around the time I went to Aqaba, Jordan. It was a very meaningful moment, where former Prime Minister Abu Mazen, myself, Prime Minister Sharon, and His Majesty, the King of Jordan, stood up and pledged to work together. But we hit a bump in the road—violence, as well as Abu Mazen was replaced, which changed the dynamic. I don't want to make any excuses, but nevertheless I think the timetable of 2005 isn't as realistic as it was 2 years ago. Nevertheless, I do think we ought to push hard as fast as possible to get a state in place.

And I repeat to you, sir, that part of my frustrations were alleviated with the Quartet making the statement it made the other day—the Quartet being the EU, Russia, United Nations, and the United States, working together. I think we can get the World Bank involved. But there is a certain sense of responsibility that falls upon the Palestinians, reform-minded Palestinians to step up and say, "Yes, we accept these institutions necessary for a peaceful state to emerge."

There's also a responsibility for Egypt. Egypt has got, in my judgment, an important role to play to help make sure there is security in Gaza as the civil structure is put in place and as the Government structure is put in place. And President Mubarak, I think, is willing to assume that responsibility over time. I don't want to put him on a timetable, but I do believe he is committed to helping bring security to that part of the world. It's in Egypt's interest that there be security.

Egypt's Role in Creation of a Palestinian State

Q. You know, Mr. President, we did our best, I mean, getting all the factions together in Cairo, Egypt, to try to convince them to have one single opinion and that we're ready for training the police and security guards.

The President. That's right. President Mubarak has been a leader on the issue of security. He really has. As you say, he's convened a very important meeting to make it clear that in order for there to be a peaceful evolution of a state, there has to be security, and that he's willing to train police. Egypt plays a mighty important role. And it's a great country, and it should play an important role.

Final Status Issues

Q. You have said, Mr. President, in recent statements that the assurances you gave to Sharon did not differ from what was being discussed and what we mentioned now and previous final status talks. But in those talks there were proposals on land swaps and an Israeli acceptance for the return of a limited number of refugees. Why were these proposals absent from your recent letters?

The President. Look, I want to assure you once again that I understand the sensitivity of these final status issues. But they will be negotiated, not between the United States and the parties; they're negotiated between Israel and the Palestinian Government of a new state. And that's really—and that is a position I've taken all along. It's what I told my friend President Mubarak. I just told that to His Majesty, the King of Jordan. And I will explain that consistent position of mine.

People—I think some people are trying to read something into what I said or didn't say. And what—you know, I'll say it finally one more time: This is an opportunity that we can't let go by. There's a lot of argument about final status issues, and they're very important issues, don't get me wrong. But the focus ought to be on how do we get a Palestinian state up and running and moving forward.

Q. You have praised Sharon's proposal to withdraw from Gaza, which is an idea that does not represent more than one percent of—[*inaudible*]—Palestine. Would you accept guarantee for granting Palestinians similar letter of assurances stating that any annexation of West Bank territory has to be minimal and that Israel has to pull out from nearly the entire West Bank, according to Security Resolution 242 and 338?

The President. No, I will write—I will say the exact same thing in a letter to the Palestinians that I have said publicly today, that I believe an opportunity exists, and it's essential that the Palestinian Authority find reform-minded leaders who are willing to step up and lead.

Israeli Security Wall/Palestinian State

Q. The last question on Israeli-Arab issue. You have repeatedly—repeatedly stated that Israel had the right to defend itself. But do you believe that by building walls and settlements and by assassinating Palestinian leaders, Israel is enhancing security and helping and reassuring peace talks?

The President. I think that any country has a right to defend herself. And you're looking at a President who is now in the process of defending my country against terrorist attacks. It is very difficult for the President of the United States to condemn anybody for defending themselves.

My problem with the wall was not the security aspect of the wall. My problem with the wall was that at one point in time, it looked like it was trying to prejudge any final status, and that I hope—my hope is, at one point in time, the wall is unnecessary. The hope is, is that a peaceful Palestinian state, that—I keep saying that, but I think it's possible—but a peaceful Palestinian state must be a state in which youngsters are well educated and have a chance to make a living and have a chance to—parents have a chance to realize—raise their children in a peaceful setting.

And I think that a peaceful Palestinian state will eventually change the dynamics on that which exists on the ground today.

Prisoner Abuse at Abu Ghraib Prison

Q. Okay. I thank you very much for your patience. I will move to the other topic, Iraq.

The President. Sure. Sure.

Q. You said yesterday that you first learned of the abuses of Abu Ghraib and other prison—and other prisons in Iraq generally. Why has it taken so long to adopt serious measures against those directly responsible and their commanders?

The President. First of all, I learned about the fact that there was an investigation going on. I did not know the extent of the abuse. And there was a report done as a result of those investigations, and what you're hearing here in America is, why didn't I see the report? And that's a good question. That's one of the questions I'm asking, because I first saw about the pictures on television screens.

But one of the things you've got to understand about our country is that, one, we reject this kind of treatment of people. It's abhorrent, and it's not America. Your viewers have to understand, this is not our country.

Secondly, that we will fully investigate. Now, there's a difference between fully investigating and rushing to judgment. We will investigate, and there's a procedure in the military that is necessary to make sure that the guilty are truly guilty. It's very important for the Commander in Chief not to prejudge.

Thirdly, the process will be transparent. Your viewers have got to know that here in America, in our system, the judicial process will be fully transparent, and you're beginning to see the transparency. The press corps wants to know different questions, and those questions need to be answered.

Tomorrow our Secretary of Defense, in whom I've got confidence and believe in, will go up and testify at the United States Senate. So you'll see the process evolve as to—and the truth come out as to why the military needed to take the time necessary to fully investigate these horrible, horrible acts.

And I repeat to you, sir, I am sorry for the humiliation suffered by those individuals. It makes me sick to my stomach to see that happen.

I'll tell you what else I'm sorry about. I'm sorry that the truth about our soldiers in Iraq becomes obscured. In other words, we've got fantastic citizens in Iraq, good kids, good soldiers, men and women who are working every day to make Iraqi citizens' lives better. And there are a thousand acts of kindness that take place every day of these great Americans who really do care about the citizens in Iraq. It's an awful, awful period for the American people, just like it's awful for the Iraqi citizens to see that on their TV screens.

Q. Again, sir, do you feel like you need to apologize to the Iraqis and the Arab world after you said that, "I'm sorry"?

The President. Well, I'm sorry for the prisoners. I really am. I think it's humiliating, and it is, again—what the Arab world must understand is a couple of things. One, under a dictatorship, these—this wouldn't be transparent. In other words, if there was torture under a dictator, we would never know the truth. In a democracy, you'll know the truth, and justice will be done. And that's what people need to know.

U.N. Security Council Resolution on Iraq

Q. What are the main pillars of the upcoming Security Council resolution on Iraq? How much control are you ready to cede to the United Nations and the future Iraqi Government?

The President. Well, I think the Iraqi Government wants the sovereignty. And I think that's the proper—the proper relationship is for the Iraqi—the sovereignty to be passed to the Iraqi Government with help from coalition as well as the United Nations. I'll tell you, a very good role for the United Nations is to help set up the elections that will take place in January of 2005. And the United Nations Security Council resolution is important, because it says to members of the world, please participate in helping this Government grow.

But the sovereignty—Iraqi people want to run the Government themselves. That's not to say they don't want help. Of course they want help. But they want to run their Government. Frankly, you hear frustrations about America there in Iraq. And I can understand that, because the Iraq—nobody wants their Government run for them. The

people of Iraq want to run their own Government, and that's what will happen.

Timing of U.S. Withdrawal From Iraq

Q. How long do you think the United States will stay in Iraq?

The President. As long as necessary, and not one day more.

U.S. Future Role in Iraq/Accomplishments

Q. A recent Gallup Poll showed that 71 percent of Iraqis considered the United States an occupying power. Does this disappoint you?

The President. No, listen, I understand. I mean, if I were an Iraqi and I saw people—was asked, am I happy that somebody is running my Government for me, which basically is what the question implies, the answer would be, "No, we want to run our Government ourselves." And that's why we're transferring sovereignty.

I'll tell you, however, the Iraqi people understand that America needs to be around for a while to help make sure that the killers—the foreign fighters who are there, disgruntled former Saddamists—don't wreak havoc. There are thousands of Iraqis losing their lives at the hands of these killers. And they are—and they need help right now, until security—Iraqi security forces are efficient, are formed in a way that will be able to be responsive to the dangers of these few people. It is essential that there be a secure environment as Iraq emerges from this period of tyranny, and they want our help there. They also want the reconstruction aid.

Q. And it has been delayed a lot.

The President. Well, it has, for a reason. Early in the winter there was fast movement on the reconstruction projects. I mean, there's some wonderful things that have happened in Iraq, which of course don't get mentioned very often.

For example, I'll tell you an interesting thing that's happened, is that the currency, the old currency was replaced by a new currency in about a 6- or 7-month period of time. That's hard to do. And yet, it was done without a lot of arbitrage, a lot of counterfeiting, theft. There was no theft, and the currency is stable, which is a remarkable feat, when you think about it. The electricity levels were climbing quite dramatically. The oil production, which is Iraqi oil production, it's not American, it's—Iraq owns the oil—it's up to about 2½ million barrels a day.

So in other words, there were positive signs going on. And then we had this period of fighting, where elements in society decided to fight because they saw freedom coming and they wanted to try and stop it, is what they're trying to do. And we took them on and are defeating them.

What's happening now is that big projects are starting back up again because the security situation is a little better, and big companies are moving in with these reconstruction projects. It will start back up, and Iraq will be better for it.

President's Meetings With Iraqis

Q. I am aware of a very emotional meeting that took place recently between you and the Iraqi women delegation——

The President. Yes.

Q. ——and met you there with lots of tears.

The President. Yes, there were.

Q. Do you care to share the details of that meeting with us?

The President. Only because you asked. I did have the honor of welcoming a group of women to the Oval Office. I was told ahead of time that some members of the delegation did not want to come in the Oval Office because they didn't want to get their picture taken, because they were afraid, not of American reaction but of reaction back home. In other words, there is still fear in people's heart. I met with those ladies later.

The door opened to the Oval Office, and the first woman that walked in looked at me, and she burst out in tears and said, "You are my liberator." It touched my

heart. It really did. And I, of course—I held her in my arms and tears came to my eyes as she cried out of joy. It really made me feel great. She said, "Thank you, Mr. President. You liberated us." I said, "No, the American people helped liberate you." And then another lady came in, and another lady came in. We had about six of us in our office.

And it was a touching meeting. These were people that were obviously somewhat taken aback that they were in with the President of the United States. And yet, when they were with me, it was deeply emotional. It touched my heart. I still remember it clearly today. It made me very joyous inside to think that people who had been enslaved to tyranny, fearful of torture, probably had friends in mass graves, would be so thankful for the chance to live in peace.

And I'll tell you what's really important for the people—those people, those women, and I think about them all the time, is for me to never show any weakness in the face of the dangers in Iraq. In other words, those killers want us to leave. But my attitude is, having met with these women, if we leave, they will be in jeopardy. And I have an obligation, no matter how difficult it gets, to stay strong on behalf of those women and their chance to raise their children in freedom.

The other day I had the Olympic Committee from Iraq come, two members of the Olympic Committee. It was an exciting moment. I love sports, for starters, and the head of the women's Olympic committee came. She was a former runner. And she told me about her 2-year-old son and 1-year-old son. She had quit the Olympic team because she didn't want to run for one of Saddam's sons, for fear of her life, and yet she was so grateful for the freedom she has. It's heartening.

I met with Fulbright Scholars, young Iraqis that are here studying in the United States. I met with doctors from Iraq who are getting new training, all of whom are desperate for there to be a free society so they can live in peace, and that's why we share the same goal.

Vision for the Greater Middle East

Q. On greater Middle East, Mr. President, has your vision on the greater Middle East initiative changed at all in light of recent reactions from Arab and European countries? What will be presented to the G–8 leaders in their meeting next month?

The President. My vision for the greater Middle East reforms were strengthened by the Alexandria Library Conference. You might have heard of that. [*Laughter*] I saw the spirit of that conference. There are people in the Middle East who understand the need for reforms.

Now, when I talk about reforms, I fully understand the pace of reform will be different from country to country. But nevertheless, there has to be a commitment to reform for a better life for every citizen. I am as strong today on reforms in the greater Middle East as I have ever been.

I fully understand criticism. I mean, I get criticized all the time in my job. I think the job of a leader is to have a vision, a vision that is hopeful and optimistic and one based upon certain principles, a principle like rule of law, a principle like human dignity by empowering individuals to make decisions in the political process, a principle that every person deserves respect, a principle that says that a peaceful society is more likely to be one that is a free society. And therefore, I won't abandon those principles, no matter how significant the pressure.

Q. Last question.

The President. Okay, one more question. Then we've got to go.

Syria

Q. Why does your administration insist on imposing sanctions against Syria?

The President. Because they will not fight terror, and they won't join us in fighting terror. We've asked them to do some

things, and they haven't responded. And Congress passed a law saying that if Syria will not join—for example, booting out a Hezbollah office out of Damascus—that the President has the right to put sanctions on.

I have yet to impose a sanction yet, but the bill enables me to do so. And we've talked to the Syrian leader very clearly, and these aren't—these are reasonable requests, and thus far, he hasn't heeded them. And that's why, if I make the decision to put on sanctions, it will be because he hasn't been a full partner in the war against terror.

Q. That would create another—more problems in the area.

The President. Well, we'll see. But I think that people need to understand that there needs to be a full commitment. I mean, there's no need to harbor people who are expressing hatred. And if the world would join together to rout out terrorist organizations who want to kill innocent people, it would be a heck of a lot better off.

See, here's my objection. We've got Muslims killing Muslims in Iraq. There are Muslims who will kill an innocent Muslim for the sake of trying to create fear. We can't let that happen. Civilized people must not allow that to happen. What they're trying to do is they're trying to shake our will, our collective will. For those of us who love freedom, they were trying to say, "Well, don't work for freedom. Leave us alone so we can kill other people." We just can't let that happen. There are too many peaceful people who need protection, and we want to help them. And most importantly, we want to help them help themselves, so they can be self-governing in Iraq.

But the killing of innocent life for political purposes is not acceptable in the 21st century. And you know that, and I believe that.

Arab-U.S. Relations

Q. I assure you that, you know, the Arab people really have nothing against the American people. Maybe the only—the only issue is the Palestinian-Israeli——

The President. Israeli issue, yes.

Q. ——and the American bias to it.

The President. I hope we can get that solved. I mean, I truly believe that a peaceful state will emerge. And listen, I've got great respect for Arab culture. I've got great respect for the Muslim religion. I reject this notion that this is a war against Muslims. This is not a war against Muslims. The Muslim religion is a peaceful religion. Islam is peace. This is a war against evil people who want to kill innocent life. That's what this is.

And it is—they've killed in our country. They've killed in your country. They killed a great man in Sadat. And it's essential that freedom-loving people and peaceful people fight terror. It's the call of our time. It's the challenge of the 21st century. And we've got to work together to do so.

And I appreciate you giving me a chance to visit and share my views to the people who need to learn more about our intentions and our deep desire for peace.

Q. I do thank you very, very, very much.

The President. Thank you, sir.

Q. And I hope to see you very soon.

The President. Good job. Very good job. Very good interview.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 3:37 p.m. in the Map Room at the White House for later broadcast, and the transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 7. In his remarks, the President referred to President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt; Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of Israel; Prime Minister Ahmed Korei and former Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) of the Palestinian Authority; King Abdullah II of Jordan; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; Ahmed Al-Samarrai, president, and

Iman Sabeeh, member of the executive office, National Olympic Committee of Iraq; and President Bashar al-Asad of Syria. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Remarks in Dubuque, Iowa
May 7, 2004

The President. Thank you all. Thank you all very much. Thanks for coming. I'm really glad you're here. It is great to be back in Dubuque. Once again, here I'm asking for the vote. [*Laughter*] I'm asking for your help. I remember last time I campaigned here, the crowds weren't quite as big—[*laughter*]—neither was the entourage. [*Laughter*]

But I am thrilled to be here. I know most of you are here to see Laura, and I appreciate you coming. She's such a fabulous First Lady and a great wife and wonderful mom that I think she deserves 4 more years as the First Lady.

Now, I'm here to ask for your help. I want to thank those who are involved with the grassroots. I want to thank those who are willing to put up the signs and to talk to your neighbors, those who are willing to go to the community centers and the houses of worship, those who are willing to work door to door and remind people that this administration has a positive vision, a hopeful vision, an optimistic vision for everybody who lives in this country.

I want you to remind them I got a plan to win the war on terror and to spread peace and freedom throughout the world, a plan that helps to create jobs and spreads opportunity to every corner of America, a plan that taps into the compassionate spirit of our country. Working together, we'll make this country safer and stronger and better. We got a positive platform, one that I am convinced the American people understand and appreciate. We will become reelected on November the 2d.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. Thank you all. When you're out there gathering up the vote—by the way, make sure you talk to discerning Democrats and independents as well. [*Laughter*] And remind them I put together a fantastic team of people to serve this country, people who have come to Washington, DC, from all walks of life, from different backgrounds, all bound together by the desire to serve this country, not their self-interest.

We've got a fabulous Vice President in Dick Cheney. One time I had given a speech, and Mother was in the crowd. I said, "You know, Dick Cheney is the finest Vice President our country has ever had." She said, "Wait a minute, buster." [*Laughter*]

I am proud to have traveled with some really fine Members of the Congress. Iowa sent some good, decent souls to Washington, DC, to represent you and to represent our Nation. And one such person is the fantastic United States Senator Chuck Grassley. Remember when we campaigned together? We'd be traveling the backroads of Iowa, and he would say, "I know the farmer who lives there." [*Laughter*] And we'd go down the road for another couple of miles, and he'd say, "Oh, I know who lives there." No wonder this guy is constantly reelected. He not only does his job, he knows everybody, everywhere across the State of Iowa.

You've got a really good Congressman representing you in Washington, DC. I'm going to tell you, the budget chairman, Jim

Nussle, is a good man. I'm proud to call Congressman Jim Leach my friend, a good, thoughtful, decent guy. I'm proud that people from the other side of the State are coming here to east Iowa. And we got a fine Congressman from the western part of the State in Congressman Tom Latham. Thank you for coming, Congressman. I had your breakfast laid out for you on Air Force One, but you were a no-show. [*Laughter*] I won't hold it against you. [*Laughter*] And I, finally, appreciate—finally, I want to appreciate—send my appreciation to Congressman Steve King from the great State of Iowa. Thank you for coming, Congressman.

I know there's a lot of State officials who are here today, senators and representatives. I'm honored you all are here. I want to thank you for your service to the State of Iowa. I appreciate the—I appreciate you working on behalf of the people of your districts.

I was also honored to have been greeted by your mayor, Mayor Terry Duggan. He was out at the airport today. I am so honored, Mayor, that you took time to be here to greet the President of the United States. My only advice to you: Fill the potholes. [*Laughter*] No, they tell me he's doing a fine job—a fine job. And I really do appreciate you coming, Mayor.

I want to thank my friend Michael Martin Murphy for coming today—appreciate you coming.

Laura and I grew up in west Texas. We grew up in a town called Midland, Texas. That's right next door to Odessa, Texas. [*Laughter*] And when you lived in Midland, Texas, you didn't particularly care for the people who played football for Odessa, Texas. And I'm proud to be associated, however, with a former Odessa football star, a man who has made his mark in helping youngsters understand the values of life, a person who came to this State and captured the hearts of the citizens of Iowa because he's such a decent fellow, a pretty good football coach too, my friend Hayden Fry—appreciate you.

When you're out rounding up the vote, you might start by reminding your friends and neighbors what this administration has accomplished. The last 3 years have brought serious challenges, and we have given serious answers. We've led. We've risen to the challenge. We came into office with a stock market in decline and an economy headed into recession. But we acted, delivered historic tax relief, and now our economy is the fastest growing of any major industrialized nation in the world.

We uncovered corporate crimes, crimes that cost people their jobs and their savings, so we worked with the Congress and we passed strong corporate reforms. Wrongdoers are being brought to account. It is clear in America, we will not tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of our country.

We saw war and grief arrive on a quiet September morning, so we have pursued the terrorist enemy across the world. We've captured or killed many leaders of the Al Qaida network, and the rest will learn there is no cave or hole deep enough to hide from American justice.

When Dick Cheney and I came to Washington, we found a military that was underfunded and underappreciated, so we gave our military the resources and respect they deserve, and today, no one can question the skill, the strength, and the spirit of the United States military.

We confronted the dangers of state-sponsored terror and the spread of weapons of mass destruction. We ended two of the most violent and dangerous regimes on Earth. We liberated over 50 million people. Once again, America is proud to stand against tyranny and to set nations free.

It is the President's job to confront problems, not to pass them on to future Presidents and future generations. Great events will turn on this election. The man who sits in the Oval Office will set the course of the war on terror and the direction of

our economy. The security and prosperity of America are at stake. I look forward to this campaign. I'm running for a reason. I want our country to be safer and stronger and better. I've got a vision for the future of this country that is optimistic. I know where I want to lead us. I look forward to explaining it in clear and simple terms to the American people.

And we've got a tough race, so I've asked you to come today to get your uniforms ready, get ready for the contest. I take nothing for granted. I look forward to getting out amongst the people and talking about my vision.

I'm running against an experienced United States Senator. He's been in Washington an awful long period of time. He's been there so long—he's been there long enough to take both sides on just about every issue. He was for the PATRIOT Act, for NAFTA, for No Child Left Behind, and for the use of force in Iraq. Now he opposes the PATRIOT Act, NAFTA, No Child Left Behind Act, and the liberation of Iraq. His positions remind me of that old Texas saying, "If you don't like the weather, just wait a few minutes and it will change." [*Laughter*]

No, he's an experienced Senator. He's a tough opponent, and I understand that. I look forward to an honest and calm debate on the issues. I look forward to gathering the support of the American people. That's the endorsement I seek. I seek your endorsement. I seek the people who are working every day.

He claims to have picked up some important endorsements amongst foreign leaders. [*Laughter*] He just won't tell us their names. [*Laughter*] He did tell us—gave us a hint the other day. On national TV, he said, and I quote, "What I said is true. I mean, you can go to New York City, and you can be in a restaurant, and you can meet a foreign leader." Now, I think this may be a case of mistaken identity. [*Laughter*] Just because a fellow has an accent—[*laughter*]—and a fancy suit and a nice table at a New York restaurant, it doesn't mean he's a foreign leader. [*Laughter*] But whoever these mystery people are, they will not determine the course of this election. The American people will decide the outcome of this election.

The voters will have a clear choice. It's a choice between keeping the tax relief that is moving this economy forward or putting the burden of higher taxes back on the working people. It is a choice between an America that leads the world with strength and confidence or an America that is uncertain in the face of danger. I look forward to taking on the big issues with a sense of optimism and resolve and determination. I will make it clear that I stand ready to lead this country for 4 more years.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. A big issue in this campaign and a big issue for every family in America is the Federal tax burden. With the largest tax relief since Ronald Reagan was the President, we have left more money in the hands that earned it. By spending and investing and helping to create new jobs, the American people have used their money far better than the Federal Government would have. Our economy is strong, and it is getting stronger. The economy grew at a rate of 4.2 percent in the first quarter, and the economic growth over the past three quarters has been the fastest in nearly two decades. Manufacturing activity is increasing. Business investment is rising. Disposable income is up. Inflation is low. Mortgage and interest rates are at near-historic lows. Homeownership is at the highest rate ever. Our farm economy is strong. America has had 4 straight years of rising farm exports, and last year we had the highest farm income on record.

This morning, we got some more good news about our economy. Last month, America added 288,000 new jobs. The economy has overcome a lot because the entrepreneurial spirit is strong. We've overcome a lot because of good policy. Since

last August, we've added 1.1 million new jobs. People are finding work in this country. The tax relief we passed is working.

This administration understands the role of Government is not to try to create wealth but an environment in which the small-business owner can grow to be a big business. We understand the importance of the entrepreneurial spirit and the importance of small-business owners in our society. Seventy percent of new jobs are created by small-business owners. And therefore, this pro—a progrowth plan we passed has focused on small businesses.

Today I met with Lynne Oyen. Lynne and her husband, Ken—Kevin—own an electrical supply company. It's a small business. It's a business that is creating new jobs. It's a business that's a Subchapter S corporation, which means they pay taxes at the individual income-tax level. Therefore, when you reduce income taxes on the individual, you're helping small businesses like Lynne's. Lynne is adding employees. Lynne is making investment decisions to expand our economy.

I want to thank you for coming, Lynne. Lynne and her husband represent the importance of stimulating growth amongst the small-business owners of the Iowa economy. And that's what we're doing through good policy.

As well we're helping individual families with good tax policy. We've got Greg and Lorie Foley with us today. They're right there. I appreciate them coming. [*Applause*] Some of their neighbors are here. The Foleys—first of all, Greg was deployed for 10 months on active duty. I appreciate his service as a member of the Iowa National Guard.

Because the child credit went up and the marriage penalty went down and the 10-percent bracket was reduced because we reduced overall tax rates, this good family saved $2,200 on their taxes last year and this year—2,200 in one year and 2,200 in the next year. Now, that may not seem like a lot for some of the folks in Washington, DC, but it's a lot for them. It's a lot of money in their pocket to help them do their duty as a mom and a dad. That extra money comes in handy. It comes in handy when you're having trouble making the bills. It comes in handy when times have been tough.

So I asked them, what are they going to do with the money. If they wanted to say, "None of your business," I would have understood that. [*Laughter*] Fortunately, they said—they told me what they're going to do. They're going to improve their house. See, they'll make their house better for their family. Now, when they make a decision to make their house better, somebody has got to provide the supplies to make the house better, which means somebody is more likely to find work at the place that's selling the supplies. And somebody that made the supplies, that sells the supplies, is more likely to be able to keep a job.

I said, "Greg, you going to do it yourself?" He said he didn't think so. He was going to hire somebody to come in and do it. So the person that comes in and helps remodel the home now has a little extra money in his pocket. That's the way the economy works. We stimulated the economy by letting these people keep more of their own money.

And now Congress is debating whether to make sure this tax relief stays in their pocket. See, if they don't make sure that child credit stays at $1,000 next year, these good folks' taxes are going up. They'll be—the Government will be taking money out of their pocket. We don't need to be doing that at this time in our—when the economy is starting to grow. See, the more money in people's pockets, the stronger this economy will be.

My opponent has a different view of that. He voted against every one of the tax measures that left more money in Greg and Lorie's pocket. He was a "no." And when it comes time to raising taxes, it's a lot easier to get a "yes" vote out of him. That's

just his point of view. He voted to raise taxes over 350 times. He voted for raising the gas tax 11 times and one time favored a tax increase of 50 cents a gallon.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Now, that would be a $5 or more increase on you every time you fill up your tank. You'd think with that amount of money, he'd at least throw in a free car wash. [*Laughter*]

We just have a different view. We have a different point of view of how this economy works. The reason I bring up his view on taxes is because, in a campaign, as you know, it's easy to make political promises. Now, we've been watching carefully, and we've been toting up the amount of money he's promised to spend if he happens to be elected. That's $1.9 trillion so far, and we're just getting started in the campaign. [*Laughter*] And if he had a history of voting on tax increases, you can understand where he is going to get the money from. It's an important distinction in this campaign that people must understand. He said he's going to raise the money to pay for this by taxing the rich. We've heard that before, haven't we? The problem is you can't raise enough money by taxing the rich to pay for all those promises. So guess who is going to get to pay? You are. But we're not going to let him have that opportunity.

This country—the people of this country understand that we must not raise taxes right now. Raising taxes will undermine growth and destroy jobs. We need to keep taxes low. We should not raise taxes on the American people.

It is very important in this campaign for me to continue to lay out a vision of how America can be the most competitive country in the world, a good place to do business so people will be able to find work. That means a lot of things. It means we better have tort reform in this country. Frivolous and junk lawsuits make it awfully difficult for people to build their business. And part of that tort reform is medical liability reform so that we don't run up the cost of health care and run doctors out of business.

If we want to be competitive, if we want to be able to create jobs in the 21st century, we better get us an energy policy. We better get an energy plan. There's one stuck in the Congress. Here's what it ought to say: It should say we ought to encourage conservation. And we will. We ought to make sure we have alternative sources of energy. Listen, I'd love to be the President that says, "The corn crop is up," or "There's more soybeans than ever before, and that means there's more ethanol available and more biodiesel available." Listen, we ought to be, at some point in time, in a position to have alternative sources of energy.

And we also need to have clean coal technology. We ought to be having safe nuclear power. We ought to be using every ounce of our efforts to find more energy to make us less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

The President has got to make sure that we're optimistic and confident in order for jobs to be created. That means we've got to reject what I call economic isolationism. Instead of shutting down markets and walling ourselves from the rest of the world, we ought to say to other nations, "Treat us like we treat you. See, you're able to sell your goods in our country. We want to be able to sell our goods into yours. Just give us a chance." Give our farmers a chance to compete, give our workers a chance to compete, give our entrepreneurs a chance to compete, and we can compete with anybody, anywhere, anytime.

We're going to make sure education systems work. The No Child Left Behind Act is a solid piece of legislation, really good reform, because we're challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations. We're raising the bar. We're saying, "If you can't read, we're going to correct the reading problems early." We're not going to quit on any child. No, to make sure we're competitive in the 21st century, we've got to make sure

our public school systems fulfill their functions, fulfill the goal of educating every child. And we've got to use our community college systems to make sure that we train workers for the jobs which actually exist, the jobs of the 21st century.

No, I can't wait to explain my vision for America, a vision that's got great faith in the entrepreneurs of our country, a vision that's got great faith in the workers of America, a vision that clearly says we will be competitive in the 21st century so our people can find work and we can compete. And the way to do that is through a pro-growth, pro-entrepreneur, pro-small-business economic agenda.

Our future also depends on America's leadership in the world. The momentum of freedom in our time is strong, but we still face serious dangers. Al Qaida is wounded, but they are not broken. Terrorists are testing our will in Afghanistan and Iraq. Regimes in North Korea and Iran are challenging the peace. If America shows weaknesses and uncertainty in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This will not happen on my watch.

This Nation is strong and confident in the cause of freedom, and today, no friend or enemy doubts the word of the United States of America. America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Afghanistan. The Taliban chose defiance. The Taliban are no longer in power. America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Iraq. The dictator chose defiance, and now the dictator sits in a prison cell.

September the 11th, 2001, taught a lesson I will never forget and our Nation must never forget: America must confront threats before they fully materialize. In Iraq, my administration looked at the intelligence, and we saw a threat. The United States Congress looked at the intelligence, and they saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence, and it saw a threat.

In 2002, the United Nations Security Council yet again demanded a full accounting of Saddam Hussein's weapon programs. They did so, and we joined with them because we remembered the history of Saddam Hussein. Saddam Hussein professed hatred for America. Saddam Hussein had terrorist ties. Saddam Hussein paid suiciders to go into Israel to kill innocent Israeli citizens. Saddam Hussein attacked his neighbors. Saddam Hussein had used weapons of mass destruction not only against his neighbors but against his own people.

So the ultimatum was delivered. Saddam Hussein, as he had for decade—for a decade—chose defiance. So either I had to—I had a choice to make, see? I had to trust the word of a madman or take action to defend our country. And given that choice, I will defend America every time.

My opponent admits that Saddam Hussein was a threat. He just didn't support my decision to remove Saddam from power. Maybe he was hoping Saddam would lose the next Iraqi election. [*Laughter*] We showed the dictator and a watching world that America means what it says. Because our coalition acted, Saddam's torture chambers are closed. Because we acted, Iraq's weapons programs are ended forever. Because we acted, nations like Libya have gotten the message and have voluntarily disarmed. Because we acted, an example of democracy is rising at the very heart of the Middle East. Because we acted, the world is more free, and America is more secure.

We've had a tough—tough weeks in Iraq. We face serious challenges. See, there's illegal militias and remnants of the regime who are joined by foreign terrorists. They're trying to take force by the power they can never gain by the ballot. That's what they're trying to do. They're trying to stop the advance of freedom. They can't stand freedom. They're trying to shake our will, is what they're trying to do. They don't

understand our country. They don't understand our nature. They don't understand our resolve. America will never be intimidated by thugs and assassins.

We have a clear strategy as this country heads toward democracy and freedom. First, we'll make sure the country is secure. We've got some fantastic troops over there, brave men and women who are—they're working with Iraqis so that the Iraqis can stand up and secure their own country at the right time. We're training people. They've got instructions, of course, to protect themselves at all costs. They've also got instructions, their timing, to take care of those who are trying to stop the advance of freedom, to make the country as secure as possible, because we're fixing to transfer sovereignty to the people of Iraq.

And that's the second phase of our strategy. There's a political strategy that we're now implementing. We put a schedule out there that says, "On June 30th, we'll transfer sovereignty." We will meet that schedule. When America says something, we will do it. The Iraqi people—by far, the vast majority of Iraqis reject the few who are trying to stop the advance of freedom. Iraqis want to run their own Government. Iraqis want to be self-governed, and we look forward to helping them be there.

The stakes are high. This is an historic opportunity to make the world a more free place and a peaceful place. Americans understand that free societies are peaceful societies. We also understand that freedom is not America's gift to the world; freedom is the Almighty's gift to each man and woman who lives in this world. It's hard work, but it is essential work. America will finish what we have begun, and we will win this essential victory in the war on terror.

People in this country will have a clear choice when it comes to American security and national security. My opponent says he approves of bold action in the world, but only if other countries do not object. [*Laughter*] I'm all for listening to other countries. I'm all for working with other countries. We put together coalitions in Afghanistan and Iraq to spread freedom and peace, but I will never turn over America's national security decisions to the leaders of other countries.

We also have a difference of opinion on the war on terror. My opponent said, "The war on terror is far less of a military operation and far more of an intelligence-gathering, law enforcement operation." I disagree—I disagree. Our Nation followed this approach after the World Trade Center was bombed in 1993. The matter was handled in the courts and thought by some to be settled. But the enemy was still training. The enemy was still plotting. The enemy was drawing up more ambitious plans. After the chaos and carnage of September the 11th, it is not enough to serve our enemies with legal papers. With those attacks, the terrorists and their allies declared war on the United States of America, and war is what they got.

We'll give our troops the best equipment, best possible—for those of you who have got loved ones in the theater, I want to thank you for your service. You e-mail your guys and tell them the Commander in Chief is incredibly proud of what they're doing for the country.

I look forward to working with the Members of Congress to make sure our troops get the best. That's why I asked for and Congress supported the $87 billion supplemental last fall. That means we spent money to make sure our troops had the best. My opponent voted "no" on that issue, so I asked him to explain his vote. He said, "I actually did vote for the 87 billion, right before I voted against it." [*Laughter*] Our troops don't need doubletalk. What they need is support, and I will support the troops.

Our men and women in the military have taken great risks, and they're doing great work. At bases across our country and the world, I've had the privilege of meeting those who defend our country and sacrifice

for our security. The abhorrent pictures on our TV screens have stained our honor. They do not reflect the nature of the men and women we have sent overseas. We've sent decent, compassioned, honorable, sacrificing citizens. I've seen their decency and unselfish courage. And I can assure you, ladies and gentlemen, the cause of freedom is in good hands.

This Nation is prosperous, and it is strong. Yet, we need to remember that our greatest strength is in the hearts and souls of our citizens. We're strong because of the values we try to live by, courage and compassion, reverence and integrity. We're strong because of the institutions that help give us direction and purpose, our families, our schools, and our religious congregations. These values and institutions are fundamental to our lives, and they deserve the respect of our Government.

We stand for the fair treatment of faith-based groups so they can receive Federal support for their works of compassion and healing. We will not stand for Government discrimination against people of faith.

We stand for welfare reforms that require work and strengthen marriage, which have helped millions of Americans find independence and dignity. We will not stand for any attempt to weaken those reforms and to send people back into lives of dependence.

We stand for a culture of life in which every person counts and every person matters. We will not stand for the treatment of any life as a commodity to be experimented upon or exploited or cloned.

We stand for the confirmation of judges who strictly and faithfully interpret the law. We will not stand for judges who undermine democracy by legislating from the bench or judges who try to remake the values of America by court order.

We stand for a culture of responsibility in America. We are changing the culture of America. All of us are helping to change the culture from one that has said, "If it feels good, do it," and, "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each of us understands we are responsible for the decisions we make in life. If you're fortunate to be a mother or a father, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart. If you're worried about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you're responsible for doing something about it. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you are responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And in the responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourselves. No, the strength of this country lies in the hearts and souls of our fellow citizens.

For all Americans, these years in our history will always stand apart. There are quiet times in the life of a nation when little is expected of its leaders. These are not one of these times. You and I are living in a period when the stakes are high, when the challenges are difficult, a time when firm resolve is needed.

None of us will ever forget that week when one era ended and another began. On September the 14th, 2001, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers. I'll never forget the day. A fellow pointed at me and said, "Do not let me down." Workers in hardhats and police and firefighters were shouting, "Whatever it takes—whatever it takes." As we all did that day, these men and women searching through the rubble took it personally. I took it personally. I have a responsibility that goes on. I will never relent in bringing justice to our enemies. I will defend the security of America, whatever it takes.

In these times, I have also been witness to the character of this Nation. You know, not so long ago, some had doubts about our character. They questioned our capacity to meet a serious challenge or to serve a cause greater than self-interest, but Americans gave their answer. I've seen the unselfish courage of our troops. I've seen the heroism of Americans in the face of

danger. I've seen the spirit of service and compassion renewed in our country. And we've all seen our Nation unite in common purpose when it mattered most.

We'll all need these qualities for the work ahead. I'm here to ask for your help and ask for your vote because we have a war to win, and the world is counting on us to lead the cause of freedom and peace. I'm here because I believe we have a duty to spread opportunity to every part of America. I'm here to ask for your help so we can make this country safer and stronger and better. This is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it, and we know that for our great land, the best days lie ahead.

Thanks for coming. May God bless. God bless our great country. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:54 a.m. at the Grand River Center. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Terry Duggan of Dubuque, IA; country music entertainer Michael Martin Murphy; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady, who introduced the President.

Remarks in Lancaster, Wisconsin
May 7, 2004

The President. Thank you all for coming. Thank you all for coming out. Come on, Laura. As you can see, I'm traveling with the A team of the Bush family. We're really glad to be here in Wisconsin, and I want to thank you all for coming out to say hello.

We're on a bus trip because I'm out asking for the vote. I'm here to tell the people of this State I'd like to be your President for 4 more years. And one of the best reasons why is to keep Laura as the First Lady for 4 years.

I'm not really here to politic you too much, but I do want you to know that I've got a plan to win this war on terror, and I've got a plan to spread freedom and peace. That's what I want to do. We're going to have to be tough in the years coming, and we've got to be compassionate too. This economy of ours is getting better. I hope the people in this part of the State are working. I know the farm economy is strong, and that's good for America. It's good for this part of Wisconsin.

I've got a plan to keep us going, so people can find work and realize their dreams. We got some good news today. They added—we added 288,000 new jobs last month. That's a good sign. Part of it has to do with making sure you get to keep more of your own money. That stimulus plan is working.

And finally, my job is to tap into the compassion of America. Let me tell you where the strength of the country is. The strength of the country is in the hearts and souls of our citizens, like the people living right here in Lancaster. That's the strength of this country, and for those of you who are—those of you who are loving your neighbor like you'd like to be loved yourself, I'm here to thank you for that; thanking you for mentoring children; thanking you for feeding the hungry, providing shelter for the homeless; thank you for hearing that universal call—that universal call to help change this country one heart and one soul at a time. My job is to rally the spirit of this great country, and that's what I'm—that's what I'm doing, traveling your great State.

I'm proud you're here, Mr. Mayor. Thanks for coming. Come on up here, Mr. Mayor. I always like to give the mayors

advice. My advice is: Fill the potholes. [*Laughter*] Thanks for coming, Mayor.

[*At this point, Mayor Jerry Wehrle of Lancaster made brief remarks and presented the President with a key to the city.*]

The President. Thank you, Mr. Mayor. Thanks for coming.

Again, thank you all for coming out to say hello. We're kind of heading down the road, but before I leave I do want to say I ask for God's blessings on you, and may God continue to bless our country.

Thank you. God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:28 p.m. at the Grant County Courthouse Square. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session in Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin

May 7, 2004

The President. Thank you all. Thanks for coming. I better take off my jacket. Listen, thank you all for coming. They told me we were coming—please sit down. It may take a while. [*Laughter*] They told me I was coming to Cabela's, and I said, "All right, fine. I'm looking for some power worms." [*Laughter*] I like to be in hunting and fishing country.

I thought what I'd do is share some thoughts with you, I'd talk to some of the citizens of this part of the world about what life has been like as a small-business owner or a family trying to raise their children and then, if we've got time, answer some questions. And then we've got to get on the bus and head up the road.

First, I want you to know I'm asking for your vote. I'm here to—it may seem like a little early to start. It may seem like the election is pretty far away. But if you really want to win, like I want to win, you can't start too soon. And I want you to know that my purpose after this is to let you know I have a reason for running. I know where I want to lead the country. And we've got a job to do together to make this country safer and stronger and better. We've got a mission together.

Probably the best reason to put me back in there is so that Laura has got 4 more years as the First Lady. We were both raised in Midland, Texas, which is a relatively small west Texas town. And when I met her later on in life—we actually went to San Jacinto Junior High together in the seventh grade—and then when I saw her afterward, after we'd both gone to college and did some things, she wasn't particularly fond of politics or politicians. [*Laughter*] Fortunately, she said yes when I asked her to marry me, and now she is a fabulous First Lady of our country.

She has come to realize what I know, that in this office that we both occupy, President and First Lady, that we can make an enormous difference in people's lives, that we can help people help themselves. It's such an honor to be the President of such a great country. It really is, and I'm so proud that Laura is standing by my side with such calm and dignity and love.

I really appreciate the Cabelas for being here. You'll hear me talk about the entrepreneurial spirit, and, Ms. Cabela, you are a true entrepreneur. You had a dream. You counted on good people to help you realize that dream, and you built one of the great companies in America. And we're proud to be here at the Cabela site in this part of Wisconsin.

And I know this: I know that if Mr. Cabela were standing up here, he'd say, "Yes, I had a good idea, but it's the people that worked with me that have made this company grow." I want to thank the folks who work here at Cabela's for your hospitality. Thanks for letting us disrupt your day. [*Laughter*] Thanks for making sure the fishermen and hunters of the country have got—well-equipped.

I'm here to ask for your help as well. I hope I give you some reasons to go out and turn to your fellow citizen and ask them to make sure they vote. I think you ought to talk to everybody from all political parties, people who don't even like politics. You need to tell them to show up and do their duty in democracy. I'd start, if I were you, by telling them that a President has got to put together a good team of people to serve the country, which is what I've done. I've surrounded myself with excellence, people from all walks of life, people from different backgrounds, people who have come to Washington, DC, to serve their country and not their self-interest.

I'm running with a fabulous guy in Dick Cheney. He is a great Vice President of the country. I, one time, said in front of my mother, I said, "Dick Cheney is the finest Vice President our country has ever had." [*Laughter*] She said, "Wait a minute, buster."

I want to thank Steve Freese for coming. Mr. Speaker, thank you. I'm proud you're here. I want to thank all the other—thanks for coming over. I want to thank Gabe Loeffelholz for coming as well. I'm honored you're here. I appreciate the local officials who have come out. We had the mayor of Lancaster show up. We did an impromptu stop. There were people in the town square there, so we stopped the bus just to say hi. The mayor was there. I said, "Mayor, I've got some advice for you: Fill the potholes." [*Laughter*] I don't know if he appreciated the advice or not.

I'm here to talk about ways to make this country safer and stronger and better. My biggest duty and most solemn duty is to protect America and—from another attack. And you've just got to know there's an enemy out there that still hates us. September the 11th changed the country. It changed how we've got to look at our future. September the 11th made us realize that oceans would not protect us from people who would want to do our citizens harm.

There are some other lessons that we must learn in order to protect the country: One, that we face a killer that has no conscience. The people of this country have a conscience. The people we face don't. Secondly, these are not religious people, in my judgment. These are people who have hijacked a great religion. This is a battle between good and evil. These are people that are so evil that they will kill innocent life, trying to shake the will of the United States of America, trying to get us to retreat from our duties in the world.

There was another lesson on September the 11th, and that is, when the American President says something, he better mean it. I told the American people this is a different kind of war than we were used to. I have an obligation to remind the American people, no matter how painful it may be to some, that we're still at war. That's my duty, to remind people that we're—there's still danger. And remember, the enemy only has to be right one time, and we've got to be right 100 percent of the time to protect the country.

You need to know there's a lot of really good folks that are working really hard to protect the homeland. We've got wonderful people in law enforcement at all levels of government, the local level, the State level, the Federal level, that are talking like they have never talked before, sharing intelligence like they have never shared intelligence before, nor were allowed to share intelligence, by the way, prior to September the 11th, in some cases.

I don't know if you know this. There's a lot of talk about what they call the PATRIOT Act, but the PATRIOT Act was passed to allow the criminal division of the FBI to be able to talk and share intelligence with the intelligence division of the FBI. Prior to September the 11th, they couldn't even talk together. How could you possibly defeat an enemy that is able to slide in our country if you can't share intelligence among law enforcement?

At any rate, there are good people working hard. We've got people that are doing a better job of guarding our borders and our ports. You know, they're making you take off your shoes at the airports. [*Laughter*] I know it's a pain, but it's necessary to do everything we can to protect the homeland. But the best way to protect the homeland is to stay on the offense and bring these killers to justice before they hurt us again. [*Applause*] Thank you.

I told the American people that we would go on the offense and we would stay on the offense, that we would do so with firm determination and resolve. And that's what I want to do. If I'm fortunate enough to become your President for 4 more years, I will continue to lead this great Nation in utilizing every asset we have, not just a few or some but every single asset we have to protect the American people. That's our most solemn duty.

I also said right after September the 11th that if you harbor a terrorist, you're just as guilty as a terrorist. I want to tell you something which is true about this job: When you speak you better mean what you say. The President has got to speak clearly so there's no ambiguity about what his words mean, and then when he says something, he's got to act on it. In order to keep the world—make the world more peaceful, the President must be sincere about when he says something. And so when I said that I was—I meant it, and we told that to the Taliban.

The Taliban were these awful characters that were running Afghanistan. I say awful—look at the movie "Osama," and you'll know what I'm talking about. Let me put it to you this way: They were so bad that they would not allow many young girls to even go to school. They were so backwards, so barbaric that they literally enslaved people to an empty ideology. And so we said, "You're training Al Qaida. You're harboring Al Qaida. Give them up." They said no, and they're no longer in power. And the world is better off for it. The United States of America is better off for it, and so are the people of Afghanistan.

I want you all to know that because we enforced doctrine, because we worked to make our own country more secure, we liberated people. People now have a chance to realize their dreams. Free societies are peaceful societies.

A cornerstone of my vision in foreign policy is the understanding of the power of freedom and what freedom can mean for people. I believe free societies are peaceful societies. I know that where people do not have hope, freedom can change that. And so we have freed the people of Afghanistan, and a peaceful society is beginning to emerge.

The other lesson on September the 11th that's very important to understand is that when we see a threat, we must not allow it to gather. In other words, when we see a threat, we've got to deal with it. In the past, if you didn't feel like you were a battlefield in the war on terror, you could see a threat and maybe hope that it would go away, but you were pretty certain it wouldn't affect you. 9/11 changed that. It's essential for the President of the United States to understand the realities we face, and the reality is that there's an enemy out there that is able to train and gather and equip and gets help from different places.

And so I looked at the intelligence after September the 11th and saw a threat in Iraq. And the United States Congress looked at the very same intelligence, and they came to the same conclusion I did,

that there was a threat in Iraq. I want to remember—I want to remind you of the history. The United Nations Security Council looked at the same intelligence, and they saw a threat. The Security Council saw the threat, and the members on the Security Council saw the threat. These are nations like France and Russia and other countries that looked at the same intelligence—Saddam's a threat. And so the world said, "Disarm, or face serious consequences." And of course, we said the same thing. If America says something, you better mean what you say.

The reason why I believe that the world reacted the way they did is because not only did they look at the intelligence, they remembered what Saddam Hussein was like. He attacked countries in his own neighborhood. He paid terrorists to go kill innocent Israelis. In other words, he was funding terrorist activity. Suiciders would receive money from him. He had terrorist connections. And by the way, we're still seeing some of the people that were in Iraq, still moving in Iraq right now, a guy named Zarqawi—he used weapons of mass destruction against people in neighboring countries, and he used weapons of mass destruction against his own people.

So the world remembered the history. We remembered what he was like, and I remembered the lessons that we learned on September the 11th. We saw a threat. I had a choice to make. Either trust the decision of a madman, a tyrant, a torturer, a hater, or to protect America. And given that choice, I will protect America every time. [*Applause*] Thank you all.

Because we acted, torture chambers are closed. Because we acted, countries like Libya understood we meant business, and they voluntarily disarmed. Because we acted, there is a democracy beginning to grow in a part of the world that needs freedom and hope. Because we acted, this man's weapons programs will never be. Because we acted, our country is more secure. Because we acted, the world is more free.

We've got hard work to do in Iraq now. It's really hard work. And the reason it is, is because there are people who want to stop the advance of freedom. Freedom frightens terrorists. Freedom frightens people who believe that they can impose their will through acts that are unconscionable, through killing innocent people. That's what you're seeing.

You're seeing a mixture of supporters of a young Shi'a named Sadr who is a—he's promoting lawlessness. You're seeing people that used to be loyal to Saddam Hussein who realized that there's no hope for them unless there's anarchy and the rule of law doesn't prevail. And you're seeing the influence of foreign fighters, like this guy Zarqawi. That's what you're seeing. You're also seeing incredibly brave action by American troops as we stay on the offensive.

The enemy wants us to quit. That's what they want. The Iraqi citizens who long for freedom are worried that we will. See, some people don't want to take a risk for peace, if they think they do, and then they're—and then they were punished if there's not security. And the enemy is trying to shake our will. My job as your President is to stand strong. My job as your President is to be as—to show utmost determination in our belief that freedom will prevail. And it will prevail.

I believe that freedom is embedded in everybody's soul. I believe people want to be free. I believe moms and dads want to raise their children in a peaceful environment. I believe moms and dads want their children to be educated and to be able to grow up and realize their dreams. I believe that is the aspirations of all people. I know freedom is not America's gift to world; freedom is the Almighty God's gift to each man and woman in this world. And I believe this strong and generous and compassionate nation must work to continue to spread freedom, not only for our own security but for the sake of others who have been enslaved by tyrants.

I've told the Iraqi people this, and I mean it: We will transfer sovereignty to the Iraqi people on June the 30th. Of course, I know I'm—American citizens hear, "Well, maybe the Iraqis don't want us to occupy them." Who wants to be occupied? Nobody wants to be occupied. People do want to be liberated. The Iraqis want us there to help with their security, but they want to run their own country. And I don't blame them. And so on June the 30th, we'll start the—we will transfer sovereignty and start a process that will allow them to have elections in January 2005.

The closer we come to sovereignty, the more the enemy will make us want to leave, and I know how hard it is. I know how hard it is for moms and dads who have got troops overseas. I know how hard it is for a mom or dad to lose a son. It's tough. And nobody in America—America suffers when one of us suffers, is the best way to put it. But I've told those mothers and dads when I've had the opportunity to see them, "We will finish what we have begun. Your son or daughter will not die in vain."

I see we've got some troops here. I want to thank you all for coming. I have the duty to make sure they get what they need. When we put somebody in harm's way, those of us in positions of responsibility have the duty to make sure they've got the best possible equipment. That's why I asked Congress to vote for an $87 billion, what they call, supplemental. That just means $87 billion available, 67 of which is available to the troops to make sure they have the best equipment.

I don't want to get too political here, but my opponent voted against it, and they asked him why. His answer was, "I voted for the 87 billion, right before I voted against it." Let me tell you something: This country doesn't need double talk; it needs plain talk; and it needs people to be able to support these troops.

I'll just say one other thing about our troops—a couple other things. I told our commanders, "Tell me how many you need on the ground, and you'll get it." This war is going to be—the decisionmaking part about what the troops need in this war is going to be made by generals, not politicians. The people in the Army, the Marines, and the Air Force will be making the decisions. The President sets the strategy. The President sets the goals, and our commanders on the ground tell us what it takes to meet those goals.

The second thing I want to say about our military, I'm just as disgusted of those pictures you've seen on TV as you are. This isn't the America we know. Let me tell you something: Those few people have stained the honor of this country. They have put—they've helped paint a picture of the country that doesn't exist. The men and women we have sent into harm's way for our security and for freedom in the world are the finest of citizens in this country. [*Applause*] Thank you all. And I can't tell you how proud I am to be their Commander in Chief.

I want to say one other thing about this, these horrible pictures and what we've seen. In a free society, we will find out the truth, and everybody will see the truth. In a society that is a free society, there will be transparency in the process. People will testify. There will be fair trials, if there are trials. The truth will be known. In societies run by tyrants, you never see the truth. You never find out the truth. This country honors every individual. We believe in human rights and human dignity, and the example we will set for the world will confirm that.

Now, let me talk a little bit about how to make the country stronger. You make the country stronger by making sure the entrepreneurial spirit in this country is strong so that people can find work. The role of Government is to create an environment in which small businesses can grow to be big businesses, in which people can realize their dreams by starting their own business, so that people can find work.

That's the role of Government. That's what I want to talk a little bit about today.

First, I can't tell you how optimistic I am about our economy. In fact, we had a pretty good job increase today—just came out at 288,000 new jobs for the month of April has just been posted. We're growing. That's 1.1 million jobs since last August have been created. That's really incredibly good news.

When I find out people are looking for work, it troubles me. So my job is to work to make an environment such that people expand their businesses so people can work. That's what we want. We want people working. We want people realizing their dreams of being able to put food on the table for their families, and it's happening.

But let me remind you right quick what we have overcome. I think it will help make these numbers even more amazing to you. This country, in a very brief period of time, overcame the stock market decline, starting in March of 2000. If you're a saver, that affected your outlook in life. If you're a retired citizen that has stock that you're relying upon in your retirement, it affects your outlook.

Then we went to a recession. Starting in early 2001, we went through a recession. That means we're going backward. That means if you're a worker, you're wondering about whether or not you're going to keep your job. That means if you're a small-business owner, you're wondering whether it makes sense to make investment. It is a negative period.

And then, just as we were coming out of that recession, the enemy hit us. I've talked to you about what it means from a foreign policy perspective. It also meant we lost jobs and work. It affected our economy. It just did. Any time your country gets attacked as significantly as it was, it affected the economy. We overcame that.

Then we had another problem in our economy, one that shook the confidence of the American people, and that is we had some people forget to tell the truth. There's some corporate CEOs who fudged the numbers and didn't tell the truth, and it affected us. We acted on that, by the way. I worked with both Republicans and Democrats in Congress to pass tough law—tough law. The message is real clear in America. If you're in a position of responsibility, you behave responsibly when it comes to shareholders and employees, or you'll be held to account. We're not going to tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America.

Then of course, I've talked about my decision to go into Iraq. But remember, on your TV screens it said "March to War" during that period of time. That's something the economy had to overcome because when you read about marching to war, it is negative. People who are making capital decisions or decisions to expand take a look at that and say, "Gosh, I'm not sure I want to expand if we're marching to war." Now we're marching to peace.

Things have changed. Our economy is growing. It's strong, and it's getting stronger. Witness the numbers today. And what it really speaks to is the fact that the entrepreneurial spirit in this country is strong, that small businesses are vibrant and strong. Seventy percent of new jobs in America are created by small businesses. And if you've got your job base growing as fast as it is, it means somebody is growing the job base. We're going to talk to a couple of small-business owners here today.

I'd like to take a little credit for the progrowth that's happening today because of the tax cuts. See, I believe that when you give people more of their own money—and notice I said "more of their own money"—it's not the Government money we're passing back. It's the people's money we take in the first place. We're going to talk about the effect of tax cuts on some families here. But when you've got more money in your pocket, you're likely to demand an additional good or a service, and when you demand an additional good or a service in our marketplace-type

economy, somebody will produce it. And when somebody produces the good or a service, somebody is more likely to keep a job or find work. That's just the way it works.

The tax cuts were important economic policy. They also helped families because we've increased the child credit. We reduced the marriage penalty. My attitude about that is, why do you want to penalize marriage? You ought to encourage marriage and family. And we helped small businesses. But the tendency in politics is to focus on the now. My job is to focus on the future, to make sure that we're the most competitive place to do business in the world. In other words, it's a good place to do business so that the job base expands. So the question is: What do we need to do to make sure we're the leader in the world?

Let me tell you a couple ideas. I want to talk about one other thing, and then I'm going to talk to some of our citizens here.

First, I believe there needs to be certainty in the Tax Code. We should not raise the taxes on the American people right now, in order to keep this economy growing, and it's an issue in the campaign. I'm telling you, it's an issue. We've been counting the number of new promises the fellow I'm running against is making. He's up to $1.9 trillion so far, of new promises. And we got a long way to go in the campaign. Pretty easy to stand up in front of people and say, "Well, I promise you this, and I'll spend that," and then it begins to mount up after a while. So the question is, how is he going to pay for it?

And the answer—his answer, of course, is taxing rich people, but the problem is there's not enough tax revenue to be generated to pay for $1.9 trillion worth of new spending by taxing rich people. And so there's a tax gap, and I'll you how he's going to fill the tax gap. You get to fill the tax gap. In order to fulfill the promises, the only way he can do so is to tax the hard-working people of America. The good news is, we're not going to let him do it.

Right quick, let me tell you how you have a vision—how you implement a vision to make sure people can find work. One, education matters a lot. We got to make sure our children learn to read and write and add and subtract early so that they're better able—this No Child Left Behind Act I've signed is good, really good. I'll tell you why: It raises the bar. We spent more money at the Federal level for Title I kids, and for the first time the Federal Government says, "Please show us whether or not the children can read and write and add and subtract." If they can't, we'll find out early and get the kids extra help. If they can, we'll praise the teachers for doing the work that we expect them to do. If the curriculum works, we'll find out. If it doesn't work, we'll find out.

We'll find out a lot through making sure that the facts are known as to whether or not children are learning. The way to make sure you challenge the soft bigotry of low expectations is to raise the bar and measure and correct problems early, before they're too late.

A second challenge for education is, is that technology races through our economy. It's one of the facts of the 21st century. There's new technologies happening all the time. Take the health care field. It's changing dramatically in a very rapid period of time. And there's a lot of communities looking for health care workers, but a lot of times, the worker doesn't have the skill necessary to fill the job. And so we've got to be really wise about how we use places like the community college system, to make sure that they match willing workers with people looking for work, with the skills necessary for the jobs for the 21st century. By reeducating people for the jobs which actually exist, we also increase the productivity level of the workforce. And a more productive workforce is a workforce that makes more money.

Let me give you an example. I've been to a lot of community colleges around the country because I believe so deeply in their value, and they're important. Again, the economy changes, and we're in a period of change now, and we better make sure the workforce has got the skills to change with it. And so I met a lady in Mesa Community College in Arizona, and she was telling me her story. She went back and got an associate's degree with a high-tech emphasis. And she had been a graphic design artist and, after 12 years, she was making X number of dollars, went back to the community college—and by the way, there's money available to help people. There's trade adjustment assistance. There's Pell grants. There's money, and that's good. The Federal Government wants to help retrain people. And she got retrained, and she made more money in her level entry job, having gotten an associate's degree, than she made after 12 years of being a graphic artist. In other words, going back to school makes the citizen more productive, and they make more money.

Secondly, there's a lot of talk about trade. When you're good at something, you want to promote it. And we're in farm country here. We're really good about growing things in America. We've got the best farmers in the world. We've got the most productive—and where we're from, we think we're pretty good about raising cows. [*Laughter*] But if you're good at it, you want to open up markets rather than close markets. Farm income is strong now. A lot of it has to do with the fact that we're selling more farm product overseas than ever before. Trade policy needs to be confident, not pessimistic, in the ability for Americans to compete.

Most Presidents have opened up our markets for other countries. That's good for consumers. If you've got more product from which to choose, you're likely to get a better price and better quality. In other words, the more choice you get, the more that people will meet demand with better product at a price you can afford.

But the problem is, other countries haven't responded. And so rather than becoming economic isolationists, for the sake of long-term job growth, this country must say, "Treat us like we treat you." With a level playing field, we can compete with anybody, anyplace, anywhere. Good trade policy is necessary to make sure jobs exist not only in the short term, in the long term.

We need to make sure we do something about the cost of health care. I'm for health savings accounts, association health care plans, and medical liability reform at the Federal level so that health care costs make it—don't make it impossible for small businesses to continue to employ people.

Two other quick points, then one other point. [*Laughter*] Laura said, "Keep it short. The bus might leave." [*Laughter*] She's been hearing me give a lot of speeches for a long time, which means she's a pretty patient lady.

We need tort reform. If you're a businessowner, somebody expanding the job base of small business, a frivolous or junk lawsuit makes it awfully hard on you as a businessperson. Remember, jobs are created when businesses expand. And if people are afraid to risk capital, which is how you expand, because of a junk lawsuit, it makes it very hard. We need justice in America. But we've got to make sure the justice—the scales of justice are balanced and fair.

And finally, it is very important for us to have an energy policy in America. We've got to increase supply in this country. We have got to—we've got to utilize—of course, we want to work on the demand side by encouraging conservation. That's important. And we've got things in the bill that will encourage conservation. But you can't conserve your way to a lack of dependence on foreign sources of energy. You've also got to increase supply so that you don't have to rely upon foreign sources

of energy. And one of the things we've got in the energy bill is the continued expansion of the use of soybeans and corn to diversify the energy supply. It makes a lot of sense to do so.

I'm a supporter of biodiesel and ethanol because I understand the practicality of it. At some point in time, we're going to say, "Gosh, the yields on corn are real good, and now we're less dependent." We need clean coal technology. We've got a lot of coal. We need to expand clean coal technology. We need—in my judgment, we need to have a safe nuclear energy program in order to expand. We need to be drilling for natural gas in environmentally friendly ways. What I'm telling you is, in order to make sure that we're a good place to do business, so we can expand the job base, we need to become less reliant on foreign sources of energy.

The other strategy is to make America a better place. The Government can help, but Government is not love. Government is justice and law. Love comes from the hearts and souls of citizens. And that is—which is the true strength of the country, by the way. We talk about our military, and it's an important part of our strength, and we'll keep you strong. We talk about our wealth, and that's an important part of our strength, and we want to continue to expand our economy. The true strength of this country is the hearts and souls of the American citizens.

Let me tell you what I mean by that. That happens—the strength happens when somebody takes time out of their life to love somebody who hurts. In the land of plenty, there are people who are—who hurt. There are people who are addicted, people who are homeless, people who are hungry. And the best way to cure that aspect of our society's ills is to rally the armies of compassion. See, society can and does change one heart, one soul at a time.

I want to be your President for 4 more years, not only to keep the country safe and stronger but to continue to rally the spirit of America, to call upon our fellow citizens to heed the universal call, the call of all religions, to love your neighbor just like you'd like to be loved yourself.

You know what I'm talking about. You know how societies can change. You've seen what happens in your communities when people take it upon themselves to help those who hurt, to build a home for the homeless through Habitat for Humanity, who take time out to instill values in Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts. You've seen what it's like when people say, "I'm going to be a coach in a Little League to help a kid learn a team sport and, at the same time, sportsmanship." You know what it means when you've seen church groups come together and say, "Let's go feed this family that hurts." You have seen what happens when the great compassion of this country wells up and starts saving lives. The strength of this country lies in the hearts and souls of our fellow citizens, which makes us such a fabulous nation.

I've asked some folks to come today. Paul Darley is a small-business owner, W.S. Darley. He is the president and chief operating officer.

Tell us what you do.

Paul Darley. Our company is a 96-year-old family business. We manufacture firefighting equipment, specifically firetrucks, fire pumps, that we distribute all over America and around the world.

The President. Based right here?

Mr. Darley. We're based in Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin. We just last year built a $3.8 billion plant. And additionally, we bought equipment worth over $1 million, which we were able to do as a result of the tax relief that took place over the last 2 years.

The President. One of the important parts of the tax relief that I hope people understand is this: Most small businesses, like this good man's business, pay tax at the individual income-tax level. A lot of citizens don't know that. But if you're a

Subchapter S corporation or a sole proprietorship, you pay tax at the individual income-tax level. So when you heard us talking about reducing individual income taxes, not only, obviously, did it affect citizens, it affects small businesses. And so when you hear people say, "We're going to tax the rich by running up some of those income taxes," they're taxing small businesses. It's important for people to understand that.

The other thing we did was we helped with what they call bonus depreciation. In other words, if you make an investment, you get to deduct more money. In other words, there was an incentive in the Tax Code.

So what did you do with the money? You built a——

Mr. Darley. We built a new $3 million plant. We also built about a million dollars' worth of equipment. But additionally, we were able to take that money, through less—because we had less dividends to pay out because our tax burden was less, we were able to reinvest that money back into our business. We were able to create jobs. We were able to train our employees. We were able to compete in a global environment.

The President. Yes. See, when he builds something, like expands his plant—I think he needed to add employees?

Mr. Darley. We did.

The President. So when you hear—the reason I bring this up is when you hear that tax relief encourages investment—there's two aspects to investment—two effects of investment. First, when he buys equipment, new equipment, somebody has got to make it, right? If somebody makes it—some business makes it, some laborer who is making the product for the business is more likely to keep a job, or if the demand is greater, they'll add jobs to make the new equipment, orders for new equipment.

Secondly, when he says he's invested in his company because of the tax incentives, he's got to have people to work that additional plant and equipment. So when you hear "investment equals jobs," that's how it works. He makes a decision. Somebody produces the product for him, and as he expands his business, he hires new people.

Is that what happened? So how many people did you hire last year?

Mr. Darley. I think 24 in the last 2 years and then, additionally, 9 since the beginning of January this year, and we plan to hire 14 or 15 more in the next 7 months.

The President. That's good news. It's good news if you're somebody—thank you, Paul.

There's a lot of small businesses like Paul's, a lot of companies. See, the entrepreneurial spirit is strong. You heard him say, "I'm thinking about hiring 14 more." There's a lot of people out there feeling the same way now. That's really encouraging.

And so the key is whether or not the the workforce is trained to be able to do the jobs he's looking for. You heard him say, "I took some of the savings so that we could train workers." There's all kinds of ways workers get trained. I mentioned the community college, but a lot of times, businesses train their own workers too. And tax relief has helped make his workforce more productive.

I want to thank you for hanging in there. Thanks for expanding your business.

Jim Hutchison is with us as well. Jim is the owner—when did you start your business, and what does it do?

Jim Hutchison. 1994. And first of all, thank you for coming to Prairie du Chien, Mr. President.

The President. Well, I'm glad to be here.

Mr. Hutchison. We started in 1994.

The President. Thanks for the excuse of getting out of Washington. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Hutchison. And it's a nice drive for you too.

The President. It's beautiful. It really is—a little different from Midland, Texas—

[*laughter*]—which is flat and in the desert. Go ahead.

[*Mr. Hutchison, owner, Prairie Industries, made brief remarks.*]

The President. Did you start this?

Mr. Hutchison. I started it in 1994. We started with seven people.

The President. How did you think of it?

Mr. Hutchison. Well, I heard some people from the 3M company were shipping a lot of work out of the area. They didn't have anyone to package for them. And I was able to get an interview with them. I thought it would last 15 minutes. It lasted 4 hours. And 300 people later, here we are.

The President. That's in 10 years. Good. I don't want to hog the spotlight, but the entrepreneurial spirit—you just heard it. He just defined what that means. The guy had a dream. He said, "I can do something better than that which was being done. Give me a chance to compete." And the key is for policy to encourage those dreams to go on, for people to say, "Look, with a good idea and hard work, I can achieve a dream."

Go ahead.

[*Mr. Hutchison made further remarks.*]

The President. Sixty employees this year—see, it's happening. Here's an optimistic guy. He stands in front of the President and the cameras and people and says, "Look, I'm optimistic. I'm growing my business. I want to compete, and I'm investing so I can become more productive." That's how the economy works. Good tax policy encourages this.

By the way, if the Congress doesn't act on some of this tax policy, the taxes go up. And to me, if the taxes start going up at this point, it changes the attitude of those who are risking capital. So I've told you we don't need to be raising taxes right now. I'm trying to put a face as to why we don't need to. See, it's one thing for me to stand up there and say it. They'll say, "Sure, he's running for office." But the reason—I have a reason to say it, and these small-business owners helped me make the case.

Thank you both for coming. I'm proud of your entrepreneurial spirit. Good job, real good.

Christine and Mark Seeley are with us. I'm proud you all are here. They're a family of—they got three kids. And the reason I've asked them to come, along with the Hendricksons, is so that people can hear what tax relief has meant to their life. Again, it's easy for us to spew numbers in Washington, but tax relief affects people in such positive ways that it's important for people who don't agree with the tax relief or are willing to take—raise the taxes on people to understand the consequences. And that's why they're here.

First of all, what do you do?

Mark Seeley. I'm an athletic trainer with Prairie du Chien Memorial Hospital right here in town.

The President. Good. My knee hurts. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Seeley. See me afterwards. [*Laughter*]

The President. Yes.

Mr. Seeley. And Christine is a stay-at-home mom.

The President. That's good. Congratulations.

Christine Seeley. Thank you.

The President. Because we raised the child credit, expanded the 10-percent—reduced—created a 10-percent bracket, and relieved the marriage penalty, this couple saved 2,200?—$2,200 in '03 and in '04. That may not seem like a lot to people who are throwing around a lot of zeros in Washington, but I bet—well, I'll let them tell you if it means anything to them. I'm like—I'm not a lawyer, you'll be happy to hear, but I realize I'm leading the witness. [*Laughter*] Tell us about the money.

Mr. Seeley. Well, what we were able to do with that refund is basically invest it right back into our house. We were having

a couple issues with some leaky roofs, so we hired a couple——

The President. Right. Pretty hard to raise a family with a leaky roof.

Mr. Seeley. That's right. You have to keep the roof over their heads, so we hired a couple of contractors to come in and repair our roof. And that's where that money went.

The President. Good. Somebody had to come over. In other words, you got the relief, and you said, "We better get on the phone and call Joe's Roofing Company." Is that who it was? [*Laughter*]

Mr. Seeley. Randy Jones Construction.

The President. Randy. All right, here's Jones' chance. Did you do a good job? Did he do a good job?

Mrs. Seeley. Oh, fabulous.

Mr. Seeley. Yes, he did a great job.

The President. Great job. Good. I don't know where Jones is. If he's listening, he just got a plug for business. Anyway, he came over. I presume he didn't do it by himself.

Mr. Seeley. No, he had actually two other crew members, and then we had another company that put on some rubber roofing in back of the house. And I think they employed—had four guys with them.

The President. Yes. Let me tell you what happens if Congress doesn't act. These folks pay a $1,000 tax increase, see? That's the debate in Washington. You're hearing this debate about whether to make the tax relief permanent. That's not the way to look at it. The way to look at it is, if Congress doesn't act, instead of $2,200, they're going to be $1,000 less than that. It's like a tax increase. That's $1,000 less money in their pocket. I like to remind people that this economy is cranking and beginning to grow because the people have spent their money far better than the Government would have.

Now that you've got the floor, you can say anything you want. [*Laughter*] Thanks for coming.

Mr. Seeley. Thank you.

The President. Glad you're here. I appreciate you taking time out of your life. Where are the little ones? Are they here?

Mr. Seeley. They couldn't make it.

The President. They're at home?

Mrs. Seeley. Yes.

The President. Too little.

Mrs. Seeley. Yes.

The President. Afraid the President would speak too long. [*Laughter*] I understand.

Tina and Mike Hendrickson are with us as well. Oh, there they are. Good. Thank you all for coming. They are—what do you do, Michael?

Michael Hendrickson. I work for the highway county department.

The President. Good. So when I said, "Fill the potholes," you knew what I'm talking about. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Hendrickson. That's right.

The President. I wasn't speaking to you. I was speaking to the decisionmaker. Maybe you are the decisionmaker?

Mr. Hendrickson. No, I get told to go fill the potholes. [*Laughter*]

The President. That's right. And Tina is a worker.

Tina Hendrickson. Yes, I work at Prairie Industries. I'm a warehouse manager.

The President. Thank you. Great. Thanks for coming. I'm proud you're both here. They've got two young children. So when we increased the child credit to $1,000, it affected them. And they're married, and so we've reduced the marriage penalty—it affected them, and so did the expansion of the 10-percent bracket, all of which will go away next year unless Congress acts. The tax savings were?

Mr. Hendrickson. I forget—$3,000, something like that.

The President. Less.

Mrs. Hendrickson. 1,900.

The President. 1,900—well, 1,900 here, 3,000 there. [*Laughter*] And so what—how does it affect you? What do you do? When you get a $1,900 check, less taxes, how does it affect your thinking?

Mrs. Hendrickson. A lot. Well, we've been able to start saving for college for the kids.

The President. Good.

Mrs. Hendrickson. That's a plus.

The President. Doing their duty as a mom or a dad, taking that extra money, it makes it easier for them to fulfill their obligations. And I appreciate that.

What else?

Mrs. Hendrickson. We went to St. Louis in April—short vacation.

The President. Good. And I presume—you stayed in a motel, or what?

Mrs. Hendrickson. Yes.

The President. Yes. So the clerk at the motel was able to keep a job, because if the motel was empty, there wouldn't be a need to have a clerk.

Yes, thank you all for coming. I'm glad you're here.

The reason why—this tax relief affected people. It increases their confidence about the future. It enables them to better raise their families. These people are working hard to raise their two sons. They're thinking about, "How can we put money aside for college," which is a vital part of the duty of being a parent, isn't it? And you want your children to be able to realize their dreams, and college is an important part of it. The tax relief matters, and Congress does not need to be raising the taxes on these people.

The reason I've asked them to come, both small business and individuals to come is, I hope it helps you better understand the progrowth package, how it works, and the philosophy behind the decisions we made.

I think I've got a little time to answer some questions. This is called "Ask George Bush," so you might as well start asking so at least we fulfill the promise of the program's name. But I'll be glad to answer. Ask some questions.

Yes, what have you got? This is a written question. [*Laughter*] This isn't exactly off the top of your head, is it? [*Laughter*]

Q. I was afraid I couldn't read my own writing, so I did go ahead and type it. [*Laughter*]

The President. Are you a doctor?

Freedom of Speech and Religious Freedom

Q. No, I'm not. [*Laughter*] Mr. President, as a member of the local clergy of this city, I'm appalled at the different lengths of political correctness that has affected religious rights in Canada, Australia, France, and other European nations. Laws are being passed to limit offensive speech. If reelected, what will your administration do to the rights—to help the rights of conservative Christians so that courts in America can't limit our free speech when it comes to offensive speech toward different groups?

The President. Yes. Look, here's the thing. Freedom to speak is a valuable part of our country, and a President has got to protect that. People ought to be allowed to speak the way you want to speak, but there are limits. And it is very important for our society to work with those that push the limits without abridging anybody else's freedom to speak.

Let me talk about freedom of religion as well, which is an incredibly important part of our society. My job as the President is to make sure—this may get to your question, by the way, besides speech—an incredibly important part about what you're asking is, can people worship freely as well? Yes. That's the part of the job of the President, is to make sure that people can worship any way they want—any way they want. And they can choose any religion they want, or they can choose no religion. You see, you're just as big a patriot—as good a patriot as the next fellow if you choose not to worship. It's your choice to make. And the freedom of this country is that you can choose to do any way you want. And it's important that we keep that freedom real and intact.

I happen to believe that it would be very difficult to be the President without believing. I believe that—I know it's been an important part of my Presidency. And I appreciate the fact—but what I'm answering to you is, is that we've got to be very careful about tampering with freedoms in America, the freedom to speak or the freedom to worship. It is the thing that sets us apart from other parts of the world, that people can come to this country and express themselves the way they see fit.

Obviously, there's a line to cross when it comes to speech. That's been a difficult challenge for our country, to figure out where it is and where it isn't. You know, sometimes on TV, there are things you don't want to see. But that's why you put an off-on button on there. You just kind of turn it off. You don't have to watch it. You can also pay attention—and there are other things we can do to make it easier for parents to make sure their children aren't watching garbage. And there are things you can do on the Internet to make sure that garbage doesn't get in your living room. But it's very important that we remain a country of free speech and free religion.

Anybody else got something? Yes, ma'am.

Steel Industry/International Economy

Q. Hi. I'm from LaCrosse. My name is Karen Heffner. My husband and I own a small steel fabricating business.

The President. Oh, good.

Q. I know. You'd like that one, right? [*Laughter*]

The President. Well, first of all, I'm glad you own a business. How long have you owned it?

Q. Since '92.

The President. Good.

Q. And we have been growing steadily too. We started with about six employees—but a couple of setbacks along the way. I just want to know—my question is, with the steel market so volatile, what can we do to help stabilize that and all the construction trade?

The President. Yes. She is referring to the fact that the price of steel, which was very low at one point, is now higher. And the reason why is, is because the world's economies are beginning to grow. For a period of time, the world was in recession. We were recession—in recession, and other countries were. And all of a sudden, the world is beginning to come out of its recession. There's a cyclicality to economies, and the cycle is now coming on an upswing.

In a country like China, it's really booming, and they're absorbing a lot of the supply of steel in the world, which is, in fact—I believe you're referring to the price of steel getting higher, which is making it more difficult for you to work. I believe that the higher price of steel will serve as an incentive for people to produce more steel, and that—it's a price-driven industry, as you know, and that as people produce more steel, it should take—relieve the pressure.

It's just like what's happening in the energy markets today. For a while, there was excess supply because the world's demand was depressed. And now the world is growing, very much like the steel prices. And by the way, I'm sure the energy prices affects your business too, I would think, which is high and hard to deal with, I fully recognize. We're seeing it at the gasoline pumps as well, and that's not positive for American consumers and American people.

It has to do with the fact that the demand is increasing relative to supply and that when you get these countries beginning to grow and they're not very fuel-efficient to begin with, like China, they're taking a lot of world oil off the market in order for their economy to grow, and it's affecting our prices.

That's why we need an energy bill. That's why we need to be diversified. I believe there will be an increase in fuel supply in response to price, which would make it—which would then begin to ease off.

About 3 years ago, if I'm not mistaken, the price of your product was significantly different than it is today. And I guess what I'm telling you is you're going through a rough cycle. But I don't think the Government policy can say, "Okay, fine"—you know, make people go out and produce more product to relieve the price. I think the market is going to have to adjust to do that.

And I also suspect you're a little nervous about reliability of electricity. I hear from small manufacturers all the time, and a part of the energy bill that's stuck in the Congress, by the way—I've been trying to get it moving for the good of the country. It's stuck. Part of it is to make sure that our electricity systems are modern, that the electricity systems have got maximum reliability standards from these sellers of electricity as well as modern ways to attract capital to expand the electricity systems and modernize them.

That was a very good question on steel. Commodity prices go up and down, and the thing that our country must not do, as I mentioned to you, in response to economic conditions, is wall ourselves off from the rest of the world. I think it would be a terrible mistake to become isolated from the rest of the world. Economic isolationism is pessimistic, and it does not lead to a hopeful future. Again, I'm going to repeat what I said about not becoming isolated from the rest of the world. If you're good at something, and we're very good at things, with a level playing field we can compete. And as we compete, people are more likely to find a job.

Anybody got anything? Yes, ma'am.

Education

Q. I'm an eighth grade teacher and——

The President. First, thanks for teaching.

Q. You're welcome. Typically, when I'm discussing education policy and, specifically, funding with my colleagues, I'm pretty much in the minority with a conservative view. What can I tell my colleagues that the Bush administration is pro-education?

The President. Sure. You can tell them we've increased Title I—elementary and secondary education spending since I've been in office, from 2001 to today, by over 47 percent. That's a healthy increase in spending. On the other hand, I believe that spending—the Federal Government ought not to try to run the schools. I believe the best spending decisions are made by State and local people.

I believe the ratio between the Federal Government and the State and local people is a good ratio, something about 94 to 6 or 93 to 7 percent—7 percent coming from the Federal Government. We're more than happy to encourage spending. I just want to make sure that the spending works.

And so you can tell the folks that our approach has changed, literally changed how people—what people—not what people can do with the money but what they must achieve with the money. You notice I used the word "achieve." In other words, we expect results. If you don't measure, if you don't get—if you don't ask for results, it is likely you won't get results or at least you won't know. How do you know—tell your friends, how can you possibly know whether or not a child can read unless you're willing to measure?

Secondly, tell your friends that when we find—in the No Child Left Behind Act, early on when we discover that a child doesn't have the tools necessary to read, he or she gets extra help. Third, that if a school perpetually fails, parents get different options in order to make sure that people respond to the moms and dads and to the needs of the children.

We've got a really good record on public education. And the No Child Left Behind Act is a strong piece of legislation which I believe will make the public school systems work better, not worse.

What else? Yes, sir.

Support for the President

Q. I don't have a question, sir. I just wanted to thank you. I served in the United States Air Force for 10 years. I just love the love that you have for our troops and admiration you have for our troops, and I salute you.

The President. Thank you, sir.

Q. ——and the First Lady as well.

The President. Thank you. I appreciate that. Thanks for saying that.

I'm a fellow who knows a good exit line. [*Laughter*] We're getting on the bus and heading up the road. I want to thank you all for coming. I hope you've enjoyed this as much as I have. I'm glad to get out of the Nation's Capital and come and be with you all. I've really enjoyed our dialog and our discussion. I hope you can tell I have a reason why I want to be your President for 4 more years. I hope you can tell I'm counting on you to go to your neighbors and let them know I have a reason. And I hope you can tell I'm incredibly optimistic and hopeful about the future of this country, because I understand the strength of this country is the people who live in America.

May God bless you all, and may God continue to bless our country. Thanks for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 1:40 p.m. at Cabela's Distribution Center. In his remarks, he referred to Richard N. Cabela, chairman and director, Cabela's Inc., and his wife, Mary; Wisconsin State Representatives Stephen J. Freese and Gabe Loeffelholz; Mayor Jerry Wehrle of Lancaster, WI; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi; and Muqtada Al Sadr, Iraqi Shiite cleric whose militia engaged in an uprising in Iraq in early April. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady, who introduced the President.

Remarks in LaCrosse, Wisconsin
May 7, 2004

The President. Thank you all very much. Thanks for coming. It's a great turnout. Laura and I are so honored so many came out to say hello here in the great State of Wisconsin. I'm glad to be back in LaCrosse. What a fine city, full of fine, fine people.

Listen, traveling your State on the bus is a fantastic experience, particularly for two people who grew up in the desert. [*Laughter*] As Laura said, people lined the road and were really friendly. We had a stop at the Kuhle family farm. That's between Hazel Green and Cuba City. It gave us a chance to shake hands with some hard-working people just like you all. A guy asked me if I wanted to milk his cows. I said, "I think we better get back on the bus." [*Laughter*] Had a little Culver's ice cream on the way here too, I want you to know.

I came here to ask for your vote. I came here to tell you I've got a reason to be President for 4 more years. I want this country to be safer and stronger and better, and working together, we can make it that way.

I also came here to ask for your help. I want you to feel so inspired to put up the signs and knock on your neighbors' doors and go to community centers and your houses of worship and encourage people to vote. Tell them to go to the polls, and tell them when you're—when you're telling them how to vote or suggesting to them how to vote—[*laughter*]—remind

them that we have a positive vision, an optimistic vision, a hopeful vision for every single American who lives in this country.

If you can't figure out what else to say, tell them they need to put me back in so that Laura can be the First Lady for 4 more years. I'm really proud of Laura. She's been a fantastic First Lady. She's a great wife and wonderful mom. She is—I'm a really lucky guy—[*laughter*]—and I think the people of America are lucky to have her as the First Lady.

I put together a fantastic team of people to serve this country, people from all walks of life, people from different backgrounds, people like Tommy Thompson of the State of Wisconsin. By the way, Tommy is doing a great job. He's got a tough job, but he's doing a great job. He helped us reform Medicare so we keep the promise to the seniors of America. Tommy—you trained him well here in Wisconsin.

I'm also running with a really fine man. Vice President Dick Cheney is a great Vice President.

I want to thank Dan Kapanke, the—one of the co-owners of the baseball team that plays here. I appreciate you opening up your field. It's nice to be here in "the Lumber Yard." It's a beautiful stadium. You know I'm a baseball fan. I love baseball. It's a perfect setting for us to talk about how to make sure our country is the best it can possibly be. So thanks for opening up "the Lumber Yard" to a bunch of tall timber. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank Congressman Mark Green and Congressman Paul Ryan, two fine Members of the United States House of Representatives.

I know the State treasurer Jack Voight is with us today, and I'm proud that the treasurer has come. I appreciate Mary Panzer and John Gard, two members of the statehouse who have joined us today, the leader in the senate and the speaker. And I want to thank all the members of the statehouse who are here. I particularly want to thank State Senator Dale Schultz, the next Congressman from this district.

We've even got them coming in from Milwaukee today. Scott Walker, who is the Milwaukee County Executive, has joined us. And I'm proud that Scott is here. Thank you for coming, Scott.

And I want to thank Rick Graber, the party chairman for the State.

I want to thank all the grassroots activists who are here, people who do the hard work at turning out the vote.

I appreciate my friend Larry Gatlin, who is here today. Larry is a great friend of Laura of me. Have you sung yet? Good. Gatlin and I both grew up in west Texas, so when he sees trees and water, he's somewhat taken aback. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank all the military personnel who are with us today. Thank you for serving this country.

Audience members. U.S.A.! U.S.A.! U.S.A.!

The President. When you're out rounding up the vote, remind the people that you talk to that this administration and our country has faced serious challenges in the last 3 years, and we have given serious answers. We came to office with a stock market in decline and an economy headed into a recession, but we acted. We delivered historic tax relief, and now our economy is the fastest growing of any major industrialized nation.

We uncovered corporate crimes that cost people their jobs and their savings. We passed strong corporate reforms. Wrongdoers are being brought to account. And we have made it clear we will not tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America.

We saw war and grief arrive on a quiet September morning. We pursued the terrorist enemy across the world. We've captured or killed many key leaders of the Al Qaida network. And the rest will learn this about America: There is no cave or hole deep enough to hide from American justice.

When Dick Cheney and I came to Washington, we found a military that was underfunded and underappreciated, so we gave our military the resources and respect they deserve. And today, no one can question the skill and the strength and the spirit of the United States military.

We confronted the dangers of state-sponsored terror and the spread of weapons of mass destruction, so we ended two of the most violent and dangerous regimes on Earth. We have liberated over 50 million people. Once again, America is proud to stand against tyranny and to set nations free.

It is the President's job to confront problems, not to pass them on to future Presidents and future generations. The President needs to speak clearly, mean what he says, to step up and make the hard decisions. And that is how I will continue to lead our country. Great events will turn on this election. The man who sits in the Oval Office will set the course of the war on terror and the direction of our economy. The security and prosperity of America are at stake.

We've got a tough race ahead of us, and that's why I'm glad so many came out. That's why I'm glad you gave me a chance to ask for your help. It's going to be a hard campaign, and I'm looking forward to it. I'm looking forward to the challenge. I'm looking forward to the opportunity to do what we have done today and explain to the American people why I'm running and what I intend to do. Yes, we've done a lot in the past, but there is more to do to make this country a better place and a safer place and a stronger place.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. We should not take my opponent lightly. He is an experienced United States Senator. He has built up quite a record. In fact, he's been in Washington long enough to take both sides on just about every issue. [*Laughter*] He voted for the PATRIOT Act, for NAFTA, for No Child Left Behind, and for the use of force of Iraq. Now he opposes the PATRIOT Act, NAFTA, No Child Left Behind, and the liberation of Iraq. His positions on these issues remind me of a saying we have in Texas: If you don't like the weather, just wait a few minutes and it will change.

Now, we're both going to spend a lot of time in this State. I've been here today picking up the endorsements of the hard-working people of Wisconsin. I've been here—out there talking to as many people as I can to let them know I have a desire to serve this country for 4 more years. As you might remember, he claims to have picked up some important endorsements among foreign leaders. The problem is, he won't give us their names. [*Laughter*]

Now, he did say the other day on national TV, "What I said is true. I mean, you can go to New York City, and you can be in a restaurant, and you can meet a foreign leader." [*Laughter*] I think this whole thing is a case of mistaken identity. [*Laughter*] I mean, just because somebody has an accent and a suit and a nice table at a New York restaurant doesn't make him a foreign leader.

But no matter who these mystery people are, they're not going to decide the election. The American people will be deciding this election, and there will be a clear choice—a clear choice, the choice between keeping the tax relief that is moving this economy forward or putting the burden of higher taxes back on the American people. It is a choice between an America that leads the world with strength and confidence or an America that is uncertain in the face of danger.

The other side hasn't offered much in the way of strategies and plans to win the war on terror or to expand prosperity throughout our country. As a matter of fact, all we hear is bitterness and old partisan anger. But they're going to find out right quick that anger is not an agenda for the future of America. I look forward to taking on the big issues, the issues that matter,

with optimism and resolve and determination. And I will make it clear that I stand ready to lead this country for 4 more years.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. A big issue for every family in America is the Federal tax burden. With the largest tax relief since Ronald Reagan was the President, we have left more money in the hands that earned it. By spending and investing and to—helping to create new jobs, the American people have used their money far better than the Federal Government would have.

This economy of ours is strong, and it is getting stronger. The economy grew at a rate of 4.2 percent in the first quarter. Economic growth over the past three quarters has been the fastest in nearly two decades. Manufacturing activity is increasing. Business investment is rising. Disposable income is up. Inflation is low. Mortgage rates are low. Homeownership rate amongst Americans is the highest ever. This farm economy is strong. America has had 4 straight years of rising exports. Last year, we had the highest farm income on record.

This morning, we got some more good news. Last month, America added 288,000 new jobs. Our people are going back to work. We've added 1.1 million jobs since last August. The unemployment rate in this State is 5.1 percent, down from 5.8 percent last summer. The tax relief we passed is working.

There is a difference of opinion about tax relief in this campaign. When you're out garnering the vote, remind people about the stands that I have taken and the stands my opponent has taken. See, on every one of the tax relief plans we passed the last 3 years, he voted against them. He voted against increasing the child credit, for reducing the marriage penalty, for creating a 10-percent lower bracket, for business investment breaks to small businesses.

And also remind them that when it comes to tax increases, it's been a lot easier to get a yes vote out of him. These are the facts. Since he's been representing the people of Massachusetts, he voted for taxes 350 times. He's not afraid to raise the taxes on the people. And that matters because, in a campaign, the tendency is for people to make promises. We're counting up the promises. He has so far promised $1.9 trillion of spending, and we're just getting started. And there's 6 months more to go. [*Laughter*]

And the question you've got to ask of the Senator is, "How are you going to pay for it?" He said, "by taxing the rich." But the problem is, you can't raise enough money by taxing the rich to pay for $1.9 trillion of new money. So he has a tax gap, and given his record, you know who's going to have to pay that tax gap. That's you, but we're not going to let him have the chance to do so.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. Raising taxes on the American people would wreck this economic growth and destroy job creation. No, what we need to do is to make sure this administration stays in office so we can keep taxes low and not raise taxes on the hard-working people of this country.

And there's more we've got to do. I'll continue to bring fiscal discipline to Washington, DC, by reminding the people over there whose money they spend. In Washington, we don't spend the Government's money. We spend your money, and we have an obligation to be wise about how we spend your money.

In order to make sure this economy continues to grow, we need an energy policy in America. We need a policy that encourages conservation. But we need a policy, also, that encourages alternative sources of energy. We ought to be using more corn and soybean to produce ethanol and biodiesel. We need clean coal technology. We ought to be spreading safe nuclear power. We ought to be exploring for natural gas in environmentally friendly ways. We need

an energy policy to become less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

We need association health care plans and tax-free health savings accounts to help control the cost of medicine so people will be able to find work. We need medical liability reform in Washington, DC, so that the frivolous lawsuits don't keep running up the cost of medicine and driving docs out of business.

We need to be confident when it comes to trade policy. Listen, other Presidents before me have opened up U.S. markets for the good of consumers. When you get more products coming into America, consumers get better choices at better prices and better quality. What we need to do is reject economic isolationism and say to other nations, "Treat us the way we treat you. Open up your markets." Create a level playing field for America's workers and farmers and manufacturers, and we can compete with anybody, anyplace, anywhere on the face of the Earth.

No, I'm running because I want to make sure this economic growth continues. I'm running to make sure America is the greatest economy on the face of the Earth. I'm running because I want our people with good, solid jobs. I'm running to promote a pro-entrepreneur, pro-small-business, pro-growth economic agenda.

America—our future, the future of this country also depends on our leadership in the world. The momentum of freedom in our time is strong, but we still face serious dangers. We're still at war. Al Qaida is wounded but not broken. Terrorists are testing our will in Afghanistan and Iraq. Regimes in North Korea and Iran are challenging the peace. If America shows weakness and uncertainty in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This will not happen on my watch.

This Nation is strong and confident in the cause of freedom. And today, nobody, no one, friend or enemy, doubts the word of the United States of America. America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Afghanistan. The Taliban chose defiance, and the Taliban are no longer in power. America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Iraq. The dictator chose defiance, and today, the dictator sits in a prison cell.

September the 11th, 2001, taught a lesson I will never forget and the country must never forget. America must confront threats before they fully materialize. In Iraq, my administration looked at the intelligence, and we saw a threat. I want to remind you that the United States Congress looked at the intelligence, and they saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence, and it saw a threat.

In 2002, the U.N. Security Council yet again demanded a full accounting of Saddam Hussein's weapons programs, and the reason why they did, again—because they remembered the history. Not only did they see a threat, they remembered the actions he had taken. He had attacked countries in his neighborhood. He had used weapons of mass destruction against people in other countries as well as people in his own country. He had ties to terrorism. He paid suiciders to go in and kill innocent Israelis. No, we remembered the nature of the man. Saddam Hussein, as he had for over a decade, refused to comply with the demands of the free world. And so I had a choice to make: Either trust the word of a madman, or defend America. And given that choice, I will defend America every time.

My opponent admits that Saddam Hussein was a threat. He just didn't support my decision to remove Saddam from power. Maybe he was hoping Saddam would lose the next Iraqi election. [*Laughter*] We showed the dictator and a watching world that America means what it says. And that's really important to keep the peace. Because our coalition acted, Saddam's torture chambers are closed. Because we acted, Iraq's weapons programs are ended forever. Because we acted, nations like Libya have gotten the message and have

voluntarily disarmed. Because we acted, an example of democracy is rising in the heart of the Middle East. Because we acted, the world is more free. Because we acted, America is more secure.

It's been tough days in Iraq for the American people, especially those families with soldiers overseas and those families of a loved one who has sacrificed for our freedom and security—tough work. And there's a reason why. There are foreign fighters and remnants of the old tyrant who can't stand the thought of freedom taking hold in Iraq. That's what we're seeing. Freedom scares terrorists. Freedom scares people who hate. Freedom scares people with no conscience.

What they're trying to do is they're trying to shake our will. They want us to leave. They want us to show weakness. They do not understand America, and they do not understand this President. No thug or assassin will intimidate America. We will finish the work that we have begun, for our own security. We will finish the work we have begun, for peace and freedom. Free societies do not attack their neighbors. Free societies do not breed hate. Free societies provide hope, so that moms and dads can raise their children in a peaceful world, so their children can aspire what we want our children to aspire to, a good education and a hopeful life.

No, these are historic times. These are times that require strong will and strong determination. These are times in which we could literally change the world by the spread of freedom. Freedom is not America's gift to the world; freedom is the Almighty God's gift to each man and woman in this world. We will finish what we have begun, and we will win this essential victory in the war on terror.

On national security, Americans have the clearest possible choice. My opponent says he approves of bold action in the world but only if other countries do not object. Now, I'm for working with other countries. I've put together coalitions to fight the war on terror—the coalition in Afghanistan. There's over 30 nations working with us in Iraq right now, because they understand what I understand: A free Iraq will make the world more secure; a free Iraq will change the Middle East for the better. But let me tell you this as clearly as I can. I will never turn over America's national security decisions to leaders of other countries.

And we have a difference of opinion about whether the war on terror is really a war at all. My opponent says the war on terror is far less of a military operation and far more of an intelligence-gathering, law enforcement operation. I disagree—I disagree. Our Nation followed this approach after the World Trade Center was bombed in 1993. The matter was handled in the courts and thought by some to be settled, but the terrorists were still training in Afghanistan. They were still plotting in other nations. They were still drawing up more ambitious plans.

After the carnage and chaos of September the 11th, it is not enough to serve our enemies with legal papers. With those attacks, the terrorists and their supporters declared war on the United States of America, and war is what they got.

And winning the war on terror requires that we use all our assets, including a fantastic military. And as we use that military, our troops must be given the best equipment in the world. That is why I went to Congress and asked for an $87 billion appropriation last fall to help our troops. I want to thank the two Congressmen for supporting that supplemental. But my opponent chose to vote no, and here's what he said. He said, "I actually did vote for the 87 billion, before I voted against it." [*Laughter*]

The American President must speak clearly. The American President must mean what he says. And when I say the troops will get the support they need, I mean that the troops will get the support they need to win this war on terror.

Our men and women in the military are taking great risks, and they're doing great work. Like you, I was disgusted about the pictures I saw on TV, about the humiliation given to the prisoners in Iraq. No American can stand for that. That doesn't reflect us, nor does it reflect the character and the decency and the honor of the men and women who wear the uniform of the United States of America. I have seen their decency, and I have seen their unselfish courage. And I assure you, ladies and gentlemen, the cause of freedom is in really good hands.

This Nation is prosperous and strong. Yet, we need to remember that our greatest strength is in the hearts and souls of our fellow citizens. We're strong because of the values we try to live by, courage and compassion, reverence and integrity. We're strong because of the institutions that help give us direction and purpose, families and schools and our religious congregations. These values and institutions are fundamental to our lives, and they deserve the respect of the Government.

We stand for the fair treatment of faith-based groups, so they can receive Federal support for their works of compassion and healing. We will not stand for Government discrimination against people of faith.

We stand for welfare reforms that require work and strengthen marriage, which have helped millions of Americans find independence and dignity. We will not stand for any attempt to weaken those reforms and to send people back into lives of dependence.

We stand for a culture of life in which every person counts and every person matters. We will not stand for the treatment of any life as a commodity to be experimented upon or exploited or cloned.

We stand for the confirmation of judges who strictly and faithfully interpret the law. We will not stand for judges who undermine democracy by legislating from the bench or judges who try to remake the values of America by court order.

We stand for a culture of responsibility in America. The culture of this country is changing from one that has said "If it feels good, just go ahead and do it," and, "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each of us understands we are responsible for the decisions we make in life.

If you're a mom or a dad—if you're lucky enough to be a mom or a dad, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart. If you're worried about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you're responsible for doing something about it. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you are responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And in this new responsibility society, each of us—each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourself.

For all Americans, these years in our history will always stand apart. There are quiet times in the life of a nation when little is expected of its leaders. This isn't one of those times. You and I are living in a period when the stakes are high, the challenges are difficult, a time when firm, firm resolve is needed.

None of us will ever forget that week when one era ended and another began. On September the 14th, 2001, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers. I'll never forget that day. There were policemen and firefighters shouting, "Whatever it takes, Mr. President. Whatever it takes." A guy in a hardhat pointed at me and said, "Do not let me down." As we all did that day, these men and women searching through the rubble took it personally. I took it personally. I have a responsibility that goes on. I will never relent in bringing justice to our enemies. I will defend the security of America, whatever it takes.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. In these times, I've also been witness to the character of this Nation. Not so long ago, some had their

doubts about the American character, our capacity to meet a serious challenge or a willingness to serve a cause greater than self-interest. Americans have given their answer. I have seen the unselfish courage of our troops. I have seen the heroism of Americans in the face of danger. I've seen the spirit of service and love and compassion renewed in our country. And we've all seen our Nation unite in common purpose when it mattered most.

We will need all of these qualities for the work ahead. See, we've got work to do. We've got a job. We must win the war on terror, and the world is counting on America to continue to lead the cause of freedom and peace.

We have work to do. We must spread opportunity to every part of the country. We must work together over the next 4 years to make America a safer place, a stronger place, and a better place for every citizen.

This is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it, and we know that for our great country, the best days lie ahead.

May God bless you all, and may God continue to bless our country. Thank you for coming. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:25 p.m. at Copeland Park. In his remarks, he referred to Dan Kapanke, owner, Lacrosse Loggers baseball team and candidate for Wisconsin State Senate; State Senator Mary Panzer and State Representative John Gard of Wisconsin; country music entertainer Larry Gatlin; Dale W. Schultz, candidate for Congress in Wisconsin's Third Congressional District; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

The President's Radio Address
May 8, 2004

Good morning. In recent days, America and the world have learned of shocking conduct in Iraqi prisons by a small number of American service men and women. These individuals had been given the responsibility of overseeing Iraqis in American custody and doing so in a decent and humane manner consistent with U.S. law and the Geneva Conventions. Instead we have seen shameful images of prisoners being subjected to abuse and humiliation. Such practices do not reflect our values. They are a stain on our country's honor and reputation.

Shortly after reports of abuse became known to our military, an investigation was launched. Today, several formal investigations, led by senior military officials, are underway. Some soldiers have already been charged with crimes. We will learn all the facts and determine the full extent of these abuses. Those involved will be identified. They will answer for their actions. All prison operations in Iraq will be thoroughly reviewed to make certain that similar disgraceful incidents are never repeated.

What took place in that Iraqi prison was the wrongdoing of a few and does not reflect the character of the more than 200,000 military personnel who have served in Iraq since the beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom. America is a compassionate country that believes in justice and in freedom. Americans believe in the worth and rights and dignity of every person.

Our country has sent troops into Iraq to liberate that country, return sovereignty to the Iraqi people, and make America and the world more secure. In this cause, our troops perform a thousand acts of kindness, decency, and courage every day. More than 700 Americans have given their lives. The

brave and honorable soldiers, sailors, airmen, coast guardsmen, and marines who are serving and sacrificing in Iraq, not the few who have let us down, show the true character of America. The men and women of our military have my complete confidence as they carry on with their mission.

This has been a difficult few weeks. Yet our forces will stay on the offensive, finding and confronting the killers and terrorists who are trying to undermine the progress of democracy in Iraq. To address the violence in Fallujah, our marines are working with Iraqis to conduct operations in and around the city. They are using targeted force to strike former Ba'athists and other militants, surrounding the city to prevent the escape of enemy fighters, and taking every precaution to avoid hurting the innocent.

In the city of Najaf, an illegal militia is attempting to incite violence and seize control. The 1st Armored Division is steadily and systematically defeating these enemy forces while seeking to protect the people and the holy sites of that city. Elements of this militia have been ejected from the Najaf Governor's office, which they had been occupying.

The vast majority of Iraqi people want a free society, and next month they will take another historic step forward when they regain sovereignty. On June 30th, a sovereign Iraqi interim government will assume authority, and Iraqis will take over the functions of their state, from basic services to law enforcement to diplomacy. On that day, the Coalition Provisional Authority will cease to exist, and relations with a new Iraqi Government will be conducted through our new embassy.

Our mission in Iraq will continue on July 1st and beyond. We have no intention of leaving that nation at the mercy of thugs and murderers. We're determined to help build a free and stable Iraq, a nation at peace with its neighbors and with the world.

Our Nation is grateful to the men and women of our military and to their families who face hardship and long separation. Our people in uniform are the best of America.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:24 a.m. on May 7 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on May 8. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 7 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks at a Ceremony Honoring the Millennium Challenge Account Nations

May 10, 2004

Thank you all for coming. Please be seated. Welcome. Thanks for coming to the White House.

Two years ago, I announced a new and hopeful approach in America's aid to developing nations. Under this approach, America has pledged to increase development assistance by 50 percent over 3 years. To make sure that governments make the right choices for their people, we link new aid to clear standards of economic, political, and social reform. We invited governments in developing nations to meet those standards so that they may truly serve their people.

America formed the Millennium Challenge Corporation to oversee this new program. Last week, the first group of

Millennium Challenge Account nations was selected. I congratulate representatives with us today from Armenia, Benin, Bolivia, Cape Verde, Georgia, Ghana, Honduras, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mali, Mongolia, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Senegal, Sri Lanka, and Vanuatu. You have chosen the path of reform, and your people and your nations are better off as a result of the decisions your Governments have made.

I want to thank the Secretary of State for leading this effort. He is the chairman of the board of the new Corporation. I appreciate other board members who are with us: Secretary John Snow, the Secretary of the Treasury; Ambassador Bob Zoellick, the United States Trade Representative; Andrew Natsios, the Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development; and Paul Applegarth, who is the CEO of the Millennium Challenge Corporation.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for taking on this important assignment.

I want to welcome the ambassadors and representatives from the 16 Millennium Challenge Account nations. We are glad you're here. Congratulations.

I want to thank the Members of Congress who are here. Two members have come today, one from the Senate and one from the House, who have been very instrumental in making sure the Millennium Challenge Account passed through both bodies. First, Senator Dick Lugar, who is the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Mr. Chairman, Senator Lugar is a clear visionary when it comes to U.S. aid. I appreciate you being here, Senator. Thank you for coming—as well as Congressman Tom Lantos, the ranking member. I see you brought Annette with you. Thank you for doing so. We're proud you both are here. Congressman Lantos, do me a favor. When you see Jim Kolbe, who is not with us today, thank him for working so hard to make sure that the House appropriations process honored our request for the Millennium Challenge Account. But at any rate, I'm glad you're here. You guys are great leaders for—to help America spread our vision of freedom and peace and decency for every human being.

In many nations, poverty remains chronic and desperate. Half the world's people still live on less than $2 a day. This divide between wealth and poverty, between opportunity and misery, is far more than a challenge to our compassion. Persistent poverty and oppression can spread despair across an entire nation, and they can turn nations of great potential into the recruiting grounds of terrorists. The powerful combination of trade and open markets and good government is history's proven method to defeat poverty on a large scale, to vastly improve health and education, to build a modern infrastructure while safeguarding the environment, and to spread the habits of liberty and enterprise.

The Millennium Challenge Account encourages all nations to embrace political and economic reform. The United States has pledged to increase its core development assistance by half, adding $5 billion annually by 2006. To be eligible for this new money, nations must root out corruption, respect human rights, and adhere to the rule of law. They must invest in their people by improving their health care systems and their schools. They must unleash the energy and creativity necessary for economic growth by opening up their markets, removing barriers to entrepreneurship, and reducing excessive bureaucracy and regulation.

The 16 nations represented here today have done all this and more. Each has worked hard to be here today, and their efforts are already yielding results. For example, Madagascar is aggressively fighting corruption. The Ministry of Justice has suspended a dozen magistrates on suspicion of corrupt activity. The Government is also implementing an ambitious program of judicial reform. Senegal, Africa's longest standing democracy, has also enacted new anticorruption laws, and is implementing

new measures to fight money-laundering. Honduras has made the improvement of education and health services a top priority. Its immunization rate of 96 percent is among the highest of all eligible countries.

The new Government of Georgia has doubled its investment in health care and raised teacher salaries by two-thirds. Mozambique has curbed Government spending and lowered tariffs. These and other reforms have resulted in double-digit growth rates over the last decade. Since launching its program of economic reform in 2002, Sri Lanka has reduced its budget deficit by a third and cut inflation by half. Other nations represented here can point with pride to similar examples of progress.

Yet funding is not guaranteed for any selected country. To be awarded a grant, nations must develop proposals explaining how they will further address the needs of their people and increase economic growth, proposals that set clear goals and measurable benchmarks.

The countries selected today represent a small fraction of those struggling to emerge from poverty and establish reform. I urge all nations of the world to follow the progressive standards of governing justly, investing in people, and encouraging economic freedom.

Reform can bring more aid from America, and it will also bring more investment and more trade, lessening the need for aid over time. Reform will be repaid many times over in the relief of poverty and rising national wealth and stability for their countries.

The 16 chosen in this round are showing the way, are showing what is possible, are serving as a bright light in the developing world. You have taken the first courageous steps toward greater independence and greater wealth and greater hopes for the people you serve.

I want to thank you all for being here. I congratulate you on your work. And may God bless your countries and the people in the countries. Thank you for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:35 a.m. in the East Room at the White House.

Remarks Following a Meeting With the National Security Team and Military Leaders in Arlington, Virginia
May 10, 2004

Mr. Secretary, thank you for your hospitality, and thank you for your leadership. You are courageously leading our Nation in the war against terror. You're doing a superb job. You are a strong Secretary of Defense, and our Nation owes you a debt of gratitude.

I've just completed a meeting here at the Pentagon with members of my national security team as well as a meeting with generals on the ground in Iraq. We discussed the needs of our military personnel, the status of current operations in Iraq, and the progress of that nation towards security and sovereignty.

The United States has a vital national interest in the success of free institutions in Iraq as the alternative to tyranny and terrorist violence in the Middle East. As we carry out this mission, we are confronting problems squarely, and we are making changes as needed.

Our priorities, however, remain the same, the protection of our country, the security of our troops, and the spread of freedom throughout the world. Like other generations of Americans, we have accepted a difficult and historic task.

We have made clear commitments before the world, and America will keep those

commitments. First, we will take every necessary measure to assure the safety of American and coalition personnel and the security of Iraqi citizens. We're on the offensive against the killers and terrorists in that country, and we will stay on the offensive. In and around Fallujah, U.S. marines are maintaining pressure on Saddam loyalists and foreign fighters and other militants. We're keeping that pressure on to ensure that Fallujah ceases to be an enemy sanctuary. In northern sectors of the city, elements of the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force are prepared to strike at terrorist fighters and prevent a resurgence of violence and chaos. South of the city, the marines are disrupting enemy attacks on our supply routes and routing out anticoalition fighters.

In the towns of Ramadi and Husabayah and Karmah, marines are on the offensive, conducting hundreds of patrols and raids every day. The enemy in Fallujah is hiding behind an innocent civilian population and calculating that our coalition's use of force will alienate ordinary Iraqis. Yet, every day our troops are responding with precision and discipline and restraint. We're taking every precaution to avoid hurting the innocent as we deliver justice to the guilty.

We're helping to build Iraqi forces that can take responsibility for security, and our forces are also helping to ensure the delivery of humanitarian supplies to families that suffer as a result of the chaos in certain communities created by the terrorists and those who want to halt the advance of freedom. In Najaf, a major Shi'a population center and a holy site, our military is systematically dismantling an illegal militia that has attempted to incite violence and seize control. Soldiers from the 2d Light Cavalry Regiment are conducting reconnaissance to learn the precise strength and location of enemy forces. The 1st Armored Division is steadily defeating these enemy forces while seeking to protect the people and holy sites of that city.

Elements of this militia have been ejected from the Najaf Governor's office, and a legitimate Governor has been appointed. The people of Najaf and Shi'a leaders oppose the occupation by this illegal militia and are putting pressure on the militia to withdraw. We're encouraged to see more Iraqis take responsibility for resolving the standoff in Najaf.

In all these ongoing operations, our troops continue to face serious danger, and this Government is giving them every means of protecting themselves and every means necessary to gain victory. We're fielding the most technologically advanced military forces ever assembled, forces that are agile and flexible, able to strike in darkness and in light.

Supplying and protecting our forces in Iraq is a long-term responsibility, so I've asked Congress to provide an additional $25 billion for a contingency reserve fund that can be used for ongoing operations in Iraq. I have pledged, as has the Secretary of Defense, to give our troops everything that is necessary to complete their mission with the utmost safety, and I urge Congress to join me in fulfilling this important commitment.

Our military, from this building to the streets of Fallujah, is performing with exceptional skill and courage. They and their families are making tremendous sacrifices for the security of our Nation and for the freedom of others. And all the hardships and sacrifices are not behind us. Our Nation is caring for the wounded and grieving for the lost, praying for families who live in sorrow. We will always remember the ones who have died, and we will honor their sacrifice by completing the mission.

Our second great commitment in Iraq is to transfer sovereignty to an Iraqi Government as quickly as possible. Decades of oppression destroyed every free institution in Iraq but not the desire to live in freedom. Like any proud country, the Iraqi people want their independence. The Iraqi people need to know that our coalition is

fully committed to their independence and we're fully committed to their national dignity. This is a reason the June 30th transfer of sovereignty is vital. The Iraqi people and men and women across the Middle East are watching closely, and they will see America keep its word.

The United Nations special envoy, Mr. Brahimi, is now back in Iraq, consulting with diverse groups of Iraqis. In the next few weeks, important decisions will be made on the makeup of the interim government. As of June 30th, Iraq's interim government will assume duties now performed by the coalition such as providing water and electricity and health care and education.

A key strategic goal of our coalition is to help build a new Iraqi army and civil defense corps and police force and facilities protection service and a border guard capable of defending and securing the country. Major General Dave Petraeus, who commanded the 101st Airborne in Iraq, has returned to oversee the training and equipping of these all-Iraqi forces. Once constituted, they will protect a free Iraq from external aggression and internal subversion. Yet, the vital mission of our military in helping to provide security will continue on July 1st and beyond. Having brought freedom to Iraq, America will make sure that freedom succeeds in Iraq, a nation we will be proud to call a friend and partner in the pursuit of peace.

Third, because America is committed to the equality and dignity of all people, there will be a full accounting for the cruel and disgraceful abuse of Iraqi detainees. The conduct that has come to light is an insult to the Iraqi people and an affront to the most basic standards of morality and decency. One basic difference between democracies and dictatorships is that free countries confront such abuses openly and directly.

In January, shortly after reports of abuse became known to our military, an investigation was launched. Today, several formal investigations led by senior military officials are underway. Secretary Rumsfeld has appointed several former senior officials to review the investigations of these abuses. Some soldiers have already been charged, and those involved will answer for their conduct in an orderly and transparent process. We will honor rule of law. All prison operations in Iraq will be thoroughly reviewed to make certain that such offenses are not repeated.

Those responsible for these abuses have caused harm that goes well beyond the walls of a prison. It has given some an excuse to question our cause and to cast doubt on our motives. Yet, who can doubt that Iraq is better for being free from one of the most bloodiest tyrants the world has ever known? Millions of Iraqis are grateful for the chance they have been given to live in freedom, a chance made possible by the courage and sacrifice of the United States military.

We have great respect for the people of Iraq and for all Arab peoples, respect for their culture and for their history and for the contribution they can make to the world. We believe that democracy will allow these gifts to flourish, that freedom is the answer to hopelessness and terror, that a free Iraq will lead the way to a new and better Middle East, and that a free Iraq will make our country more secure.

I understand the difficulty of the mission of our men and women in uniform. They're facing an enemy in sand and heat and blasting winds, often unable to tell friend from foe. I know how painful it is to see a small number dishonor the honorable cause in which so many are sacrificing. What took place in the Iraqi prison does not reflect the character of the more than 200,000 military personnel who have served in Iraq since the beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

All Americans know the goodness and the character of the United States Armed Forces. No military in the history of the

world has fought so hard and so often for the freedom of others. Today, our soldiers and sailors and airmen and marines are keeping terrorists across the world on the run. They're helping the people of Afghanistan and Iraq build democratic societies. They're defending America with unselfish courage. And these achievements have brought pride and credit to this Nation.

I want our men and women in uniform to know that America is proud of you and that I'm honored to be your Commander in Chief.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:55 a.m. at the Pentagon. In his remarks, he referred to former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; Adnan al-Zurufi, Governor of the Najaf province in Iraq; Lakhdar Brahimi, Special Adviser to the U.N. Secretary-General; and Maj. Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, incoming chief, Office of Security Transitions—Iraq.

Interview With the American Forces Radio and Television Service
May 10, 2004

Pentagon Meeting

Q. Thanks for doing this, sir. Let's start with why you're at the Pentagon. You just met with your national security team and some top military officials, and you talked about the progress we've made in Iraq. Can you outline that for me, please?

The President. Sure. First, we got rid of Saddam Hussein. That in itself was tremendous progress for the people of Iraq. He was a tyrant. We discovered mass graves, torture rooms. I mean, this is a fellow who, you know, if you didn't agree with him politically, your life was in jeopardy. And as a result of getting rid of Saddam Hussein, the people of Iraq now have a chance to live in freedom.

Secondly, we have been on the offense against foreign fighters and former Saddam loyalists and the illegal militias that really are doing everything they can to stop freedom. These people can't stand the thought of a free society. A free society will be a defeat to their ideologies or way of thinking or their desires. And our military has performed brilliantly, and I got a briefing on the progress being made around parts of Iraq.

Thirdly, we're making progress in heading toward a transfer date of sovereignty. What that means is that at some point in time—not "some point"—on June 30th, a new Government will be stood up and they will be, then, responsible for making decisions that will benefit the Iraqi people. Of course, we will stay to help make sure the security situation will then be such that then they'll be able to have free elections.

One of the things we got briefed on today from General Abizaid and General Petraeus is that we are continuing to work with the Iraqis to develop a security—Iraqi security force, different elements of a security force, to fight off these terrorists and criminals, for that matter, and people coming into the country illegally—or people trying to blow up infrastructure. And that's been steady. Progress is steady. You've just got to understand, these people have come from a world in which a tyrant really ruled their life. And so they're beginning to develop the habits and the confidence that free people will have.

What's very important—there's two things that are important: One, our troops have got to know we're doing the right thing, and by sacrificing the way they are

in Iraq, they're really making this country more secure and free; and secondly, the Iraqi people must know that I will not back off in the face of these terrorist attacks. I will remain steadfast and strong in the mission, because it's the right thing to do.

President's Reaction to Prisoner Abuse

Q. Let's talk about that mission for just a second. Some things have started to overshadow our mission there, some of the real disturbing photos that we've seen. How do we set that aside and continue what we need to do?

The President. Well, I think there will be a focus here in America on pictures and, you know, what you've seen. And the way you handle that is you just tell the truth, which stands in stark contrast to societies run by tyrants. Look, the world will see that the American people are disgusted by the behavior of a very few people. The troops need to hear from me that I understand that those over there in the Iraqi theater are good, decent, honorable citizens who are not only fighting the bad guys but are making life better for the innocent people of Iraq. And there's thousands of acts of kindness that take place every day, and I know it.

The world will also see that we handled the situation in a way that is open and transparent. In other words, people will be able to see the process and that justice will be done. It is very essential that as we—that as justice is done, that we honor the presumption of innocence and the rule of law. There are certain standards of law that free societies adhere to, but we will get to the bottom of this.

In the meantime, as I mentioned today to some people here in the Pentagon, we stay focused on the mission. We must not be diverted. We will find the truth. We'll make sure the truth comes out, and we'll make sure the system works well. But we must not lose our focus. And I told that to General Abizaid as well. We must stay—we must stay totally focused on what's taking place in Iraq, because a free Iraq is in this Nation's long-term interest.

See, free societies are peaceful societies. And we're in a part of the world right now where there hasn't been much freedom, and as a result, people lose a sense of hope, and they become violent, and they fall prey to false ideologies that then encourage killing of innocent life. And the long-term security of this Nation depends on our ability to stay focused on the mission in Iraq, because a free Iraq will be a major change agent in the Middle East.

Q. Sir, you touched on it a little bit. You and I both know that that's a small part of the military, a very small part, and the rest of us aren't representative of that.

The President. Right.

Q. You're our Commander in Chief. Now is your opportunity to talk to the rest of us. What would you like to say to the rest of us regarding——

The President. Sergeant Lehman, I'll tell you, the actions of a few will not be allowed to stain the honor of the mighty United States military. Not only do I know how hard our troops are fighting in Iraq and how brave our troops are; I also know how decent and compassionate our troops are. I hear stories all the time of people working with orphans or people helping schools be formed or people working to provide medical care for people. I mean, people in Iraq who have interface with our troops, the innocent Iraqis who have, know how decent and compassionate these folks are.

We've sent the finest from our country overseas, and I want our troops to know that. And the American people know that; that's what's important. Our troops need to know the American people stand squarely behind them.

Military Appreciation Month

Q. May is Military Appreciation Month. What can the United States and its citizens do to help show our troops their appreciation?

The President. Make sure your pay is good; make sure that the base housing works well; make sure that when a troop gets wounded overseas, that they get the best care at Walter Reed or Bethesda in a quick period of time; make sure you get the best equipment possible; make sure that there's a firm financial commitment behind the men and women who wear our uniform; as well as to thank a member or the military. In my State of the Union, I read a letter from a little girl that I thought was a very touching letter, where she was writing about the need to thank somebody in uniform. Well, that's what Americans can do.

I'm telling you, I've been out there. I get out of Washington, and I see the people, and I hear the—in every speech I give I praise the United States military—speeches I've been giving recently, like last week, I praised the United States military for courage and strength and sacrifice. And the response is overwhelming. The American people believe in our military personnel, and our troops need to know that.

President's Visits With Troops

Q. When you've gotten out, you've had a chance to visit some of our forward-deployed troops. You've been to Walter Reed——

The President. Right.

Q. ——and you've visited some of those who have come back. What strikes you about the military members that you talk to?

The President. I think that—a couple of things. One, the wounded want to get back in their unit, which is remarkable to hear. You walk in, a fellow has been—I remember going to Fort Hood over Easter. And Laura and I went in a fellow's room, and they had been in a fight in Sadr City. And he said, "Look, I just want to get out of here and get back to my unit."

I meet people who understand the mission and who believe that what we're doing is the right thing, because they see on the ground the realities on the ground, and they see progress that is being made. Sure, there's a lot of tough fighting, but in parts of the country, a civil society is beginning to grow and develop.

I had—one of the most poignant meetings came with a young guy I met who had lost his leg in Afghanistan, and I went in there—part of my mission is to tell him, "We care for you a lot," and just let him know that the Commander in Chief appreciates their sacrifice. And he lost his leg, and I told him, I said, "When you get out of here, you're going to get the best prosthesis possible, and then you're going to come to the White House and run with me." The guy had kind of a glazed look, you know, "Sure, another political promise that won't be met."

And sure enough, he got rehab. I kept checking on him through a colonel I knew who was in charge of physical therapy at Walter Reed, and she one day came in and said, "Well, Mr. President, he's ready to run." I said, "I'm not so sure I am. I hurt my knee." [*Laughter*] Anyway, we go over to the South Lawn of the White House, and he came up from Louisiana, and it was a touching moment for me. It just—it reminded me of how courageous our people are. This kid came out of the bed rehabbed, and he was running with the President—outran me too, I want to tell you.

Message to Military Families

Q. That was my next question. [*Laughter*] It's hard to talk about the sacrifices of military members without talking about their families as well. What would you like to say about that?

The President. Well, obviously the first families that I want to talk about are those who have lost a loved one. I think it's very important for them to know the United States Government, along with our military, will complete the mission. In other words, I've assured people that they will not have died in vain. And the mission is a free

Iraq. A free Iraq is in our Nation's interest because it will help us become more secure. But a free Iraq will also be a part of an historic opportunity to change the world to be more peaceful.

Secondly, I know there's a lot of loved ones who are, obviously, worried. And my message to them is, we're making sure they get everything they need, and that the—we spent time today talking about troop protection. These generals understand the need for troop protection. These are capable guys that are smart, that know what they're doing, and they care as much as anybody cares to make sure our troops have the best and that they're well protected.

Third, my message to the families is, is that there's a lot of people praying for you and for your loved ones. And I hope it sustains them during these lonely moments, to be held up in prayer by fellow citizens. There's a lot of prayer warriors across America who pray daily for the safety of the troops and for the peace of mind for the families.

Q. Do you think that families understand the mission just as much as the military members?

The President. I do—I do. I think they hear from their loved ones. The first mission is to make sure that we never forget the lessons of September the 11th. We're at war. I think most family members understand we're at war. Family members understand their loved one volunteered for the mission. Not one person in combat today that didn't say, "I want to defend my country, voluntarily. I'll go into the theater. If sent, I'll go." And family members understand that.

There's obviously—look, there's apprehension and nervousness. And one of the things that we must do is make, as best as possible, certain the tours of duty so there's not anxiety amongst family members. However, when General Abizaid says he needs to slow down the rotation in order for there to be more troops on the ground, he'll get that from me and from the Secretary of Defense because we support our generals on the ground, which means we support our troops on the ground, so they can have what is necessary to win this—win this war. And we're going to win it, see? That's what people have got to understand. It's tough at times, but we're winning. And what matters is determination and will and steadfast leadership from the United States.

And you know, the Iraqis are sitting there watching this election process of ours. It's an important process, obviously. Democracy is essential, in my judgment, for a peaceful world, and we're the leading democracy on the face of the Earth. But as they watch this, they're wondering whether or not I've got what it takes to stand up to the political pressures and do what I think is right, which is follow through with our strategy to win this war and make sure they're free. They've got to hear this, and our troops must hear this: I don't care what the politics are like in America. We're doing the right thing, and we will—we will finish the task, because I understand how important the task is for the future of this country.

Changing Situation in Iraq

Q. We've talked about the progress toward that task, and things have changed a little bit because they've been making progress on their own, politically, and some of the volatility that has surfaced. How has our mission changed toward that task recently?

The President. Remember, things have changed on the ground too, because we're bringing people to justice. I mean, our troops are successful. They're running raids in different cities when they find people showing up who wants to—who want to stop progress. The people in the military watching this need to know that we're on the offense. And one of the reasons why things have quieted down recently is there's fewer of them to make noise, fewer of the enemy to make noise.

But what is changing is the fact that we're heading toward a moment of transfer of sovereignty. And the Iraqis are going to have to then be responsible, at some point in time, and the transfer of sovereignty is that point in time—that they are going to have to say, "Now is the time to clean up this mess, and oh, by the way, we'd like some help." And up to now, it's been a—they've been very dependent on us. But that is beginning to change. And that's what you're beginning to see, change on the ground. That's why General Petraeus' mission is so important, to be able to provide training for these troops and to make sure there's a command structure so that Iraqi citizens are responding to Iraqi commands and needs.

And we'll have a role, don't get me wrong. I mean, we will be there after the transfer of sovereignty, because there's still going to be need for us to help protect—protect infrastructure, protect these killers [sic]. The other thing that—this is an enemy that is resourceful, and they're cold-blooded. They don't care who they kill. We do. We care a lot about human life, but they don't. And they will destroy women and children in order to create fear. And the presence of our great military will help alleviate any fear that they may try to cause.

Terrorist Attacks

Q. We still hear about terrorist attacks, not only there but other parts of the world. What message do you have for the people who are perhaps still afraid of terrorist attacks?

The President. We're vulnerable, because, again, we're facing an enemy that doesn't mind walking into a subway in Madrid and putting bombs on trains where innocent commuters are sitting. And therefore, so long as they're out there, we're vulnerable. We have to be correct 100 percent of time in protecting America, and they've got to be right one time about hurting us. And so the citizens need to know we're doing everything we can to better share intelligence and safeguard our ports and borders and make sure people take their shoes off when they get on the airplanes and everything we can to secure the country.

But they also need to know, at least in my judgment, the best way to protect the homeland is to stay on the offense, give our military every tool we need, give our intelligence service the tools necessary to find these people and to get them and to stay after them and not relent and not yield.

There's pressures in the world of people—the natural tendency for people is to say, "Oh, let's lay down our arms." But you can't negotiate with these people. There are no negotiations that are to be had. Therapy won't work. The only way to deal with them is to stay on the offense, and that's precisely what the Government will do so long as I am the Commander in Chief, because our most solemn duty and the solemn duty of people who wear the uniform of the United States is to protect the American people from harm. And I can't tell you how much I appreciate the sacrifice of those who are willing to do so.

President's Thanks to the Troops

Q. Please, just, sir, one final word for the military members that you're talking to out there.

The President. My final word is, I'm proud of our United States military, and it is a high honor to be the Commander in Chief of such a fine group of men and women.

Q. Thanks so much for joining us, sir.

The President. You bet.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 12:10 p.m. at the Pentagon for later broadcast. In his remarks, the President referred to former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; Gen. John P. Abizaid, USA, combatant commander, U.S. Central Command; Maj. Gen.

David H. Petraeus, USA, incoming chief, Office of Security Transition—Iraq. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Remarks Honoring the 2004 Super Bowl Champion New England Patriots
May 10, 2004

The President. Thank you all for coming. Please be seated. Welcome back. The mighty New England Pats have returned, just like he told me they would. It's such an honor to welcome the team back here. I'm especially glad to see Tom Brady. I'm trying to figure out what it's like to be around a real celebrity. [*Laughter*]

Bob Kraft is a owner who knows how to win. And congratulations on winning the Super Bowl. What I appreciate is the fact that in the contracts you sign with the players that you include a commitment to participate in at least 10 public service events each year. I appreciate the commitment. I also appreciate the players' commitment as well.

You've got a great head coach, obviously. You can't win Super Bowls 66 percent of the time in a 3-year period unless you've got a great coach. Congratulations.

I want to congratulate all the players who are here. For those of you who weren't here 2 years ago, this is a pretty cool place to come. I want to congratulate the people who work to make a team go well, the trainers and the person—the equipment personnel, the people who never get the—who never get heralded. I understand it's—the players, obviously, are the ones that make it happen, but there are a lot of people behind the scenes that have worked long and hard to support these guys. And I want to congratulate you as well.

I appreciate Sununu, the Senator from New Hampshire. He's a huge fan of the team, as is Ed Markey and Jim McGovern, people from the mighty Massachusetts delegation. We're proud you're here. Thanks for coming. Andy Card, the Chief of Staff here at the White House, is a longtime Patriots fan. He's constantly reminding me how great the Pats are, on a Sunday by Sunday basis. And Andrew Natsios as well is a Pats fan. Obviously, we've got quite a few here. If the Rose Garden were bigger, there would be a lot more people here, I assume. Welcome. I'm glad you're here.

The thing—a couple of things impressed me. One, you never lost a home game. That's really good marketing. [*Laughter*] That's a smart way to do it, to fill up your stadium and have your fans go home happy every game. I watched some of your games. I appreciate the dramatic comebacks that you were capable of making. I like it when a kicker ends up winning the game. You like it when the kicker ends up winning the game. I know Adam is with us today. I am really impressed at how cool you are under fire, and how—like, I need a few suggestions before a press conference, if you don't mind.

I also appreciate so very much the coach. I don't know what it's like in the locker room, but I remember when you were here last year—or 2 years ago—and you said you were going to say a few words and you said like four words. [*Laughter*]

Bill Belichick. I got carried away.

The President. Yes, right. You got carried away. [*Laughter*]

Here's what I like about this team: They had a thousand hours of volunteer service to communities in Massachusetts and New England. That's a lot of hours for people who are spending a lot time practicing and reading playbooks. That is an unbelievably important example for champions to set for others. I know you supported the Boys and

Girls Club and the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, the Massachusetts 9/11 Fund, the R.O.S.E. Fund to end domestic violence. I really want to thank you for that. Listen, it's one thing to be a champ on the field, and obviously, that's what every player strives for. But to be able to be a complete person like you have been is really important, and you set such a good example of what it means to serve something greater than yourself.

I know there's a lot of fans that come to your game. You also know there are fans that are rooting for you who wear the uniform of the United States military—a lot of Pats fans out there who are scattered around the world, doing everything they can to defend us and to protect us. They are cheering in places like Afghanistan and in Iraq and in other countries. It is—I can't tell you how important it is for them to see the action from home, to see the great players performing on the field of play. It's also important for them to know that our players care for them a lot, that they understand that we're grateful for their service and grateful to their families as well for the sacrifices they're making.

We have got some unbelievable troops, fantastic men and women who understand that they're serving something important, and that is security for our country and peace and freedom around the world. And the fact that players are willing to serve their communities reinforces that service of our troops.

So thanks for what you do. Congratulations for getting back here to the Rose Garden. My hope, of course, is that I'm back here again to see you next year. [*Laughter*] Your hope is that you come back.

Welcome back. Congratulations.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:32 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Tom Brady, quarterback, Robert Kraft, chairman and owner, Bill Belichick, head coach, and Adam Vinatieri, kicker, New England Patriots.

Remarks at Butterfield Junior High School in Van Buren, Arkansas
May 11, 2004

Thank you all very much. Thanks for coming. I appreciate it. Go ahead and be seated. Thanks for coming. Todd, thanks for having us. [*Laughter*] That story he told reminds me of the time when I had just got elected Governor of Texas, and a friend of mine said, "Why don't you call old Bascom Bentley on the phone?" He's an east Texas guy, and he said, "Why don't you call Bascom Bentley on the phone and just wish him the best." So I picked up the phone and dialed old Judge Bentley. He's one of these east Texas judges. You probably know the kind I'm talking about here in Arkansas. [*Laughter*] I said, "Judge, this is George W. Bush calling." He said, "Come on, Cliff, quit pulling my leg." [*Laughter*]

So, Todd, I understand how those phone calls can go. [*Laughter*] But we are serious about coming here because Butterfield Junior High is a place of academic achievement. That's why I'm here. It's a place—I'm here to congratulate this school and to hold you up as an example to the country. You're raising the bar. You see, this is a school that expects the best for every student. You're reaching for high standards, and more importantly, you're making progress toward meeting those standards. You're doing your job.

I know the school year ends on May 27th. And I bet some of the students are

kind of looking forward to that date. [*Laughter*] As a matter of fact, I remember the feeling, myself, but summer vacation has got to feel better for you after a year of accomplishment. And this past year, students at Butterfield have accomplished a lot.

Not only am I here to hold up the school and talk about setting high standards and making sure people achieve those standards, I'm here also to thank the teachers and the staff members and the parents, who believe in the potential of every young person and are willing to work hard to make sure every young person achieves that potential.

Not only do we want to thank Todd for being a principal; it turns out that really good schools have got really good principals, people that are smart and capable and who believe the best. But really good principals also have got hard-working staffs, and I know how hard it is to welcome a President. I mean just take a look at those light fixtures—I don't—I'm not sure if that's a permanent part—[*laughter*]—of the gymnasium. But for all those who put on this event and put up with my entourage, I thank you for letting me come by.

I appreciate your Governor showing up. He's a good friend of mine. He's an excellent person—Mike Huckabee is with us today, in case you don't recognize him. [*Laughter*] I'm proud of Mike. He said, "Look, I'm going to set an example by taking care of my own body before I ask others to do the same." He's exercising, and he's eating smart, and his health is a lot better for it.

I appreciate Lieutenant Governor Win Rockefeller joining us as well. Thank you, Governor.

I'm proud to be able to work with a really fine Member of Congress from this district, in John Boozman. Where are you, John? Yes, thank you. Yes, there he is. I know Cathy and Kristen and Lauren are here as well, his wife, Cathy, and two daughters. I'm glad you all are here. The only problem I've got with Boozman is he keeps talking about the Arkansas-Texas game. [*Laughter*] I know it. I shouldn't have brought it up. [*Laughter*]

I appreciate Dr. Merle Dickerson, who is the superintendent of the Van Buren School District. Merle, thank you for your hospitality. Thank you for your leadership. I appreciate so very much—I know the importance of a good school superintendent. See, when it came time to name the Secretary of Education, I picked a superintendent in Rod Paige. He was the superintendent of the Houston Independent School District. I saw him in action in implementing policies that raise standards and encourage the best for every student. So I know the importance of a good superintendent, and I appreciate you, Merle.

Ray Simon is with us today. Where are you, Ray? Oh, there you go—blending in nicely. Ray is the Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education. He's the former director of the Arkansas Department of Education. He works for Rod Paige. In other words, what I'm telling you is we pick good people to staff the Federal offices, people who understand the principles of the No Child Left Behind Act, which I'm about to describe to you.

I appreciate Ken James, the director of the Arkansas Department of Education. Thank you for coming, Ken. Mayor John Riggs is with us. Where are you, Mr. Mayor? Mr. Mayor, I'm glad you're here. People give me advice all the time, so sometimes I like to give people advice. And Mr. Mayor, my only advice to you is, fill the potholes. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank the Junior High Trailblazers for hosting me today. I appreciate the students letting us come on your campus. I hope you don't mind having the classes canceled for a while today. [*Laughter*]

I also met Alyse Eady today. Where are you, Alyse? There she is. Alyse, thanks for coming. Let me tell you about Alyse. She's a sophomore at Southside High, and she

is a tutor at the Boys and Girls Club. The reason I bring up Alyse is because I want to remind everybody here what the strength of this country is.

Now, a lot of people talk about the military being the strength of this country, and I see we've got some fine troops here. Thanks for coming. And the military is an important part of our strength. As a matter of fact, we're counting on the military in theaters overseas to make us more secure. We're counting on brave men and women to help spread freedom in parts of the world that desperately need freedom. We're counting on our military to make America more secure by spreading peace.

And that's what you're seeing right now. On your TV screens, you're seeing tough work, because there are people who can't stand the thought of free societies springing up in the middle—in the midst of hatred and violence in the Middle East. But our troops are making sacrifices for our short-term and long-term security. A peaceful Iraq, a free Iraq, which is going to happen, will make America more secure.

Part of our strength is the military. I intend to keep the military strong. Our men and women are going to have what it needs to keep the peace. Part of a strong America is a prosperous America. That's part of our strength; it's not the strength. It's part of the reason we're strong, and we'll keep our prosperity strong. But the real strength of America is in the hearts and souls of our citizens, and that's important for our country to understand.

No, the true strength of this country happens when people hear the universal call to love a neighbor just like they'd like to be loved themselves. And here is a 10th grader in high school who's heard that call, has taken time out of her life to mentor and tutor children who may not have as much love in their life as she has had because of her mom and dad, Lewis and Lady.

My call to the citizens of this country, whether they be in Fort Smith, Arkansas, or Van Buren, Arkansas, or anywhere else in the country, is to take time out of your life and follow your heart and help somebody who hurts, feed the hungry, provide shelter for the homeless, surround somebody with love who wonders whether or not their future is bright. No, the strength of this country, as witnessed by this young soldier in the army of compassion, is the heart and soul of the American people.

And another part of the strength of America is the fact we've got a lot of teachers who care deeply about the students. The students—it's probably going to take the students a little while to appreciate the teachers. [*Laughter*] But I think when you look back, you're going to find out these people are some of the most important people you'll ever have in your life. And I'm not saying that just because I married a teacher. [*Laughter*] By the way, Laura is doing fabulous. She's a—[*applause*].

The teachers here need to know that our Nation appreciates every man and woman who devotes a lifetime to building knowledge and character of the young people of this country. Teaching is one of the great callings, one of the most noble professions, and America deeply appreciates the service of America's teachers. For those of you who are a teacher at this school, thank you for what you do.

I'm here today to talk about making sure our schools work. A little over 2 years ago, I signed into law an historic, bipartisan act of Congress called the No Child Left Behind Act. And the theory of this law was straightforward, and here's what it said. It said the Federal Government is spending more money on education, but for the first time, we're asking for results. That's a change.

In the past, we used to send checks from Washington—and by the way, Washington should not be primary funder of schools in America. That's up to the States and the local people. But we had targeted money, particularly for poorer students. And we helped to send the checks, and

we just hoped something good happened. That was the old way, "Here's your money, and maybe something positive will happen."

Now we're sending the checks, and we're asking the question, "Are the children learning to read and write and add and subtract?" That's not that tough a question, is it? It seems like it makes sense for taxpayers' money—in return for taxpayers' money, to determine whether or not we're meeting some basic goals. If you don't ask the question, you never find out the answer. If you don't say, "We're sending you more money; now please show us whether or not a child can read"—if you don't ask, you'll never know until it's too late—until it's too late.

As well we better figure out who needs help early, before it's too late. I mean, one of the reasons you ask the question, "Can you read or write and add and subtract," is you want to diagnose early. You can't solve a problem unless you diagnose it. The importance of the No Child Left Behind Act is to find out who needs help.

And so we've left behind an old attitude. See, I think some schools—there was this attitude that certain students can't learn, and so this—"Might as well shuffle them on from grade to grade." It's easy to shuffle the so-called—what they call hard-to-educate students through the system. It's easy to quit on families who might live in inner cities or rural areas. It's easy to quit on kids whose parents don't speak English as a first language. It's easy, but it is not fair. And that's not how we do things in the United States of America.

I believe every child can learn. That's what I believe, and so do the people here at this school. So we've raised the standards for every public school. We're challenging what I call the soft bigotry of low expectations. We're—we require testing in the basics and holding schools accountable for results. An accountability system is how you determine whether or not what you're doing in the classrooms is working.

Under the new law, when children are falling behind, the schools that need the most attention get extra help, extra money so the children can catch up. Let me repeat what I just said. Under the new law, when we discover that children are falling behind, that are not meeting standards, those schools get extra help, extra money to make sure that people are brought up to the standards. Schools will have time to improve. They will be able to use the accountability system to determine if they have the right curricula. Sometimes schools use the wrong curriculum. Sometimes they think this kind of reading program works, when, in fact, it doesn't. And they must have time to adjust, but at some point, there has to be an end to mediocrity.

The attitude in this bill says no child should be trapped in a school that does not teach and will not change. In other words, there is time to change. There is time to change, but if you refuse to change, and somebody is still trapped in the school that is not meeting standards, then something has to happen. Parents need options to help their child. Federal dollars will follow the child.

For example, if a school—a child is trapped in a school for several years that is—that's not meeting standards, the Federal Government will pay for after-school tutoring, and the parent can choose all kind of tutoring options, whether they be public or private. One parent—a parent can send the school—a child to a different public school. In other words, when—there has to be accountability in order for a—I mean, there has to be a consequence in order for an accountability system to work. When schools do not improve year after year, without consequences, we will not see change. That's just a fact of life.

And so the new law says, "You've got time to meet the standards, which we have raised. You've got time to improve." But because there's now consequences, parents will have more say in their child's education, and that's important, because we

want parents to be at the center of the education system in America. We want our parents more involved.

There's no better way to get parents involved than by publishing test results for each school. Think about this. First of all, under the old system, a lot of parents believed their local schools were doing just fine because that's what they were told. "Oh, don't worry, Johnny is doing just fine, and our school is too." But they never measured. And sometimes, that wasn't the case. Now parents don't have to take anybody's word for it. They can see the results themselves. An accountability system says, "We'll measure, but we're going to post the results for everybody to see." If they see excellence, just like at this school, it will give them solid ground to thank the teachers and the principals for doing the job we expect. But if they see failure, like any good parent, they're going to want to know why. "Why can't my school be like Butterfield? What is it about our school that doesn't match the performance of Butterfield Junior High?" In other words, an accountability system, if properly used, will help people achieve a greater standard and will encourage more parental involvement.

Now, let me make sure you understand one thing: I strongly believe in local control of schools. I believe firmly—there is a difference between asking the question about whether or not a child is learning and insisting that teachers and principals are free to teach the way they see fit. Superintendents and school boards are free to make change where they see change is necessary.

The No Child Left Behind Act raises expectations but leaves control where it belongs, at the local level. See, you can't provide people excuses. There's no better excuse than saying, "I would have done it this way, but the Federal Government told me to do it this way." I fully understand that. In order to make sure that there is an accountability system that works, you not only measure, but you then say to people, "It's up to you to chart the path to excellence." You don't want Federal bureaucrats who you've never seen in Crawford County, Arkansas, making the decision for the classrooms in county—Crawford County, Arkansas. You need local control of schools so people who are making those decisions are accountable to the parents and the local citizens.

For more than 2 years, we've been putting the new reforms into action. All 50 States, plus the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, have now drawn up plans to measure performance in every school. Notice—they drew up the plans. See, the State of Arkansas drew up its accountability plans. People in Puerto Rico decided the accountability system to use. This isn't a Federal test. The local people, the State people made the decision as to how to measure, and every State is reporting the information to the parents.

And we're seeing progress. Let me tell you the facts. The test scores for fourth grade math around the Nation went up 9 points between the years 2000 and 2003. See, I'm able to tell you that because we measure. If we hadn't measured, I couldn't tell you that. Eighth graders improved by 5 points in the same period. In other words, math scores are beginning to go up—still too low, but they're heading toward higher standards. Reading scores for fourth graders increased in the vast majority of States that tested between 1998 and 2003, including the State of Arkansas. See, your reading scores are going up here.

I'll never forget the day a woman looked at me—she's an African American friend of mine—and she said, "You've got to understand something, Governor Bush"—at the time—"reading is the new civil right." See, if you can't read, you can't realize the great promise of America. That's why we want every child reading. The good news is the reading scores are going up.

Since 2000, average math scores in Arkansas went up 13 points in fourth grade,

and 9 points in eighth grade. By the way, that's higher than the national average.

Things are happening in the country. When you raise the bar and you hold people to account, it's amazing the results you can get. And that's incredibly positive. Here at Butterfield Junior High, you have every reason to be proud. In 2003, this school met the adequate yearly progress standard expected under No Child Left Behind. In other words, the State put out a set of criterion and measurement standards, and you met it, right here at this school.

Let me tell you what Traci Sellers said. Is Traci here, by the way? Probably not. Traci—I'm about to quote you. [*Laughter*] She's an English teacher. She said, "The No Child Left Behind makes us aware of what we're doing and how we can improve. It encourages us as teachers to go that extra step, so that every child can succeed." I appreciate your attitude. I appreciate your hope.

Think about what she said: "It makes us aware of what we're doing." In other words, are we doing the right thing? Are we meeting expectations? "Am I doing my job?" she says, "and the accountability system helps me understand whether I am or not." She said, "How can I improve?" What a fantastic attitude. Here's a teacher who loves her children, says, "I want to make sure I'm doing the job, and if not, I want to figure out how to do the job better." That's why you have an accountability system. It says—it encourages us. In other words, instead of being discouraged by the system, it encourages.

That's not the way everybody feels in America. There are people that don't like to change, and there are some complaints that I'd like to address today. Let me first by telling you, I think it's easier to make excuses sometimes than needed improvements. That's just human nature, isn't it? But the problem is we don't need people making excuses for educational failures in America. We need change.

When it comes to testing, I've heard every excuse in the book. I bet the Governor has too. See, we put strong accountability measures in when I was the Governor of Texas, and I went around the State explaining it. And then the No Child Left Behind brought an avalanche of complaints as well. Some object to regular testing because they believe schools will just teach the test; that's what you hear. I'm sure you've heard it. Well, think about that for a minute. If a test measures basic knowledge, the basics in math or reading, then teaching the test means you're teaching a child the basic knowledge of reading and math.

In other words, for a child to pass a reading test, you had better understand how to read. And therefore, in order to help the child pass the test, they've got to know how to read in the first place. And the reading accountability systems help people determine whether or not the child has got the basic tools necessary to be a good reader. That's what we're talking about here.

The whole point is this: It is not enough to hope that students are learning. I mean, that's just, to me, an excuse why not to measure. We need to know the ones who are learning and the ones who are not learning. Some believe that the standards of No Child Left Behind are too high. They say that if you raise expectations, all you're doing is setting up children to fail. Yet this law requires students to perform at grade level, which doesn't seem like it's too high a bar to cross.

I mean, we're asking children to read at third grade level if you're in the third grade. Why is that raising expectations too high? I mean, my goodness, that's what society should expect. If you want the kids to learn to read at grade level, then you better insist they learn to read at grade level. That's the standard that is important, and it's the standard that we must hold true to if we want to make sure every child

has a chance to succeed in our great country.

Teachers and parents here today know this when it comes to standards: If you expect nothing from a child, if you expect low—if you have low standards for every child, don't be surprised at what you get. That's a fact of life. When you have high expectations, children have a way of rising to meet those expectations. High standards do not set children on a path to failure; high standards set our children on the path to success.

Other critics say it is unfair to measure the performance of minority groups and unfair to require schools to improve the scores amongst all groups. That's a complaint you hear. These critics say we shouldn't fault a whole school just because some African American or Spanish students are not progressing. They're missing the higher—the people who say that missed the entire purpose of the law, and that is to make sure that no child of any background is left behind, see. That's the purpose of this law.

The reason we measure success and problems group by group—that's what's called disaggregating data. In other words, we want to know—we don't want to look at the school as a whole; we want to look at the people in the school. And that's the difference. We want to look at the data based upon individuals. We want to know student performance. See, you've got to make sure the schools are serving every student. So in other words, when you look at the school as a whole, you don't know whether or not certain children are being left behind. You don't know whether certain children need extra help.

And there's an achievement gap here in America today that we've got to close. There's an achievement gap between the test scores of white and minority students. Nationally, on reading tests, black and Hispanic fourth graders score at least 26 percentage points lower than white students in the same grade. We've got to do something about that. If we want this country to be a hopeful country for every citizen, if we want to make sure every person can realize the American Dream, we've got to close this gap. And what the accountability system—they'll help us close that gap by determining who needs help. No, we want America to be promising for every single child of every background so that not one single child in America is left behind.

Another claim is that under the new law, we're punishing schools that are not making progress. See, sometimes when you change, people are quick to criticize. And one of the complaints is that schools get punished that aren't making progress, but people who make that claim ought to read the law. The truth is, the lowest performing schools are getting extra money to improve. That's what the—that's the truth.

In 2003, we spent $234 million to assist underperforming schools to make sure people aren't left behind. In other words, we said, "Here's a problem, and here's some extra money to help you fix it." In 2004, we'll at least double that amount. In other words, the Federal Government is saying, "Measure, and, oh, by the way, when we find mediocrity, we'll help, but the local people have got to change. You've got to change what you're doing in order to make sure that children can learn." We expect schools to do their job, and we're helping them do their job. We also understand it can take some time to get there.

Some say the No Child Left Behind Act doesn't provide enough money to meet our goals. First, let me tell you again what I said. It's the primary responsibility of the State and local governments to fund schools, not the Federal Government. But the additional testing required by the law—in other words, the Federal Government did say, "Okay, you've got to test in return for money." We're helping to pay for the tests. People say, "Well, it's an unfunded mandate to put accountability systems in place." No, the accountability systems are largely funded by the Federal Government.

Second, if my 2005 budget is enacted, Federal spending on elementary and high school education will have increased by 49 percent since 2001. In Arkansas, that's an extra $112 million Federal dollars for your public schools compared to 2001.

Nationwide, since 2001, we've already increased funding for low-income schools under Title I—that's the money for the poorest of students—by 41 percent. That will rise to 52 percent if Congress approves my budget, which would mean an additional $37 million to help people in this State.

In other words, we're doing our duty. We understand that people need extra help when it comes time to addressing problems early, before they're too late, and the Federal Government is responding.

And I also want to remind you that we've done another thing—and Laura is very much involved with this—we've kicked off a major initiative to make sure our children can read at grade level by the third grade. We have quadrupled Federal funding since 2001 for America's reading programs—by the way, making sure that when we fund programs, that they use scientifically based programs, reading—not programs that sound like they might work but programs which actually do work in teaching the children of America how to read.

This No Child Left Behind Act is a good law. It's a good, solid law. But I understand some adjustments need to be made, even in the best laws. So we've listened to schools and teachers, and we're responding in practical ways. We're making sure that the progress of special ed students is judged by standards appropriate to their development. In other words, as you measure a special ed student, there must be some flexibility in the measurement standards. And we know that.

We're giving schools more time to bring students who don't speak English as a first language into the accountability system. If a fellow shows up at school and can't speak Spanish—I mean English—and only speaks Spanish, they need some time to learn the language before they become a part of the accountability system. They don't need a lifetime of learning, but there needs to be some flexibility in the accountability systems.

We're giving schools in rural areas more latitude in meeting teacher qualification standards. In other words, we're flexible in the application of the law. Yet I will never compromise on this goal: Every child can learn the basics, and every school must teach the basics.

A lot of the No Child Left Behind Act is—focuses on early grades, and that's good. In other words, my attitude is, and I think the attitude of the experts is, when we get it right early in the grades and stay focused, we're going to have a bunch of kids getting into high school who are literate, smart, and capable.

But right now we've got some people that need help when it comes to reading. I mean, there have been some kids that have been shuffled through that are now in high school, and they're struggling to learn how to read. And we'd better get it right now, before they get out. And so I'm asking Congress to pass a $100 million Striving Reading Initiative, intensive intervention in children's lives who cannot read, before they get out of high school. It's an essential part—I mean, that's the minimum we can do. That's the basic part of making sure that a child has hope.

We'll use resources to help the school districts to train teachers so they can get the right kind of help and use a curriculum that works. I mean, there are good curriculum that can work. The school districts need the help of implementing those curriculum, and that's what this money will be for.

I also proposed a $120 million increase for the Mathematics and Science Partnership program. In other words, we want to make sure kids can read; we also want to make sure they can do math and science. But we've got some new jobs that are being

created that require new skill sets, and it's not good enough to shuffle kids out of the schools that don't know anything about math and science. And so the creation of these partnerships will help school districts set up effective math and science programs.

I believe that in every school, we ought to continue to raise the bar, and one way to do so is to make sure that the advanced placement programs are vibrant and active across our country. Right here at Butterfield, you offer pre-8 AP courses, which is good—preparing these children to take advanced placement. Advanced placement means you're raising the bar as high as you can possibly go.

I've proposed increasing money from the Federal Government, double the current amount we spend, for teacher training, to help good-hearted teachers become AP teachers.

And I fully recognize as well there are some low-income students. When they go home and say, "Look, I'm getting ready to take the AP exam," and the mother or father will say, "How much does it cost," and they lay out the cost of the AP exam, the mother or dad says, "No, I think we'll use the money for something else," see. So the child prepares to take the AP, and then Mom or Dad look at the fund—look at the cost, and they say, "No, we'd like for you to take the AP exam, but we need this money for rent or food." The Federal Government ought to help low-income students pay for the fee so they can take the AP exam. We want to be raising the bar for every student, and the entry fee should not be an excuse.

One of the things we need to do is encourage math and science professionals from the private sector to teach part-time in our high schools. And so we've got what's called the Adjunct Teacher Corps, which is a neat program, when you think about it. Got somebody here in Fort Smith, Arkansas, who's an engineer. They may have—he or she may have worked for a while, and they may be retired, and the school district—I don't know if the high school principal is looking for a science teacher or not; he may be. But it makes sense to have—to encourage citizens to get back in the classroom as a second career, to lend their talents.

You've got what you call a State Scholars program here in Arkansas. Governor, thanks for implementing it. It's an initiative that we announced here 2 years ago, which brings businesses and college officials in the middle schools and high schools to encourage students to take a more demanding coursework load. In other words, when you get—people can get inspired to take tougher courses, we ought to try to do so. The program is raising the completion rates in algebra II and chemistry and physics among Arkansas high school students. In other words, you've got more students now taking algebra II and chemistry and physics, and that's going to benefit your State.

See, when you've got people with those skills getting out of high school, and somebody is looking to put a business here, they can say, "Look at this. Look at the base of knowledge amongst people that we can employ in this State." People are likely to bring work here if the potential workforce has got the basics in math and science. And that's what you're doing. I want to expand the State Scholars program nationwide, just like we've done here in Arkansas. It's effective. It works.

And there ought to be incentives to encourage students, and one way to do so is to give those students who finish a State Scholars program a boost in their Pell grant scholarship. In other words, we're saying to kids in high school, "Reach higher. Here's some people to help you reach higher, some local college folks or businesspeople. And by the way, when you take a tougher course load and pass, you get additional scholarship money from the Pell grant." We've expanded Pell grants. I want to enrich them to encourage students to reach for the stars. So I've sent a proposal to Congress where they would

receive an additional $1,000 during each of their first 2 years of college. This will help 4,000 Arkansas seniors a year. This will provide an incentive for people to say, "I want to do a better job in high school."

What I'm here to tell you is, I understand that public education is essential to the future of this country. It's essential we get it right. I'm here at Butterfield because I understand a good school is the gateway to hope. And we want that gate open all across America.

After decades of missed opportunities, after missing chances to make sure every child has got the basics to succeed, we finally reformed the public schools of America. It took a lot of work. It took a lot of work to convince people that change is needed. But Congress listened; we passed a bill. Let me tell you something, when you get a "yes" vote from both Senators of Arkansas and both Senators from Texas and both Senators from Massachusetts, you've got yourself a bipartisan piece of legislation.

And we're not backing down, see. I don't care how much pressure they try to put on the process. I'm not changing my mind about high standards and the need for accountability, because I know the promise it holds out for the—[*applause*].

We're not going back to those days where we just kind of hope something happens. We're not going back to the days where kids just got moved through, and they weren't sure whether or not they could read, and at the end of the system, they said, "Oops, they can't read." Those day were too pessimistic for me, and they don't represent the great values of the United States of America. See, we believe in the dignity of every human being. We believe in the worth of every child. We're optimistic people. We believe in raising the standards. We believe in giving schools the resources and flexibility they need. We have begun a new era in public education for the good of the United States of America.

I better quit before some of us fall out. [*Laughter*] I know it. When you get the President, and he blows a lot of hot air—[*laughter*]—but I do want to thank you for your hospitality. I want to thank the people of this good school for believing in the best, for having such a clear vision about what's possible, about believing in the worth of every child. I want to thank the teachers. I appreciate your love and compassion. I want to thank you for never settling for mediocrity, for always aiming high.

I want to thank the citizens who are here, the moms and dads. By the way, a child's first teacher is a mother or a father. That's the first teacher a child has. I like to remind people that we need to promote a culture of personal responsibility in America that starts with moms and dads who understand they're responsible for loving their child with all their heart. And by the way, a part of that personal responsibility society is one that says if you've got a problem with the school in the community in which you live, you do something about it. See? You don't rely on some faraway Government to take care of it. Do something about it.

Part of this responsibility era says if you're a CEO in corporate America, you're responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And finally, a responsibility society is one in which each of us loves our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourself.

It's such an honor to be here at Butterfield, in Van Buren, Arkansas. I'm proud to be here. Thanks for coming out to say hello. May God bless you all, and may God continue to bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:45 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Todd Marshell, principal, Butterfield Junior High School; and Gov. Mike Huckabee and Lt. Gov. Win Rockefeller of Arkansas.

Statement on Signing the Executive Order Blocking Property of Certain Persons and Prohibiting the Export of Certain Goods to Syria
May 11, 2004

Today I have signed an Executive order implementing sanctions on Syria pursuant to the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act of 2003. These sanctions will significantly reduce the level of trade and commercial activity between our two countries and, in particular, target entities and officials in or closely associated with the Syrian Government who have engaged in actions of concern specified in the act.

Since 1979, the United States has designated Syria a state sponsor of terrorism due to its support for groups such as Hezbollah and Palestinian terrorist organizations. In 2003, Congress passed the SAA because of Syria's continued support for terrorism, pursuit of weapons of mass destruction, occupation of Lebanon, and actions undermining U.S. and international efforts with respect to Iraq. Based on Syria's failure to take significant, concrete steps to address the concerns we have raised, I have determined that further economic sanctions be imposed.

The Syrian Government must understand that its conduct alone will determine the duration of the sanctions and the extent to which additional sanctions may be imposed should the Syrian Government fail to adopt a more constructive approach to relations with its neighbors, weapons of mass destruction, and terrorism.

If the Syrian Government demonstrates a genuine intention to seek true peace by confronting terror and violence, ending its pursuit and development of weapons of mass destruction, and respecting the sovereignty and independence of Lebanon, the United States will respond positively.

Similarly, I urge the Syrian Government to offer its full support to the goal of a stable and sovereign Iraq, beginning with redoubled efforts along the border to prevent the movement of foreign fighters into Iraq. The Syrian Government has taken some steps in this regard but must do more, given that individuals bent on sowing terror continue to cross into Iraq from Syria. Additionally, it is time for the Syrian Government to comply with its obligations under U.N. Security Council Resolution 1483 and immediately transfer assets belonging to the former Iraqi regime to the Development Fund for Iraq.

This is a momentous time in the Middle East. I call upon the Syrian Government to join the ranks of those nations that have committed themselves to political and economic reform, a decision that would benefit—first and foremost—the people of Syria. I sincerely hope that the Syrian Government will conclude that its interests are best served by joining efforts to build a Middle East that is stable, secure, and free from terror and violence.

NOTE: The Executive order is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Message to the Congress Transmitting the Executive Order Blocking Property of Certain Persons and Prohibiting the Export of Certain Goods to Syria

May 11, 2004

To the Congress of the United States:

Consistent with subsection 204(b) of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, 50 U.S.C. 1703(b) (IEEPA), and section 301 of the National Emergencies Act, 50 U.S.C. 1631, I hereby report that I have issued an Executive Order (order) in which I declared a national emergency with respect to the threat constituted by certain actions of the Government of Syria. Further, in accordance with subsection 5(b) of the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act of 2003 (SAA), Public Law 108–175, this message also constitutes the report on my exercise of the waiver authority pursuant to that statute.

On December 12, 2003, I signed into law the SAA in order to strengthen the ability of the United States to effectively confront the threat to U.S. national security posed by Syria's support for terrorism, its military presence in Lebanon, its pursuit of weapons of mass destruction, and its actions to undermine U.S. and international efforts with respect to the stabilization and reconstruction of Iraq. These policies by the Government of Syria directly threaten regional stability and undermine the U.S. goal of a comprehensive Middle East peace. Despite many months of diplomatic efforts to convince the Government of Syria to change its behavior, Syria has not taken significant, concrete steps to address the full range of U.S. concerns, which were clearly conveyed by Secretary of State Powell to Syrian President Asad in May 2003. I find the actions, policies, and circumstances described above sufficiently grave to constitute a threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States, and thus have declared a national emergency to address that threat.

In implementation of subsection 5(a) of the SAA, in the order I directed that action be taken to prohibit the export to Syria of products of the United States other than food and medicine, including but not limited to items on the United States Munitions List or Commerce Control List, and I prohibited commercial air services between Syria and the United States by aircraft of any air carrier owned or controlled by Syria, as well as certain non-traffic stops by such aircraft.

It is important to the national security interests of the United States, however, that certain discrete categories of exports continue in order to support activities of the United States Government and United Nations agencies, to facilitate travel by United States persons, for certain humanitarian purposes, to help maintain aviation safety, and to promote the exchange of information. Also, it is important to U.S. national security interests that aviation-related sanctions take into account humanitarian and diplomatic concerns as well as the international obligations of the United States.

Accordingly, I have waived the application of subsections 5(a)(1) and 5(a)(2)(A) of the SAA to permit the export and reexport of: products in support of activities of the United States Government to the extent that such exports would not otherwise fall within my constitutional authority to conduct the Nation's foreign affairs and protect national security; medicines on the Commerce Control List and medical devices; aircraft parts and components for purposes of flight safety; exports and reexports consistent with the 5(a)(2)(D) waiver outlined below; information and informational materials, as well as telecommunications equipment and associated items to

promote the free flow of information; certain software and technology; products in support of United Nations operations; and, certain exports and reexports of a temporary nature. These items are further identified in the Department of Commerce's General Order No. 2, as issued consistent with my order. I have also waived the application of subsection 5(a)(2)(D) to permit the following with respect to aircraft of any air carrier owned or controlled by Syria: takeoffs or landings of such aircraft when chartered by the Government of Syria to transport Syrian government officials to the United States on official Syrian government business; takeoffs or landings for non-traffic stops of such aircraft that are not engaged in scheduled international air services; takeoffs and landings associated with an emergency; and overflights of U.S. territory.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
May 11, 2004.

NOTE: The Executive order is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks on the Death of Nicholas Berg
May 12, 2004

I want to express my condolences to the family and friends of Nicholas Berg. Nicholas Berg was an innocent civilian who was in Iraq to help build a free Iraq. There is no justification for the brutal execution of Nicholas Berg—no justification whatsoever.

The actions of the terrorists who executed this man remind us of the nature of the few people who want to stop the advance of freedom in Iraq. Their intention is to shake our will. Their intention is to shake our confidence. Yet, by their actions, they remind us of how desperately parts of the world need free societies and peaceful societies, and we will complete our mission. We will complete our task.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House prior to his departure for Bethesda, MD. American hostage Nicholas Berg was killed in Iraq in early May by senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi.

Remarks in a Discussion on Education at the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Maryland
May 12, 2004

The President. Thanks, Reid. Thank you all for coming. What he forgot to tell you is, I've known Reid for a long time. See, when I was the Governor of Texas, I was worried that we weren't using a curriculum, a reading curriculum that would work. So I said to Margaret Spellings, who is my Domestic Policy Adviser here in Washington, I said, "Who's the best in the country about figuring out how to teach children how to read?" And they said, "Reid Lyon." I said, "Okay, get him up here," or "Get him down here," in this case. He was here

in Washington. He came down, and we've had a great relationship ever since.

Today we're going to talk about reading and that reading is more of a science than people think. And the reason we're here at the National Institutes of Health is because this facility uses Federal taxpayers' money to research, to figure out how to solve problems. We've got a problem in America, and the problem is, not every child can read at grade level. So we're here to discuss a strategy to insist that every child does read at grade level. To me, it's a national—we have an obligation nationally to make sure of this.

I'll never forget the reading czarina of Houston Independent School District—and by the way, Secretary of Education Rod Paige was the superintendent of the Houston Independent School District at the time. He had hired this lady to help teach every child to read. She said, "Governor, I want to tell you, reading is the new civil right." That's what I think. I think if you cannot read in the 21st century, you don't have a chance to succeed. And we believe every child can read.

Mr. Secretary, thanks for coming. Rod Paige is a fellow who was on the frontlines of education there as the superintendent in Harris County District. And I asked him to come up and be the Secretary of Education, Reid, because he understands the correct attitude about making sure public schools work. It's really embodied in the No Child Left Behind Act.

Let me go through real quick what that act says. It says, first of all, we believe every child can learn. In other words, we need to raise the bar and raise the standards. It's what I call challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations. It means basically that when you walk into a classroom full of the so-called hard to educate, you don't quit. That's what it means.

Secondly, it says that in return for increased Federal spending—which we've increased Federal spending quite a bit here in Washington, DC—that we expect results. In other words, the cornerstone of making sure every child can learn to read is you've got to measure to determine where they are. And if not, if you're finding children can't read at early ages, correct it early, before it's too late. And we're going to talk about that here.

Thirdly, it says that there must be consequences for schools that won't teach and won't change. In other words, something has to happen other than just posting scores to get parental involvement. What we now have got is a system where, after a period of time, if the schools won't teach a child to read, Federal money follows the child so the child can get tutoring, for example, or the child can go to a different public school.

Finally, the cornerstone of good education policy is local control of schools. We're going to hear from some folks from Alabama and Arizona who are great teachers, who understand it is really important for there to be the ability for people to make decisions, to align authority and response at the local level.

Governor Ehrlich is with us. I'm sure he's glad to hear that the Federal Government isn't going to run the schools in the State of Maryland. He's plenty capable of doing it, along with the people he's picked to run the schools and be responsible for public policy, like the Lieutenant Governor, Mike Steele, and Nancy Grasmick, who's the head of the education department in Maryland. I want to thank you all for coming, Governor. I appreciate you taking your time for being here.

I also want to thank Elias Zerhouni, who's in charge of NIH. Elias, I'm proud of the job you're doing. You've got a tough job, and I picked a good man to do it, and I really appreciate you being here. I'm glad Claude Allen is here as well. He's the Deputy Secretary of Health and Human Services. You're doing a fine job too, Claude. I'm proud you guys are here. Thanks for coming.

I'm going to turn this over to Reid here in a second. But if the goal is to have children reading at grade level by the third grade, which is a goal we have set—and by the way, some people have been criticizing the No Child Left Behind Act because they say the standards are too high. I don't think that's too high a standard, to expect a child to read at third grade when they're in the third grade. As a matter of fact, you know, I think it is perfectly reasonable to ask school districts to at least accomplish that. But to do it, we've got to advance a—help advance a strategy. I think it is a proper role for the Federal Government to help school districts implement reading strategies that work.

And Reid Lyon has been very much involved in figuring out what works. And you'll hear him talk about phonemic awareness and phonics and fluency. I'm going to let him describe what all those words mean. But really what they mean is there's a way to figure out whether or not the curriculum being used at the local level can be effective, that's what he's saying.

And so we put forth a Reading First Initiative across the country. And part of it, obviously, requires Federal commitment, Federal dollars. We've got $1.8 billion now we're spending on Reading First programs. We intend to spend 5 billion over a 5-year period of time.

So far, we're making good progress. In 2002, all 50 States are participating in the grantmaking process. In other words, they've developed curriculums screened by people like Reid who say, "Gosh, this will work." In other words, we don't want to spend money unless people are using curriculum that works. There's no need to throw good money into programs that won't work. We've tried that before.

And so the grant programs seem like they're going well. The screening process is going well. There are 1,000 districts that now get Reading First grants. There are 3,600 schools getting Reading First grants. There's been 73,000 teachers trained in the curriculum that works. Part of making sure that a Reading First program works, part of making sure that children can read at the grade level by the third grade is to make sure you've got teachers who can teach by the third grade—teachers who can teach curriculum to make sure children can read by the third grade. One-point-two million students are being affected.

By the way, Ralph Regula is with us today as well. I just saw Ralph sneak in here. Mr. Chairman, thanks for coming. He's a strong advocate of the Reading First program. He's a United States Congressman from the State of Ohio. The fact you're here, Mr. Chairman, says a lot about your interest. You're probably wondering when I'm going to stop talking. You know how we are when we get a mike.

As well I just want you to know—and we've discussed some of this today—we've got a early Reading First program, which really starts in the pre-K period as well as—and you're going to hear an interesting program called Striving Readers Initiative. This basically says that if you don't hold people to account early in the system, it is likely people are going to get shuffled through the schools without being able to read, see. And we're beginning to find out that's the truth, and we're finding people in junior high and high school who can't read. We need intensive intervention programs. At the very minimum, when a kid gets out of high school, they ought to be able to read, see. And you'll hear an interesting program developed by this good man to my left here, about how to be successful.

What we're talking about is making sure we meet an obligation in our country to give people the chance to succeed in this great country, and I'm telling you we can do it. I have seen incredible progress. We test for a reason, because we want to know, and the reading scores are beginning to go up. And I believe it has a lot to do with the research that Reid Lyon has done here at the NIH facilities here. I believe that when you can figure out the key to

reading and convince people to use the proper strategy, every child can learn to read. I refuse to accept anything less than that. I refuse to lower the bar for kids. And so therefore, my job as your President is to continue to challenge and push and insist on high standards. And we're making progress.

Reid, I'm really proud of the work you do. He's about to tell us—what do you do—[*laughter*]—and how do you do it?

[*At this point, G. Reid Lyon, Chief, Child Development and Behavior Branch, National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, made brief remarks.*]

The President. You know, people are going to say, "Well, that sounds good. How do you know it works?" And as you know, I'm a how-do-you-know-it-works kind of guy. Reid mentioned there is a debate. Governors are very familiar with the reading curriculum debate, and there are some very strong opinions about what might work, what might not work. I'm the kind of fellow that says, "You ought to be able to figure it out pretty clearly."

Why are you so certain that your attitude is the right attitude?

[*Dr. Lyon made further remarks.*]

The President. Good. Well, I—anyway. This is based upon science, is what I'm telling you, see. And if you've got something that works, then it makes sense to spread the news. So that's what we're talking about here: How do we make sure the research that has been done here in Washington is shared around the country?

We've got another expert here in reading, the professor and director of the Center of Research of Learning at the University of Kansas—Don Deshler is with us. I first learned of Don when Laura, who is very much involved with reading—she was a school librarian. She loves to read. She believes every child can read. She believes every child must read, and she also understands that there is some need for some serious intervention programs in certain schools. So she met Don in Florida, and she came back and she said,"You're not going to believe this guy. He's got a fabulous program." I said, "Okay, we'll put him on the stage and see if he can explain it." [*Laughter*]

Tell us what you do.

[*Donald D. Deshler, professor and director of the Center for Research on Learning, University of Kansas, made brief remarks.*]

The President. I was going to say, so what do you have to do to get the Michigan school to—did you design a curriculum? Did you have teacher training? What was it?

[*Dr. Deshler made further remarks.*]

The President. Yes, thanks. Gosh, glad you came. [*Laughter*] Glad Laura told me about you. [*Laughter*] I love your attitude. What he's talking about, this initiative, the Intervention Initiative, to make sure junior high students and high school students at least have the capacity to read, is something I've sent up to Congress, Mr. Chairman. We need to get it funded. He's got a program that works. The role of the Federal Government is to fund the capacity for districts to take the program, implement it, and make it happen.

I agree with you that because of the reforms that are now in place, high schools are going to start seeing a more literate population. The problem is, we've got a gap, and we've got to make sure that we do everything we can to intervene and help those kids. If you can't read, it doesn't matter. That's just as simple as that. I mean, I know that doesn't sound very nuanced or sophisticated, but it's true. It's the absolute truth.

And we're here talking about making sure everybody can. Governor, I want you to pay attention to this program because I bet you there's some schools in the State of Maryland that could use a little intervention, particularly at the junior high and high

school level. This works. And this good man here has taken a scientific approach to developing a curriculum, which is relatively easy to implement, I would guess. I mean, it doesn't——

Dr. Deshler. Well, I—good teaching, I believe, is a challenge, and it requires hard work. But if we follow known principles of instruction, the payoff is enormous.

The President. Yes. The—I'm glad you brought up Michigan, because Faith Stevens is with us. She is the Reading First coordinator for the whole State, right? That's a big job. I'm really glad you're here. How's it going? Are you implementing the Reading First Initiative?

[*Faith Stevens, Reading First coordinator, Michigan Department of Education, Lansing, MI, made brief remarks.*]

The President. Great job. Thank you. You know, one of the interesting comments I've heard, and I'm confident others who are involved with public policy when it comes to education have heard, they say, you know, "All you're doing is teaching the test. Don't test, because all you're doing is teaching the test." Listen, if you teach a child how to read, they will pass a reading test.

I've heard every excuse in the book why not to measure. But if you can't measure, how do you know? And you heard the great deal of satisfaction from that teacher as a result of correctly utilizing an accountability system to make sure that she was doing the right thing, that she was able to impart her love. And the joy as a result of teaching a child to read was evident in her statement. As a matter of fact, tell her, "Thanks for teaching." Tell her, "Thanks for being also agile enough of mind to be willing to change, if change is needed." We can't be risk-adverse when it comes to making sure every child learns to read.

Speaking about teachers, we've got Janice Kantor with us. She came all the way from Phoenix, Arizona, for which we are grateful. Welcome. She is a Reading First literacy coach. It's kind of an interesting title, isn't it? When I went to Sam Houston Elementary School in Midland, I don't remember any literacy coaches. [*Laughter*] I remember a football coach. [*Laughter*] But I think it's a really interesting evolution that we've got literacy coaches, which should say to people that reading is more important than athletics. They're both important, but we better make sure they read.

So what does a literacy coach do?

[*Janice Kantor, Reading First literacy coach, Westwind Primary School, Phoenix, AZ, made brief remarks.*]

The President. Fabulous. Thanks for coming. Pretty strong spirit, isn't it? I really appreciate that. Thank you for being here. You know, I think one of the things we have to address is why teacher colleges aren't teaching reading teachers how to teach in the first place, so you don't need to retrain.

Maybe that's another project for you, Reid. [*Laughter*] Maybe it's my project. But thank you for retraining teachers. Listen, teachers are a really loving people, and they care deeply about their profession and their desire to pass on knowledge, and sometimes they just don't have the skills to be able to do so. It's got to be frustrating. It wasn't frustrating if you didn't measure, because you didn't know. But then when you start using the accountability system that all of a sudden points out that, oops, maybe I ought to get a—find a new skill so I can do my job.

We've got Cynthia Henderson with us from Montgomery, Alabama. I'm really glad you're here. Cynthia is a kindergarten teacher. And she went through the Reading First training program, and why don't you tell us what that was like. As I understand, it was slightly intimidating to begin with. Is that an accurate assessment?

[*Cynthia Henderson, kindergarten teacher, Floyd Elementary School, Montgomery, AL, made brief remarks.*]

The President. Yes, benchmark means—explain to—benchmark means they met expectations.

Ms. Henderson. They met every expectation for the entire year.

The President. And so what she's saying is she just kind of sent these little fellows and little ladies off to a glorious future because they've got the foundations for reading.

Ms. Henderson. And you know, because I work at a school that, where most of the children that are enrolled there are either on poverty level or below poverty level, it means so much to me because some of them are going to be the first ones in their families to even attend college.

The President. There you go.

Ms. Henderson. It is so exciting that they're so excited about reading. And I think it's all about changing a school, that changes a community, that changes a whole city, that changes a State, that changes a whole nation of readers.

The President. There you go. I agree. One of the things that's very important in the measurement system is to do what I call "disaggregate the data." Some districts didn't like measuring specific groups of people because you could pass the standards if you put every—lumped everybody together. But that didn't tell the whole truth about who was learning and who wasn't learning.

And so as part of the new accountability system, the No Child Left Behind Act, we break out based upon race. It's really essential we do that. It's really important. If you don't do that, you're likely to leave people behind. And that's not right. There's a learning—there's an achievement gap in America that will be closed. It must be closed, and will be closed. It won't be closed unless you're honest about the achievement gap, unless you're able to see clearly who needs help and who doesn't need help.

What you've heard here, teachers and coaches and implementers who understand that the accountability system must be used as a tool to make sure that the curriculum being used, the techniques being used, the strategy being used, works. That's what you're hearing.

If you heard—they said, "We look at the test results per child." Inside the classroom, that's good, but schools and districts need to look at the test results per child as well and not try to gloss over the reality in certain school districts by lumping everybody together. This act is called the No Child Left Behind Act because we want to make sure no child is left behind, not it's okay that some get left behind. That's not the spirit of the law.

I hope you've enjoyed this as much as I have. This is a—again, we came here because the discussions we were having were based upon sound science, not guesswork. And like you, sir, I am incredibly optimistic that we're getting it right here in America. We're getting it right because smart people have help. Policymakers understand what works. We're getting it right because people are continuing to devise strategies to help children who need continued help. We're getting it right because we're providing resources to make sure teachers get retrained with curriculum that works. We're getting it right because we've got fabulous teachers in the classroom—coaches and teachers, I might want you to know—whose spirit can lift the room here at the NIH with just a few words.

And listen, we will meet the goal here. We have an obligation to meet the goal to make sure every child can read at grade level, starting by the third grade. And there's no doubt in my mind this country will do it. We're on track, and I want to appreciate those who put us on track and who keep us on track for being here today.

God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:27 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Phyllis C. Hunter,

former manager, Reading Department, Houston Independent School District; and Gov. Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr., and Lt. Gov. Michael S. Steele of Maryland.

Statement on the Panama-United States Proliferation Security Initiative Ship-Boarding Agreement
May 12, 2004

The United States welcomes Panama's signing today of a ship-boarding agreement that supports the efforts of the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) to stop the trade in deadly weapons and materials.

The agreement establishes streamlined procedures for American officials to request and board ships registered to Panama if those ships are suspected of carrying weapons of mass destruction, their delivery systems, or related materials. More ships sail under the Panamanian flag than that of any other nation. This agreement sends a strong signal to proliferators that the free nations of the world are determined to protect their people and preserve the peace.

This is the second bilateral ship-boarding agreement signed to support PSI. The United States and the Government of Liberia signed a similar agreement on February 11, 2004. Together, Panama and Liberia account for roughly 30 percent of the world's commercial shipping tonnage. We welcome this historic decision by the Government of Panama. And we urge other nations with large commercial shipping registries to follow the lead of Panama and Liberia to make a stand against proliferation.

Letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives Transmitting a Fiscal Year 2005 Budget Amendment To Establish a Contingent Emergency Reserve Fund To Support Operations in Iraq and Afghanistan
May 12, 2004

Dear Mr. Speaker:

I ask the Congress to consider the enclosed FY 2005 budget amendment to establish a $25 billion contingent emergency reserve fund to support operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Although we do not know the precise costs for operations next year, developments on the ground in Iraq indicate the need to plan for contingencies. We plan to pursue a full FY 2005 supplemental request when we can better estimate precise costs. In the meantime, this reserve fund will ensure that our men and women in uniform continue to have the resources they need when they need them.

I have pledged to our troops that they will have all the resources they need to accomplish this vital mission, and I urge the Congress to approve this reserve fund.

The details of this proposal are set forth in the enclosed letter from the Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

Sincerely,

GEORGE W. BUSH

Remarks in a Discussion at Parkersburg South High School in Parkersburg, West Virginia
May 13, 2004

The President. Thank you all very much. Thanks for coming. Please be seated. First, thanks for the invite. You all got the best seat in the house. At least you got the best view of me. [*Laughter*] I really want to thank you all for coming. I want to thank our panelists for being here, because we're about to have a discussion on how to make sure every person in America can realize their dreams. That's what we're here to talk about: Dreams and how they can be realized; how to make sure the education system works the way every mom and dad, every teacher, every principal, every concerned citizen wants it to work.

And this is the perfect place to come and have a discussion about education, because Parkersburg South is educating the kids. They're doing a fine job here. Tom, I want to thank you. I've spent a lot of time at schools, and there's always a common denominator in excellent schools, and that is you've got a good principal, see—somebody who listens to the teachers, somebody who interfaces with the parents, but somebody who sets high standards, somebody who believes in the best for every child. And I appreciate you taking on a tough job, and I appreciate you doing it well.

I want to thank Bill Niday as well. He's the superintendent here in Wood County. I know something about superintendents, and I know how important they are for education. See, I picked a superintendent of schools to run the Department of Education, the superintendent from Harris County, which is Houston, Texas. I mean, the superintendent is on the frontline of education. They're involved with all aspects of local education. So I picked a man who understands how it works. And the reason I brought a superintendent in from Texas to Washington, because I believe in local control of schools. I want the people at the local level running the schools.

I appreciate Barbara Fish, from the State board here in West Virginia, for coming. Where are you, Barbara? Thank you for coming. I'm honored you are here. I appreciate what you said. Barbara said to me—I'm going to talk a little bit about No Child Left Behind here in a second. She said, "I love the spirit of No Child Left Behind." See, I love the spirit of Barbara, who understands that by setting high standards and measuring and making sure curriculum works and making sure your dollars are well spent, that we can make sure no child is left behind in America. So thank you for your vision, and thank you for your care.

They're telling me Jimmy Colombo is here, the mayor. Where are you, Mr. Mayor? There you are. I appreciate you coming. Who you got with you? There he is. We'll try to get you a better seat next time, Mayor. [*Laughter*] But thank you for being here. I'm proud you're here. I really appreciate so many of the citizens of this good city coming out and waving, and it means a lot to me. And Mayor, the fact that you're here means a lot too. I appreciate you serving your community. Just make sure you fill the potholes. [*Laughter*]

I appreciate the Patriots. All of the Patriots are here. Thank you for hosting us. I want to congratulate the seniors who are getting ready to graduate. Make sure you don't take the foot off the gas pedal too soon—isn't that right? Keep studying until the final bell rings. But good luck to you.

Today I had the honor of meeting Heather Stout. She came out to the airport. She's a sophomore at West Virginia University in Parkersburg. I'll tell you why I mention her. Where are you, Heather? She's somewhere. Oh, there you are, right there. I'm sorry. I beg your pardon. You know

what? The reason I bring her up is she's a tutor. She is a math tutor for fourth grade students. Here's a person going to college who has taken time out of her life to help children learn math.

Listen, we talk a lot about the strength of our country, and I'm going to spend a little time talking about the strength of our—a lot of the strengths of the country. But the true strength of this country is the hearts and souls of the American people. That's the strength of America. We're strong because there are good people willing to teach. We're strong because there are good citizens willing to love a neighbor just like they'd like to be loved themselves. See, there are people who hurt in our country, but that hurt can change as a result of a loving citizen saying, "What can I do to help?" See, societies change one heart, one soul, one conscience at a time. That's how societies change, and that happens when people like Heather, and I'm sure people here in this crowd, are willing to take a little time to love and spread compassion.

The reason I mention Heather is because I want people in this good part of the country to do everything they can to help the lonely, to feed the hungry, to find shelter for those who are looking for a place to stay. Heather, thanks for the example you've set. Thanks for having such a good heart, and thanks for following your heart.

One of the things that I'm so proud of is the United States military. I'm proud—[*applause*]—thank you all for coming. Thank you all. Corporal Ferguson, where's—there he is. Lance Corporal Ferguson—excuse me. He just came back from Iraq. He was one of over 200,000 men and women who have served this Nation. And the reason I bring him up—I want to say a couple of things—thank you, go ahead and be seated. I appreciate you being here. Thank you for your service. And that's Joe Ellison—yes, Lance Corporal Ellison is with him too. I didn't mean to leave you out, but thank you for your service too.

Let me say a couple of things that you need to know. First, our men and women are serving in historic times. We have a duty never to forget the lessons of September the 11th, 2001, and when we see a gathering threat—when we see threats, we can no longer hope they go away. We can't hope for the best. We've got to take action. Now, action doesn't necessarily mean use of the military. Action can mean using diplomatic pressure, all kinds of pressures. But the enemy declared war on us. And we must be strong, and we must be diligent, and we must be focused. We must do everything we can to protect our homeland. We've got brave soldiers doing just that.

And we're being tested, see. We're being tested because there are people who cannot stand the thought of free societies growing up in a part of the world that is used to hatred and tyranny. We're being tested because there are coldblooded killers that cannot stand the thought of freedom becoming the norm.

And yet, we know something here in America. We know the power of free societies. See, freedom equals peace. Free societies will be peaceful societies. And we also know that freedom is not America's gift to the world; freedom is the Almighty God's gift to each man and woman in this world.

I want these marines to know that they are serving in historic times. The world is changing for the better. The world will be more free and more peaceful, thanks to the United States of America and our military. These are historic times.

I'll tell you an interesting story to try and put it in perspective. I was having dinner with Prime Minister Koizumi in Tokyo. Laura was with me, by the way. She's doing a great job, fabulous person. And here I was, talking to the Prime Minister of a former enemy. My dad, like many of your relatives, fought in the Pacific in World

War II, and here I was, talking to the Prime Minister of the country against whom we used to fight, a country that had attacked us. And we were talking about how to keep the peace. We were strategizing about how to make sure the Korean Peninsula is nuclear-weapon free.

It was a very interesting conversation. First of all, I like the guy a lot. And secondly, it was a positive conversation, an important conversation, to help keep the peace. Had we not gotten the peace right after World War II, it might have been that I wouldn't be having the conversation with Prime Minister Koizumi. As well during the conversation, I thought about what it would be like for a future American President to be talking to a duly elected leader of Iraq, a free Iraq, a peaceful Iraq, a democratic Iraq, about how to deal with problems future generations will face.

No, these are historic times. We're being tested. People are testing our mettle. And I will not yield to the whims of the few. [*Applause*] Thank you all. I won't yield because I believe so strongly in what we're doing, and I have faith in the power of freedom to spread its wings in parts of the world that desperately need freedom.

I want to say one other thing about our troops. Like you, I have been disgraced about what I've seen on TV, what took place in the prison. But the actions of a few do not reflect on the fantastic character of the over 200,000 men and women who have served our Nation.

One other thing before we talk about education: It is really important for this country to be wise about how we use our natural resources. And I have asked the Congress to pass a national energy policy so we become less dependent on foreign sources of energy. I've asked the Congress to quit playing politics and get a bill out of the United States Senate to my desk that includes the use of clean coal technologies to make sure we are less dependent. I mean, we're seeing what it means to be hooked on foreign sources of energy right now. And like you, I'm unhappy about it. But I got a plan, if we can just get some cooperation, so we can make sure we got more supply here at home. That's the way you relieve the pressure from foreign sources—you use what you have in a smart way. And we can do this in this country. We can be wise about how we use our resources, so that the people benefit.

And you got a lot of coal here, and it's an important part of our country's energy mix. And we can use technologies to make sure that coal does what we want it to do, which is to power electricity so people can have reliable sources of electricity for their homes and their businesses.

One of the things we're here to talk about today is how to make sure the workforce is educated. But we'd better make sure we've got an educated energy policy too, so that we can have a workforce that expands.

Now, the best way to make sure we got a workforce that's educated is to start early, before it's too late. The No Child Left Behind Act changed the attitude about monies being spent out of Washington. Listen, we've increased the budgets out of Washington by 49 percent since 2001. That is a healthy increase.

Two things I want to say about that: First of all, it's not the Federal responsibility to fund schools. It's State and local responsibility to fund. You don't want the Federal Government running the school system here. But we can help. We can help with Title I students. We can help with Reading First programs. There are ways for the Federal Government to help, and we are.

Make no mistake about it, we're increasing the budgets at the Federal level, but for the first time we have said, "Since we're spending more money, why don't you show us whether or not the children are learning to read, write, and add and subtract. Why don't you use an accountability system to let everybody know that we're succeeding." And that's what's changed. And this high

school right here is using the accountability system, and the students at this school are meeting the accountability standards.

See, we're setting higher standards. And by the way, if you set low standards, guess what you're going get? You're going to get lousy results. If you have the attitude that certain children can't learn to read and write and add and subtract, sure enough, certain children won't learn to read and write and add and subtract. So we're raising that bar. We're providing extra money. We're holding people accountable, and we're making sure there's local control of schools. See, the people of Parkersburg can run the schools better than people in Washington, DC, can. That's for certain.

And we're making progress. The reading scores in West Virginia are up. That's really good news. It means the teachers are doing what we expect, and they're working hard, by the way. Being a teacher is a difficult profession, and we need to praise our teachers and thank our teachers.

The test scores are up. That must make everybody feel better. It should. And the reason I can say that is because we're measuring. See, if you don't measure, you say, "I think the test scores are up," or "Maybe the test scores are up." You don't know unless you measure. We're measuring, and the results are good.

But let me tell you a statistic that troubles me: 68 of 100 ninth graders nationwide, only 68 will go to college. We ought to have a goal that says every child, every high school student, finishes high school and is capable of finding a job or capable of going on to college. That ought to be the goal.

And so what we're going to talk about today is not how to make sure elementary school children can read but to make sure that the high school programs raise the bar, intervene when necessary, make sure that money is spent wisely, so that we're educating children that have got the capacity to take over the jobs of the 21st century. And there's some practical things we can do.

First, there needs to be intervention programs for junior high and high school kids who have been shuffled through without the capacity to read. And we've got a program called Striving Readers Initiative, which is an intervention program based on a curriculum designed out of the University of Kansas, by the way, and it works. And I would urge the good folks of the—the planners here in West Virginia to access the Federal monies that I'm asking Congress to spend on making sure that at the very minimum, a kid has got the capacity to read before they get out of high school.

See, if you can't read, these jobs of the 21st century are going to go begging. If you don't have the capacity to at least read, it's going to be impossible for you—not totally impossible, nearly impossible to get the high-paying, high-productivity jobs that are now being created in America.

Secondly, we need to make sure we get more math and science graduates. It's really important that we emphasize math—besides literacy, math and science—and we're going to talk a little bit about that here in a minute—because math and science programs will be necessary to make sure the skill level is good enough for these new jobs that are being created, that people will be able to fill those jobs as well. And so I've got a plan that provides Federal grants to develop teaching programs, in other words, help schools develop effective math teaching programs.

Thirdly, we need an adjunct teacher program to encourage professionals and experts from math and sciences to teach—in other words, once somebody has finished their career or maybe is looking for a career adjustment, to allow them and encourage them to get in the classroom to spread their skills. We need engineers teaching in high schools. We need scientists teaching in high schools. We need people who have been in the military that have had some engineering experience to come out and

teach in high schools. And we—I'm asking Congress to pass a $40 million program to encourage the recruitment and training of such teachers.

As well we need to be raising that bar. We're going to talk about advanced placement here in a minute. Advanced placement programs are essential programs for challenging every child. In other words, we need to keep raising the standards. We've got to constantly strive to set big goals so people are reaching for those goals and helping schools make sure that the programs work.

Advanced placement is—I love the program. We're about to talk to an advanced placement teacher who I suspect loves it as well, but there are some difficulties. I think the Federal Government should be spending money to help train teachers to teach advanced placement. See, a lot of school districts say, "Well, I'm interested, but it just doesn't meet our needs right now." Well, it should meet the needs, and therefore, there's Federal money available for teacher training.

And one other aspect: It costs $80 to take a advanced placement test. Now, that's high for a lot of families. Low-income families will say, you know, "I'd rather spend my 80 somewhere else than taking a test," and there's a lot of missed opportunity. I think the Federal Government ought to help low-income students pay for the fee to take the AP test.

I'm getting there. Our panelists are about to fall out, wondering—all right. As the old guy said, "You're just not a potted plant." [*Laughter*]

I think we ought to enhance Pell grants for students who take rigorous academic courses. Or as I say, if you're taking a rigorous course load in high school and you qualify for Pell grants, you ought to get an extra $1,000 on your Pell grant. We're spending money at the Pell grant, and Pell grants are good things. We ought to use the Pell grant system to encourage people to keep raising their sights.

We're going to talk about ways to make sure the Perkins Act, which is the vocational training act, work better. I mean, this act was passed in 1917. We're spending a billion dollars a year. The attitude has got to change from 1917. It kind of—it has some, but as a part of the vocational training courses, there need to be a rigorous focus on English and math and science. We've got to make sure the children have got, oh, yes, the skills that may be taught at the Perkins programs, but they need the basics too. And so in order to make sure the high school programs work all the way around, we need to reform the Perkins program.

We're going to talk about the community college system. I'm a big believer in the community college system. Community college systems are ways to help high school students achieve big goals, and we're going to talk about that. The community college systems are also important to taking older folks that have been in one field and training them for another field.

And we've spent a lot of money at the Federal level to make sure that we're able to match skills with jobs available. I mean, I think—one of the stories I tell is I went to the Mesa Community College in Arizona, and I met a woman who had been a graphic design artist for over a decade. And she then went back to the community college, got help from the Federal Government, and got her associate degree. And in her entry-level job in a high-tech field, she made more in her first year than she had made in her last year. In other words, education will not only help somebody become employable; education will help somebody become more productive, which means higher, higher wages, better job, better availability for work. And that's what we're going to talk about.

So here we go. Big Tom, are you ready?

Thomas Eschbacher. I'm ready to go. [*Laughter*]

The President. He has got a program here called High Schools That Work, and

we're going to spend some time talking about that. It is a way to introduce a rigorous course schedule into the high school curriculum to challenge people. You may want to talk about that, and you may want to not talk about that, but let her go.

[*At this point, Mr. Eschbacher, principal, Parkersburg South High School, made brief remarks.*]

The President. Good job. That's why you're no longer the band director. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Eschbacher. I was pretty good at that too, though.

The President. What were you, tuba?

Mr. Eschbacher. I'm a sax player.

The President. Sax player, right.

Dr. Becky Daniel is with us. She is an AP English teacher. First, Becky has been teaching for 29 years, which is a great credit to you, to be in the classroom for that long. You might want to tell people about the advanced placement program—I suspect some people don't even know what we're talking about—why it's important, how you got into it. Let her go. Thanks for coming.

[*Rebecca Daniel, English teacher, Parkersburg South High School, made brief remarks.*]

The President. Good job, Becky. Thank you. I love her spirit. See, I like teachers that challenge the soft bigotry of low expectations. In other words, she's saying, "I'm going to keep raising that bar. I'm going to keep challenging." And it must make you feel great to see people achieve what you want them to do. Yes, it's got to.

And I agree with you, I think we need to make sure AP is available for all kids. Part of it is the teacher training; part of it is the fee. I mean, I'm sure you've run into kids who say, "My mother and daddy don't want to spend the money on the fee." And that's not a good enough excuse. We've got to encourage—by the way, AP—listen to what she said—if you pass the AP, you get through college faster. And that takes a lot of the financial pressure off. I mean, it's not only good in terms of your brain; it's good in terms of your wallet. And so, thanks for doing what you're doing, Becky. I appreciate your spirit.

We've got another teacher with us today. Dave is with us. He is a physics teacher. Here's a guy who was trained to be a chemical engineer? Yes. Then he decided to be a teacher—and both of them noble professions, but here he is now, imparting knowledge. He turned down what I bet was a pretty good career in this part of the world. He said, "I want to teach," and he's a physics teacher.

Tell us what you're seeing. Tell us what you're hearing about sciences. It's essential that people take science in high school. This job base of ours is changing. It's in transition. We're creating new jobs all across the country, and people are going to have to be prepared to succeed in these jobs. These aren't the jobs like we've had in the past. These are better paying jobs, steady work, but require the use of your brain. And part of that base, to be ready for these new jobs, is a science base.

And that's why we have Dave here. Thanks for coming.

[*David Foggin, physics teacher, Parkersburg South High School, made brief remarks.*]

The President. So, are kids interested? I mean, how do we—are people interested in sciences and math now, do you find?

Mr. Foggin. What I like to do—and Tom can probably attest to this—"All in the name of science," he says—I'll take kids in the hallway, and we'll push them on scooters and talk about force and acceleration. We'll go to the gym and throw medicine balls in the air and talk about potential energy and kinetic energy. We swing on ropes and talk about pendulums and harmonic motion. I try to make things active

and fun and keep science fun, and sometimes you don't even realize you're learning.

The President. Yes, practical—with a practical application.

Mr. Foggin. Yes, a lot of hands on.

The President. One of the things he's talking about is going to businesses—we call them State Scholar programs. We're going to talk about how to get other businesses involved here in a minute. But what businesses are interested in is they want a high school to be ready to—be capable of training people so they can hire them. That's what they want, and so we've got what's called State Scholar programs, which is a collaborative effort between high schools and school districts and businesses to encourage rigorous curriculum that matters. That's kind of what you were doing when you went to the plant. You had business executives say, let us help figure out——

Mr. Foggin. We met with employers all around this area and asked them, "What do you want from employees? Let's see some of your employees." And we spent about a week with them to see exactly what it is they do, what skills they need, and then we all got back together at the end and said, "Hey, everything we saw was"——

The President. See, that's a smart way to run a high school. It's a practical way to run a high school. It says, "Look, we're going to make sure that kids who come out of here not only can read and write, but they're going to have the basis so they can become employees." As this job base expands—and it's expanding—as new jobs are being created, we've got to get it right here in high school.

It starts with making sure kids can read early. I mean—and that's what's happening. It will help when we have intervention programs all around the country to make sure that the literacy levels are high enough to become—so people can at least fill out the forms when it comes to finding work. But we need to make sure we stay focused on math and science.

And that's why I'm so—I appreciate Dave being here. Thanks for what you do. I love both your spirits, and thanks for teaching. Appreciate you coming.

We've got a man from Atlanta, Georgia, right here sitting next to the President. Gene Bottoms—he is the senior vice president of what's called the Southern Regional Education Board. It is a—well, he can tell you what it is. But he is involved with working with school districts around the country to encourage them to put in place rigorous academic programs. Is that an accurate description?

James E. "Gene" Bottoms. That's a big part of it.

The President. All right. Well, tell them what you do.

[*Mr. Bottoms made brief remarks.*]

The President. Nationally, only 68 percent of the children who start from the ninth grade will graduate from high school on time. In other words, West Virginia is doing really well.

[*Mr. Bottoms made further remarks.*]

The President. Thanks for coming. Good job.

We've got Joe Badgley with us. He is the dean of academic affairs. You still the interim president?

Joseph L. Badgley. Yes, sir.

The President. You're still the interim president, although he named his successor yesterday or today?

Dr. Badgley. My successor was named yesterday.

The President. Yes, we've got you coming and going. Anyway—[*laughter*]—thanks for coming. He is at West Virginia University at Parkersburg. And tell us about the program you've got here. Just let us—let her go.

[*Dr. Badgley made brief remarks.*]

The President. So what does that mean for a mom or a dad, or what does it mean for the student when that happens?

Dr. Badgley. Well, one of the great things about the program is that many of the high schools choose to give graduation credit so that the students are earning credits toward graduation from high school at the same time they're earning college credit, which is why the program is often referred to as dual credit. And it's important to note that those courses are delivered at deeply discounted tuition rates, which means that students can graduate from high school with as much as a semester of college work completed at a substantial savings to themselves and to their families.

The President. Yes, that's a really smart idea. And how hard is it for the high school students? I mean, if somebody is sitting out there listening who says, "Gosh, I may want to get my child, who's a sophomore in high school, to think about this," is it a steep hill to climb, or is it—obviously, if 900 kids are going, they've had pretty good success passing the courses.

Dr. Badgley. It's a very popular program, and the students—the program is open to high school juniors and seniors who have a 2.8 grade point average and the recommendation of their principal or their counselor to participate in the program.

The President. Yes, that's neat. What are you doing for worker training? Can you share some of the ideas with the citizens here in this community about why you're important and useful and necessary?

[*Dr. Badgley made further remarks.*]

The President. Yes. See, I like to tell people the community college systems are available, affordable, and they're flexible. In other words, they're able to change their curriculum in order to meet the needs of the job requirements or the job needs here. And it's a really good asset. And the thing that's so impressive about the utilization of this good asset is they hooked up with a high school—high schools here. So people have got all kinds of opportunities.

Listen, I hope you're as optimistic about the future of the country as I am. You just heard some, I think, incredibly positive news about your community. You've got people who are raising the bar, people who are making sure that the course load is relevant to the jobs of the 21st century, people who are using the asset base, the education asset base, in a wise way to make sure that every child has got an opportunity to realize the great promise of the country.

We live in the most fabulous nation on the face of the Earth, and one of the reasons why is because we're a nation that believes in the worth of every person, regardless of their background. We're a nation that believes in the potential of every person. We want every child to learn to read, write, and add and subtract. We want every child to have the curriculum necessary to be able to realize his or her dreams. That's what we want in America.

We're also a great nation because we've got fantastic values. And one of the values we hold dear is the value of freedom. We love our freedom. We understand our freedom. We will never relinquish our freedom.

Thank you all for coming. May God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:58 p.m. in the school's gymnasium. In his remarks, he referred to Lance Cpl. Stephen Ferguson, USMC; and Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan.

Statement on Senate Passage of Individuals With Disabilities Education Improvement Legislation
May 13, 2004

I am pleased that the Senate passed the "Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act," which would continue to build on the great progress we have made in helping children with disabilities achieve their full potential. By working together to open doors for citizens with disabilities, we can help fulfill the promise of our great Nation.

This legislation will further promote educational opportunities for children with disabilities. I am committed to working together with students, parents, teachers, schools, and communities to ensure that all children are given every chance to learn and to reach their full potential, including children with disabilities.

I urge the House and Senate to meet in a timely manner in order to reach agreement on a final legislative package that I can sign into law this year.

Remarks at the American Conservative Union 40th Anniversary Gala
May 13, 2004

Thank you all very much. Thanks a lot. I'm honored to join you here for the 40th anniversary of the American Conservative Union. I bring greetings from the A team in my family, Laura Bush. I am a—you got stuck with the junior varsity. [*Laughter*] I'm a lucky man to be married to Laura. She is a fabulous person, great mom, great wife, and I think she deserves 4 more years as the First Lady.

I just left a meeting with our fabulous Vice President, and he sends his best. He's still pretty proud of his last year in the House, when he received a 100-percent rating from the ACU. He didn't mention that one when you gave him a 90. [*Laughter*] The ACU doesn't rate Presidents, but a President can rate you. This is a fine group of decent citizens, principled citizens, and tonight I am proud to stand with the ACU.

And I appreciate my friend David Keene, the chairman. This is his 20th anniversary. He is the longest serving chairman in ACU history. As one of his predecessors said about David's long tenure, "So long as it's not a paying job, he won't have any competition." [*Laughter*]

I met David's daughter, Private 1st Class Lisa Keene. And I'm proud that she is volunteering in the United States Army, but not nearly as proud as her dad.

I appreciate being up here with some fine Members of Congress. Senator Mitch McConnell, the dinner cochair, good to see you, Mitch. Thank you. I see Senator Jim Bunning is here today. Thank you for cochairing this as well. I'm pulling for you in the reelection. I know Chris Cox is here as well. Congressman Cox is a fine Member of the Congress and a good friend. And of course, former ACU chairman—I don't think he was the guy that gave me that quote, by the way—and that would be Congressman Phil Crane. Appreciate you being here. I see other Members of the Senate and the House who are here. Thanks for coming; good to see you all.

I know members of my administration are here. I see Kay James, who's the Director of the Office of Personnel Management. I appreciate you being here, Kay. John

Bolton, the Under Secretary of State of Arms Control and International Security—[*applause*]. I told you we were going to get out of the ABM Treaty—[*laughter*]—and we did. And I want to thank you for your help.

I appreciate being here with a member of the ex-Governors club—I'm a member too—[*laughter*]—in my friend Jim Gilmore. Good to see you, Jimmy. Thanks for being here.

I like to be around celebrities. You know, I don't get out much. [*Laughter*] So it's good to rub elbows with Snow. [*Laughter*] And I appreciate the president of Catholic University, Father David O'Connell, for coming as well. I'm honored you're here.

Some here tonight were there for that first meeting of the ACU in the fall of 1964. Back then, as David mentioned, you weren't feeling too good about the President from Texas. As a matter of fact, you stood behind a good man from Arizona, Barry Goldwater. You knew that the principles he represented, freedom and limited Government and national strength, would eventually carry the day, and you were right. And that day came when President Ronald Reagan—I might add, supported by a great Vice President—[*laughter*]—came to Washington, DC. President Reagan taught America the power of an optimistic spirit. He also understood the power of ideas to transform our country and to change the world.

The conservative movement has become the dominant intellectual force in American politics, on the strength of writers and thinkers like Whittaker Chambers and Bill Buckley and Russell Kirk. The movement has inspired many hundreds of fine Americans to run for office and to serve in government. It's easy to understand why. On the fundamental issues of our time, conservatives have been right. Conservatives were right that the cold war was a contest of good and evil. And behind the Iron Curtain, people did not want containment; they awaited for liberation. Conservatives were right that the free enterprise system is the path to prosperity and that free enterprise is the economic system consistent with human freedom and human dignity. Conservatives were right that a free society is sustained by the character of its people, which means we must honor the moral and religious heritage of our great Nation.

These convictions, once defended by a few, are now broadly shared by Americans. And I am proud to advance these convictions and these principles as I stand for reelection in 2004.

I'm looking forward to the campaign. I'm looking forward to taking our message to the American people. And it's going to be a tough campaign. I need your help. I'm running for a reason. You're about to hear why. I've got a purpose to be your President for 4 more years. I'm running against a person who has got a lot of experience. He just shares a different philosophy from us.

When the nonpartisan National Journal did his ratings, they found that my opponent had the most liberal record of all 100 United States Senators. That's a heck of a feat. [*Laughter*] It isn't very easy to make Ted Kennedy the conservative Senator from Massachusetts.

My opponent has earned more than Senator Kennedy's endorsement. You may have heard he claims to have picked up some endorsement from foreign leaders as well. [*Laughter*] He just won't give us their names. He did drop a hint the other day on national TV when he was asked about the leaders. "What I said is true," is what he said—he, my opponent. "What I said is true. I mean, you can go to New York City, and you can be in a restaurant, and you can meet a foreign leader." [*Laughter*] I've got a hunch this whole thing might be a case of mistaken identity. [*Laughter*] Just because somebody has an accent—[*laughter*]—a nice suit, and a good table at a fancy restaurant doesn't make him a foreign leader. [*Laughter*]

Whoever these mystery men are, they're not going to be deciding the election. The American people will be deciding this election. And great events will turn on this election. The man who sits in the Oval Office will set the course of the war on terror and the direction of our economy. The security and prosperity of America are at stake. The voters this year are going to have a clear choice. It's an unmistakable choice between keeping the tax relief that is moving our economy forward or putting the burden of higher taxes back on the American people. It is a choice between an America that leads the world with strength and confidence or an America that is uncertain in the face of danger.

The other side hasn't offered much yet in the way of clear strategies to win the war or to expand our economy. Thus far, all we've heard is old bitterness and outbursts, instead of calm debate. They will learn that anger is not an agenda for America's future.

I look forward to taking on the big issues, setting big goals, with optimism and resolve and determination. And I will make it clear to the American people, I stand ready to lead this Nation for 4 more years.

A big issue for every family in America is the Federal tax burden. With the largest tax relief since Ronald Reagan was President, we've left more money in the hands that earned it. By spending and investing and helping create new jobs, the American people have used their money far better than the Federal Government would have.

This economy is strong, and it is getting stronger. Last month, America added 288,000 new jobs. Manufacturing jobs have increased for 3 straight months. Since August, our economy has added more than 1.1 million new jobs. In the first quarter of 2004, the economy grew at a strong rate of 4.2 percent, and over the past year, economic growth has been the fastest in nearly two decades. Business investment is up. Inflation is low. Mortgage and interest rates are near historic lows. The homeownership rate in America is the highest ever. America's economy is the fastest growing of any major industrialized nation. The tax relief we passed is working.

There's a difference of taxes in this campaign. My opponent has a different view. When we passed an increase in the child credit to help families, he voted no. When we reduced the marriage penalty, he voted against it. When we created a lower 10-percent bracket for working families, he voted no. When we reduced taxes on dividends that helps our senior citizens, he said no. When we gave small businesses tax incentive to expand and hire, he voted against it. When we phased out the death tax, he voted no. I think we got a trend here. [*Laughter*]

It's easier to get a "yes" vote out of him when it comes to raising taxes. That's his record. Senator Kerry has voted over 350 times for higher taxes on the American people. He supported higher gas taxes 11 times and once favored a tax increase of 50 cents a gallon. That would cost you another $5 or more every time you fill up your tank. With that kind of money, you'd think he'd throw in a free car wash. [*Laughter*]

My opponent has proposed a lot of new spending, and we're counting. At last count, he's proposed $1.9 trillion of new spending, and the election is 6 months away. [*Laughter*] He's going to have to pay for that somehow. Of course, you've heard the old, tired rhetoric of how he's going to pay for it. He's going to tax the rich, but there's not enough money to pay for all those new programs by taxing the rich. He's got what we call a tax gap. That gap needs a lot of money to pay for all his promises. And given his record, there's no doubt where that money is going to come from. It's going to come from the working people in America. The good news is, we're not going to give him the chance.

The American people know what you and I know, that higher taxes would undermine

growth and destroy jobs, just as this economy is getting stronger. No, I have a better idea. We should keep taxes low. We will not raise taxes on the American people.

We must do more to keep this economy growing and make sure America is the best place to do business in the world. We need to maintain spending discipline in our Nation's Capital. I look forward to working with Members of the United States Congress to do just that.

We have a plan to protect small-business owners and employees from frivolous and needless lawsuits. We need tort reform out of the United States Congress.

I've developed plans and a strategy to help control the cost of health care by giving people better access through association health care plans and tax-free health savings accounts. And for the sake of affordability and availability of good medicine, we need to pass medical liability reform out of the United States Senate.

As we are learning at our gas pumps, this country needs an energy plan. We need an energy strategy, one that encourages conservation, one that develops alternative uses for energy, one that modernizes the electricity grid. But we need to make sure we use our coal resources, our natural gas resources, our nuclear resources. We need to become less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

In order to make sure we grow our economy, we need to reject economic isolationism. We've opened our markets, for the sake of consumers, to other countries. Rather than walling ourselves off and stopping the creation of new jobs, we need to get other countries to open up their markets for us. When you're good at something, we ought to promote it. We're good at manufacturing things. We're good at growing things. Our technology sector is the best in the world. We need to be opening up markets so people can find jobs here in America.

What I'm telling you is, if you're interested in job creation in America, you need to reelect a President who's pro-growth, pro-entrepreneur, and pro-small-business, and that's George W. Bush.

I'll tell you something else we understand loud and clear, and that is a hopeful society is one that encourages ownership. We want more people owning their own home. There's a homeownership gap in America. Not enough minorities own their own home. We've got plans to make sure people from all walks of life have a chance to say, "This is my home. Welcome to my home." We want more people owning their own small business. We want people owning and managing their own health care plan. We want younger workers to own and manage their own retirement accounts. See, we understand, when people have assets to call their own, they gain independence and security and dignity. See, I believe in private property so much, I want every American to have some.

On issue after issue, the American people have a clear choice. My opponent is against personal retirement accounts, against giving patients more control over their medical decisions through health savings accounts, against providing parents more choices over education for their children, against tax relief for all Americans. He seems to be against every idea that gives Americans more authority and more choices and more control over our own lives.

The other side will make a lot of promises over the next 6 months. The American people need to listen closely, because there is a theme. Every promise will increase the power of politicians and bureaucrats over your income, over your retirement, over your health care, over your children's education. It's the same old Washington mindset: They'll give the orders, and we'll pay the bills. I've got news for him. America has gone beyond that way of thinking, and we are not going back.

Our future also depends on America's leadership in the world. The momentum of freedom in our time is strong, but we

still face serious dangers. Al Qaida is wounded but not broken. Terrorists are testing our will in Afghanistan and Iraq. Regimes in North Korea and Iran are challenging the peace. If America shows weakness and uncertainty in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This will not happen on my watch.

This Nation is strong and confident in the cause of freedom. We know that freedom is not America's gift to the world; freedom is the Almighty's gift to every man and woman in this world.

Because of our principled stand and clear speaking, today, no friend or enemy doubts the word of the United States of America. America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Afghanistan. The Taliban chose defiance, and the Taliban is no longer in power. America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the dictator in Iraq. He chose defiance, and now he sits in a prison cell.

September the 11th, 2001, taught a lesson I will never forget and America must never forget. America must confront threats before they fully materialize. In Iraq, my administration looked at the intelligence, and we saw a threat. Members of the United States Congress from both political parties looked at the intelligence, and they saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence, and it saw a threat. As a matter of fact, the previous administration and Congress looked at the intelligence and made regime change in Iraq the policy of the United States.

In 2002, the U.N. Security Council, yet again, demanded a full accounting of Saddam Hussein's weapons programs. They remembered what we remembered. They remembered he attacked countries in his neighborhood. They remembered that he paid suiciders to kill innocent Israelis. They remembered he had ties to terrorist organizations. They remembered that he used weapons of mass destruction against his own people. As he had for over a decade, Saddam Hussein refused to comply with the demands of the free world. So I had a choice to make: Either trust the word of a madman, or defend America. Given that choice, I will defend America every time. [*Applause*] Thank you.

My opponent admits that Saddam Hussein was a threat. He just didn't support my decision to remove Saddam from power. Maybe he was hoping Saddam would lose the next Iraqi election. [*Laughter*]

We showed the dictator and a watching world that America means what it says. Because our coalition acted, Saddam's torture chambers are closed. Because we acted, Iraq's weapons programs are ended forever. Because we acted, nations like Libya have gotten the message and have renounced their own weapons programs. Because we acted, an example of democracy is rising at the heart of the—at the very heart of the Middle East. Because we acted, the world is more free, and America is more secure.

We face challenges in Iraq, and there's a reason why. Illegal militias, remnants of the regime, and foreign terrorists are trying to take the power they can never gain by the ballot. They hate free societies. They can't stand the thought of freedom arising in a part of the world that they want to control. They know that a free Iraq will be a major defeat in the war on terror. They find little support amongst the Iraqi people. And they will find no success in their attempt to shake the will of the United States of America. They don't understand us in this country. We will never be intimidated by thugs and assassins.

We're on the offense in Iraq. We will defeat them there so we do not have to face them in our own country. And we're not alone. Other nations are helping. They're helping because they understand the historic opportunity we have. They understand the stakes. They know that a free Iraq will be an agent for change in a part of the world that so desperately needs freedom and peace.

The Iraqi people want to run themselves. And so, on June 30th, a sovereign Iraqi interim government will take office. And there will be tough times ahead. These are not easy tasks. They are essential tasks. And America will finish what we have begun, and we will win this essential victory in the war on terror.

On national security, Americans have a clear choice. My opponent says he approves of bold action in the world but only if other countries don't object. I'm for united action. I believe in building coalitions. We have built coalitions in Afghanistan. We have built coalitions in Iraq. We have built coalitions to stop the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, but I will never turn over America's national security decisions to leaders of other countries.

Some are skeptical that the war on terror is really a war at all. My opponent said, "The war on terror is far less of a military operation, and far more of an intelligence gathering, law enforcement operation." I disagree. Our Nation followed this approach after the World Trade Center was bombed in 1993. The matter was handled in the courts and thought by some to be settled. And yet, the terrorists were still training in Afghanistan. They were still plotting in other nations. They were still drawing up more ambitious plans. After the chaos and carnage of September the 11th, it is not enough to serve our enemies with legal papers. With those attacks, the terrorists and their supporters declared war on the United States of America, and war is what they got.

Winning the war requires us to give our troops the best possible support. I want to thank the Members of Congress who are here for supporting the $87 billion appropriations, called a supplemental, that I encouraged them to spend last fall. We owe it to our troops to support them. Not everybody voted for the 87 billion, however. When asked why my opponent didn't vote for it, here is what he said: "I actually did vote for the 87 billion, before I voted against it." [*Laughter*] The American President must speak clearly and mean what he says.

Our men and women in the military are taking great risks on our behalf. We've got a fantastic United States military. The conduct of a few inside an Iraqi prison was disgraceful. Their conduct does not represent the character of the men and women who wear our uniform, nor does it represent the character of the United States of America.

At bases across our country and the world, I've had the privilege of meeting with those who defend our country and sacrifice for our security. I've seen their great decency and unselfish courage, and I assure you, ladies and gentlemen, the cause of freedom is in really good hands.

This Nation is prosperous and strong, yet we need to remember that our greatest strength is in the hearts and souls of our citizens. We're strong because of the values we try to live by, courage and compassion, reverence and integrity. We're strong because of the institutions that help give us direction and purpose, our families, our schools, and our religious congregations. These values and institutions are fundamental to our lives, and they deserve the respect of our Government.

We stand for the fair treatment of faith-based groups so they can receive Federal support for their works of compassion and healing. We stand for welfare reforms that require work and strengthen marriage, which have helped millions of Americans find independence and dignity. We stand for a culture of life in which every person matters and every person counts. We stand for institutions like marriage and family, which are the foundations of our society.

And we stand for judges who strictly and faithfully interpret the law. I have nominated people from all walks of life to serve on our bench, highly qualified, decent Americans, men and women who will not undermine democracy by legislating from the bench. Yet, because a small group of

United States Senators are willfully obstructing the process, many of my nominees have been forced to wait months, years, for an up-or-down vote. The needless delays in the system are harming the administration of justice, and they are deeply unfair to the nominees themselves. It is time for liberal Senators to stop playing politics with American justice.

The culture of this country is changing. It is changing from one that has said, "If it feels good, do it," and, "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each of us understands we are responsible for the decisions we make in life. If you are fortunate enough to be a mother or father, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart. If you're worried about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you're responsible for doing something about it. If you are a CEO in corporate America, you are responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And in the responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourself.

For all Americans, these years in our history will always stand apart. There are quiet times in the life of a nation when little is expected of its leaders. These aren't one of those times. You and I are living in a period when the stakes are high, the challenges are difficult, a time when firm resolve is needed.

None of us will ever forget that week when one era ended and another began. On September the 14th, 2001, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers. It is a day that I will never forget. There were firefighters and policemen in the crowd shouting, "Whatever it takes." A guy in a hardhat looked at me and said, "Don't let me down." As we all did that day, these men and women searching through the rubble took it personally. I took it personally. I have a responsibility that goes on. I will never relent in bringing justice to our enemies. I will defend the security of America, whatever it takes.

In these times, I've also been witness to the character of this Nation. Not so long ago, some had their doubts about the American character, our capacity to meet serious challenges or to serve a cause greater than self-interest. But Americans have given their answer. I've seen the unselfish courage of our troops. I've seen the heroism of Americans in the face of danger. I've seen the spirit of service and compassion renewed in our country. And we've all seen our Nation unite in common purpose when it mattered most.

We will need all these qualities for the work ahead. We have a war to win, and the world is counting on us to lead the cause of freedom and peace. We have a duty to spread opportunity to every corner of this country. This is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it, and we know that for our blessed land, the best days lie ahead.

May God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:05 p.m. at the J.W. Marriott Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to former Gov. James S. Gilmore III of Virginia.

Remarks at a Victory 2004 Luncheon in Bridgeton, Missouri
May 14, 2004

The President. Thanks for coming. Please be seated. As Kimmy Brauer said, we have done extremely well with a few people. [*Laughter*] This is the way we like to do

it in politics. I want to thank you all for your generosity. I want to thank you for helping to make sure that our ground game in the great State of Missouri is as good as it can possibly be.

We won the State in 2000, and there's no doubt in my mind we're going to carry it in 2004, and one of the reasons why is because of your generosity. And another reason why is because we're going to be really well-organized. And finally, a reason why is because our message is so positive and hopeful for all the citizens of this State. I mean, when the campaign is all said and done, people will realize we've got a plan to make the country safer and stronger and better.

I think there's a lot of reasons to put me back in office for 4 more years. But perhaps the most important reason to send me back up there is so that Laura can be the First Lady for 4 more years. She is really, really a great soul and a wonderful wife, a fantastic mother, and is really making a difference in a lot of people's lives. Both of us have come to realize that the President and the First Lady have got a fantastic opportunity to affect people's lives in positive ways.

I'm going to Concordia University Wisconsin after this, to give the graduation speech. My speech is on compassion. My speech will be an attempt to remind the graduates that they can change our society with good hearts. And Laura and I have come to realize that by asking people to serve and by calling on people to teach children to read or, in her case, making sure that literacy is spread throughout the country through the library—a vibrant library system, for example, that we can make a positive difference. And she's making a heck of a good difference for the country, and I'm really proud of her. And she sends her love, by the way.

And the Vice President sends his best. We have got a great Vice President. He's a steady—as we say in west Texas, he's a steady hand. [*Laughter*] He's a good man, and I'm proud to serve with him, and I look forward to serving with him for 4 more years.

I also have got to tell you the Attorney General, from the great State of Missouri, is doing a fabulous job—John Ashcroft. I'm proud of his service.

And I appreciate Foxy and Marilyn. I call him "Foxy." I hope that's all right. Turn the cameras off. [*Laughter*] I appreciate Sam and Marilyn for their friendship, and I want to thank you for your help here. I appreciate the Ambassador and Kimmy for opening up this garage. [*Laughter*] I'm glad you polished the vehicles for us today. [*Laughter*] But thanks for doing that.

I love being with my family, and as you've heard me say before, I lucked out when it came to uncles, particularly with Bucky Bush and Patty—thank you all for coming—and cousins Scott and Lindsey, as well as George Walker is with us. I appreciate all of my family members for hanging in there with me.

I appreciate Ann Wagner, who is the co-chairman of the entire Republican Party, and she is doing a great job. My friend Mercer Reynolds is here. He is the national finance chairman of the Victory Committee. He was chairman of the Bush-Cheney Committee, and then we finished that task, and then we gave him another task. He did such a good job that we said, "Stay involved," and he is. Where are you, Merce? There you are, right there. Thanks for coming, great to see you. And of course, I'm proud to be here with Rosemary's little boy, Jack. [*Laughter*] That would be Jack Oliver. He's doing a great job. And he's the national finance vice-chairman, which means Mercer tells him what to do, and then he goes and does it—[*laughter*]—or he tells Mercer what to do. [*Laughter*]

I'm so honored members of the congressional delegation are here. I remember campaigning hard with Jim Talent, feeling very comfortable that he would make a great Senator, and he is making a great

United States Senator. I'm proud you're here, Senator. Thanks for coming. And wife, Brenda, is with us here as well. Thank you, Brenda.

Todd Akin is the Congressman—are you the Congressman from this particular spot? You are? This is your district?

Representative W. Todd Akin. Technically, the line was redrawn a little bit. We're just south, but we're very close. [*Laughter*]

The President. We're close to Congressman Akin's district. [*Laughter*] I appreciate you coming, Todd. You're doing a great job, and his wife, Lulli, is with us. Thanks for coming.

And finally, Kenny Hulshof is with us, along with Renee. Kenny, thanks for coming. I'm proud you're here. Thanks for coming to the big city.

Finally, Ann Dickinson is the national committeewoman, is with us. Ann, thanks for your leadership. It's important to point out the grassroots activists because they're the people who are going to turn out the vote. My job is to carry the message. Your job is to turn out the vote, and we're counting on you. As I said, we did a great job here in Missouri last time. There's no doubt in my mind we will carry this State again.

I intend to spend time here, working here. I have done so in the past. As you might remember, I fired a slider at them the other day at Busch Stadium. A little disappointed they jerked me out of the game early—[*laughter*]—but I enjoyed it. And I love coming to the State. I think as we campaign, it's important to spend a little time looking back—but not much. The only time a candidate should look backwards is to remind people about the seriousness of the intentions when you move forward. In other words, you look back to say to people, "I can handle challenges." On the other hand, you say that to say, "And here's what I intend to do." And since you've done what you said you were going to do in the past, it adds credibility to the message.

And we've done some things in the past 3 years that I think it's important for you to remind your friends about. First, the President has got to put together an administration that can handle the good and the bad. In other words, the ability to react to the uncertain is an important part of the Presidency. I put together a fabulous team, really capable, honorable, decent people, people from all walks of life. We've got some of the—I think I've empowered more women than any President, at least empowered women in high positions, than any President. That may be a somewhat of exaggeration, but I'm telling you, when you listen to the Condi Rices of the world or the Margaret Spellings of the world or the Harriet Miers of the world—these are all senior members of my team who give me good advice. And the team I brought together are there to serve the country first and only. And that's important for the American people to understand.

And thankfully, we had a good team, because we had to face some very difficult challenges. We faced a recession. When we came into office, the country was headed into recession, and the stock market had been declining since March of 2000. And so we acted. I mean, instead of kind of wringing our hands trying to figure out what to do, we acted. We went to the Congress, delivered historic tax relief. The recession was one of the shallowest in economic history, and as result of the tax relief, our economy is strong.

And then we found corporate crimes. And I know everybody here agrees with me that the actions of a few of the corporate citizens just needed to be taken care of in a firm way. And we passed laws—we worked with both Republicans and Democrats to pass corporate reforms, good, strong corporate reforms. The message is clear that we're not going to tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America.

The corporate decisionmaking that was not up to standards, up to high standards that we expect in America, affected us. It affected our economic growth, and it affected the country in a negative way. It just did. But we're recovering from that period because we took action.

Obviously, September the 11th was a defining moment in this administration, just like it was a defining moment in the country. We saw war and grief arrive on one day, in one moment. And—but we took action. I realized we were at war. And we called countries together and put our own military in action and have taken down a lot of the Al Qaida network. And we're after them to this day, and we'll stay after them so long as I'm the President.

We confronted the dangers of state-sponsored terror. We saw threats to our national security, and as a result of the action we took, two of the most violent and dangerous regimes on the face of the Earth have been removed. Fifty million people have been liberated. I mean, this country is not only protecting ourselves, but we are proudly the armies of liberation, so people can live in freedom around the world.

When we got to Washington, the military was underfunded, and it wasn't—it was underappreciated. It was a problem that I recognized, and we acted again. We worked with Congress, and I want to thank the Members of Congress here who recognized the need for us to provide for defense budgets that would make sure our military had the resources they deserved and needed. And today, no one can doubt the skill or the strength or the spirit of the United States military.

So what I'm telling you is, is that we—I've made decisions. We've dealt with problems. I will argue the world is better off because of decisionmaking that I have made. But it's important for the American people to realize that whoever holds the Oval Office will deal with problems that we may never foresee. And you must be prepared to deal with those problems, and I have shown the American people I'm capable of dealing with them.

See, I believe the President's job is to confront problems, not to pass them on to future Presidents and future generations. That's the job of a leader. That's how I have led, and that's how I will continue to lead. Now, we've got a tough race, and it's an important race, because the person who sits in the Oval Office will set the course of the war on terror and will make decisions about the direction of our economy. In other words, the way I like to put it is, the security and prosperity of America are at stake in this election.

And I'm running against a person who has been in Washington a long time, which means he's experienced. It also means he's taken positions on issues. He's been there long enough to take both sides of just about every issue—[*laughter*]—had there been a third side—[*laughter*]—kind of the ultimate triangulation. [*Laughter*]

You know, I was—we had an interesting debate the other day—or not a debate, a discussion about the role of foreign leaders in the campaign. I don't know if you remember that. He claimed he had gotten some endorsements from foreign leaders, and he just wouldn't tell us who they were. Now, he was quoted about this on a TV show the other day or a news show, and here's what he said. He said, "You know, what I said is true. I mean, you can go to New York City, and you can be in a restaurant, and you can meet a foreign leader." [*Laughter*] I think this is a case of mistaken identity. [*Laughter*] I mean, just because somebody has an accent—[*laughter*]—or a nice suit or a fancy table does not make him a foreign leader. [*Laughter*]

The good news is, foreign leaders—or mistaken foreign leaders—won't be deciding the election. The people of this country will decide this election. I look forward to taking our message to the people. I've got a message that is confident and optimistic and positive, and that's what I'm going to

be talking about. And there will be a clear choice. There will be a choice, for example, between keeping the tax relief that is working or taxing the American people. It will be a choice between an America that leads the world with strength and confidence or an America that is uncertain in the face of danger.

And this is a campaign that is going to require a—candidates to lay out the strategy to win the war on terror and a strategy to make sure our economy is the best place in the world to do business so people can find work. And yet, thus far in the debate, all we've heard is angry partisan rhetoric. And my opponent will find out that anger is not an agenda for the future of the country. The American people want to know what you stand for, not what you stand against.

And so people learned what I stood for when it came time to dealing with an economy that was slowing down. See, I understand a big issue for every family is the Federal tax burden. And because we left more money in the hands that earned it, the economy is strong, and it's getting stronger. The way I like to put it is, by spending and investing and to—helping create new jobs, the American people have used their money far better than the Federal Government would have.

It's an important part of our philosophy to trust people with their own money. And the results are good, and they're getting better. I mean, last month, we created—America added 288,000 new jobs. These were jobs that were not—these jobs were created because the entrepreneurial spirit is strong. People have got confidence in the future. After all, manufacturing jobs, which had been declining, are now increasing. The economy grew at 4.2 percent, and over the past year, economic growth has been the fastest in nearly two decades. That's strong growth.

I'll tell you another statistic that I love is the fact that homeownership rates in America are the highest ever. It is a fantastic statistic, when you think about it. I mean, we want people owning their own home. We want people owning their own business. We want people owning their own—and managing their own retirement accounts. I mean, we want ownership that's good for the country.

The economy is strong. It is getting stronger. The tax relief we passed is working, and the fundamental question is, how are you going to keep the economy strong? What are you going to do about it? This is going to be a good debate for the country to hear, because the truth of the matter is, I'm running against a fellow who has got a record on taxes. First of all, he voted against every one of the tax decreases I proposed. He voted against raising the child credit, which helps families. He voted against lowering the marriage penalty. He voted against creating the new 10-percent tax rate. He voted against getting rid of the death tax. He voted against small-business incentives. He has voted against every single tax decrease that helped the economy grow. Yet, when it came time to voting for taxes, he's got a record there too. He voted for increasing taxes 350 times as a United States Senator.

And here we are in the campaign, and we're beginning to tote up the amount of money he's promising the American people. See, it's easy to get in the campaign and say, "I promise you I'm going to spend money here, and I promise you I'm spending money there." We've submitted our budget. The Congress has got my budget. They've got my promises, which shows we can cut the deficit in half by 5 years. He hasn't submitted a budget yet, but we're helping him submit one because we're watching every promise. He's promised over $1.9 trillion of new spending thus far. And we've got 6 months to go. [*Laughter*] We're just getting started.

And he says he's going to pay for it by taxing the rich. Now, we've heard that rhetoric before. You can't raise even close to $1.9 trillion by taxing the rich. So I will

continue to remind the people that there's a difference between what he has promised and what he can raise by taxing the rich—it's called a tax gap. And given his record of voting for tax increases 350 times for the American people, he's going to fill the tax gap by taxing the working people of this country, and it's an issue.

The good news is, the American people understand that if we raise taxes now, it will wreck the economic growth and make it hard to find work. The good news is, he's not going to have a chance to raise taxes on the American people because we're not going to give him the chance.

I mentioned to you that the task of a President is to make sure that economic growth is vibrant and strong not only this year but in years to come. The role of our Government is to create an environment in which small businesses can grow to be big businesses, in which people feel comfortable risking capital. It's not—the role of the Government is not to create wealth but an environment in which people are comfortable about risking capital to realize their dreams.

And so I look forward to the debate about how to make sure that the economic growth we have today is sustainable. One is, we've got to have fiscal discipline in Washington, and I look forward to working with the Members of Congress to see that that's the case. Secondly, we need tort reform. We need tort reform at the Federal level, and we need tort reform at the State levels as well. I have been pushing for tort reform in the Halls of Congress. I will continue to push for tort reform in the Halls of Congress. We need asbestos litigation reform. We need class action reform, and we need medical liability reform as part of a cost containment strategy for health care costs.

The practice of defensive medicine costs our Government billions of dollars a year. In other words, when you have frivolous and junk lawsuits, it causes people to say, "Gosh, in order not to get sued, I will have defensive medicine practices." It not only costs us billions of dollars at the Federal level and, therefore, the taxpayers billions of dollars; it makes it very difficult for small businesses to grow to be big businesses and large businesses to feel comfortable about hiring new people.

As well I appreciate Senator Talent leading the charge on association health care plans, which will enable small businesses to pool risk across jurisdictional boundaries to make sure that the small-business employee can have affordable health care. I'm also a strong proponent of what's called health savings accounts. I truly believe they're going to help change the marketplace for health care. On the one hand, they make sure that the patient-doctor relationship is the cornerstone of health care decisionmaking, not the Federal Government. On the other hand, it provides good incentive for people to reduce the cost of health care. So we've got a strategy to make sure that America is the best place in the world to do business by containing the cost of health care.

Listen, when you go to the gasoline pumps here in America, it makes you realize we need a—that Congress needs to implement the plan I submitted, an energy plan. We've laid out a strategy to make us less dependent on foreign sources of energy; yet it can't get out of the Congress. I'm not blaming the Members of Congress here or Senator Talent, but it's stuck. We need an energy bill on my desk that will do a couple of things. We need to encourage conservation. We need alternative sources of energy.

Listen, I would love to be in a position to be able to say, "The corn harvest in Missouri is up and, therefore, we're less dependent on foreign sources of energy. Soybeans are plentiful this year. We're less dependent on foreign sources of energy because of biodiesel." And this is all very possible. In the meantime, while we wait for technologies to come on line that are

cost effective, we need to use our coal resources wisely. Therefore, we need clean coal technology to be expanded. We need to be exploring for natural gas, which I'm confident we can do in our hemisphere, in our country in environmentally friendly ways.

It seems like to me we ought to be using technology to make sure that our nuclear power industry can build safe nuclear powerplants. But it makes sense to me to be expanding nuclear power, which is clean and reliable and doesn't—it makes us less dependent on foreign—what I'm telling you is, in order to be competitive, not only this year but for decades to come, the Congress needs to pass an energy bill, and this country needs to become less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

Finally, an issue is the trade issue. It's very important for the President to be confident about America's capacity and ability to compete overseas. The tendency is to isolate us from the world. When people say, "Oh, gosh, we've got—you know, trade is tough; therefore, let's build up walls and barriers," that, to me, would make it very difficult for people to find good jobs. In order to expand the job base, we've got to be opening up markets rather than shutting down markets.

Listen, Presidents before me have made the decision to open up our country's markets to foreign goods because it's good for consumers. If you're an American consumer, you've got more to choose from; you're probably going to get a better product at a better price. If that's the case, why don't we get countries to treat us the same? That's the policy of this administration. We're vigorously opening up other markets so our Missouri farmers—and by the way, the farm economy is really strong right now. And one of the reason why it's strong is because we're selling Missouri products overseas.

We've got to be confident in our ability to compete. We must not be pessimistic about our approach in the world. And so good trade policy, in my judgment, will mean good, high-paying jobs for America. What I'm telling you is, is that this campaign is going to be one that requires—will be competing visions about how to make sure that the job base is strong by making sure America is the best place in the world to do business.

The future also depends on our leadership in the world, and this is going to be an important part of the campaign, a discussion about how best America should lead. Al Qaida is wounded but not broken. And it's very important for the American people to know that. There are terrorists who test our will in Iraq and Afghanistan. There are regimes in North Korea and Iran that are challenging the peace. If this country shows weakness and uncertainty in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This isn't going to happen on my watch. The—I think the Nation is strong and confident in the cause of freedom, and I intend to keep it that way.

An essential part of the foreign policy of this country is that we understand that freedom is not America's gift to the world, that freedom is the Almighty God's gift to each man and woman in this world. And as a responsible citizen of the world, we have the responsibility to help people live free lives. I believe freedom changes the world. I know free societies are peaceful societies.

The other thing that's important is for the President to speak clearly and mean what he says. Today, nobody, friend or enemy, doubts the word of the United States of America. We gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Afghanistan. They defied the ultimatum, and now they're no longer in power. The world is better off for it. America is more secure, and as importantly, the people of Afghanistan are more free.

Remember what conditions were like prior to my decision. We had young girls in that country who had no education at all because the Taliban refused to let them

go to school. It's hard for the American people to understand that people could be so barbaric in their behavior, that this is the way these people were. And for the good of those young girls and for the good of people who have dreams and aspirations, just like we have dreams and aspirations in the country—in this country, the Taliban are gone.

And so are the training camps and safe havens. I laid out the Bush doctrine, which said, "If you harbor a terrorist, if you feed a terrorist, you're just as guilty as the terrorist," and we enforced that doctrine for the sake of peace and freedom.

We also gave an ultimatum to the dictator in Iraq. And he chose defiance. Of course, he had a chance to make the decision; the decision was his to make. And now, he sits in a prison cell.

It is very important for the country never to forget the lessons of September the 11th: One, there's an enemy which hates us that must be pursued at all costs. And two, that we must confront threats before they fully materialize. That's what—one of the things that changed on September the 11th as far as policy goes. In the past, we could take a look and see a problem and maybe hope it would go away, because we were protected by oceans. Or it could be a problem, and maybe just—it wouldn't affect us. It might affect somebody else but not America. That changed on that day.

In Iraq, we looked at intelligence and saw a threat. The Congress looked at the intelligence—both Republicans and Democrats in Congress looked at the intelligence; they saw the threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence; it saw a threat. And so, in 2002, the U.N. Security Council said, once again, to Saddam Hussein, "a full accounting of your weapons programs."

The reason the world acted—because not only did we look at intelligence, we remembered the nature of the man. We knew that he had attacked his neighborhood. We knew had paid suiciders to go in and kill innocent Israelis. We knew he had terrorist ties. The person responsible for the Berg death, Zarqawi, was in and out of Baghdad prior to our arrival, for example. But we also remembered vividly the fact that he used weapons of mass destruction against his own people. We—it was just not the United States who remembered the fact. The United Nations Security Council, in a 15-to-nothing vote, remembered that.

And so they said to Saddam Hussein, "Give us a full accounting of what you've got," and he defied the world again. This wasn't the first time that he defied the world. He had defied the world over and over. So I have a choice to make: Trust him, hope he changes his habits, or defend the country. Given that choice, I will defend America every time.

Because we acted, we showed a watching world that America means what it says. And I believe, therefore, the world will be more peaceful. Because we acted, Saddam's torture chambers are closed. It's important for the American people to remember that. Because we acted, the weapons programs—Iraq's weapons programs are ended forever. That's important for peace and stability in the Middle East. It's important for our own security. Because we acted, countries like Libya got the message and have renounced their weapons programs. Because we acted, democracy is rising in the heart of the very Middle East. What I'm telling you is, because we acted, America is more secure and the world is more peaceful.

We have tough work in Iraq. And there's a reason why. There are elements of Saddam's crowd and foreign fighters who fear a free society. They can't stand the thought of living in a—they can't stand the thought of Iraq being free. It would dash their hopes. It would make it impossible for them to realize their grand ambition of dominating through hate and murder. They—and they're tough fighters, but so are we. And so are a lot of Iraqis.

The Iraqi people want to be free. They're glad to get rid of Saddam, and

they obviously want to run their own country. If I were them, I would want to run my own country too. And that's why June 30th transfer date is a solemn date. We will transfer sovereignty on June the 30th. We'll help the Iraqis, of course. In the meantime, these killers are trying to shake our will. That's what you're seeing. They want us to be intimidated by their barbaric behavior. They want us to leave. They want us to break a promise. That's just not the way I think, and it's not the way Americans think. We're not going to be intimidated by these thugs and assassins. We will follow our strategy of a free Iraq.

America will be more secure when Iraq is free. These are historic times. It's an historic opportunity. I tell the story about—to make my point there—about a dinner I had with Prime Minister Koizumi, the Prime Minister of Japan, who is a good friend and a good fellow. He and I were talking about how to keep the peace in the Far East, how to make sure that the Korean Peninsula is nuclear-weapons free. It's an interesting conversation, isn't it, when you're talking about—when the President's father fought the Japanese as a young torpedo bomber, and here I am, talking to the leader of a former enemy about how to make the world more peaceful, what we can do together to help convince Kim Chong-il to get rid of his nuclear weapons program. And during that conversation I realized that someday an American President is going to be talking to a duly elected official from Iraq about how to deal with the threats of that moment, of that era.

These are historic times. Iraq will be free. The world will be different when Iraq is free. People say, "Can you win the war on terror?" Of course we can. We can win the war on terror by being strong and never yielding to the enemy. But we can also win the war on terror by spreading freedom. Free societies are peaceful societies. Free societies are societies that are able to defeat hopelessness and despair.

There's a difference in this election about decisionmaking when it comes to national security matters. I'm running against a fellow who said he approves of bold action in the world but only if other countries do not object. My opponent says that. I believe in united action. And we have put together strong coalitions for Afghanistan and Iraq—over 30 nations in Iraq right now. I will never turn over America's national security decisions to leaders of other countries.

An issue in this race will be an understanding of the nature of the war we face. My opponent said, "The war on terror is far less of a military operation and far more of an intelligence gathering, law enforcement operation." That's his point of view. I disagree—I disagree. We followed that approach after the World Trade Center was bombed in 1993. That's how the world viewed the bombing, and the matter was handled in the courts and thought by some to be settled. However, the enemy was still planning and plotting. They were drawing up ambitious plans. After the chaos and carnage of September the 11th, it's not enough to serve enemies with legal papers.

The terrorists and their allies declared war on the country on September the 11th, 2001, and war is what they got. We will use every asset at our disposal—every asset—to defend the security of this country.

And that includes the United States military. We've got a great United States military. The conduct of a few inside the Iraqi prisons was disgraceful, and it does not represent the true character of the American military or the American people. I have had the honor of traveling to bases around the country. I have seen a lot of our troops. I have seen their great decency and their unselfish courage. And I assure you that the hands of—that the cause of freedom and our Nation's security is in really good hands.

Finally, it is very important for the President to understand that even though we're

strong and prosperous—and I'll keep us strong, and I'll do everything I can to keep us prosperous—the strength of the country is in the hearts and souls of our citizens. It is very important for people to—a President to understand that Government can hand out money, but it can't cause people to love one another. And yet, many of the problems of society require love and compassion. I mean, amongst our plenty, there are people who are hurt—who hurt, who've got broken hearts, who are addicted to drugs or alcohol, who wonder whether or not anybody loves them at all. And the best way to solve those problems is to rally the spirit of this country and ask people to love their neighbor just like they'd like to be loved theirselves, is to call upon people to serve their country by helping save lives with love.

No, the strength—if you understand the strength of the country is in the hearts and souls of the people, then you don't rely upon Government alone to help save lives. You rally the armies of compassion, which I have done and will continue to do as the President. I think one of the biggest responsibilities of the Presidency is to capture the American spirit, capture that strength of the country, and ask it to serve.

Today in the speech I'm giving—my speech is on compassion, saying to young kids getting out of college, "Here's your chance to serve the country by saving one soul." See, societies change one heart, one soul at a time. And while one graduate can't do everything, one graduate can do something to be the person that makes a difference in somebody's life.

The country's culture is changing from one that has said, "If it feels good, do it," and, "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to one in which each of us understands we are responsible for the decisions we make in life. I like to call it the responsibility era. See, if you are fortunate enough to be a mom or a dad, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart. It's your responsibility. If you're worried about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you're responsible for doing something about it.

Oftentimes, people say, "Oh, the Federal Government will fix it." No, you're responsible. If you're a corporate CEO, you're responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. It's part of the responsibility society. And as I mentioned, a responsible society is one in which each of us serves our country by loving our neighbor. And it's happening in the country. You know, one of the things you see when you're the President, you see the character of America. And I'm constantly thrilled at the millions of acts of kindness that take place on a daily basis that changes the nature of the country and provides such hope.

I want to be your President. I'm here to thank you for your help. I have a reason to run. We have a war to win. We have a responsibility to spread peace and freedom around the world. I'm going to take this message to the American people across our great country. I'm going to take the message of a vision that says, "Everybody has a shot at the American Dream, not just some but every person," a vision that is strong on education, strong on economic opportunity, a vision that says the ownership society is the cornerstone of a hopeful America.

And finally, I look forward to being the President for 4 more years to continue to tap into the great strength of the country, and that is the—our fellow citizens, the hearts and souls of our citizens. I'm looking forward to this. I'm looking forward to the campaign. I look forward to all aspects of it, and I'm confident, with your help, I'm going to win.

Thank you for coming, and may God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:10 p.m. in the auditorium at the Hunter Engineering Co. Research and Training Center. In his remarks, he referred to Camilla "Kimmy"

Brauer, wife of Hunter Engineering Co. president and former U.S. Ambassador to Belgium Stephen F. Brauer; Sam Fox, Missouri State finance chair, Bush-Cheney '04, Inc., and his wife, Marilyn; Ann Wagner, chairman, and Ann Dickinson, national committeewoman, Missouri Republican Party; American hostage Nicholas Berg, who was killed in Iraq in early May by senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi; Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan; and Chairman Kim Chong-il of North Korea.

Commencement Address at Concordia University Wisconsin in Mequon, Wisconsin

May 14, 2004

Thank you all very much. Dr. Ferry, members of the faculty, trustees, and families, distinguished guests, most importantly, members of the Class of 2004, I appreciate the warm welcome to this fine university and to this great State. Thank you for such a wonderful welcome. I am honored to be with you on graduation day as you become proud alumni of CUW.

I thank you as well for the honorary degree. I kind of like the sound, "Dr. Bush." [*Laughter*] I don't think Laura is going to call me that. [*Laughter*]

My congratulations to my fellow honorees today, especially General Vessey, a fine officer who served our country with distinction and honor.

I'm here today with one of your alumni, the Class of 2000. He can't rise for applause because he's working. But I want his parents to know he's doing a really fine job. And everyone at Concordia can be very proud of Officer Scott Eichstaedt of the United States Secret Service.

I am told that when the name of your commencement speaker was announced on April the 1st—[*laughter*]—a lot of students thought it might be an April Fool's Day joke. [*Laughter*] And some of you may still have doubts. I saw a person when I walked in, said, "Is it him, or is it the guy on 'Saturday Night Live'?" [*Laughter*]

All of you have worked hard and have come far, and you can always be proud of the achievement we mark today. Through it all, you've had a lot of fine people standing with you. This graduating class is a credit to the superb and caring teachers at Concordia. And today we also honor the people who believed in you and prayed for you and paid for you—[*laughter*]—the parents of the Class of 2004.

Many of today's graduates are on your way to full-time ministry, and that commitment is one of the greatest that a man or woman can make. All of the graduates leave Concordia with a commission and a calling. In the Lutheran tradition, all work—in an office, on a farm, in the home, or in the halls of government—should be done in the glory of God. And that is accomplished by doing our work with excellence and care and an awareness of the needs around us.

We find our examples in great lives. Important work in this world can be done by towering figures like Martin Luther, who changed history and your own lives with an act of conscience. Work of lasting value can also be done by a solitary soul, condemned and stripped of all power, like Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Every life holds the possibility of serving God. And in every great life, that possibility is realized in service. After all, Bonhoeffer said, "The Church is the Church only when it exists for others."

This teaching of faith is confirmed in our daily experience. Many of us find that there is much more to life than getting

and keeping. True fulfillment comes with the responsibilities we assume, to care for our families and to love a neighbor as we want to be loved ourselves. This is more than a familiar saying; it is the foundation of a meaningful life.

A person shows his or her character in kindness and charity, and what is true in our lives is also true in the life of our Nation. You can fairly judge the character of society by how it treats the weak, the vulnerable, the most easily forgotten. Our own country, at its best, strives to be compassionate, and this isn't easy. Compassion is not merely a vague feeling of empathy; it is a demanding virtue. It involves action and effort and deep conviction, a conviction as old as Scripture and present at the founding of our country. We believe that everyone has a place and a purpose in this world, that every life matters, that no insignificant person was ever born.

America rejects the ethic of sink or swim. America rejects social Darwinism, because strength is not the same as worth. Our greatest failures as a nation have come when we lost sight of our compassionate ideals in slavery, in segregation, and in every wrong that has denied the value and dignity of life. Our greatest strength as a nation is that we bravely face our flaws and do our best to make things right. Our greatest successes as a nation have come when we broadened the circle of protection and inclusion, and this work is not finished. We will press on until every person shares in the promise of our country.

The mission statement of this university directs each of you towards a life of service to the church and to the world. It's not my place to tell you how best to serve the church, but I do have a few thoughts about how you can make your mark in the world. Wherever you are headed, I urge you to do the work nearest you and help to build a more compassionate society.

First, America needs your efforts and energy in the fight against poverty and despair. A compassionate society does not look away from a man being dragged down by addiction, or a mother being abandoned by the father of the child, or boys and girls with no role models in life who wonder if anyone cares about them. These personal tragedies are often failures of love, and they must be answered with love and caring and kindness. Government can play many important roles, but it cannot take someone's hand and be their friend. You have that power. If you follow this calling, you can help transform our society, one heart, one soul at a time.

This call is heard and followed here in the Milwaukee area at Lutheran Counseling and Family Services. It was founded over 100 years ago to help children in need. Today, it offers services and counseling that help teens and preteens escape drug and alcohol abuse. When children hurt this deeply and this early, they often need an entirely new path, a new way. The CEO of the program, Dr. Chuck Meseck, says this: "The clinical work is important, but in helping a person, faith is what really heals them completely."

Around our country, there are so many people with loving hearts who despair at the suffering they see around them. And so I made a decision: Instead of ignoring or resenting religious charities and faith-based groups, this country will encourage these good works in every way we can. The Federal Government now allows faith-based groups to compete for billions of dollars in social service funding without being forced to change their identity and their mission. We must support the best, the most effective sources of compassion and hope, and we will not discriminate against people of faith.

Second, America needs your good heart in meeting a basic responsibility, to protect and honor life in all its seasons. A compassionate society shows a special concern for those at the beginning of life, those at the end of life, and those who struggle in life with disabilities. Most of you, at some point, will be called to care for a dying

relative or a frail and aging parent or someone close to you with a terrible sickness. Often, in their pain and loneliness, they will feel they are nothing but a burden and worthless to the world, and you will need to show them that's not true. Our worth as human beings does not depend on our health or productivity or independence or any other shifting value the world might apply. Our worth comes from bearing the image of our Maker. And the hardest times of your life may be the most important, when you bear witness to this truth by your sacrifice and loving kindness to another soul.

This commitment to the value of every life also challenges our society. Technologies that have extended life also make treatment decisions harder at the end of life. New methods of research hold promise in treating disease. These innovations show the resourcefulness of humanity, and they must be guided by all the wisdom of humanity. Our standards must be high and clear and fixed. Life is not just a tool or a commodity or a means to other ends. Nothing good or just can be built on the destruction or suffering of others.

These convictions have deep roots in our Nation's founding. Our Declaration of Independence calls life an endowment of the Creator, and on Earth, an unalienable right. Applying this belief has always been a test of our democracy. Your education has prepared you to add to these debates with respect for others and with confidence in your own beliefs. By your voice and by your example, all of you can help to build a culture of life in America.

Third, America needs your idealism to show the good heart of our country to the whole world. A compassionate society sees needs and suffering beyond its borders and cares enough to act. Americans show this care by adopting orphans from other lands, by resettling tens of thousands of refugees each year, by sending surgeons and dentists on medical missions, by spending years living among and serving people in faraway countries. The kingdom you serve is not bounded by coasts or rivers or checkpoints. The hymns you sing are sung in every language. The needs of all the world are your concern, and I hope that, with your generous spirit and global vision, you will point the way for others.

The moral ideals of America are also universal. Because we believe in the rights and dignity of our own citizens, we believe in the rights and dignity of people everywhere. So in Africa and elsewhere, we are leading the fight against AIDS and other diseases. Where there is famine, our country provides food. Where there is desperate poverty, our country provides developmental aid. Where there is natural disaster, even in hostile nations, America is eager to help. And where there is tyranny, oppression, and gathering danger to mankind, America works and sacrifices for peace and freedom. The liberty we prize is not America's gift to the world; it is the Almighty God's gift to all humanity.

At this hour, our fellow citizens are sacrificing for the security and freedom of Afghanistan and Iraq. Their mission is like others we have given to past generations in our military, to defeat the violent and to rescue the innocent. The mission of our military is also vital to the interests of America. We will not allow Afghanistan and Iraq to fall under the control of radicals and terrorists who are intent on our own destruction. On these matters, the compassion and the vital interests of our country speak as one: For the sake of peace and for the sake of security, we stand strong for freedom.

The great events of these historic times can seem remote and beyond the control of individuals. Yet, we have recently seen how much difference, for good or ill, the choices of individual men and women can make. In Iraq, the cruelty of a few has brought discredit to their uniform and embarrassment to our country. The consequences of their failures of character reach well beyond the walls of a prison.

Yet, those failures cannot diminish the honor and achievement of more than 200,000 military personnel who have served in Iraq since the beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom. The character of the men and women who wear our uniform has been shown in countless acts of goodness and decency and unselfish courage. Our American military comes from all parts of the country. Six are members of the graduating class, and we thank them all.

One person can do so much harm or so much good. One person can show the compassion and character of a whole country in an hour of testing. Never doubt that you can make a difference, because the call that comes to you is yours alone. And a great deal depends upon your answer. By bringing care and hope into other lives, you can fill your own life with purpose. By caring for life at every stage, you can make our country a more just and welcoming place. By showing the generosity of America, you can help change the world. Each of you has gifts to offer, and I am confident you will use those gifts where they are needed.

I wish you well on the journey ahead. I thank you for the warm welcome and the honorary degree. I leave today a proud member of the Concordia University Wisconsin Class of 2004.

May God bless you. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:15 p.m. in the field house. In his remarks, he referred to Rev. Dr. Patrick T. Ferry, president, Concordia University Wisconsin; and Gen. John W. Vessey, Jr., USA (Ret.), former Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff. Following his remarks, the President received an honorary doctorate of laws from the university.

The President's Radio Address
May 15, 2004

Good morning. This week, our Nation was sickened by the murder of an American civilian, Nicholas Berg. The savage execution of this innocent man reminds us of the true nature of our terrorist enemy and of the stakes in this struggle. The terrorists rejoice in the killing of the innocent and have promised similar violence against Americans, against all free peoples, and against any Muslims who reject their ideology of murder. Their barbarism cannot be appeased, and their hatred cannot be satisfied. There's only one way to deal with terror: We must confront the enemy and stay on the offensive until these killers are defeated.

And this is precisely what our Armed Forces and the forces of our coalition are doing. In and around Fallujah, U.S. marines are conducting joint patrols with local Iraqis to take back the city from Saddam loyalists and foreign fighters and other militants. In nearby towns, marines are conducting raids to disrupt enemy attacks on our supply routes and to root out anticoalition fighters.

To the south, in and around the cities of Najaf and Karbala, U.S. Army soldiers and Iraqi security forces are systematically dismantling the illegal militia led by the radical cleric Al Sadr that has incited violence and attempted to seize control. Iraqi security forces ejected elements of this militia from a mosque in Karbala that was being used to store ammunition. The Iraqi people oppose the actions of this illegal militia, and Shi'a religious leaders have called on it to withdraw. Recent days have seen demonstrations in which ordinary Iraqis have taken to the streets, calling on the militia to withdraw from their cities and towns.

As we attack and defeat the enemies of freedom in Iraq, we will continue to work with Iraqi leaders to build a free, democratic, and independent government. The United Nations special envoy, Mr. Brahimi, is now back in Iraq, consulting with diverse groups of Iraqis. In the next few weeks, important decisions will be made on the makeup of an interim government. And on June 30th, the flag of a free Iraq will be raised, and Iraq's new interim government will assume a sovereign authority.

America will keep its commitment to the independence and national dignity of the Iraqi people. Yet the vital mission of our military in helping to provide security will continue on July 1st and beyond. Under the leadership of Major General David Petraeus, coalition forces are training thousands of Iraqis to protect a free Iraq from external aggression and internal subversion. Our forces will remain in Iraq to assist the Iraqi people until Iraqis can secure their own country.

Our country has great respect for the Iraqi people, and we are determined to expose and punish the abuse of Iraqi detainees. Charges have been filed against seven soldiers, and the first trial is set to begin next week. My administration and our military are determined that such abuses never happen again.

All Americans know that the actions of a few do not reflect the true character of the United States Armed Forces. No military in the history of the world has fought so hard and so often for the freedom of others. Today, our forces are keeping terrorists across the world on the run. They're helping the people of Afghanistan and Iraq build democratic societies, making America more secure. By their example, the people of those countries and of the countries around the world are coming to know that freedom is the answer to hopelessness and terror. Our service men and women are defending America with unselfish courage, and their achievements have brought pride and credit to this Nation.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:56 a.m. on May 14 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on May 15. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 14 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. In his address, the President referred to American hostage Nicholas Berg, who was killed in Iraq in early May by senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi; Muqtada Al Sadr, Iraqi Shiite cleric whose militia engaged in an uprising in Iraq that began in early April; Lakhdar Brahimi, Special Adviser to the U.N. Secretary-General; and Maj. Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, incoming chief, Office of Security Transition—Iraq. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks at the Peace Officers Memorial Service
May 15, 2004

Thank you all very much. I'm so very honored to join all of you in paying respects—our respects to our Nation's fallen law enforcement officers. Every year on this day, we pause to remember the sacrifice and faithful services of officers lost in the line of duty throughout our Nation's history. And we add to the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial the names of men and women lost in the past year as well as some who fell in the line of duty in other times. They accepted the hard responsibilities of a great and essential calling.

Our fallen officers died in service to justice and in defense of the innocent. They will never be forgotten by their comrades. They will never be forgotten by their country. And today, in the presence of so many families and friends they loved, our Nation pays tribute in pride and in gratitude.

I appreciate Chuck Canterbury's leadership and his friendship. I also want to thank Aliza Clark. I appreciate Jim Pasco as the executive director of the Fraternal Order of the Police, who has worked hard to make this a special event for those who grieve.

I want to thank my friend the Attorney General, John Ashcroft. He's doing a great job on behalf of the American people. I appreciate FBI Director Mueller, other members of my administration. I want to thank Duke Cunningham and other Members of Congress who have joined us.

I also thank all the family members who have come to Washington for this service. For each of you, there is a name on the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial that will always stand apart. You feel the hurt and loss and separation, but I hope you don't feel alone. A lot of people are praying for you, and you can know today that our Nation will always remember the one you loved.

They were among the more than 800,000 men and women who serve as officers of the law in the United States. On the wall are the names of U.S. marshals and county sheriffs, deputies, State patrolmen, municipal police, Federal agents, Coast Guard officials and others who are in the business of protecting their fellow citizens. America's men and women in law enforcement carry different responsibilities and serve different jurisdictions. Yet in all of those jobs, we look for the same basic qualities of character, for personal discipline, alertness of mind, and courage. Our country and our neighborhoods depend on such people, and fortunately for us all, they keep coming forward.

We look for people like Sergeant Jason Pratt of the Omaha Police Department. He was shot last September at the age of 30, while helping a fellow officer pursue a suspect. A colleague said of Sergeant Pratt, "He was always willing to step up and take the point." And when he died, more than 20 police officers were at the hospital with him. As the mayor of the city put it, "Omaha lost one of its protectors, but his family lost much more." These same words are true in every community, every time an officer of the law is taken from us.

When the innocent need defending, we look for people like Trooper Nik Green of the Oklahoma Highway Patrol, who was shot and killed by a drug dealer resisting arrest. He died on the morning after Christmas on a stretch of highway just over a mile from his home, where he left behind a wife and three young daughters. This good man was also a youth pastor at First Baptist Church, where hundreds of his fellow State troopers came to pay their final respects. The pastor said of Trooper Green, "He set a standard that we're left challenged by. We're going to hurt for a long, long time."

To bring help in desperate hours, we look for people like Patrick Hardesty of the Tucson Police Department. He was shot and killed by a fleeing suspect in a hit and run. Officer Hardesty had seen danger before, during his 20 years as a United States marine. He is survived by his wife, their three children, and comrades who say they thought of him more as a brother than a friend. A colleague said of Officer Hardesty, "Even before he became a good cop, he was a really good man."

These are the characteristics we honor today, really good men. These officers and the others we recognize at this service reported to work not knowing that the day would bring the end of their watch. In the words of a colleague of one fallen officer, "We all take it for granted that they will come back home safe and sound after their shift. Then one day, they don't." That is

a part of the heroism of law enforcement, knowing that the most routine calls can turn suddenly violent. In the worst of moments, that is the heroism that faces danger and risks all for the safety of strangers. And in every moment, our country is in debt to the men and women in patrol cars, on bikes, and on foot, and standing post, and we must never take them for granted.

The nearness to danger inspires a special loyalty among those who carry a shield and enforce the law. And when one is lost, the family left behind is cared for and held close by the brotherhood of law enforcement. In the memorial and in countless acts of love and kindness, the fallen are remembered and honored. And this afternoon, on behalf of all Americans, I offer the respect of a grateful nation. Their calling in life was to keep the peace, and we pray they have found the peace in the Almighty God.

May God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:46 p.m. on the West Grounds at the U.S. Capitol. In his remarks, he referred to Chuck Canterbury, national president, and James O. Pasco, Jr., executive director, National Fraternal Order of Police; and Aliza Clark, president, National Fraternal Order of Police Auxiliary. The Peace Officers Memorial Day and Police Week proclamation of May 7 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks at the Opening of the *Brown* v. *Board of Education* National Historic Site in Topeka, Kansas

May 17, 2004

Thank you all for coming out today. Cheryl, thank you very much for your kind introduction. I appreciate all the Brown family who are here. Justice Breyer. Governor Sebelius is with us today; Governor, thank you for being here. Leader Frist; Senator Brownback and Senator Roberts from the great State of Kansas; Congressman Jim Ryun, Congressmen Tiahrt, Moran, and Moore as well from Kansas. Congressman Elijah Cummings, thank you for being here, Congressman. Proud you're here. Secretary Norton and Secretary Paige, distinguished guests, and ladies and gentlemen:

I'm honored to join you at this historic place to mark a day and a decision that changed America for the better and forever. Fifty years ago today, nine judges announced that they had looked at the Constitution and saw no justification for the segregation and humiliation of an entire race. Here at the corner of 15th and Monroe and at schools like it across America, that was a day of justice, and it was a long time coming.

For millions of African descent, the experience of segregation began in chains and darkness beneath the deck of a ship. A terrible civil war ended their slavery but did not end their oppression. Generations of African American citizens grew up and grew old under laws designed to demean them. Under the rule of Jim Crow, almost no detail of life escaped the supervision of cruel and petty men. The color of your skin determined where you could get your hair cut, which hospital ward you could be treated in, which park or library you could visit, or who you could go fishing with. And children were instructed early in the customs of racial division at schools where they never saw a face of another color.

This was codified cruelty at the service of racism. Segregation dulled the conscience of people who knew better. It fed the violence of people with malice in their hearts. And however it was defended,

segregation could never be squared with the ideals of America.

The legal challenges to school segregation began more than 100 years before the Supreme Court heard the case of *Brown* v. *Board of Education*. In 1849, African American parents brought suit against Boston's divided schools. Here in Kansas, segregation was challenged in several cases between 1881 and 1949. These early efforts did not bring victory, yet they inspired words and warnings that have spoken across the years. As Justice John Marshall Harlan wrote in his dissenting opinion in *Plessy* v. *Ferguson*: "In view of the Constitution, in the eye of the law, there is in this country no superior, dominant ruling class of citizens. The humblest is the peer of the most powerful. The law regards man as man and takes no account of his surroundings or of his color."

The fulfillment of that vision decades later fell to a small group of earnest and tenacious lawyers. Two of them would travel thousands of miles together in a 1929 Ford, driving from courthouse to courthouse, with Charles Hamilton Houston and young Thurgood Marshall typing briefs in the car. They documented the often poor conditions of black-only schools, the holes in the roofs and dirt floors that ran with mud when it rained. And they pursued a strategy to bring down the whole sorry structure of segregation, case by case.

Eventually, in December of 1953, Thurgood Marshall stood before the Supreme Court as counsel in a consolidated action involving 4 States and nearly 200 plaintiffs, including 13 families from Topeka, Kansas. Many legal arguments were advanced in the case. Yet the stakes were summarized in the brief Marshall presented to the Court. It stated, "Separate but equal is legal fiction. There never was and never will be any separate equality." The Court agreed. As the decision was announced, some were waiting to see which Justices would be in dissent. The answer came when Chief Justice Warren declared that the opinion was unanimous.

The decision in *Brown* versus *Board of Education* did not end all segregation, did not even end school segregation for many years. The civil rights movement was still waiting on other heroes and cases and laws. Yet, all sides of the question knew that on May 17th, 1954, a line had been crossed in American history. The system of racial oppression in our country had lost its claim to legitimacy, and the rising demand for justice would not be denied.

Putting the *Brown* decision into effect would take Presidential orders and the presence of Federal troops and marshals and the courage of children. One of the children who integrated Central High School in Little Rock was Melba Pattillo. She recalls white students after gym class turning her shower to scalding. Others broke a bottle and tripped her on the glass, leaving scars that remain today.

Yet, Melba has other memories as well. She says, "I went in not through the side doors but up the front stairs, and there was a feeling of pride and hope that, yes, this is the United States. Yes, there is a reason I salute the flag, and it's going to be okay."

In the years after *Brown*, many would know the fears and insults this young woman had faced. A court can make an order, but it was the child that had to walk the gauntlet of slurs and jeers into a school. And America is still grateful to every child who made that walk.

In many ways, the events of those years seem long ago. We tend to think of them as the distant dramas of a different country. Yet, segregation is a living memory, and many still carry its scars. The habits of racism in America have not all been broken. The habits of respect must be taught to every generation. Laws against racial discrimination must be vigorously enforced in education and housing and hiring and public accommodations. Many African Americans with no inheritance but their character

need access to capital and the chance to own and build for the future. And while our schools are no longer segregated by law, they are still not equal in opportunity and excellence. Justice requires more than a place in a school. Justice requires that every school teach every child in America.

America has yet to reach the high calling of its own ideals. Yet we're a nation that strives to do right, and we honor those who expose our failures, correct our course, and make us a better people. On this day, in this place, we remember with gratitude the good souls who saw a great wrong and stood their ground and won their case. And we celebrate a milestone in the history of our glorious Nation.

Thank you for having me. May God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:06 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Cheryl Brown Henderson, president, Brown Foundation for Educational Equity, Excellence and Research; and Gov. Kathleen Sebelius of Kansas.

Statement Calling for a Constitutional Amendment Defining and Protecting Marriage

May 17, 2004

The sacred institution of marriage should not be redefined by a few activist judges. All Americans have a right to be heard in this debate. I called on the Congress to pass and to send to the States for ratification an amendment to our Constitution defining and protecting marriage as a union of a man and a woman as husband and wife. The need for that amendment is still urgent, and I repeat that call today.

Statement on the Death of Iraqi Governing Council President Izz al-Din al-Salim

May 17, 2004

On behalf of the American people, I condemn the brutal act of terrorism against Iraqi Governing Council President Izz al-Din al-Salim and several Iraqi citizens. Mr. Salim was a man of courage who risked his life in pursuit of a free, democratic, and prosperous Iraq. I offer our deepest condolences to the victims' families. I pray that God may give them strength in this hour of grief.

On June 30, the flag of a free Iraq will be raised, and Iraq's new interim government will assume sovereign authority. The terrorists know that a free Iraq will be a major defeat for the cause of terror, so they are trying to shake our confidence and will. The terrorists have found little support among the Iraqi people. The vast majority of Iraqi people want a free society. And the terrorists will find no success in their attempts to shake the will of America and our coalition.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Burma
May 17, 2004

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. I have sent the enclosed notice, stating that the Burma emergency is to continue beyond May 20, 2004, to the *Federal Register* for publication. The most recent notice continuing this emergency was published in the *Federal Register* on May 19, 2003.

The crisis between the United States and Burma, constituted by the actions and policies of the Government of Burma, including its policies of committing large-scale repression of the democratic opposition in Burma that led to the declaration of a national emergency on May 20, 1997, has not been resolved. These actions and policies are hostile to U.S. interests and pose a continuing unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States. For this reason, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency with respect to Burma and maintain in force the sanctions against Burma to respond to this threat.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
May 17, 2004.

NOTE: The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee
May 18, 2004

Thank you all very much. Thank you all. Please be seated. Go ahead. Finally, AIPAC elected a president I could kiss. [*Laughter*]

I'm honored to be here at AIPAC. Thank you for such a warm welcome. It's good to be with so many friends, friends of mine and friends of Israel. For more than 50 years, the United States and Israel have been steadfast allies. AIPAC is one of the reasons why. You've worked tirelessly to strengthen the ties that bind our nations, our shared values, our strong commitment to freedom.

By defending the freedom and prosperity and security of Israel, you're also serving the cause of America. Our Nation is stronger and safer because we have a true and dependable ally in Israel. I appreciate—[*applause*]—I'm just getting warmed up. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank Amy for her leadership. I appreciate you taking time to serve a cause that—in which you believe deeply. I want to thank Bernice for her willingness to serve as well. I've known Howard for a long time. He's effective. [*Laughter*] I want to thank the AIPAC board members for their friendship and leadership.

I'm honored to be in the presence of my friend the Ambassador from Israel, Danny Ayalon. I appreciate you being here, Danny.

Ehud Olmert is with us. Ehud, it's good to see you again. Thank you, sir. I

remember the first time we visited in 1998. I had just been reelected as the Governor of Texas. I went to Israel, and Ehud welcomed me and three other Governors to, I guess, your office. You were the mayor, if I'm not mistaken, at that point in time. And you were focused on filling potholes and emptying the garbage of the people. [*Laughter*] But we struck up a good relationship then, and it's great to see you again.

I appreciate the other ministers who are here, some of whom I have met before, some of whom I have had not the honor of meeting. I know I met Tommy before. Appreciate you all being here. Welcome to America. Thank you, Tommy.

I'd like to also recognize many people this morning who are learning to participate in democracy. I'm told there are over 850 students here from 50 States. Make sure the Texas students behave well. [*Laughter*] Your mothers are watching. [*Laughter*] I know there are buses outside waiting to take you to Capitol Hill. I'm told—Howard told me there's over 500 meetings scheduled with Members of the Senate and the House. That is good news. I'm sure you're going to pass this message on to them: A free, prosperous, and secure Israel is in this Nation's national interest.

AIPAC is doing important work. I hope you know that. In Washington and beyond, AIPAC is calling attention to the great security challenges of our time. You're educating Congress and the American people on the growing dangers of proliferation. You've spoken out on the threat posed by Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons. You've always understood and warned against the evil ambition of terrorism and their networks. In a dangerous new century, your work is more vital than ever. I thank you for doing your part in the cause of freedom.

Our Nation and the nation of Israel have much in common. We're both relatively young nations, born of struggle and sacrifice. We're both founded by immigrants escaping religious persecution in other lands. We have both built vibrant democracies, built on the rule of law and market economies. And we're both countries founded on certain basic beliefs, that God watches over the affairs of men and values every life. These ties have made us natural allies, and these ties will never be broken.

In the past, however, there was one great difference in the experience of our two nations: The United States, through most of our history, has been protected by vast oceans to our east and west and blessed with friendly neighbors to our north and south. Israel has faced a different situation as a small country in a tough neighborhood. The Israeli people have always had enemies at their borders and terrorists close at hand. Again and again, Israel has defended itself with skill and heroism. And as a result of the courage of the Israeli people, Israel has earned the respect of the American people.

On September the 11th, 2001, Americans saw that we are no longer protected by geography from the dangers of the world. We experienced the horror of being attacked in our homeland, on our streets, and in places of work. And from that experience came an even stronger determination, a fierce determination to defeat terrorism and to eliminate the threat it poses to free people everywhere.

Not all terrorist networks answer to the same orders and same leaders, but all terrorists burn with the same hatred. They hate all who reject their grim vision of tyranny. They hate people who love freedom. They kill without mercy. They kill without shame, and they count their victories in the death of the innocent.

We saw the nature of this enemy again in recent days when terrorists in Iraq beheaded an American citizen, Nicholas Berg. The message that accompanied the videotape of this brutal slaying promised more such atrocities. Here's what the killer said: "We will send you coffin after coffin, box after box, slaughtered in this way." The

faces of the terrorists were cloaked, but we have seen their kind before.

Followers of the terrorist ideology executed an elderly man in a wheelchair, Leon Klinghoffer, and pushed his body off the side of a ship into the sea. They kidnaped the journalist Daniel Pearl and cut his throat, because he was a Jew. This enemy has left blood on the streets of Jakarta and Jerusalem, Casablanca and Riyadh, Mombasa and Istanbul, Bali, Baghdad, and Madrid. They have declared war on the civilized world, and war is what they got.

Freedom-loving people did not seek this conflict. It has come to us by the choices of violent men, hateful men. See, we seek peace. We long for peace. Israel longs for peace. America longs for peace. Yet, there can be no peace without defending our security. There is only one path to peace and safety. America will use every resource we have to fight and defeat these enemies of freedom.

The lesson of September the 11th is clear and must never be forgotten. Emerging terrorist threats must be confronted before they can reach our country and harm our people. Every terrorist is at war with civilization, and every group or nation that aids them is equally responsible for the murders that the terrorists commit.

So America has led a relentless global campaign against terrorists and their supporters. We're chasing them down one by one in caves and in shadows where they try to hide. We have uncovered terrorist cells on several continents. We've prevented a number of terrorist attacks. We've removed the Taliban regime, which sheltered the plotters of September the 11th. We have stopped shipments of chemical precursors and nuclear-related—weapons-related components bound for states that sponsor terror. By speaking clearly and by meaning what we say, countries like Libya have gotten the message and have renounced their weapons programs.

And for the sake of peace and security, we ended the regime of Saddam Hussein. That regime cast a shadow, a dark shadow of aggression over the Middle East for decades. They invaded both Iran and Kuwait. The regime built and used weapons of mass destruction against its neighbors and its own people. The regime sponsored terror and paid rewards of up to $25,000 to the families of Palestinian homicide bombers. That regime filled mass graves with innocent men, innocent women, and innocent children. That regime defied the demands of the free world and America for more than a decade. And America is more secure and the world is better off because that regime is no more.

America is on the offensive, and we will stay on the offensive until the terrorists are stopped and our people are safe. I will use every asset at our disposal to do our most important job, which is to protect the American people. And that includes the United States military.

We have come to know the skill and the courage of the men and women of the United States military. They have fulfilled every mission their country has given to them. They and their families have endured long deployments and uncertainty. Our men and women in uniform have fought in mountain passes and desert sands in the remotest part of the world. They've lost brave friends and comrades, who will always be remembered and honored by a grateful nation. They have done all this to defend our country and to advance the cause of freedom and peace. And their loved ones and those who wear our uniform must know that America is very grateful to their service.

The peace we seek depends on defeating the violent. Yet, we also have a larger mission in the world. In the long term, we must end terrorist violence at its source by undermining the terrorist ideology of hatred and fear. Terrorists find influence and recruits in societies where bitterness and resentment are common and hope and opportunity are rare. The world's best hope for lasting security and stability across the

Middle East is the establishment of just and free societies.

And so across that vital region, America is standing for the expansion of human liberty. This historic task is not easy in a part of the world that has known so much oppression and stagnation and violence. It's hard work. Yet we must be strong in our firm belief that every human heart desires to be free. We must be strong in our belief that free societies are hopeful societies and peaceful societies.

We have made progress that few would have predicted or expected just 3 years ago. In Afghanistan, our coalition is working with President Karzai to help the people of Afghanistan build a modern, peaceful, and democratic government. In January, Afghans approved a new constitution that protects the right of all Afghan citizens, including women. Through weeks of negotiation and compromise, they agreed upon a fundamental law that respects tradition and establishes a foundation of modern political rights, including free speech, due process, and a vote for every citizen. We're making progress.

In Iraq, Saddam's brutal dictatorship is gone, and in its place an Iraqi democracy is emerging. Iraqi leaders have signed a transitional administrative law that will guarantee basic freedoms. Iraq now has an independent judiciary, a free market, a new currency, more than 200 newspapers in circulation, and schools free of hateful propaganda.

It's hard work in Iraq. Our efforts are approaching a crucial moment. On June 30th, our coalition will transfer its authority to a sovereign Iraqi Government. With the assistance of the United Nations and our coalition, Iraqi citizens are currently making important decisions about the nature and scope of the interim government. In time, Iraq will be a free and democratic nation at the heart of the Middle East. This will send a message, a powerful message, from Damascus to Tehran that democracy can bring hope to lives in every culture. And this advance of freedom will bring greater security to America and to the world. These are historic times. It's an historic opportunity.

Yet, as June 30th approaches, the enemies of freedom grow even more desperate to prevent the rise of democracy in Iraq. That's what you're seeing on your TV screens, desperation by a hateful few, people who cannot stand the thought of free societies in their midst. They're targeting brave Iraqis who are leading toward democracy, such as Izz al-Din al-Salim, who was assassinated in Baghdad yesterday. They're murdering Iraqi policemen who stand as symbols of order. They're killing foreign aid workers who are helping to rebuild Iraq. They're attacking our military. Their goal is to undermine the will of our coalition and the will of America and to drive us out before our mission is complete. They're not going to succeed. They will not shake the will of America.

My resolve is firm. The resolve of the American people is solid. Our military is skilled; spirits are high. They are determined to succeed. We understand the stakes are high for America and for the world. We will not be intimidated by thugs and assassins. We will win this essential, important victory in the war on terror.

This is an historic moment. The world watches for weakness in our resolve. They will see no weakness. We will answer every challenge. U.S. Army soldiers and Iraqi security forces are systematically destroying the illegal militia in the south of Iraq. Coalition forces are working with Iraqis in Fallujah to end control by Saddam loyalists and foreign fighters. We're building up Iraqi security forces so they can safeguard their own country. We're flexible in our methods, but our goal is unchanging. Iraq will be free, and Iraq will be a democratic nation.

Freedom is also at the heart of our approach to bringing peace between Israel and the Palestinian people. The United States is strongly committed, and I am

strongly committed, to the security of Israel as a vibrant Jewish state. Israel is a democracy and a friend and has every right to defend itself from terror.

For the sake of peace, this country is committed to helping the Palestinian people establish a democratic and viable state of their own. Israel needs a truly responsible partner in achieving peace. The Palestinian people deserve democratic institutions and responsible leaders. Progress towards this vision creates responsibilities for Israel, the Palestinian people, and Arab nations. Before these two states—before there can be two states, all parties must renounce violence and fight terror.

Security is the foundation for peace. All parties must embrace democracy and reform and take the necessary steps for peace. The unfolding violence in the Gaza Strip is troubling and underscores the need for all parties to seize every opportunity for peace. I supported the plan announced by Prime Minister Sharon to withdraw military installations and settlements from Gaza and parts of the West Bank. As I said in my statement on April 14, 2004, the Prime Minister's plan is a bold, courageous step that can bring us closer to the goal of two states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security.

The Prime Minister's decision has given the Palestinian people and the free world a chance to take bold steps of their own toward peace. First, the Palestinian people must reject corrupt and failed leaders and insist on a leadership committed to reform and progress and peace. Second, they must renounce terror and violence that frustrate their aspirations and take so many innocent lives. And finally, by taking these steps, they will have an opportunity, a fantastic opportunity, to build a modern economy and create the institutions and habits of liberty. The Palestinian people deserve a better future, and that future can be achieved through democracy.

Many in this room have worked and waited a lifetime for peace in the Holy Land. I hear that deep concern for peace. Our vision is a Middle East where young Israelis and Palestinians can play and learn and grow without living in the shadow of death. Our vision is a Middle East where borders are crossed for purposes of trade and commerce, not crossed for the purposes of murder and war. This vision is within our grasp if we have the faith and the courage and the resolve to achieve it.

Perhaps the deepest obstacle to peace is found in the hearts of men and women. The Jewish people have seen, over the years and over the centuries, that hate prepares the way for violence. The refusal to expose and confront intolerance can lead to crimes beyond imagining. So we have a duty to expose and confront anti-Semitism wherever it is found.

Some of you attended a very important event in Berlin last month, the International Conference on Anti-Semitism. You understand that anti-Semitism is not a problem of the past. The hatred of Jews did not die in a Berlin bunker. In its cruder forms, it can be found in some Arab media, and this Government will continue to call upon Arab governments to end libels and incitements. Such hatred can also take subtler forms. The demonization of Israel, the most extreme anti-Zionist rhetoric can be a flimsy cover for anti-Semitism and contribute to an atmosphere of fear in which synagogues are desecrated, people are slandered, folks are threatened. I will continue to call upon our friends in Europe to renounce and fight any sign of anti-Semitism in their midst.

We are living through historic times. We are called to do important work in the world. We will stand together against bigotry in every land and every language. We will answer violent men with patient, determined justice. We will expand human freedom and the peace that freedom brings. And by our resolve and by our courage, we will prevail.

I want to thank you for your dedication to the security of America and to the safety

of Israel. I want to thank you for your warm hospitality today. May God bless America. May God bless Israel. Thank you for coming. Thank you all for your time. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:53 a.m. at the Washington Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Amy Friedkin, president, board of directors, Bernice Manocherian, president-elect, and Howard Kohr, executive director, American Israel Public Affairs Committee; Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Industry and Trade Ehud Olmert, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Justice Yosef "Tommy" Lapid, and Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of Israel; American hostage Nicholas Berg, who was killed in Iraq in early May by senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi; President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan; and Iraqi Governing Council President Izz al-Din al-Salim, who was killed in a suicide car bomb attack on May 17 in Baghdad.

Statement on Establishing the Great Lakes Interagency Task Force
May 18, 2004

The Great Lakes are a national treasure that represents 20 percent of the world's fresh water. The Great Lakes region is an economic engine and recreational haven, and we are making great progress in protecting and restoring this vital natural resource.

To build on that progress, today I am establishing the Great Lakes Interagency Task Force, chaired by EPA Administrator Mike Leavitt. The Task Force will address environmental and natural resource issues of national concern and better coordinate the region's sustainable development and restoration. It will harness the collective efforts of the Federal Government, Governors, mayors, Members of Congress, tribes, and citizen stewards to ensure that the greatness of the lakes endures for generations. The Task Force will also consult with the Government of Canada on the most effective way forward on addressing past and current environmental impacts to the Great Lakes ecology.

NOTE: The Executive order on establishment of the Task Force is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks Following a Cabinet Meeting and an Exchange With Reporters
May 19, 2004

The President. Thank you for coming. I've just met with my Cabinet to discuss a variety of issues. We spent a lot of time talking about the situation in Iraq. I detailed our plan and our strategy to transfer full sovereignty to the Iraqi people on June the 30th. I reminded them that a lot of progress has been made already toward that transfer. Eleven ministries are now run by Iraqi citizens—I might add, capably run by Iraqi citizens.

I discussed with the Cabinet the plans of Mr. Brahimi, the U.N. representative who is consulting with Iraqi leadership and Iraqi citizenry, as well as our own Government officials there, about the interim government and who will occupy the positions of responsibility in that government. I

anticipate in the next couple of weeks decisions will be made toward who will be the President and the Vice Presidents as well as the Prime Minister and other ministers.

Thirdly, we talked about the U.N. Security Council resolution, which is—the Secretary is moving forward. He's in consultations with Security Council members—a Security Council resolution which will embrace the new interim government and the need to provide security so that free elections will happen as promised to the Iraqi people.

We've got hard work to do. I told my Cabinet we've got hard work to do. After all, we saw the vivid savagery of the enemy. The decapitation of a U.S. citizen reminds us all about the barbaric nature of those who are trying to stop progress toward freedom. We understand the nature of that enemy. We also understand the nature of our brave troops. They're motivated. They're skilled. They're well trained. They will accomplish the mission.

Then I talked about the economy. We're pleased with the economic progress here in America. After all, the growth rates are high. New jobs are being created; 1.1 million new jobs since last August have been created by the entrepreneurs and small-business owners and risktakers of America. And that's positive.

I am concerned about the price of gasoline at the pump. I fully understand how that affects American consumers, how it crimps the budgets of moms and dads who are trying to provide for their families, how it affects the truck driver, how it affects the small-business owner.

I anticipated this 3 years ago. I asked my team to put together a strategy to make us less dependent upon foreign sources of energy. I submitted that plan to the United States Congress. Now we want people to have it both ways, just like they've tried to have it both ways over the last couple of years. On the one hand, they decry the price at the pump, and on the other hand, they won't do anything about it. They won't take action. Congress needs to pass the energy plan.

We had a very interesting discussion about capacity. For example, had ANWR been passed—had it not been vetoed in the past, we anticipate an additional million barrels of oil would have been coming out of that part of the world, which would obviously have a positive impact for today's consumers.

And so it's time for some action here to get us less dependent. They need to pass that which I have submitted to Congress, so this country will become less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

All in all, we're upbeat about the spread of freedom and peace and the ability for our fellow citizens to find work.

Let me answer two questions, starting with Lindlaw [Scott Lindlaw, Associated Press].

Israeli Action Against Demonstrators

Q. Thanks, Mr. President. You've called for maximum restraint from both sides in the Middle East. Today Israel's military acknowledged they fired four tank shells, machine guns, a missile into a crowd of demonstrators. One, was it justified? Two, what are you telling them, and what are you hearing?

The President. I continue to urge restraint. It is essential that people respect innocent life, in order for us to achieve peace. And we'll get clarification from the Government. I haven't had a chance to speak to the Government or be briefed. But I am—I will continue to speak out about the need for all parties to respect innocent life in the Middle East.

Caren [Caren Bohan, Reuters].

Gasoline Prices/Strategic Petroleum Reserve

Q. Sir, Senator Kerry has suggested halting shipments to the emergency oil reserves. Your energy bill is a long-term strategy. What are some short-term steps that can be taken?

The President. If people had acted on my energy bill when I submitted it 3 years ago, we would be in a much better situation today.

Secondly, we will not play politics with the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. That Petroleum Reserve is in place in case of major disruptions of energy supplies to the United States. The idea of emptying the Strategic Petroleum Reserve plays—would put America in a dangerous position in the war on terror. We're at war. We face a tough and determined enemy on all fronts, and we must not put ourselves in a worse position in this war. And playing politics with the Strategic Petroleum Reserve would do just that.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:04 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Lakhdar Brahimi, Special Adviser to the U.N. Secretary-General; and American hostage Nicholas Berg, who was killed in Iraq in early May by senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks Honoring NCAA Winter Champion Teams
May 19, 2004

The President. Thanks for coming.

Audience member. We'll be back. [*Laughter*]

The President. Whoever said, "We'll be back," it sounds like the Connecticut women's basketball team.

I'm glad you all are here. This is what we call Champions Day. It is my high honor to welcome champions to the White House. I appreciate—I notice we've got a lot of folks from Connecticut here. [*Laughter*] Yes. We've got two fine United States Senators in Chris Dodd and Joe Lieberman. We're proud you're here. Nancy Johnson is here with us today. Chris Shays, you made it. Very good. And Rob Simmons is with us as well. Yes, there you go. [*Laughter*]

They're here because Connecticut—University of Connecticut has done something really unusual. They have a women's champion and a men's champion in the same year, and we're proud to welcome them here. Maybe now is the moment that I should admit that I was born in Connecticut. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank Phil Austin for being here. Geno, welcome back. Geno is—he's obviously a great coach. And he is a fellow who—I've watched the games, and I've watched his attitude, and no wonder Connecticut women's basketball does so well, because he knows how to win. And I'm proud to have him back. This is the third year that the Connecticut ladies have been here since I've been the President.

And Jim Calhoun is also a great coach and a fine man as well. Coach Calhoun looked at me and said, "I wonder if you're a point guard." I said, "I couldn't even touch the net." [*Laughter*] But he's got some people that can touch the net on his team. And both these champs really worked hard to get here—both these teams worked hard to get here, with great coaches. And I'm proud to welcome them here to the White House.

University of Denver—one of your—well, you've got a couple of alumni who work for me. One is Gale Norton, who is the Secretary of the Interior. Welcome, Gale. I'm glad you're here. The other one

is Condi Rice, and I told her to keep working. [*Laughter*] No rest for the weary. [*Laughter*]

I appreciate Marc Holtzman and George Gwozdecky, who is the head coach, for joining us as well. We've got Wayne Allard, who is the United States Senator from Colorado, with us. Scott McInnis and Diana DeGette is with us as well. Diana, thanks for coming. We're glad you all are here, proud the good folks from Colorado are here.

Laura Halldorson is the coach of the University of Minnesota women's hockey team. I welcome the team here. I also welcome Senators Norm Coleman and Mark Dayton. Where is Senator Dayton—he was a fine goalie, by the way.

Audience member. Long ago.

The President. Yes, long ago. [*Laughter*]

Martin Sabo, the Congressman, is with us. Martin, thank you for coming. We're proud we've got so many here.

I was pleased to know that the University of Minnesota women's hockey team's slogan this year was, "Get it done, and meet George." [*Laughter*] It's my pleasure to meet you. [*Laughter*] You beat Harvard, and you became the first women's team in school history to win a national championship, and that's got to make you feel great. Congratulations.

I had met one of your players before. I warned her I was going to say this, but Krissy Wendell, who plays for the Minnesota team, and I met at the winter Olympics. It was there that she handed me a cell phone so I could speak to her mother. [*Laughter*] I worked hard to convince her mother it was actually the President speaking to her. [*Laughter*] I tried as hard as I could to sound exactly like myself. [*Laughter*] I will never, however, forget what her mother said. She said, "I just want you to know, I'm praying for you." And I told Krissy, when she talked to her mother, tell her how—that was—it meant a lot, and tell her mom, thanks.

I also am really glad that the women's team is here. I'm sorry that Diana is not here. She's making a living. [*Laughter*] It's part of the economic recovery package. [*Laughter*] She goes to college, and she gets a really good job with the WNBA Phoenix Mercury.

But these women know how to play basketball, and they're tough competitors. I think a lot of people probably wrote Geno's team out pretty early in the year. It seemed like the field was really a competitive field this year, and a lot of people probably said, "Well, they don't have it. They're kind of burned out, maybe don't have what it takes." And in fact, these women show they do have what it takes. They've got great courage, great desire, and I'm really happy you're back.

And I'm really happy the men's team is here as well. It's—the NCAA Final Four is some kind of exciting for a lot of sports fans. And the Duke game was really an exciting game, and I know the people of Connecticut were—Connecticut fans were incredibly thrilled that Calhoun and his men are here today. And I am too—glad you're here.

And then there's the University of Denver hockey team—the men's hockey team. They won their first national championship in 35 years. This team wasn't expected to win either. It just goes to show you, don't write people out, particularly those who have got desire and character. You just don't write them off. You just—you never kind of take anything for granted.

I like the story of Lukas Dora. Where are you, Lukas? There you go. Lukas is from the Czech Republic. He said—they tell me he talks a lot on the ice. He's a talkative guy, but he uses unique English to confuse the opponents. [*Laughter*] Kind of sounds like the strategy I use at the press conferences. [*Laughter*]

They're champs on the court. They're champs on the ice. They've got to be champs off the court and ice too, to be true champs. You've got an opportunity

now, with the spotlight on you as champions, to make a difference in the communities in which you live. Here's a chance—a chance to be more than just an athlete. It's a chance to be a hero to somebody who needs a role model, somebody who—like when you go to visit the children in the hospital—and I know you do—somebody, when you touch their life—you go in as a champ, and you touch a life, and somebody feels better as a result of a little love and compassion, or serving food, or helping with toy drives. All of it matters, see. All of it counts.

And now that you've got the spotlight on you, I hope you continue to seize that moment and make America a better place, by changing a heart and a soul, one person at a time. See, true champs are those that show courage and work hard to win, but they're also people who show compassion and love and decency when given the chance.

We're welcoming true champs here to the White House, and it's my high honor to do so. Congratulations for what you have done. May God continue to bless you all, your schools, and your families. Welcome.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Phillip E. Austin, president, Geno Auriemma, women's basketball head coach, Jim Calhoun, men's basketball head coach, and Diana Taurasi, former player, University of Connecticut; Marc Holtzman, president, and George Gwozdecky, men's hockey head coach, University of Denver; and Drenda Wendell, mother of Krissy Wendell. The President honored the University of Connecticut men's and women's basketball teams, the University of Denver men's hockey team, and the University of Minnesota women's hockey team.

Statement on Senate Passage of Legislation To Implement Project BioShield

May 19, 2004

I commend the Senate for passing legislation that will bolster the Nation's defenses against biological, chemical, radiological, and nuclear threats. Project BioShield will speed the development of new vaccines and treatments that would help prevent harm to Americans in a terrorist attack. This legislation carries out my proposal to encourage accelerated research and development of medical countermeasures based on the latest scientific discoveries, provides for rapid stockpiling of critical new drugs and vaccines, and makes these treatments available quickly in emergency situations. America is more secure today because we have placed a strong emphasis on homeland defense, and initiatives like Project BioShield are another important step in winning the war on terror.

Remarks Following Discussions With Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi of Italy
May 19, 2004

President Bush. Thank you for coming. You just interrupted a conversation about how we're working on a strategy to help the Iraqis become a free nation.

First, I want to thank my friend Silvio Berlusconi for being here this evening. He's a man of good judgment, good advice, and he's a good friend. And after we have dinner, we're going to go to the Sons of Italy banquet tonight.

I also want to thank the Italian people for the great humanitarian mission that they're undertaking in Iraq. I appreciate their contribution to a free society in a part of the world that is desperate for freedom.

The Prime Minister and I have spent time working on a strategy that's based upon the following points: One, there will be a full transfer of sovereignty to an interim Iraqi government on June the 30th. That will be accompanied by a United Nations Security Council resolution. He had some very good ideas about what should be in that resolution. I, of course, listened to his good ideas.

We also talked about the need to make sure there is a security force to help the Iraqis move toward elections. It's tough work there now, because killers want to stop progress. It will be tough work after sovereignty is transferred, because there will still be people there trying to derail the election process. And that's why one of the discussion points we had was how to continue to broaden the coalition. And finally, we talked about how to make sure that Iraq does have free elections, as Mr. Brahimi has scheduled.

It's an easy conversation to have with Silvio, because we share values. We believe in human rights, human dignity, rule of law, and the right for people to self-govern.

And so I'm proud my friend is here. I appreciate your leadership.

Prime Minister Berlusconi. Thank you.

President Bush. Thank you for your advice.

Prime Minister Berlusconi. As far as I'm concerned, I'm very happy to be here, and I'm very happy to have had this discussion with my friend President Bush, discussion on this plan, which is very detailed in terms of the date and is a very convincing plan.

As the President already said, within 2 weeks or even probably before, by the end of this month, the envoy of the Secretary-General of the United Nations will indicate the names of the members of the interim government.

And something else that President Bush did not mention right now, but we discussed, is the possibility, opportunity of convening a meeting in New York, where your President should be invited and he should meet the members of the Security Council of the United Nations and the top representatives of the countries—members of the coalition. And this in order to provide this government with an international legitimization which is not only useful for the international community but mostly for domestic purposes for this government in Iraq.

And by month—the end of July, there would be the possibility of setting up an electoral commission which will be formed and made up of—also of celebrities and personalities from United Nations which will help preparing the elections to be held in January.

And we have discussed also other issues, and over dinner we'll have the possibility of discussing additional initiatives which I think should be taken. Since I have the possibility and chance of talking to the President of the Russian Federation, Putin,

and to Tony Blair and other leaders, I also submitted to President Bush the possibility of organizing an international conference on Iraq, which could be held before the elections in Iraq in January.

And I can say that we agreed on all of these future possibilities, and we fully share the strategy which needs to be followed. The West must defend itself against international terror. We can think—we are winning this battle if we remain united. Should we leave, abandon Iraq before a democracy takes hold, should we abandon it before this takes place, then we would leave this country to chaos and to a lengthy—to many, many years of civil war, with thousands and thousands of casualties and victims, and this country would probably be a authoritarian country, a fundamentalist country, and certainly an exporter of terror.

I think we've started the work which cannot be left halfway. We have to complete it and until we are sure that we can guarantee the unlucky Iraqi people democracy and freedom, founded in democracy and freedom.

President Bush. Good job. Thank you, sir.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:18 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Lakhdar Brahimi, Special Adviser to the U.N. Secretary-General. Prime Minister Berlusconi referred to President Vladimir Putin of Russia; and Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom. The Prime Minister spoke in Italian, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks at the Sons of Italy Foundation Gala
May 19, 2004

The President. Thank you all. Please be seated.

Audience member. Mr. President!

The President. I promised the Prime Minister you'd behave yourselves. [*Laughter*] It's great for the son of Barbara to be here with the Sons of Italy. [*Laughter*] Thank you for having me. I'm honored.

It's a privilege for me to join you all as we celebrate the achievements and contributions of Italian Americans. I'm especially pleased to join you in welcoming our great friend the Prime Minister of Italy, Silvio Berlusconi. At this crucial moment in history, America and Italy are standing together as proud friends and strong allies in the cause of freedom. Our two peoples are bound together by affection and respect, and today, Americans feel respect and gratitude for the leadership of the Prime Minister.

I appreciate Charlie; thank you for being the honorary chairman of this event. I thank Phil as well for being the host. I want to thank Joe Sciame, who is the chairman of the Sons of Italy Foundation, Paul Polo, who is the president. Our Ambassador to Italy is with us, Mel Sembler. I appreciate the job he is doing on behalf of the American people. Sergio Vento is with us, who is the Italian Ambassador to the United States. And Sergio, I appreciate your leadership.

I know there are some Members of Congress and the Senate here. I see Santorum and Lieberman, and I appreciate you both being here. Thanks for coming. I would recognize the other Members of Congress by name, but you evidently are not here or have lousy seats. [*Laughter*]

I appreciate the fact that we've got scholarship and award recipients who are with

us, and I appreciate the distinguished guests who are here as well.

This annual event is an opportunity to express well-justified pride in the Italian ancestry of millions of Americans. The immigrant journey to America could be difficult. Families were often separated, and life in a new country brought its hardships. But this country, the United States, is fortunate that generations of Italian families made the journey. They brought to our country strength of character, a deep faith in God, love of family, and an appreciation of freedom. Without question, America is a better place for the influence of the sons and daughters of Italy.

In so many aspects of American life, it is hard to think of this country without the Italian influence. The life of our country has been richer because of names like DiMaggio and Lombardi, Capra and Sinatra, LaGuardia, Scalia, and Giuliani. Countless of other Italian Americans, less well known, have excelled in every field, from the artisans who carved the figure of Lincoln that overlooks the Mall right here in Washington, to business leaders, to educators, to many good priests and nuns who have kindly looked after Italian parishes here in America. It was an Italian American, Mother Frances Cabrini, whose mission to build hospitals and orphanages for poor immigrants made her America's first saint. Of course, that's the official count—every Italian American man will tell you his mother is the saint. [*Laughter*]

From our Nation's beginnings, the sons and daughters of Italy have been fierce defenders of American liberty. Italians crossed the Atlantic to fight with us in the Revolutionary War. In later struggles, dozens of Italian Americans would receive the Medal of Honor. One of these was Marine Sergeant John Basilone. For 3 days, he battled an entire enemy regiment at Guadalcanal with nothing but his own machine gun, leading General Douglas MacArthur to call him "a one-man army."

Sixty years ago, Allied troops freed Rome, and next month the Prime Minister and I will meet in that city to commemorate its liberation. The sacrifices of that terrible war were shared by both our countries and helped to forge our determination to resist tyranny wherever it exists. For more than five decades, Italy has shown great resolve and courage as a member of NATO. In the past 3 years, America and Italy have been steadfast allies in the war on terror.

The war on terror continues in Iraq. We're standing together in that desperate country as a part of a strong coalition. America appreciates the contributions and sacrifice of nearly 3,000 soldiers that Italy has deployed in that country. We honor the memory of 19 Italians killed by a terrorist's bomb last November and the memory of the Italian soldier killed this week.

And we honor the courage of men like Fabrizio Quattrocchi, a baker who went to Iraq to work as a security guard. He was kidnaped by terrorists and faced his killers with the bravest defiance. Just before he was murdered, he stood up and shouted, "Now I will show you how an Italian dies!" In that moment, this good man from Genoa showed us that and more: He showed us how a hero lives.

Now all our efforts in Iraq are approaching a crucial moment. The Prime Minister and I had a strategy session on how to help the Iraqis realize their liberty. I appreciate his good, strong advice. On June 30th, our coalition will transfer its authority to a sovereign Iraqi government. With the assistance of the United Nations and our coalition, Iraqi citizens are currently making important decisions about the nature and the scope of that interim government.

In time, Iraq will be a democratic nation at the heart of the Middle East. This will send a powerful message from Damascus to Tehran that democracy and freedom can bring hope to lives in every culture. And this advance of freedom will bring greater

security to America, to Italy, and to all who love freedom.

As June 30th approaches, the enemies of freedom grow even more desperate to prevent the rise of democracy in Iraq. That's what you're seeing on your TV screens, the desperate tactics of a hateful few, people who cannot stand the thought of free societies in their midst. They're targeting brave Iraqis who are leading toward democracy, such as Mr. Salim, who was assassinated in Baghdad on Monday. They're murdering Iraqi policemen, who stand as symbols of order. They kill foreign aid workers who are helping to rebuild Iraq. They attack our military. You see, their goal is to undermine the will of our coalition and to drive us out before our mission is complete. They will not succeed. They will not shake the will of America or our coalition.

My resolve is firm. The resolve of the Prime Minister of Italy is firm. The resolve of the American people is firm. Our military is skilled and determined. We all understand the stakes are high for America and the world. We will not be intimidated by thugs and assassins. We will win this essential victory in the war on terror.

These are historic times. This is an historic moment. The world watches for any weakness. They will see no weakness in America. They will see no weakness in Italy. We will answer every challenge. U.S. soldiers and Iraqi security forces are systematically destroying the illegal militia in the south of Iraq. Coalition forces are working with Iraqis in Fallujah to end control by Saddam loyalists and foreign fighters. We're building up Iraqi security forces so at some point, they can safeguard their own security. We're flexible in our methods, but our goal is unchanging. Iraq will be free. Iraq will be a democratic nation.

The sons and daughters of Italy who are serving and sacrificing with us in this cause have earned the gratitude of the American people. We're honored to call the Italian Republic one of our closest friends and strongest allies in the world. We are proud of the great Italian heritage in America. I thank each of you for carrying this heritage forward.

I thank you for your warm welcome tonight. And I ask for God's blessing on the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:50 p.m. at the Grand Hyatt Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Charles Gargano, honorary gala chairman; Philip R. Piccigallo, executive director and chief executive officer, Sons of Italy Foundation; Rudolph W. Giuliani, former mayor of New York City; Iraqi Governing Council President Izz al-Din al-Salim, who was killed in a suicide car bomb attack on May 17 in Baghdad; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Interview With Al Zaman
May 18, 2004

Q. Mr. President, I'd like to thank you very much for this opportunity that you provided to Al Zaman newspaper and the Iraqi media. I hope that this meeting and interview with you will be meaningful and will give the Iraqi people the answers they're looking for.

The President. Yes, I look forward to answering your questions. I want to thank you for coming. Welcome to the White House, and welcome to America.

Assassination of Izz al-Din al-Salim/Iraqi Freedom

Q. Mr. President, a few days ago there was an assassination attempt of—an actual assassination of Mr. Izz al-Din al-Salim, and you have described this as a terrorist act. Are there particular groups behind this assassination? And what are they, specifically? Who is behind this assassination attempt?

The President. Well, I don't know. I can't name a person yet. We're looking to find out who did this terrible, terrible deed. The facts will come out. We'll find the truth.

But one of the truths we do know is that there are some people who are trying to stop Iraq from being a free country. They hate the thought of Iraq being free, and so therefore, they're trying to kill people, innocent lives, to shake our will and to frighten Iraqi people. America will not be frightened, and I hope that those who love freedom in Iraq will not be frightened. We must continue to work together to achieve the objective, which is an Iraq which is free, whole, and at peace, so people can realize their potential.

We'll find the truth about who killed this good man, and he will be brought to justice by the Iraqi citizens.

Transition to Iraqi Interim Government

Q. Mr. President, what are your future plans regarding Iraq and the Iraqi people in developing both their political life and their civic life?

The President. Sure. June 30th is an important day in modern Iraqi history, because it's the day that sovereignty will be passed to an interim government. And when America says something, we mean it. So on that day there will be a new government, which will begin—which will replace Mr. Bremer and the Governing Council. At the same time, America will set up an Embassy, headed by a very distinguished diplomat named Ambassador Negroponte. He will have the responsibility for seeing to it that the reconstruction aid approved by the American people through the Congress is spent properly. So in other words, we'll continue with the reconstruction aid.

We will work with the new interim government on security matters. It's going to be very important for the people of Iraq to realize that sovereignty has been passed and that America wants to help the new government prepare the way for elections, help the new government prepare the way for peace, to help the new government on security matters by doing two things: one, training Iraq, continuing to train policemen and Iraqi forces so the Iraqi people take care of their own security needs against the few who want to stop the hopes of many; as well as help the Iraqi forces deal with foreign fighters, for example, who are still in the country and trying to kill people and intimidate and to create fear.

So we'll have an active role. But the truth of the matter is, Iraq will be run by Iraqi citizens. The future of Iraq is in your hands. We're there to help. We're there to help the people realize dreams. The people of this country are very generous and compassionate people, and we want you to succeed.

Q. Mr. President, you mentioned now about the transfer of sovereignty through a political process. But there are those who are saying that the transfer of sovereignty on June 30th will be an incomplete sovereignty and not a complete sovereignty. So, Mr. President, do you have different issues of this——

The President. I do have a different view. It will be a complete passage of sovereignty. And then we'll work with the government to help the government achieve objectives. And we'll work with the United Nations. But what happens on June 30th is that the ministries will be run by Iraqis. Some ministries, as you know, aren't. I mean, the coalition—the CPA is making many decisions for the Iraqi people. Now it's time for the Iraqi people.

Now, people will say, "Well, can you give us help? We need help in certain areas."

And of course the coalition and America will want to help, but the decisionmaking process will be Iraqi leadership. This will be a big day. It's an important day. And then, of course, there will elections to a general assembly that will then write a new constitution. And there will be another election. And America wants to help. And I think the interim government is going to realize it's important for our troops to stay there to make sure that there is security, and we will do so. We will help. But this is an important day. It's a transfer of sovereignty, and people will see that it's a transfer of sovereignty.

Prisoner Abuse in Abu Ghraib Prison

Q. Mr. President, I thank you for this explanation and your insistence on transferring sovereignty on the 30th of June. I would like to move into another issue, which is much more sensitive in Iraq. There is the scandal of the behavior of American soldiers in abusing prisoners in Abu Ghraib Prison. Some of those prison guards said that they carried out these acts as instructions coming from higher up. Do you believe, Mr. President, that there are much more senior people in the administration who could be behind this?

The President. Let me first speak directly to the Iraqi people through you on this matter. The actions in that prison did not reflect the attitude of America and the American people. These humiliating acts do not reflect our character.

Secondly, the Iraqi people and the world will see that we will conduct a thorough investigation for the whole world to see so that the truth will be known as to how these actions might have taken place. In other words, were there orders; who gave the orders? And the world will see that—which is very different, by the way, from a process that would have been under Saddam Hussein. In other words, you would never know these abuses took place, much less being able to ask the leader questions as a member of the free press or the ability for the world to see a very transparent process.

I want to know the truth too, and I look forward to a thorough investigation. And there will be a thorough investigation. As a matter of fact, part of the investigation process is to bring people to justice. And there will be a trial shortly in Iraq, and we will find out the—in other words, this will be the beginnings of the process where people will see justice will be meted out for the action of those guards. But you've just got to know that I'm interested in the truth as well, just like you're interested in the truth.

And one of the things in our country is people are innocent until proven guilty. And therefore, with that presumption of innocence, therefore, the process must be very thorough before you start accusing people. And that's what you'll see. You'll see this unfold in a series of hearings and investigations and, in some cases, military trials.

Muqtada Al Sadr

Q. Mr. President, now there are very sad events in the city of Najaf. There is fighting between the Al Sadr's militia and the coalition forces. How do you look and see Mr. Al Sadr, and why do you think that the CPA refused an agreement with Muqtada Al Sadr as some reports mentioned that the Shi'a religious leaders, such as Sistani, embraced such an agreement, but it was rejected by the CPA? Don't you think this is an escalation? And who would be benefited from that escalation?

The President. I've got to tell you—I must tell you, I am not exactly sure of the agreement to which you refer. I do know a couple of things: One, that Shi'a leaders are getting very impatient with Al Sadr and that it's best that the Iraqi leadership take care of him. One of the things we've insisted—or I've said publicly is that he's been accused of a crime, and he ought to be tried by Iraqis. And they ought to settle this issue in a court in Iraq.

Secondly, I've made it very clear that our troops will honor the great religious shrines in the holy sites and that we'll protect the holy sites. Now, on the other hand, he's made the decision to occupy the holy sites, and that's unfortunate.

Thirdly, I will tell you that when militia threaten our troops or threaten innocent Iraqis, we will protect ourselves and protect them, because a peaceful Iraq must not have militias running—you know, making decisions. There needs to order, and there needs to be calm.

But Mr. Sadr, who has made some pretty outlandish statements in the past, can best be dealt with by Shi'a leadership. And obviously, would hope this will end his occupation, will end soon.

Now, as to negotiations, I'm not at liberty to comment on it because I'm not exactly sure about what you're referring to.

Q. There were some negotiations, and there was an agreement between Muqtada Al Sadr, according to what the press reports said——

The President. Why don't you check on that. Thank you.

Iraqi Reconstruction

Q. Mr. President, I believe that you might agree with me that there is a slowdown in the reconstruction process of Iraq, and some of the donors country are not fulfilling their financial obligations. What is the U.S. intention in motivating those countries to fulfill their obligations?

The President. Well, that's a very good question. I think, first of all, the first question is, if I were you I'd ask, "Will America fulfill its obligation?" And the answer is, yes, we will, which is a lot of reconstruction money.

Now, the expenditure of that money has slowed down from our perspective because of the security situation. And that's why it's essential that Iraqis, themselves, stand up and join those who are anxious for life to improve, to reject the violence of the few people. It's essential that we be successful at transforming the police force into—and the forces that are there to protect infrastructure into a viable force which works, with a good command structure, an Iraqi command structure, so that projects can forward.

Secondly, I have a chance to speak to leaders of the world in person here in the next couple weeks, and we'll continue to remind them of the joint obligation the free world has to see to it that we're successful in Iraq. And the definition of success is a society which is peaceful and free, that governs itself, a society in which children can go to school and which the health care is good and which the infrastructure is strong, and in which the businesses flourish—all of which I think is going to happen, by the way—that we all have an obligation to work toward that day, because a free and peaceful Iraq is in the world's interest.

And so I'll continue to remind people of their obligations. I will tell you, though, part of the reluctance for people to come forward is because of the security situation. People see on their TV screens the fact that aid workers or reconstruction workers get killed, and it creates a sense of fear—precisely what the enemy wants. That's why it's important for the Iraq populace and the leadership here in America to stand firm in the face of these terrorist attacks and not be intimidated* and to move forward with a positive program that is going to make—it's going to change the country in such a positive way.

Syria/Iran/Iraqi Freedom

Q. Mr. President, last question, and it's a two-part question. How do you view the countries neighboring Iraq? And Syria was punished. Is it because their position regarding the American presence in Iraq? And what is the situation regarding Iran? And do you—afraid of Shiite state and government in Iraq? And what is the message

* White House correction.

you'd like to convey to the Iraqi people? Thank you.

The President. That is an excellent question. First, no, my decision towards Syria was really based upon a series of requests we had of the Government to reject terrorist organizations, to help fight off cross-border infiltration into your country, to join us to make the area peaceful. And our requests were rejected, and therefore, I started a process as a result of a law passed by the United States Congress.

Secondly, in terms of Iran, my concern with Iran is that they would—that they believe they can develop a nuclear weapon. I think that would be a big mistake, and I think it's very important for the world to work with the Iranians and insist they not develop a weapon.

No, I do not believe that there's going to be a Shi'a theocracy in Iraq dominated by Iran. I believe the Iraqi people are—want to have their own country, their own identity, that understand the Shi'a, Sunni, and Kurd can and must work together for the good of the whole. And I believe the Iraqi people don't want to be dominated by anybody. They want the United States to be a friend but the United States to not dominate. They certainly don't want the Iranians to dominate. Iraq is plenty capable of being a strong, independent nation, and our objective is to help them become that nation.

I want the Iraqi people to hear me on this. I'm told that some in Iraq are very worried that America will lose its will and not help this important country full of good people become a free country. The Iraqi people must understand that I will not lose my will, that we will help Iraq become free and peaceful, that we will stand with those who want a new Iraq after Saddam Hussein to develop, where mothers and dads can raise their children in a peaceful world, where business and shopkeepers can grow their businesses, where the education system works well, where people can get good health. And I believe it's possible.

And I call upon the Iraqi people to reject violence, band together to insist that the country move toward a peaceful tomorrow. Iraq is changing for the better. I mean, look at the soccer team. The Iraq soccer team is going to the Olympics as a proud—to represent a proud new country. And I'm excited. I'm excited for the Olympic team. I'm excited for the Iraqi people, and I look forward someday to greeting an Iraqi leader dedicated to peace and freedom, just like I've had the opportunity to greet you, as a fellow human being, as a person who—I respect people. I respect their religion. I respect human rights. I respect human dignity. And that's the kind of society I know will grow up in Iraq.

This is historic times. They're hard times. But there are better times ahead, but it requires courage and strength and will. And I want to thank you for coming to the White House. It's been my pleasure to be with you, sir.

Q. I thank you very much, Mr. President, for this opportunity once again. And I hope that you will have many opportunities with the Iraqi press in the future.

The President. Yes, sir. Thank you. Very good.

NOTE: The interview began at 4:45 p.m. in the Library at the White House, and the transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 20. In his remarks, the President referred to Iraqi Governing Council President Izz al-Din al-Salim, who was killed in a suicide car bomb attack on May 17 in Baghdad; L. Paul "Jerry" Bremer III, Presidential Envoy to Iraq; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; and Muqtada Al Sadr, Iraqi Shiite cleric whose militia engaged in an uprising in Iraq that began in early April. The interviewer referred to Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, Iraqi Shiite leader. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Remarks Following Discussions With Prime Minister Konstandinos Karamanlis of Greece
May 20, 2004

President Bush. Thank you for coming. I've really been looking forward to this discussion with our friend. Welcome. It's the first chance I have to wish you a happy Name Day—tomorrow, isn't it?

Prime Minister Karamanlis. Tomorrow, you know about that?

President Bush. I know about that, and I'm glad to do so.

We will talk about a lot of subjects—we've already covered quite a few—and then I'm going to host a lunch with the Prime Minister here shortly.

One of the topics I do want to discuss is the Olympic games, how excited I am for your country to host the Olympic games. I wish I could attend, but this is a political season. So instead, I'm sending my father to lead our delegation.

I want to thank you for your very close cooperation, working together to make sure the games are successful, that people are able to travel to your beautiful country in as secure an environment as possible. You're making very good progress, Mr. Prime Minister, and I appreciate your hard work. I know your intentions are to have this the best possible games, and for that, I'm grateful.

I look forward to continuing our discussion over lunch, and of course, I want to congratulate you for your—for the victories you achieved and look forward to working with you. Welcome.

Prime Minister Karamanlis. Thank you very much, Mr. President, and I would like to thank you for your warm hospitality. And since you raised the question of the Olympic games, I would like to take the opportunity to say that we are doing everything humanly possible, in terms of energy, resources, professionals, to secure really successful games, and I'm confident that we'll succeed.

President Bush. Welcome.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:48 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Statement on House of Representatives Passage of Budget Legislation
May 20, 2004

I commend the House of Representatives for passing a responsible budget that meets our Nation's highest priorities of winning the war on terror, protecting the homeland, and helping our economy continue to create new jobs. This budget keeps tax relief flowing to married couples, families with children, and working people, while restraining overall spending and allowing the deficit to be cut in half in the next 5 years. I urge the Senate to follow the House's lead and pass this budget so that we can continue making progress on our shared agenda of building a safer, stronger, and better America.

Statement on the Anniversary of the Birth of the Republic of Cuba
May 20, 2004

On behalf of the people of the United States, I send greetings to all people of Cuban heritage who celebrate the anniversary of the birth of the Republic of Cuba.

We stand firmly with the 11 million Cubans who still suffer under the repressive Castro dictatorship, and who dream of a prosperous and free future.

The United States is working for the day when a free Cuba will rejoin the community of democracies in the Americas. We will vigorously implement the recommendations of the Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba so that Cuba will reflect the vision of the great Cuban patriot Jose Marti: *"Con todos y para el bien de todos."* ("With all the people and for the good of all the people.")

May God bless the Cuban people.

NOTE: The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language version of this statement.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency Protecting the Development Fund for Iraq and Certain Other Property
May 20, 2004

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent the enclosed notice, stating that the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13303 of May 22, 2003, as expanded in scope by Executive Order 13315 of August 28, 2003, protecting the Development Fund for Iraq and certain other property in which Iraq has an interest, is to continue in effect beyond May 22, 2004, to the *Federal Register* for publication.

The obstacles to the orderly reconstruction of Iraq, the restoration and maintenance of peace and security in the country, and the development of political, administrative, and economic institutions in Iraq constituted by the threat of attachment or other judicial process against the Development Fund for Iraq, Iraqi petroleum and petroleum products, and interests therein, and proceeds, obligations, or any financial instruments of any nature whatsoever arising from or related to the sale or marketing thereof, pose a continuing unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States. For these reasons, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency protecting the Development Fund for Iraq, and certain other property in which Iraq has an interest, and to maintain in force the sanctions to respond to this threat.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
May 20, 2004.

NOTE: The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Message to the Congress Transmitting a Revision of the United States Arctic Research Plan
May 20, 2004

To the Congress of the United States:

Consistent with the provisions of the Arctic Research and Policy Act of 1984, as amended (15 U.S.C. 4108(a)), I transmit herewith the eighth biennial revision (2004–2008) to the United States Arctic Research Plan, as prepared for the Congress and the Administration by the Interagency Arctic Research Policy Committee.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
May 20, 2004.

Message to the Congress Transmitting a Report on United States Trade and Investment Policy for Sub-Saharan Africa and Implementation of the African Growth and Opportunity Act
May 20, 2004

To the Congress of the United States:

Consistent with title I of the Trade and Development Act of 2000, I am providing a report prepared by my Administration entitled "2004 Comprehensive Report on U.S. Trade and Investment Policy for Sub-Saharan Africa and Implementation of the African Growth and Opportunity Act."

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
May 20, 2004.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 21.

Commencement Address at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana
May 21, 2004

Thank you all very much. Chancellor Emmert and President Jenkins and Chairman Ogden, Members of the Congress, members of the faculty, trustees, families, distinguished guests, and members of the Class of 2004. I want to thank you for the warm welcome. It's great to be in the—on this wonderful campus. I'm honored to be with you on graduation day as all of you become proud alumni of Louisiana State University.

As you graduate from LSU, your Chancellor is graduating to new challenges as well. We appreciate Chancellor Emmert for his fine, steadfast leadership in making LSU one of America's flagship universities. This day is a tribute as well to the faculty of LSU, and we thank them for your skill and your dedication.

Some in this class are graduating with honors, and I congratulate all of you on an achievement that took a lot of discipline.

Others may have spent a little less time in the library—[*laughter*]—a little more time keeping the stools warm down at the Chimes. [*Laughter*] But you earned your degree, and you too can leave today with high hopes. I speak with some authority here—[*laughter*]—I've seen how things can work out pretty well for a C student. [*Laughter*]

All of you have learned a lot here at LSU, and you learned to take your sports seriously. I know you're especially proud of your mighty national champs, the finest athletes to wear the LSU jersey, the Lady Tigers of the women's track team. Plus you've got a pretty good football team too. I know firsthand, when Coach Saban told me right there at the White House how good this team was. And I want to congratulate all the athletes here at LSU.

After 4 years of sitting through lectures, I have a feeling you're not in the mood for another one. You've probably had your fill of political speeches from Free Speech Alley. [*Laughter*] So today, on your last day at LSU, I thought I would share a few important lessons that I've picked up along the way.

Let me begin with a very valuable lesson I've learned, a lesson that has influenced my well-being, and here it is: Listen to your mother. [*Laughter*] I had little choice. My mom has a way of speaking her mind. When I paid attention, I benefited. When I didn't, I paid the price. That's how it still works. [*Laughter*] In the world's eyes, you are now an independent adult. In your mother's eyes, you probably still have some growing up to do. You may not always agree with her advice, but I think of it this way: The first voice you heard is always worth listening to.

There are many moms and dads here today, and I know how some of you are feeling. It feels really good to write the last tuition check. [*Laughter*] It also feels like the last 20 years or so went by awfully fast. I know you're proud of your sons and daughters, and I know they are grateful. Today we honor the parents of the Class of 2004.

Here is another bit of advice I hope you graduates will consider as you weigh the values and priorities of your life. Sometimes you'll hear people say that moral truth is relative or call religious faith a comforting illusion. And when you hear talk like that, take it seriously enough to be skeptical. It may seem generous and openminded to say that everybody, on every moral issue, is equally right. But that attitude can also be an excuse for sidestepping life's most important questions. Most people over the ages have viewed the search for moral truth as one of the main purposes of life. And they were correct.

Good societies are constructed on the conviction that there is right, and there is wrong, and we can know the difference. Our country depends on businesspeople who are honest in keeping the books and public officials who stay true to their oath and soldiers who put their duty above comfort and men and women in every walk of life who conduct themselves with integrity, even when no one is watching.

Good lives are also constructed on moral conviction. You will find that indifferent and cynical men and women accomplish little that makes them proud. You will find that fighting injustice and evil requires a vision of goodness and truth. You will find the only way to live an honorable life is to believe in honor. For your sake and for the sake of our country, I hope you will always strive to be men and women of conviction and character.

As you enter professional life, I have a few other suggestions about how to succeed on the job. For starters, be on time. It's polite, and it shows your respect for others. Of course, it's easy for me to say. It's easy for me to be punctual when armed men stop all the traffic in town for you. [*Laughter*]

On the job and elsewhere in life, choose your friends carefully. The company you keep has a way of rubbing off on you, and

that can be a good thing or a bad thing. In my job, I got to pick just about everybody I work with. [*Laughter*] I've been happy with my choices, although I wish someone had warned me about all of Dick Cheney's wild partying. [*Laughter*]

Let me leave you with one more lesson. Wherever life takes us and whatever challenges we meet, each one of us has much to be grateful for. And the proper measure of response of a grateful heart is service. There's no such thing as a self-made man or woman. Everyone has had a little help along the way. It is a sign of maturity to remember our debts and a sign of grace to pass the favor along in generosity to others. There's a wise saying: We make a living by what we get; we make a life by what we give.

Louisiana State University has a tradition of gratitude expressed in service to community and country. Four monuments on your campus honor those from LSU who served and died in the Armed Forces. Recently, a new name was added to the War Memorial: Navy Lieutenant Scott Lamana was killed in the attack on the Pentagon on September the 11th, 2001. He died at his post. His Nation honors his memory.

In the war on terror we have counted on others from LSU. With us today to receive their degrees are three young men who saw active duty in Operation Iraqi Freedom. We thank Sergeant Cavalier, Corporal Esposito, Sergeant Jarreau for their service in the United States Marine Corps.

One of the finest ways to show gratitude for freedom is to defend freedom. And those who wear the uniform of our country have repaid America many times over with their selflessness and courage. That courage is needed. We live in historic times, when the will and character of America are being tested. We're at war with enemies that have many destructive ambitions and one overriding goal: They want to spread their ideology of hatred by forcing America to retreat from the world in weakness and fear. Yet, they're finding that Americans are not the running kind. When this country makes a commitment, we see it through.

We have an historic opportunity, the establishment of a peaceful and democratic Iraq at the heart of the Middle East, which will remove a danger, strike a blow against terrorism, and make America and the world more secure. We will complete the mission for which so many have served and sacrificed. And the world can be certain we will defend the freedom and security of this Nation, whatever it takes. And the world can be certain we will never abandon our belief that freedom is the gift from the Almighty to every man and woman in this world.

More than 60 years ago, when America was attacked at Pearl Harbor, a senior at this university joined the Marine Corps. He was three credits short, so he didn't graduate in 1942. Instead, he found himself taking part in fierce battles at Iwo Jima and Guam and elsewhere in the Pacific theater. Corporal Lamar Simmons returned home to Louisiana and built a successful career running radio stations. Not so long ago, his stepson learned that LSU gives academic credit for military service and applied for those credits on behalf of Mr. Simmons. And so a man who began his studies here in 1938 graduates with you today: Lamar Simmons, Class of 2004.

Mr. Simmons, with my honorary degree, I guess that makes me the second-oldest member of your graduating class. [*Laughter*] I speak for all of my classmates in paying tribute to this one man and to the great generation of Americans to which he belongs. These Americans saw faraway conflict change their lives and took on duties they had not asked for and did what had to be done. They kept this country free. We are still in their debt.

As President, I've had the privilege of seeing another generation rise to its responsibilities and show its character. I've seen the goodness and idealism of young Americans. I've seen confidence—I've seen your

confidence in yourselves, and I have confidence in you, in your generation, and in the great contributions you will make to our country.

I wish you all the best. I thank you for letting me share this day. I'm proud to be a member of your class. Congratulations, and may God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:21 a.m. at the Pete Maravich Assembly Center, after receiving an honorary doctorate of sciences from the university. In his remarks, he referred to Mark A. Emmert, chancellor, and Nick L. Saban, head football coach, Louisiana State University; William L. Jenkins, president, and Roger H. Ogden, chairman, board of supervisors, Louisiana State University System; graduates Sgt. Jared D. Cavalier, USMC, Cpl. Eric I. Esposito, USMC, Sgt. Joseph D. Jarreau, USMC, and A. Lamar Simmons; and Tony Walker, stepson of Mr. Simmons.

The President's Radio Address
May 22, 2004

Good morning. This week brought further evidence that across America, more citizens are finding jobs. The Department of Labor reported State-by-State job results, and these figures show that America's jobs engine is running strong.

Nationally, we gained 288,000 new jobs in April, and the Nation has added more than 1.1 million new jobs since last August. The unemployment rate has fallen steadily and now stands at 5.6 percent, down from 6.3 percent last June and lower than the average unemployment rate of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s.

In April, the biggest job gaining States were Florida, North Carolina, Missouri, and Michigan. Forty-five States out of 50 added new workers. In some States, job creation had been strong for many months. Florida has gained more than a quarter million new jobs since December 2001. In Nevada, 90,000 new jobs have been created since January of 2002, and Missouri has added 57,000 jobs since last summer.

States that have trailed in job growth are now making progress. Wisconsin and Ohio have each added more than 30,000 new jobs this year. New Hampshire gained 2,700 new jobs in April alone. And in Oregon, the unemployment rate has fallen from a high of 8.7 percent last summer down to 6.7 percent in April as the State has added 29,000 new jobs.

These gains are the result of the hard work of Americans and a progrowth, projobs agenda that begins with tax relief. When we let the American people keep more of what they earn and save, they put that money to good use. They demand more goods and services, which creates demand for new workers. Now that our economy is expanding and adding more jobs, we need to make sure Americans keep their tax relief.

Congress has begun to act. The House of Representatives has voted to make marriage penalty relief permanent and to keep the expanded 10-percent bracket. This week the House also voted to make permanent the $1,000 per child tax credit which is helping so many families. I congratulate the House on these important votes. Now the Senate should take action so we do not raise taxes on the American people.

To sustain our economic growth, we must also ensure affordable and reliable sources of energy. To protect consumers against high prices, the Department of Energy has established a hotline to gather complaints of price gouging. This weekend

in Amsterdam, Secretary Spence Abraham is meeting with petroleum producers from around the world on actions they can take to help the U.S. and global economy. Also, we have reformed Federal regulations to allow badly needed improvements and expansion of the Nation's petroleum refineries, so that more gasoline can get to the market quickly.

But our Nation must address fundamental energy challenges that have built over time. I have increased fuel economy standards for SUVs, vans, and pickups. And 3 years ago, I submitted to Congress a national energy strategy that would address our long-term energy needs. It called for tax incentives for fuel-efficient hybrid vehicles, more exploration in places like Alaska, and greater use of ethanol, a reliable source of energy produced on our farms.

This national strategy would help make our country less dependent on foreign sources of energy. Yet, these measures have been repeatedly blocked by Members of the Senate, and American consumers are paying the price. Three years is long enough. I urge the Congress to end the delays and pass comprehensive energy legislation.

With the right policies, we will maintain the strong forward momentum of the American economy, which is creating thousands of new jobs for American workers.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 11:50 a.m. on May 21 at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, LA, for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on May 22. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 21 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks Honoring the 2003 Women's National Basketball Association Champion Detroit Shock

May 24, 2004

The President. Thank you all for coming. Welcome to the Rose Garden, and congratulations to the 2003 WNBA championship team from Detroit. That's who we're here to honor. It's good to welcome the coach. [*Laughter*] I don't know if 20 years ago they would have thought of you as a coach.

William Laimbeer, Jr. I know. I know. [*Laughter*]

The President. But he made a pretty darn good one, didn't he? I'm real proud of your leadership.

I want to thank Tom Wilson for being here; Val Ackerman, here as well. I want to thank the players and the coaches for coming.

This is an historic season for the Shock. After all, you went from worst to first. Isn't that right?

Team member. Yes, that's right. [*Laughter*]

The President. And interestingly enough, in winning the championship, you drew the largest crowd in league history, which says something about the talent and the flair and the charisma of the players. I think one of the things that good teams do is, they decide to be a team. They come together and say, "We're going to win as a team." And that's what this team did. There was tremendous discipline, hard work, and good leadership. And I'm proud of the fact, and I know the women on this team are, that you were Coach of the Year in the WNBA.

I said they came together as a team, but they had great talent. Ruth Riley was the WNBA Finals MVP. The Rookie of the Year was Cheryl Ford, and a member of the 2004 Olympic team was Swin Cash. This is a team with talent but learned to blend the talent for a greater whole.

They tell me that they changed the road there by the stadium to Three Championship Drive. Is that right?

Team member. Yes, that's right.

The President. It must be pretty intimidating for a team to pull up on Three Championship Drive to play.

I also appreciate most of all the fact that many of the players on this team are involved with helping others. I know there is a strong commitment to literacy on the team. These women understand that a child cannot succeed in America unless they can read, and I appreciate you taking your championship status and converting it into something really important in our society, besides winning basketball games.

Swin Cash and Ruth Riley have come to the National Book Festival. I know because my wife was the founder of it, and she was most appreciative. I appreciate so much the Steps to Success program, which gives the players a chance to speak to children about nutrition and exercise and self-image. In other words, these players are mentors as well as good players. They've achieved an interesting status, a championship status, and now they convert it to helping somebody change their life or somebody to be loved.

I appreciate so very much the McKeesport, Pennsylvania, effort. Coach, when you had the whole team there to distribute 20 tons of food, I mean, it's a really fine example of what a champion means.

And so today it's my honor to welcome to the Rose Garden true champs—great athletes and really fine people. Congratulations. I'm glad you're here.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:08 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to William Laimbeer, Jr., head coach, and Ruth Riley, Cheryl Ford, and Swin Cash, players, Detroit Shock; Tom Wilson, president and chief executive officer, Palace Sports & Entertainment; and Val Ackerman, president, Women's National Basketball Association.

Remarks at the United States Army War College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania
May 24, 2004

Thank you all. Thank you, and good evening. I'm honored to visit the Army War College. Generations of officers have come here to study the strategies and history of warfare. I've come here tonight to report to all Americans and to the Iraqi people on the strategy our Nation is pursuing in Iraq and the specific steps we're taking to achieve our goals.

The actions of our enemies over the last few weeks have been brutal, calculating, and instructive. We've seen a car bombing take the life of a 61-year-old Iraqi named Izz al-Din Salim, who was serving as President of the Governing Council. This crime shows our enemy's intention to prevent Iraqi self-government, even if that means killing a lifelong Iraqi patriot and a faithful Muslim. Mr. Salim was assassinated by terrorists seeking the return of tyranny and the death of democracy.

We've also seen images of a young American facing decapitation. This vile display shows a contempt for all the rules of warfare and all the bounds of civilized behavior. It reveals a fanaticism that was not caused by any action of ours and would not be appeased by any concession. We

suspect that the man with the knife was an Al Qaida associate named Zarqawi. He and other terrorists know that Iraq is now the central front in the war on terror, and we must understand that as well. The return of tyranny to Iraq would be an unprecedented terrorist victory and a cause for killers to rejoice. It would also embolden the terrorists, leading to more bombings, more beheadings, and more murders of the innocent around the world.

The rise of a free and self-governing Iraq will deny terrorists a base of operation, discredit their narrow ideology, and give momentum to reformers across the region. This will be a decisive blow to terrorism at the heart of its power and a victory for the security of America and the civilized world.

Our work in Iraq has been hard. Our coalition has faced changing conditions of war, and that has required perseverance, sacrifice, and an ability to adapt. The swift removal of Saddam Hussein's regime last spring had an unintended effect: Instead of being killed or captured on the battlefield, some of Saddam's elite guards shed their uniforms and melted into the civilian population. These elements of Saddam's repressive regime and secret police have reorganized, rearmed, and adopted sophisticated terrorist tactics. They've linked up with foreign fighters and terrorists. In a few cities, extremists have tried to sow chaos and seize regional power for themselves. These groups and individuals have conflicting ambitions, but they share a goal: They hope to wear out the patience of Americans, our coalition, and Iraqis before the arrival of effective self-government and before Iraqis have the capability to defend their freedom.

Iraq now faces a critical moment. As the Iraqi people move closer to governing themselves, the terrorists are likely to become more active and more brutal. There are difficult days ahead, and the way forward may sometimes appear chaotic. Yet our coalition is strong, our efforts are focused and unrelenting, and no power of the enemy will stop Iraq's progress.

Helping construct a stable democracy after decades of dictatorship is a massive undertaking. Yet we have a great advantage. Whenever people are given a choice in the matter, they prefer lives of freedom to lives of fear. Our enemies in Iraq are good at filling hospitals, but they don't build any. They can incite men to murder and suicide, but they cannot inspire men to live and hope and add to the progress of their country. The terrorists' only influence is violence, and their only agenda is death.

Our agenda, in contrast, is freedom and independence, security and prosperity for the Iraqi people. And by removing a source of terrorist violence and instability in the Middle East, we also make our own country more secure.

Our coalition has a clear goal, understood by all, to see the Iraqi people in charge of Iraq for the first time in generations. America's task in Iraq is not only to defeat an enemy; it is to give strength to a friend, a free, representative government that serves its people and fights on their behalf. And the sooner this goal is achieved, the sooner our job will be done.

There are five steps in our plan to help Iraq achieve democracy and freedom. We will hand over authority to a sovereign Iraqi government, help establish security, continue rebuilding Iraq's infrastructure, encourage more international support, and move toward a national election that will bring forward new leaders empowered by the Iraqi people.

The first of these steps will occur next month, when our coalition will transfer full sovereignty to a government of Iraqi citizens who will prepare the way for national elections. On June 30th, the Coalition Provisional Authority will cease to exist and will not be replaced. The occupation will end, and Iraqis will govern their own affairs. America's Ambassador to Iraq, John Negroponte, will present his credentials to the new President of Iraq. Our Embassy

in Baghdad will have the same purpose as any other American Embassy, to assure good relations with a sovereign nation. America and other countries will continue to provide technical experts to help Iraq's ministries of government, but these ministries will report to Iraq's new Prime Minister.

The United Nations special envoy, Lakhdar Brahimi, is now consulting with a broad spectrum of Iraqis to determine the composition of this interim government. The special envoy intends to put forward the names of interim government officials this week. In addition to a President, two Vice Presidents, and a Prime Minister, 26 Iraqi ministers will oversee government departments from health to justice to defense. This new government will be advised by a national council, which will be chosen in July by Iraqis representing their country's diversity. This interim government will exercise full sovereignty until national elections are held. America fully supports Mr. Brahimi's efforts, and I have instructed the Coalition Provisional Authority to assist him in every way possible.

In preparation for sovereignty, many functions of government have already been transferred. Twelve government ministries are currently under the direct control of Iraqis. The Ministry of Education, for example, is out of the propaganda business and is now concerned with educating Iraqi children. Under the direction of Dr. Aladin al-Alwan, the Ministry has trained more than 30,000 teachers and supervisors for the schools of a new Iraq.

All along, some have questioned whether the Iraqi people are ready for self-government or want it. And all along, the Iraqi people have given their answer. In settings where Iraqis have met to discuss their country's future, they have endorsed representative government, and they are practicing representative government. Many of Iraq's cities and towns now have elected town councils and city governments, and beyond the violence, a civil society is emerging.

The June 30th transfer of sovereignty is an essential commitment of our strategy. Iraqis are proud people who resent foreign control of their affairs, just as we would. After decades under the tyrant, they are also reluctant to trust authority. By keeping our promise on June 30th, the coalition will demonstrate that we have no interest in occupation. And full sovereignty will give Iraqis a direct interest in the success of their own government. Iraqis will know that when they build a school or repair a bridge, they're not working for the Coalition Provisional Authority; they are working for themselves. And when they patrol the streets of Baghdad or engage radical militias, they will be fighting for their own country.

The second step in the plan for Iraqi democracy is to help establish the stability and security that democracy requires. Coalition forces and the Iraqi people have the same enemies, the terrorists, illegal militia, and Saddam loyalists who stand between the Iraqi people and their future as a free nation. Working as allies, we will defend Iraq and defeat these enemies.

America will provide forces and support necessary for achieving these goals. Our commanders had estimated that a troop level below 115,000 would be sufficient at this point in the conflict. Given the recent increase in violence, we'll maintain our troop level at the current 138,000 as long as necessary. This has required extended duty for the 1st Armored Division and the 2d Light Cavalry Regiment, 20,000 men and women who were scheduled to leave Iraq in April. Our Nation appreciates their hard work and sacrifice, and they can know that they will be heading home soon. General Abizaid and other commanders in Iraq are constantly assessing the level of troops they need to fulfill the mission. If they need more troops, I will send them. The mission of our forces in Iraq is demanding

and dangerous. Our troops are showing exceptional skill and courage. I thank them for their sacrifices and their duty.

In the city of Fallujah, there's been considerable violence by Saddam loyalists and foreign fighters, including the murder of four American contractors. American soldiers and marines could have used overwhelming force. Our commanders, however, consulted with Iraq's Governing Council and local officials and determined that massive strikes against the enemy would alienate the local population and increase support for the insurgency, so we have pursued a different approach. We're making security a shared responsibility in Fallujah. Coalition commanders have worked with local leaders to create an all-Iraqi security force, which is now patrolling the city. Our soldiers and marines will continue to disrupt enemy attacks on our supply routes, conduct joint patrols with Iraqis to destroy bomb factories and safe houses, and kill or capture any enemy.

We want Iraqi forces to gain experience and confidence in dealing with their country's enemies. We want the Iraqi people to know that we trust their growing capabilities, even as we help build them. At the same time, Fallujah must cease to be a sanctuary for the enemy, and those responsible for terrorism will be held to account.

In the cities of Najaf and Karbala and Kufa, most of the violence has been incited by a young radical cleric who commands an illegal militia. These enemies have been hiding behind an innocent civilian population, storing arms and ammunition in mosques, and launching attacks from holy shrines. Our soldiers have treated religious sites with respect while systematically dismantling the illegal militia.

We're also seeing Iraqis, themselves, take more responsibility for restoring order. In recent weeks, Iraqi forces have ejected elements of this militia from the Governor's office in Najaf. Yesterday, an elite Iraqi unit cleared out a weapons cache from a large mosque in Kufa. Respected Shi'a leaders have called on the militia to withdraw from these towns. Ordinary Iraqis have marched in protest against the militants.

As challenges rise in Fallujah, Najaf, and elsewhere, the tactics of our military will be flexible. Commanders on the ground will pay close attention to local conditions. And we will do all that is necessary by measured force or overwhelming force to achieve a stable Iraq.

Iraq's military, police, and border forces have begun to take on broader responsibilities. Eventually, they must be the primary defenders of Iraqi security, as American and coalition forces are withdrawn. And we're helping them to prepare for this role. In some cases, the early performance of Iraqi forces fell short. Some refused orders to engage the enemy. We've learned from these failures, and we've taken steps to correct them. Successful fighting units need a sense of cohesion, so we've lengthened and intensified their training. Successful units need to know they are fighting for the future of their own country, not for any occupying power, so we are ensuring that Iraqi forces serve under an Iraqi chain of command. Successful fighting units need the best possible leadership, so we improved the vetting and training of Iraqi officers and senior enlisted men.

At my direction and with the support of Iraqi authorities, we are accelerating our program to help train Iraqis to defend their country. A new team of senior military officers is now assessing every unit in Iraq's security forces. I've asked this team to oversee the training of a force of 260,000 Iraqi soldiers, police, and other security personnel. Five Iraqi army battalions are in the field now, with another eight battalions to join them by July the 1st. The eventual goal is an Iraqi army of 35,000 soldiers in 27 battalions, fully prepared to defend their country.

After June 30th, American and other forces will still have important duties.

American military forces in Iraq will operate under American command as a part of a multinational force authorized by the United Nations. Iraq's new sovereign government will still face enormous security challenges, and our forces will be there to help.

The third step in the plan for Iraqi democracy is to continue rebuilding that nation's infrastructure so that a free Iraq can quickly gain economic independence and a better quality of life. Our coalition has already helped Iraqis to rebuild schools and refurbish hospitals and health clinics, repair bridges, upgrade the electrical grid, and modernize the communications system. And now a growing private economy is taking shape. A new currency has been introduced. Iraq's Governing Council approved a new law that opens the country to foreign investment for the first time in decades. Iraq has liberalized its trade policy, and today an Iraqi observer attends meetings of the World Trade Organization. Iraqi oil production has reached more than two million barrels per day, bringing revenues of nearly $6 billion so far this year, which is being used to help the people of Iraq. And thanks in part to our efforts—to the efforts of former Secretary of State James Baker, many of Iraq's largest creditors have pledged to forgive or substantially reduce Iraqi debt incurred by the former regime.

We're making progress. Yet there still is much work to do. Over the decades of Saddam's rule, Iraq's infrastructure was allowed to crumble while money was diverted to palaces and to wars and to weapons programs. We're urging other nations to contribute to Iraqi reconstruction, and 37 countries and the IMF and the World Bank have so far pledged $13.5 billion in aid. America has dedicated more than $20 billion to reconstruction and development projects in Iraq. To ensure our money is spent wisely and effectively, our new Embassy in Iraq will have regional offices in several key cities. These offices will work closely with Iraqis at all levels of government to help make sure projects are completed on time and on budget.

A new Iraq will also need a humane, well-supervised prison system. Under the dictator, prisons like Abu Ghraib were symbols of death and torture. That same prison became a symbol of disgraceful conduct by a few American troops who dishonored our country and disregarded our values. America will fund the construction of a modern maximum security prison. When that prison is completed, detainees at Abu Ghraib will be relocated. Then, with the approval of the Iraqi government, we will demolish the Abu Ghraib prison, as a fitting symbol of Iraq's new beginning.

The fourth step in our plan is to enlist additional international support for Iraq's transition. At every stage, the United States has gone to the United Nations—to confront Saddam Hussein, to promise serious consequences for his actions, and to begin Iraqi reconstruction. Today the United States and Great Britain presented a new resolution in the Security Council to help move Iraq toward self-government. I've directed Secretary Powell to work with fellow members of the Council to endorse the timetable the Iraqis have adopted, to express international support for Iraq's interim government, to reaffirm the world's security commitment to the Iraqi people, and to encourage other U.N. members to join in the effort. Despite past disagreements, most nations have indicated strong support for the success of a free Iraq, and I'm confident they will share in the responsibility of assuring that success.

Next month, at the NATO summit in Istanbul, I will thank our 15 NATO Allies who together have more than 17,000 troops on the ground in Iraq. Great Britain and Poland are each leading a multinational division that is securing important parts of the country. And NATO, itself, is giving helpful intelligence and communications and logistical support to the Polish-led division. At the summit, we will discuss

NATO's role in helping Iraq build and secure its democracy.

The fifth and most important step is free national elections to be held no later than next January. A United Nations team headed by Carina Perelli is now in Iraq, helping form an independent election commission that will oversee an orderly, accurate national election. In that election, the Iraqi people will choose a transitional national assembly, the first freely elected, truly representative national governing body in Iraq's history. This assembly will serve as Iraq's legislature, and it will choose a transitional government with executive powers. The transitional national assembly will also draft a new constitution, which will be presented to the Iraqi people in a referendum scheduled for the fall of 2005. Under this new constitution, Iraq will elect a permanent government by the end of next year.

In this time of war and liberation and rebuilding, American soldiers and civilians on the ground have come to know and respect the citizens of Iraq. They're a proud people who hold strong and diverse opinions. Yet Iraqis are united in a broad and deep conviction: They're determined never again to live at the mercy of a dictator, and they believe that a national election will put that dark time behind them. A representative government that protects basic rights, elected by Iraqis, is the best defense against the return of tyranny, and that election is coming.

Completing the five steps to Iraqi elected self-government will not be easy. There's likely to be more violence before the transfer of sovereignty and after the transfer of sovereignty. The terrorists and Saddam loyalists would rather see many Iraqis die than have any live in freedom, but terrorists will not determine the future of Iraq.

That nation is moving every week toward free elections and a permanent place among free nations. Like every nation that has made the journey to democracy, Iraqis will raise up a government that reflects their own culture and values. I sent American troops to Iraq to defend our security, not to stay as an occupying power. I sent American troops to Iraq to make its people free, not to make them American. Iraqis will write their own history and find their own way. As they do, Iraqis can be certain, a free Iraq will always have a friend in the United States of America.

In the last 32 months, history has placed great demands on our country, and events have come quickly. Americans have seen the flames of September the 11th, followed battles in the mountains of Afghanistan, and learned new terms like "orange alert" and "ricin" and "dirty bomb." We've seen killers at work on trains in Madrid, in a bank in Istanbul, at a synagogue in Tunis, and at a nightclub in Bali. And now the families of our soldiers and civilian workers pray for their sons and daughters in Mosul and Karbala and Baghdad.

We did not seek this war on terror, but this is the world as we find it. We must keep our focus. We must do our duty. History is moving, and it will tend toward hope or tend toward tragedy. Our terrorist enemies have a vision that guides and explains all their varied acts of murder. They seek to impose Taliban-like rule, country by country, across the greater Middle East. They seek the total control of every person and mind and soul, a harsh society in which women are voiceless and brutalized. They seek bases of operation to train more killers and export more violence. They commit dramatic acts of murder to shock, frighten, and demoralize civilized nations, hoping we will retreat from the world and give them free rein. They seek weapons of mass destruction to impose their will through blackmail and catastrophic attacks. None of this is the expression of a religion. It is a totalitarian political ideology, pursued with consuming zeal and without conscience.

Our actions too are guided by a vision. We believe that freedom can advance and change lives in the greater Middle East, as it has advanced and changed lives in

Asia and Latin America and Eastern Europe and Africa. We believe it is a tragedy of history that in the Middle East, which gave the world great gifts of law and science and faith, so many have been held back by lawless tyranny and fanaticism. We believe that when all Middle Eastern peoples are finally allowed to live and think and work and worship as free men and women, they will reclaim the greatness of their own heritage. And when that day comes, the bitterness and burning hatreds that feed terrorism will fade and die away. America and all the world will be safer when hope has returned to the Middle East.

These two visions—one of tyranny and murder, the other of liberty and life—clashed in Afghanistan. And thanks to brave U.S. and coalition forces and to Afghan patriots, the nightmare of the Taliban is over, and that nation is coming to life again. These two visions have now met in Iraq and are contending for the future of that country. The failure of freedom would only mark the beginning of peril and violence. But my fellow Americans, we will not fail. We will persevere and defeat this enemy and hold this hard-won ground for the realm of liberty.

May God bless our country.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8 p.m. in the Thorpe Hall gymnasium. In his remarks, he referred to American hostage Nicholas Berg, who was killed in Iraq in early May by senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; Lakhdar Brahimi, Special Adviser to the U.N. Secretary-General; Aladin Abd al-Sahib al-Alwan, Iraqi Minister of Education; Gen. John P. Abizaid, USA, combatant commander, U.S. Central Command; Muqtada Al Sadr, Iraq Shiite cleric whose militia engaged in an uprising in Iraq that began in early April; James A. Baker III, the President's personal envoy on the issue of Iraqi debt; and Carina Perelli, Director, United Nations Electoral Assistance Division. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Iraqis Receiving Medical Care in the United States and an Exchange With Reporters

May 25, 2004

The President. I'm honored to shake the hand of a brave Iraqi citizen who had his hand cut off by Saddam Hussein. I'm with six other Iraqi citizens as well who suffered the same fate. They are examples of the brutality of the tyrant.

I am also here with Marvin Zindler of Houston, Texas. I appreciate Joe Agris, the doctor who helped put these hands on these men; Don North, the documentary producer who made a film of this brutality, which brought the plight of these gentlemen to the attention of Marvin and his foundation. These men had hands restored because of the generosity and love of an American citizen, and I am so proud to welcome them to the Oval Office.

I assured them we have a plan to help Iraq achieve free elections. We'll transfer full sovereignty. They were pleased to hear that America will stay and help with security. We will continue to work on reconstruction matters. I assured them I will continue to ask the world to help. And they want to vote. They want to have elections. And they're going back to Iraq soon, and we're so proud to have them here in the Oval Office.

Again, thank you, sir, for coming.

Qasim Kadhim. Thank you very much.

The President. I appreciate you. Thank you. Please be seated, and I'll answer a couple of questions.

Terry [Terence Hunt, Associated Press].

Lt. Gen. Ricardo S. Sanchez

Q. Mr. President, can you say why General Sanchez is being replaced as the top commander in Iraq? Is that in any way related to the prisoner abuse scandal? And who is going to replace him?

The President. Rick Sanchez has done a fabulous job. He's been there for a long time. His service has been exemplary, and the Defense Department will add further comments to it.

Mike [Mike Emmanuel, FOX News], welcome. It's good to see you.

Transfer of Sovereignty in Iraq

Q. Mr. President, Chirac's office is quoted as saying that President Chirac told you that the transfer of power has to be real.

The President. Yes.

Q. Can you describe what you may have said to him to reassure him that the transfer of power would be real?

The President. Yes, what President Chirac and others have said is they want to make sure that the transfer of sovereignty to the interim government is a real transfer. And that's what we want. We want there to be a complete and real transfer of sovereignty so that the Iraqi citizens realize the fate of their country is now their responsibility. And we'll be there to help, and we'll help in a variety of ways. We'll help by making sure our security forces are there to work with their security forces. We'll help to make sure the reconstruction money we have set aside is well spent. We'll help by getting—to continue to work with other countries to help aid a free Iraq. We'll do what we need to do to help the interim government succeed in getting to the period of free elections. And I had a great conversation with President Chirac. We share the same goal, a free and stable and peaceful Iraq.

Yes, Dick [Richard Keil, Bloomberg News].

Q. Mr. President, looking forward a bit to the elections that you'd like to see in Iraq, is it imperative for Iraq to end up with a democracy? Or are free elections enough to satisfy your aims at this point?

The President. What's imperative is that the Iraqi citizens develop a constitution that they can call their own, a constitution written and approved by Iraqis. As I said last night, our intention was never to have Iraq look like America. Our intention is for Iraq to be free and stable and whole, at peace with its neighbors.

A free Iraq will help change the history of the greater Middle East. A free Iraq will show the rest of the world that when people are given a chance to raise their families in peace and security, a civil society that's stable and hopeful will develop, and that's what we want. We want a society where the men who've suffered so much because of the whims of one brutal man—where their children can grow up and realize their full potential, where the schools work, where the health care system is good. And there's no doubt in my mind that Iraq can achieve this great dream and vision. And there's no doubt in my mind, some day their children will come to America and say, "Thank goodness America stood the line and was strong and did not falter in the face of the violence of a few."

Listen, thank you all for coming. I'm proud to have you here.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:02 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Marvin Zindler, member, board of directors, and Joseph Agris, chief executive officer and founder, Agris-Zindler Children's Fund; Lt. Gen. Ricardo S. Sanchez, USA, commander, Coalition Joint Task Force Seven; and President Jacques Chirac of France.

Remarks in a Discussion at Youngstown State University in Youngstown, Ohio
May 25, 2004

The President. Well, thank you, Ron. Thanks. Listen, thanks for coming. As you can see, I'm joined by some of your fellow citizens here to have a dialog about health care. And there's some really amazing things going on in the Youngstown area as well as across the country to make sure people have got a safety net. And that's what we're going to discuss, community health centers and why they're important for Ohio, why they're important for the country, and how they fit into a strategy to make sure we do a better job of controlling costs as well as making sure people get health care. That's what we're here to discuss.

We've got some real experts here that I'll be introducing in a minute, people who have actually used community health centers, people who work in a community health center, people who run community health centers, and people who oversee community health centers. We've got the whole spectrum of the community health center world right here in Youngstown to discuss why they're important.

Before I do, first of all I want to thank Tony Atwater, the provost of this fine university. Tony, thank you very much. You're a good man to host us. It's not easy to welcome the President. [*Laughter*] The entourages are quite large these days. But I'm really proud that we could visit your beautiful campus, and thanks a lot for the hospitality.

Tom Van Coverden is the president and CEO of the National Association of Health Care Centers. Tom, thanks for coming, glad you're here.

George McKelvey is with us. Mr. Mayor, it's good to see you. Thank you for your service. See you tomorrow. Mr. Mayor and I first met on a train, didn't we, 4 years ago. Thanks for coming by. You're doing a fine job here. And the mayor told me when I first met him, he said, "My vision is a modern Youngstown." And you're making it come true. I'm proud of your service—doing a great job.

And the mayor of Alliance is with us, Toni Middleton. Where are you, Mr. Mayor? There you go. Thanks for coming. The reason Toni is here, I think a community health center is opening up in Alliance.

Mayor Toni E. Middleton. Yes, we opened up in December.

The President. Good. See, Mr. Mayor, you've got yourself a good asset in your community, which we'll be discussing here shortly.

Listen, when I landed at the airport, I met a fellow named Sid Harris. I'm about to introduce Sid. He has been an active volunteer at a local hospital for 15 years, where he's performed over 4,000 hours of volunteer help. Sid is a—he holds fundraisers so that children with heart problems can go to camp in Virginia. He sends nursing students to Youngstown State University. Sid is a soldier in the army of compassion. Sid is right here. Sid, why don't you stand up, if you don't mind. Thank you, Sid. His wife pointed out to me when I got off the plane, Sid may not be able to see you, but he sure can hear you. [*Laughter*]

And the thing about Sid is, is that he is such a loving guy that he wants to help somebody in life. That's what he wants to do. We talk about the strength of the country being the U.S. military, and we're going to keep it strong so the world will be more peaceful and free. We talk about one of our strengths being the fact that we're a wealthy nation compared to other nations, and that's the way we want it. We've got to make sure we remain the best place in the world to risk capital so people can

work. But the true strength of the country is in the hearts and souls of our citizens. That's the true strength of America. The true strength of our country is the fact that people like Sid are willing to take time out of their lives to make somebody else's life better.

We've got people in our country who hurt, who are lonely, who wonder whether or not the future belongs to them, whether or not there's any brighter day. And we've got people in our country who are willing to surround the lonely with love and to help. See, that's the strength of America. And the reason I like to talk about the Sid Harrises of the world is to thank those here and those around Youngstown and those around the country who are doing the same thing, and to call upon others to love your neighbor like you'd like to be loved yourself. We all can save America, one heart and one soul at a time. And Sid Harris is a part. I appreciate you coming, Sid.

There's an interesting debate in Washington about health care. My view is, is that we need to empower consumers and doctors. We need to make sure the patient-doctor relationship is the center of health care decisionmaking, not Washington, DC. We need to make sure that we put good policy in place that helps patients.

One of the things that you're going to see happening here very quickly is drug discount cards will be sent out to senior citizens. It's a good thing. You take those drug discount cards, and you'll be able to—this is part of Medicare reform, making the Medicare system better. And the drug discount cards will allow seniors to save between 15 to 25 percent off of brandname medicines and more off of generic drugs. There's a market over the Internet, kind of, that's taking place—in other words, people are now posting price so consumers have got the ability to choose price. And that is causing more price efficiency in the marketplace. It's a positive thing that's beginning to take place.

By the way, poor seniors will get a $600 credit on their card. Many drug companies have said they're going to—once the $600 credit is used, they'll extend to help the poorest of seniors with drug prices. It's a positive development.

Medicare reform is going to work, and it's going to work well. It fully kicks in in the year 2006. The first stage is the drug discount cards that are now being sent out.

Secondly, we've passed what's called health savings accounts. I suspect there's some small-business people here. These are particularly beneficial for individuals and small businesses. This will allow you to put money into a health savings account tax-free, earn interest on it tax-free, take it out tax-free to pay for ordinary medical expenses as well as to pay for a high-deductible, low-cost medical catastrophic policy. It's a good way to help control costs. It's a new innovation that is beginning to get in the marketplace, all aimed at helping to control medical costs and making sure the patient-doctor relationship is the center of medical decisionmaking processes.

We need what's called association health care plans. This will allow small businesses to pool risk so they can have the same purchasing power as large businesses do. I believe there ought to be tax credits for the working uninsured.

And I know you need medical liability reform here in the State of Ohio and across the United States. Here's why. Junk and frivolous lawsuits cause docs to have to practice what's called defensive medicine. In other words, they practice more medicine than you need in order to make sure that if and when they get sued, they've got a good case. Secondly, junk and frivolous lawsuits mean their premiums go up for their medical liability insurance, which means your bills go up. Thirdly, junk and frivolous lawsuits discourage good docs from even practicing medicine in the first

place. If you want health care to be affordable and available, you need to have a legal system that is fair and balanced.

I believe this is a national issue because it runs up the cost of medicine for national budgets. The Medicare budget goes up. The Medicaid budget goes up. The veterans' health care system costs go up. And we need law coming out of Washington to make medical liability reform the law of the land. It passed the House; it's stuck in the Senate.

These are practical ways to address the rising cost of health care, the availability of health care, all aimed at making sure the patient and the doc are the center of the health care decisionmaking process.

Now, one of the problems we got here in America is that there are some people, quite a few people, who need primary care, a place where they can go get help when they need it. The problem, oftentimes people go to the emergency room, which is very cost-inefficient. It costs the taxpayers money. The emergency room ought to be used for true emergencies, not for the primary care of health care—primary health care for people who can't afford health care. So the Government wisely set up what's called community health centers. These are facilities where—that provide primary and prenatal care, checkups, immunization, preventative treatments to anybody who needs them. In other words, this is a part of the safety net. This is a wise expenditure of taxpayers' money. It relieves pressure off the emergency rooms, and it provides a safety net for some of the citizens in our communities.

We provide care up to about 13 million people a year, I think. I think it's important for us to continue to either expand existing community health centers or build new ones. The goal I set when I first got elected was that we would expand them by 1,200—expand or build 1,200 new ones. We've accomplished half of that goal. I'm asking for Congress to accomplish the other half of the goal over the next couple of years. This is wise use—[*applause*].

These things make sense. It's a heck of a lot better system than having the entire health care system federalized. This makes a lot of sense to make sure that we recognize in our society people can't afford health care, and they need access to health care. And it's a practical way to do so.

Today you're going to hear from people who've used the community health centers. You're also going to hear about a doc who works at the community health center. But I first want to start off with Betty Duke. Her job is—well, she's got a pretty fancy title. She's the Administrator of the Health Resources and Services Administration, HSRA—HRSA—[*laughter*]—in Rockville, Maryland. She works for Tommy Thompson, who is my Cabinet Secretary for Health and Human Services. She's got such a complicated job, it required a Ph.D. But her job is to oversee this health center initiative, the expansion of existing health centers or the building of new ones in communities where there is a need.

Why don't you tell us, Betty, just anything you want to say, you're welcome. It's your mike.

[*At this point, Elizabeth J. Duke made brief remarks.*]

The President. Yes, I appreciate—one of the things—we're trying to get up to serving 16 million people, see. There's a lot of discussion about whether or not people have got access to health care. This is access to health care in a practical way—16 million people.

They treat bicycle injuries? [*Laughter*] I was wearing my helmet, I want you to know. [*Laughter*]

Ron, you're the CEO of the Ohio North East Health Systems, Inc. That's a long title for——

Ronald Dwinnells. We call it "ONE," as in "Number One." [*Laughter*]

The President. "Number One"? Okay. You're the health CEO of "Number One,"

then. So, like, what is your—how many of these centers do you run? How long have you been running centers? How often are they open?

[*Dr. Dwinnells made brief remarks.*]

The President. Tell people why it's—I think they're cost-effective, otherwise I wouldn't be asking them to expand. Do you think they're—of course you think they're cost-effective. [*Laughter*] You're not a lawyer, but it's a leading question. [*Laughter*]

Dr. Dwinnells. Yes, I definitely think it's very cost-effective. This year, we're anticipating 60,000 visits. We have a $5 million a year budget this year. This is compared to $600,000 in 1998. So there's been a huge growth. I believe—[*inaudible*]—I saw figures once where to care for a patient through community health centers, it was this ungodly small amount, a dollar-something per encounter. And it's amazing, because it's run close to——

The President. As opposed to an emergency room, or no care at all until it's too late—until, in other words, somebody gets so sick that they show up requiring a much greater bill. It's going to be—it will cost them a lot of money if we don't take care of a problem early.

[*Dr. Dwinnells made further remarks.*]

The President. Right. One of the things I forgot to ask Betty about was the National Health Service Corps.

[*Dr. Duke made further remarks.*]

The President. I appreciate you doing that. In other words, what Betty does is not only see the construction and—oversee the construction or expansion of these facilities, her job also is to provide incentive to health care providers to show up and work there. And that's good. It's a good program. And part of it is to forgive loan.

Dr. Dwinnells. Mr. President, can I say——

The President. Yes, absolutely.

Dr. Dwinnells. I'm a National Health Service Corps alumni.

The President. Are you? Good.

Dr. Dwinnells. Yes, and I'm still here. [*Laughter*]

The President. We've got somebody who works for you here. Compton. Compton, I'm glad you're here.

Compton Girdharry. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Comp's a doc. What kind of doc are you?

Dr. Girdharry. I'm an obstetrician/gynecologist, Mr. President.

The President. How long have you been practicing medicine?

Dr. Girdharry. I was practicing for 21 years in the city of Alliance.

The President. And?

Dr. Girdharry. And I was unfortunately forced out—to give up that practice because of the rising cost of malpractice insurance.

The President. Let me stop you there. You hear me talk about the need for medical liability reform. You need to do it Ohio. We need to do it in Washington. Listen, everybody ought to have their day in court, but a reasonable person must know that the system is totally out of whack—totally out of whack when you start driving people out of business, people who you need in your communities. Fortunately—I didn't mean to tell your story for you—[*laughter*]—fortunately, you found a home.

[*Dr. Girdharry made further remarks.*]

The President. Doc, I'm here thanking you, see? [*Laughter*] You're the guy who's helping make people's lives better, and I appreciate that.

One of the interesting things is—and so, you were worried about medical liability reform—I mean, liability insurance as a private doc. What about now when you work here?

Dr. Girdharry. That's the great thing about it. Being in sole practice, I actually was administrating my whole practice, and

my practice was a major headache. So now, with the Federal tort, I don't have to worry about that.

The President. Yes, in other words, the Government helps with the liability.

Dr. Girdharry. That is correct.

The President. Isn't that right, Betty?

Dr. Duke. That's correct. That's correct. We have a program in which we provide insurance for the health providers who work in our system.

The President. See, I want people who might be listening out there, who are docs out there, who are wondering whether or not it makes sense to go and lend their services and their expertise and their compassion to a community health center, to understand that it's a good place to show—to do your skill; it's a good place to come.

Are you still looking for docs?

Dr. Duke. We are always looking for docs, and we make it really good for them to come to work for us.

The President. You do? Good. Well, you've got living proof of it right here in Compton.

Anything else you want to say, Compton, now that you've got the floor? [*Laughter*]

Dr. Girdharry. I think also that the health clinic is a great idea because a lot of my patients, when I went out of business, are traveling right now to different cities. And the problem is that a lot of them don't seek the health care because they either can't afford it or they can't do the distance and they have young kids at home. So it is a major help for these people.

The President. Well, that's good. Thanks, appreciate you being here. Thanks for your compassion. I'm glad you're here.

Cindy.

Cynthia Sacco. Yes.

The President. Got the mike there.

Ms. Sacco. Got the mike.

The President. Which one is your grandson?

Ms. Sacco. That handsome gentleman right there.

The President. In the uniform? Thanks for your service, Sergeant, appreciate it. Your grandmother was bragging on you. That's right. [*Laughter*]

Cindy, thanks. Tell us your story.

[*Ms. Sacco made brief remarks.*]

The President. So the center is sitting there, you go in——

Ms. Sacco. No insurance.

The President. Right.

Ms. Sacco. Didn't matter.

The President. Right. That's what they're there for.

Ms. Sacco. Come on in.

The President. That's exactly why we need to expand them. And, obviously, we want people to have insurance, need to work—encourage people to have insurance. There's ways to do so in a cost-effective way as well through tax credits. Some don't have insurance. Some are too poor. Some are sick. Some have never been to a doctor in their life. These centers are available. You not only go to the center, you obviously find a specialist, or they find a specialist for you.

Ms. Sacco. They found him for me.

The President. Right, yes.

Ms. Sacco. They took care of everything. They don't only take care of you physically, the staff, from the doctors on down, take care of your emotional needs, your well-being.

The President. Kind of like a hospice.

Ms. Sacco. It's wonderful. The staff there is unbelievable.

Dr. Dwinnells. We look at the total well-being of the person, not just the disease but the overall total. It's a holistic approach.

The President. And so do you have—so you have volunteers there who help post-surgery——

Dr. Dwinnells. Well, they're not volunteers. We pay them. [*Laughter*] We have some volunteers.

The President. Paid volunteers. [*Laughter*] That's good. [*Laughter*]

You got anything else you want to say? I'm proud of your sons. Her other son is a marine in Haiti, serving our country.

Ms. Sacco. Grandson. That's their mommy, right there.

The President. I mean, grandson. What am I saying? Where's Mom? Hey, Mom, how are you? Are you the—you've got the same pictures on; that's good. I'm proud of them; that's good. Yes, tell them thanks. Well, already told one thanks. Tell the other one thanks. You don't look old enough. [*Laughter*]

Ms. Sacco. Nor do I. [*Laughter*]

The President. I was just about to say that. [*Laughter*]

Ms. Sacco. I'm cuing you. [*Laughter*]

The President. I quit. [*Laughter*]

Joyce Phifer is with us as well. Joyce, thank you for coming—a mom of 11 children. Any of them here?

Joyce Phifer. Yes, my son is here.

The President. Your son is here?

Ms. Phifer. He too was in the service until he had to have a kidney transplant.

The President. Where is he?

Ms. Phifer. He's there.

The President. There he is. Thank you, sir. Welcome.

[*Ms. Phifer made brief remarks.*]

The President. This is a fantastic story. And the operation was in January?

Ms. Phifer. In January.

The President. This year?

Ms. Phifer. This year.

The President. You look great. [*Laughter*] That's right. I hope this helps you understand a key aspect of our strategy, to make sure that our health care system is available to citizens from all walks of life. And that's really important for our society, is to have a health care system that is—that meets the needs of every patient and every consumer.

And one way to do it is to expand—one part of the strategy is to expand community health centers. It's a commonsense approach to making sure that the health care system works. You see, it's a commonsense approach to making sure the system meets the needs without centralizing the decisionmaking process in Washington, DC. I think this system is—this approach is a much better approach.

It's—obviously, there's more that needs to be done. I mentioned several key things: Expand health savings accounts; make sure the Medicare reform continues forth; medical liability reform; association health care plans; tax credits for the uninsured—but all of it fitting together makes sense so that the country can be proud of the health care system, so docs can feel comfortable practicing medicine in the health care system, so that we can remain the best place in the world to get health care.

And one of the challenges we face is to make sure the health care system responds to the needs of the citizens. Another challenge we face is to make sure we secure our country. And I can assure you, I will use every asset at my disposal to make sure the American homeland is safe and secure.

We have faced a lot of challenges in this Nation, but our spirit is strong, our sight and vision is clear. America understands where we need to go. We need to be compassionate at home, and we need to be firm and resolved abroad as we spread freedom and peace.

It is such an honor to be here. I want to thank the folks who were willing to share their stories with you all and with me. I hope you have a better understanding of a key component of how America's health care system will work better as we head out into the 21st century.

May God bless the citizens of this community, and may God continue to bless our country. Thank you for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:40 p.m in Bliss Hall. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor George McKelvey of Youngstown, OH; and Mayor Toni E. Middleton of Alliance, OH.

Remarks in a Discussion at Vanderbilt University Medical Center in Nashville, Tennessee
May 27, 2004

The President. Thank you all for coming. Please be seated. Tommy, thanks for the kind introduction. You can keep your job for a while. [*Laughter*] I put him in my Cabinet because I knew how effective he was as a Governor. He was the Governor of Wisconsin. [*Applause*] And I knew when I asked him to—don't go overboard for Wisconsin, please. [*Laughter*] I knew when I asked him to join my Cabinet that he would reform programs that needed reform, focus resources on programs that needed resources, and would do a great job. He really has. He's been a remarkable Secretary of Health and Human Services, and I'm proud he came here today.

We're going to talk about an interesting subject, and it's one that has got a chance to change our country for the better. As you can see, I've surrounded myself with people who probably can—not probably—will be able to explain the subject better than me.

But before we get talking about health care and how to make sure the costs are reasonable and health care is affordable and medical errors are reduced by using information technology, I do want to thank the good folks here at the Vanderbilt University Medical Center for your hospitality. I particularly want to thank Harry Jacobson for welcoming us, for allowing us to use this facility to talk about health care. No better place to talk about health care than at a place that delivers excellent health care, right here at Vanderbilt. Thanks for having us.

Neal Patel is with us. Where are you, doc? There he is. Neal showed us the new children's hospital, some of the parts of the children's hospital. It's an impressive facility. Thank you for being a doctor. Thank you for caring about America's kids, and thank you for giving us a tour. I want to thank Jim Shmerling, who is the CEO; Bill Stead, who is the chief information officer. Thank you all for coming.

This is a—the reason we're here is because this hospital knows how to use information technology for the benefit of patients and docs. That's why we're here. You're ahead of the country in using technology to your advantage, and we'll talk about that here in a second.

I want to thank my friend Senator Bill Frist for joining us today. Senator, you're doing a heck of a job. You cut your eye teeth here, right? That's where you started practicing? That's good. He married a Texas girl, I want you to know. [*Laughter*] Karyn is with us, a west Texas girl, just like me. We both married above ourselves, didn't we, Senator? [*Laughter*] But Karyn, thank you for coming. I'm proud you're here.

I want to thank Members of the Congress who are here with us today. First, Congressman Jim Cooper from this district. Thanks for coming, Congressman, proud you're here. Jimmy Duncan is with us, Jimmy. And you brought your son John, I see. Thank you for being here. I know Zach Wamp and Kim are here. Thank you all for coming. Appreciate you being here. And Marsha Blackburn is with us today. Marsha, thanks for coming.

I know the mayor is here. Mr. Mayor, I appreciate you coming. Thanks for being here. Fill the potholes, that's the only advice I can give you. [*Laughter*] I'm sure you are.

Today when I landed, I met Phuong Le. Phuong, please stand up for a second, will you? Thanks for coming. I'll tell you why I wanted to introduce Phuong. She is a soldier in the army of compassion. That's why I want you to hear about her. She is a person who just graduated from high

school, like a week ago, right, Phuong? Yes, a week ago. For 6 years, she has been volunteering at the Siloam Family Health Center to not only help people who can't speak English communicate with the caregivers there but to help provide love for those who hurt. That's what she's there for. The reason I bring up Phuong is because I want to remind you that the strength of this country is in the hearts and souls of our citizens. We're a mighty military power. We will stay that way to make the world more free and more peaceful. We've got a mighty economy. We are a wealthy nation compared to other nations, but our strength is in the hearts and souls of our citizens. That's our true strength. Our strength is found when people take time out of their life, like Phuong has done, to help somebody who hurts.

See, the great hope for America is neighbor loving neighbor. The hope for this country is when somebody who is hungry or needs shelter or needs love can find it when a fellow citizen says, "What can I do to make your life better?" I appreciate, Phuong, you serving as such a great example for the folks here in this community. I call on others to love your neighbor just like you'd like to be loved yourself. And you can join the army of compassion, which is changing America for the better one heart, one soul at a time. Thanks for coming.

One of the important subjects in America is how do we make sure health care is affordable and available. Part of making sure health care is available is for medicine to use information technology, and that's what we're here to discuss.

I want to talk real quick about some other ways we can help with health care. One, we've modernized the Medicare system. Senator, thank you. Members of the House who voted for the plan, I want to thank you for your vote.

The modern Medicare system begins with making sure seniors have got drug discount cards, and they're now being passed out. And seniors are going to be able to save between 15 to 30 percent off the retail price of most brand drugs and more for generic drugs. As well there is going to be a $600 credit for poor seniors. This is the beginning of a reform package that will affect seniors' lives in a very positive way, by making sure our drugs are more affordable.

And the cards are out. They're heading out right now. Unlike most Government programs where they say, "The check's in the mail," actually, the cards are in the mail—[*laughter*]—and people will be able to use those cards to their benefit. They'll also be able to get on the Internet and comparatively shop for drugs. In other words, you can get on the Internet, put in your ZIP Code, and you'll be able to see the price of retail drugs in drug stores close to you and in your community. And that in itself will serve as a way to put pressure, downward pressure through the market, not through Government edict or Government declarations but through the market, for the benefit of consumers. This is a major—the beginning of a major reform to the benefit of our seniors.

We've also got in the—inherent in that bill, what's called health savings accounts. You can put in after-tax money. You can earn interest after tax. You can take out money after tax—put it in tax-free, earn it tax-free, take it out tax-free in order to pay for not only medical costs but also catastrophic care. These are called health savings accounts, which will be a really good vehicle to help control costs and to make sure patient and doctors are the center of the decisionmaking process in health care.

We're working with Congress to expand what's called association health care plans, which will allow small businesses to pool risk so—just like big businesses do to get better prices for their health care plans for their employees.

We've also got to make sure that we continue to expand community health centers—again, appreciate the Members of

Congress here. Community health centers are a really effective use of taxpayers' money, in my judgment. They provide primary care and preventative care for people who need help with medicine, and it takes the pressure off the emergency rooms. The most expensive place to find health care is an emergency room.

These community centers are being expanded all across America. They want to open up—or expand 1,200 community health centers. That's on top of the 3,000 that exist. We want to see to it that 16 million Americans are taken care of in these community health centers. In other words, it's a safety net for people. I recognize people aren't covered by insurance. We'd like more people covered by insurance. Until they are covered by insurance, here's a way for people to get good, cost-effective health care, cost-effective for them and, as importantly, cost-effective for the taxpayers.

And finally, in order to make sure that we've got available and affordable health care, the United States Congress needs to pass medical liability reform. Our doctors—if you get sued all the time, you're going to practice defensive medicine. And when you practice defensive medicine, it means somebody's cost is going to go up. In other words, you're worried about winning a lawsuit, and therefore, you're going to do more procedures than might be necessary just to protect yourself. And these lawyers are filing suit after suit after suit, and you know what I'm talking about. That's just the way it is. People ought to have their day in court. But frivolous lawsuits are running up the cost of medicine, and they're running docs out of business. Just talk to docs. Just talk to people in rural America what it's like to try to keep a professional—a group of docs around when these junk lawsuits are making it hard for them to stay in business.

When I got to Washington, I said, "We'll just let the States take care of it," and then I saw what the cost of defensive medicine and increased premiums are doing to our budgets. The cost of Medicare goes up with all these junk lawsuits. The cost of Medicaid goes up with all these lawsuits. The cost of veteran health care goes up for all these lawsuits. It's time for the United States Congress to pass national medical liability reform. It's out of the House of Representatives. You don't have to worry about your United States Senators from Tennessee. They're on board. I appreciate you. We've just got to convince some other ones.

These are all ways to affect cost and to make sure the doctor-patient relationship is central in medicine. What we can't afford to have happen in America is for the Federal Government to decide to run it all. That will not work. America has got—is on the leading edge of medicine for the whole world. We've got the best research and development. We've got great docs. We've got fantastic hospitals. The Federal Government cannot run the system as well as docs, professionals, administrators, and patients can.

Another way to save money is to introduce information technology into the health care world. One of the amazing discrepancies in American society today is, we're literally changing how medicine is delivered in incredibly positive ways. And yet, docs are still spending a lot of time writing things on paper, and sometimes it's hard to read their handwriting—[*laughter*]—and therefore, sometimes it's difficult to have the spread of accurate information so that doctors can make good decisions.

The idea of making sure we use information technology starts with setting this goal: Within 10 years, we want most Americans to have electronic health care records. That means your records. And what—you'll hear us talking about it here today. I'll try not—I'll try to give it my best shot. Your records are on—in a digital form that can be transformed—transferred over the Internet, so that if you happen to be traveling somewhere and you get in a wreck, a doctor

or emergency physician in Texas can call up the information or ask for information or seek information not only off the card but to your home doctor's office, and they'll be able to know what's wrong with you or right with you, what has been wrong with you, and how to treat you.

You can imagine what kind of system that will do. It will cut down the cost of paperwork. It will also cut down on medical errors, which, if you're going to be a patient, that's something you really hope happens. [*Laughter*] Sometimes information gets lost. Sometimes people inadvertently prescribe the wrong drug because the information isn't correct. And so the fundamental question is: How do we use technology—how do we modernize health care? That's what we're here to talk about. How do we, you know, do the same thing that is happening in other industries to health care?

And we believe we can change how health care uses IT, and it starts with the Federal Government. Listen, the VA is doing a fabulous job for using information technology. This hospital is doing a fabulous job for using information technology, which we will talk about. And so, one of the first things we're going to talk about is what can the Federal Government do to help.

Now, we hired a guy named David Brailer. David's right here to my right. David's an expert on information technology and how it is applied to medicine and to health care. Tommy hired him, see—yes, he's got a pretty good title, the National Health Information Technology Coordinator. [*Laughter*] The way I look at it, his job is to use the Federal Government's abilities and our Medicare law and our VA and other assets we have to spread this fantastic opportunity throughout America.

And I just want to say one other thing before I turn it over to David. Privacy is really an important part of, in my judgment, of an American system that works well. I don't want some people looking at my records. Of course, my line of work, everybody gets to look at my records. [*Laughter*] It's too late for me. [*Laughter*] It's not too late for you, and therefore, as you hear the idea of moving your information across the Internet, you've just got to know it's got to be with your permission. These are your records. It's your health, and you can decide whether or not people can use your records. This is important for people to understand that, that those of us in Government who talk about spreading information also, first and foremost, keep your privacy in mind.

Now with that, David is the Coordinator, named on May the 6th, and here he is sitting with the President right here in Vanderbilt talking about his job. But David, tell us what you do, why you do it, and when you're going to finish it. [*Laughter*]

David J. Brailer. What time is it?

The President. Yes, exactly.

Dr. Brailer. Well, thank you, Mr. President. And first, let me just say thank you from American medicine for your historic leadership in information technology.

The President. Thank you very much. Thanks.

[*At this point, Dr. Brailer, National Health Information Technology Coordinator, Department of Health and Human Services, made brief remarks.*]

The President. Good. Let me ask you a couple of questions. One of the interesting challenges—evidently the medical lingo varies. In other words, part of your challenge has been to standardize as well as develop a common vocabulary. Would you explain that so—obviously I can't. Would you explain it, please, so people can understand it better?

Dr. Brailer. We have a different vocabulary. Sure, when a physician sees a patient, we write down a problem list, which is the list of issues that's active with that person. We create a label called a diagnosis, which is the formal name that you know. We do procedures, the things that we do

to people's bodies whenever they have to have treatments. We make estimations of what is happening with someone, and all of these things are codified in language.

And traditionally in medicine the language has been informal. It's been variable by physician. I might call something hypertension; someone would call it high blood pressure. I might say you have a high temperature; someone says you have a fever. And there are over 50,000 language terms that are in medicine that cover, and the point of standardization is to make it one vocabulary. This is very hard, not just in terms of what the vocabulary is but being able to make this part of the normal daily activities of physicians' days.

The President. Yes, see, that's part of the challenge. I'm sure you can envision it. If people call the same disease or symptoms by different names, obviously there needs to be a standardization process. The Federal Government can help. As I understand it, we're quite far down the road in terms of developing the standards.

Dr. Brailer. Mr. President, the Federal Government has had an extremely positive effect in the last 2 years. Secretary Thompson set up an effort to take the standards that are being developed in the private sector—the Federal Government hasn't developed the standards, but it's taken those and put them into Government procurement, into the contracting arms of Health and Human Services and elsewhere. So they go from being on paper into real systems that are used everyday. And we have a lot more that can be done.

The President. Good. I imagine they say "scraped your chin when you fell off the bicycle" the same in Tennessee as they do in Texas, though. [*Laughter*] What do you think?

Okay, thanks. Good job.

Jim N. Jirjis is with us. Jim, thanks for coming. He is the assistant chief medical officer here at Vanderbilt University Medical Center. Appreciate you coming.

Jim Jirjis. My pleasure.

The President. Here's your chance. [*Laughter*]

[*Dr. Jirjis made brief remarks.*]

The President. You helped set up the electronic records here at the hospital?

Dr. Jirjis. Correct.

The President. So what does that entail?

Dr. Jirjis. Well, I have the funnest—second funnest job in the world. [*Laughter*] Vanderbilt is a wonderful sandbox, I like to say. Harry Jacobson, Bill Stead are visionary leaders, and they have developed an infrastructure that allows guys like me and Neal, whose passion—you know, I was the guy in high school behind the computer. I was also an athlete too; don't make any mistake about it. [*Laughter*] But when I came to medicine and computers, who knew, at Vanderbilt, I would have a sandbox.

[*Dr. Jirjis made further remarks.*]

The President. Yes, and one final question along these lines. You do prescribe prescription drugs over the—through the Internet yet?

Dr. Jirjis. Most of the prescriptions through the Internet, we can't interact with the pharmacies yet, though there's a lot of work going on nationally to try to arrive at that.

The President. Yes.

Dr. Jirjis. In our hospital, 100 percent of our prescriptions are done in the computer.

The President. Which is important.

Dr. Jirjis. If I try to order the wrong thing, Bill Stead—even if it's 1 a.m., a little "beep" comes up, says, "You're going to hurt this patient."

The President. See, that's really important for people to understand. The ability to make sure that we prescribe the right drug and the right dosage can be controlled by proper use of medical records, which is really important. And it's cost effective.

I hope you're getting a sense for what we're talking about here. It's a really exciting opportunity. Again, I repeat, we're at Vanderbilt for a reason. It's because this hospital is—and system is innovative and different. And it's on the leading edge of change. It benefits a lot of patients, obviously, in your illustrious career here, one of whom is Bob McNeilly. He's a patient, Bob. He's, like, your patient, right?

Dr. Jirjis. Yes, he is.

The President. Bob, welcome.

Bob McNeilly. Thank you.

The President. Tell us how electronic records affected you.

[*Mr. McNeilly, patient, Vanderbilt University Medical Center, made brief remarks.*]

The President. How does that work? I mean, you say it communicates with you.

Mr. McNeilly. Well, I've got e-mail. [*Laughter*]

The President. Yes, there you go. [*Laughter*] There you go. You look like an e-mailing kind of guy.

Mr. McNeilly. Absolutely. [*Laughter*] Give me your address, and I'll send you one. [*Laughter*] There's another advantage also. I've got more than one doctor here at Vanderbilt. I've got, as a matter of fact, two other doctors who are both cardiologists. One calls himself my plumber and one my electrician. [*Laughter*] They prescribe medications, and I want to make sure that Jim Jirjis knows exactly what they have prescribed and what changes are in my medication. And they, in turn, need to know anything that he's prescribed. This system takes care of that automatically.

The President. Yes, that's fantastic. If you're beginning to get the drift here, it not only helps the docs make right decisions; it helps the patients as well. It helps the patients—keeps the patients on a timetable. It reminds patients about patient responsibility, but it also has got—give you peace of mind to know that you're getting the very best care all the time.

Mr. McNeilly. Absolutely. I really have a great deal more confidence in the system. Although, I'm looking forward to the next step, which is to have access to my own medical records, which are computerized now, which really enables me to take charge of my health care even more than I do now.

The President. Absolutely. Gosh, thanks. I'm glad you're here. I appreciate you coming.

Mr. McNeilly. Thank you. I'm glad I'm still here. [*Laughter*]

The President. All right, we've got J.T. Finnell with us. He's an emergency medicine physician right out of Indianapolis, Indiana. You're probably wondering why we asked somebody from Indianapolis to come. And one of the reasons why is the health care system in Indianapolis has done a fantastic job of implementing and employing information technology.

Is that an accurate description, J.T.?

John "J.T." Finnell. That's correct.

The President. All right, well, tell us why you're here.

Dr. Finnell. Well, it's race week.

The President. Get out of town, huh?

Dr. Finnell. That's right. [*Laughter*]

[*Dr. Finnell, emergency medicine physician, Wishard Memorial Hospital, Indianapolis, IN, made brief remarks.*]

The President. Let me stop you, one question. One of the interesting things that—the reason why Indianapolis is farther down the road, if you notice, hospitals can talk to hospitals, which hasn't happened in many communities. In other words, it's easier to talk intra-hospital system than it is inter-hospital system. And part of the challenge is and the reason we standardize language is so that when a—one emergency room can talk to another emergency room or a State facility. Indianapolis has done a good job of integrating the capacity to talk amongst different facilities. I think that's an accurate statement.

Dr. Finnell. That is accurate.

The President. Yes, and so the challenge is, by the way, is to do that within a community and then is to get communities hooked up with communities so that the whole—there's a whole nationwide network. That's the real challenge we're going to face in America. Step one was to get the language standardized so words can travel and be understood on a more common basis. Go ahead. Examples.

[*Dr. Finnell made further remarks.*]

The President. Information saves lives, and it saves money. That's what we're here talking about, and we've got a strategy to encourage information—the spread of information technology throughout the entire health care industry to help control the costs and raise the quality of health care. That's what we're here to talk about.

And somebody who can testify—I think you can——

Jennifer Queen. I hope so.

The President. You will—is Jennifer Queen. She's here as a mom. Tell us about Courtney, your daughter.

[*Ms. Queen, mother of a Vanderbilt University Medical Center patient, made brief remarks.*]

The President. Thank you for sharing that. That's a great—you know, a great story. I saw Courtney. You're right, she's strong. She's doing great.

Ms. Queen. Yes, she's our little beautiful angel.

The President. She is your beautiful angel.

Ms. Queen. We have two little angels, and they're doing real well.

The President. That's good. Listen, I hope that story helps you understand—listen, if you're having to tote around written records, not only is it cost ineffective, there's a chance there's going to be errors. And as the system evolves, it puts these records on the computers, on disks. They can move information at lightning speed. You not only save money; you improve the quality of care through the spread of good information. It lets these docs do their jobs. It eases the minds of the patients. They can take Courtney's records with her if she were to go down to Crawford, for example. [*Laughter*] And you can take the records with you.

And it's—we're changing medicine. Medicine's changing. That's what we're talking about. It's changing for the better. We're here because this little center of excellence is on the leading edge of change. And the goal for our country is that most everybody—medical records are digitized, and every health care system can talk to each other, every office can talk to each other to share information in a better way, to make sure America's health care system remains the best in the world.

That's what we want. We want only one thing: We want the best health care system in the world for our patients at the best possible price. It can be—it will be achieved. That's what I'm here to tell you. It's going to be achieved. One of the ways we do so is to properly use information technology. I want to thank our panelists for sharing your stories and your information. I want to thank you all for coming to listen. I hope you have found this as interesting as I have.

Let me conclude by telling you, we're lucky to live in the greatest country in the face of the Earth. God bless. Thanks for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:43 p.m. in the Langford Auditorium. In his remarks, he referred to Harry R. Jacobson, vice-chancellor for health affairs, Neal R. Patel, assistant professor of pediatrics and anesthesia, James E. Shmerling, chief executive officer, Children's Hospital, and William W. Stead, associate vice-chancellor for health affairs and director, Informatics Center, Vanderbilt University Medical Center; Karyn Frist, wife of Senator Bill Frist; Kim Wamp, wife of Representative Zach Wamp; and Mayor Bill Purcell of Nashville, TN.

Remarks Following Discussions With Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen of Denmark
May 28, 2004

President Bush. Welcome. Thanks for coming. It's always good to be with a friend. Friends are candid with each other. Friends are open, and friends are constructive. And that's the kind of conversation we've just had and will continue to have.

I told the Prime Minister that our Government and our coalition will transfer full sovereignty, complete and full sovereignty to an Iraqi government that will be picked by Mr. Brahimi of the United Nations. He said, "Do you mean full sovereignty?" I said, "I mean full sovereignty." I then told him that we're working closely in the United Nations to get a new Security Council resolution, and we're making progress on that resolution.

I spoke to Vladimir Putin this morning about the resolution, and we agreed to work together on behalf of the Iraqi people and the new government. I told him that we would come up with an arrangement that would enable us to help the Iraqi people secure their country so that the country can move toward elections. I told him I would continue to work with countries around the world to build support for the new Iraqi government so that the Iraqi people have a chance to live in a free and just society, just like we do.

I also want to thank the people of Denmark for their love of freedom, their support for human rights, and the commitment of troops to Iraq. The moms and dads of those troops need to know they're performing brilliantly, Mr. Prime Minister. They're good, strong soldiers who bring great credit to your country. I'm proud to have you here. Thanks for coming.

Prime Minister Rasmussen. Thank you very much, Mr. President. I'm happy to be back in the White House. I'm here as a friend and ally. And today I have confirmed that the Danish troops will stay in Iraq. We will stay and finish our job. Our common goal is to assist the Iraqi people in building a new, modern, and democratic society.

We have a lot of negative news from Iraq. What we need now are—is some positive news. And I welcome the efforts to achieve consensus in the U.N. Security Council on a new Security Council resolution which can pave the way for the building of a democratic society in Iraq.

We need a transfer of full sovereignty to an Iraqi government, an Iraqi government which will be provided with all the signs and principles of a sovereign government. From June 30, international military presence in Iraq will be provided at request from this new Iraqi government. Our troops will stay in Iraq as long as the Iraqi government decides.

Finally, we have discussed the tragic events of prisoner abuse in Iraqi prisons. I welcome the assurance that these cases will be fully investigated and the people responsible will be held accountable. And I welcome that the necessary steps will be taken to make sure that nothing like this will happen in the future.

Finally, I would like to emphasize the importance of strength in transatlantic relations. In a few days' time, we will commemorate the 60-year anniversary of the Allied invasion of Europe. We owe a great deal to the United States and Europe. Thousands of Americans lost their lives in Europe in the fight against Nazi tyranny, in the fight for freedom. And let this commemoration also be a reminder of our shared values and shared destiny.

Thank you.

President Bush. Good job, Mr. Prime Minister. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:01 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Lakhdar Brahimi, Special Adviser to the U.N. Secretary-General; and President Vladimir Putin of Russia.

Statement on the National Economy
May 28, 2004

One year ago today, I signed into law the jobs and growth tax relief package to jump-start the economic recovery and create jobs for American workers. With our economy growing at the fastest pace in nearly 20 years and more than 1.1 million more Americans working since last August, it is clear the tax relief is working.

Take-home pay for workers is up, and disposable income for families has increased to record levels. The incentives in our plan for small businesses are producing results as more manufacturers have been reporting increased activity and new orders than at any time in 20 years. I am encouraged to see that the unemployment rate has fallen in 47 of 50 States, because we want everyone who wants to work to be able to find a job.

There is more to do. We must continue to build on this success by expanding growth and increasing prosperity for all Americans. I look forward to working with Congress to pass my six-point plan for economic growth, including making the tax cuts permanent, and to ensure that our workers have the skills to compete in the changing world.

The President's Radio Address
May 29, 2004

Good morning. Monday is Memorial Day, and all across America this weekend, people are remembering those who fought for freedom and who gave their lives in service to their country.

Here in the Nation's Capital, Saturday has a special significance as we dedicate the World War II Memorial in the presence of thousands of veterans of that conflict. When it mattered most, an entire generation of Americans stepped forward to fight evil and show the finest qualities of our Nation and of humanity.

The World War II Memorial will stand forever as a tribute to the generation that fought that war and to the more than 400,000 Americans who gave their lives. Because of their sacrifice, tyrants fell; fascism and nazism were vanquished; and freedom prevailed.

Today, freedom faces new enemies, and a new generation of Americans has stepped forward to defeat them. Since the hour this Nation was attacked on September the 11th, 2001, we have seen the character of the men and women who wear our country's uniform. In places like Kabul and Kandahar, Mosul and Baghdad, we have seen their decency and brave spirit. And because of their fierce courage, America is safer, and two terror regimes are gone forever, and more than 50 million souls now live in freedom.

Our mission continues, and we will see it through to victory. We have a strategy to defeat our terrorist enemy and a plan to help establish lasting freedom in Iraq.

The stakes are high, and they are clear. The enemy seeks to establish a new haven for terror and violence at the heart of the Middle East. They seek to force free nations to retreat into isolation and fear, yet we will persevere and defeat this enemy and hold this hard-won ground for the realm of liberty.

Those who have fought the battles of the war on terror and served the cause of freedom can be proud of all they have achieved. And these veterans of battle will carry with them for all their days the memory of the ones who did not live to be called veterans. Each man or woman we have laid to rest had hopes for the future and left a place that can never be filled. Each was the most important person in someone's life. For their families there is terrible sorrow, and we pray for their comfort. For the Nation there is a feeling of loss, and we remember each name.

Through our history, America has gone to war reluctantly because we have known the costs of war. And in every generation, it is the best among us who are called to pay that price. Those who have paid those costs have given us every moment we live in freedom, and every living American is in their debt. We can never repay what they gave for this country, but on this holiday, we acknowledge the debt by showing our respect and gratitude.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 1:45 p.m. on May 28 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on May 29. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 28 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address. The Prayer for Peace, Memorial Day proclamation of May 26 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks at the Dedication of the National World War II Memorial
May 29, 2004

Thank you all very much. I'm honored to join with President Clinton, President Bush, Senator Dole, and other distinguished guests on this day of remembrance and celebration. And General Kelley, here in the company of the generation that won the war, I proudly accept the World War II Memorial on behalf of the people of the United States of America.

Raising up this memorial took skill and vision and patience. Now the work is done, and it is a fitting tribute, open and expansive like America, grand and enduring like the achievements we honor. The years of World War II were a hard, heroic, and gallant time in the life of our country. When it mattered most, an entire generation of Americans showed the finest qualities of our Nation and of humanity. On this day, in their honor, we will raise the American flag over a monument that will stand as long as America itself.

In the history books, the Second World War can appear as a series of crises and conflicts, following an inevitable course from Pearl Harbor to the coast of Normandy to the deck of the *Missouri.* Yet, on the day the war began and on many hard days that followed, the outcome was far from certain.

There was a time in the years before the war, when many earnest and educated people believed that democracy was finished. Men who considered themselves learned and civilized came to believe that free institutions must give way to the severe

doctrines and stern discipline of a regimented society. Ideas first whispered in the secret councils of a remote empire or shouted in the beer halls of Munich became mass movements. And those movements became armies. And those armies moved mercilessly forward until the world saw Hitler strutting in Paris and U.S. Navy ships burning in their own port. Across the world, from a hiding place in Holland to prison camps of Luzon, the captives awaited their liberators.

Those liberators would come, but the enterprise would require the commitment and effort of our entire Nation. As World War II began, after a decade of economic depression, the United States was not a rich country. Far from being a great power, we had only the 17th largest army in the world. To fight and win on two fronts, Americans had to work and save and ration and sacrifice as never before. War production plants operated shifts around the clock. Across the country, families planted victory gardens, 20 million of them, producing 40 percent of the Nation's vegetables in backyards and on rooftops. Two out of every three citizens put money into war bonds. As Colonel Oveta Culp Hobby said, "This was a people's war, and everyone was in it."

As life changed in America, so did the way that Americans saw our own country and its place in the world. The bombs at Pearl Harbor destroyed the very idea that America could live in isolation from the plots of aggressive powers. The scenes of the concentration camps, the heaps of bodies and ghostly survivors, confirmed forever America's calling to oppose the ideologies of death.

As we defended our ideals, we began to see that America is stronger when those ideals are fully implemented. America gained strength because women labored for victory and factory jobs, cared for the wounded, and wore the uniform themselves. America gained strength because African Americans and Japanese Americans and others fought for their country, which wasn't always fair to them. In time, these contributions became expectations of equality, and the advances for justice in postwar America made us a better country.

With all our flaws, Americans at that time had never been more united. And together we began and completed the largest single task in our history. At the height of conflict, America would have ships on every ocean and armies on five continents and, on the most crucial of days, would move the equivalent of a major city across the English Channel.

And all these vast movements of men and armor were directed by one man who could not walk on his own strength. President Roosevelt brought his own advantages to the job. His resolve was stronger than the will of any dictator. His belief in democracy was absolute. He possessed a daring that kept the enemy guessing. He spoke to Americans with an optimism that lightened their task. And one of the saddest days of the war came just as it was ending, when the casualty notice in the morning paper began with the name Franklin D. Roosevelt, Commander in Chief.

Across the years, we still know his voice. And from his words, we know that he understood the character of the American people. Dictators and their generals had dismissed Americans as no match for a master race. FDR answered them. In one of his radio addresses, he said, "We have been described as a nation of weaklings, playboys. Let them tell that to General MacArthur and his men. Let them tell that to the boys in the flying fortresses. Let them tell that to the marines."

In all, more than 16 million Americans would put on the uniform of the soldier, the sailor, the airman, the marine, the coast guardsman, or the merchant mariner. They came from city streets and prairie towns, from public high schools and West Point. They were a modest bunch and still are. The ranks were filled with men like Army Private Joe Sakato. In heavy fighting in

France, he saw a good friend killed and charged up the hill determined to shoot the ones who did it. Private Sakato ran straight into enemy fire, killing 12, wounding two, capturing four, and inspiring his whole unit to take the hill and destroy the enemy. Looking back on it 55 years later, Joe Sakato said, "I'm not a hero. Nowadays they call what I did 'road rage.' " [*Laughter*]

This man's conduct that day gained him the Medal of Honor, one of 464 awarded for actions in World War II. Americans in uniform served bravely, fought fiercely, and kept their honor even under the worst of conditions. Yet they were not warriors by nature. All they wanted was to finish the job and make it home. One soldier in the 58th Armor Field Artillery was known to have the best-kept rifle in the unit. He told his buddies he had plans for that weapon after the war. He said, "I want to take it home, cover it in salt, hang it on a wall in my living room so I can watch it rust."

These were the modest sons of a peaceful country, and millions of us are very proud to call them dad. They gave the best years of their lives to the greatest mission their country ever accepted. They faced the most extreme danger, which took some and spared others for reasons only known to God. And wherever they advanced or touched ground, they are remembered for their goodness and their decency. A Polish man recalls being marched through the German countryside in the last weeks of the war, when American forces suddenly appeared. He said, "Our two guards ran away. And this soldier with little blonde hair jumps off his tank. 'You're free,' he shouts at us. We started hugging each other, crying, and screaming, 'God sent angels down to pick us up out of this hell place.' "

Well, our boys weren't exactly angels. They were flesh and blood, with all the limits and fears of flesh and blood. That only makes the achievement more remarkable—the courage they showed in a conflict that claimed more than 400,000 American lives, leaving so many orphans and widows and Gold Star Mothers.

The soldiers' story was best told by the great Ernie Pyle, who shared their lives and died among them. In his book "Here Is Your War," he described World War II as many veterans now remember it. It is a picture, he wrote, "of tired and dirty soldiers who are alive and don't want to die; of long darkened convoys in the middle of the night; of shocked silent men wandering back down the hill from battle; . . . of Jeeps and petrol dumps and smelly bedding rolls and C-rations . . . and blown bridges and dead mules and hospital tents and shirt collars greasy-black from months of wearing; and of laughter too, and anger and wine and lovely flowers and constant cussing. All these it is composed of; and of graves and graves and graves."

On this Memorial Day weekend, the graves will be visited and decorated with flowers and flags. Men whose step has slowed are thinking of boys they knew when they were boys together. And women who watched the train leave and the years pass can still see the handsome face of their young sweetheart. America will not forget them either.

At this place, at this memorial, we acknowledge a debt of long-standing to an entire generation of Americans, those who died, those who fought and worked and grieved and went on. They saved our country and thereby saved the liberty of mankind. And now I ask every man and woman who saw and lived World War II, every member of that generation to please rise as you are able and receive the thanks of our great Nation.

May God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:09 p.m. on the Mall. In his remarks, he referred to former Senator Bob Dole, national chairman, World War II Memorial Campaign; and Gen.

P.X. Kelley, USMC (Ret.), chairman, American Battle Monuments Commission. The Prayer for Peace, Memorial Day proclamation of May 26 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Telephone Remarks to the Rolling Thunder Ride for Freedom
May 30, 2004

Thank you, Artie. It's great talking to you. I'm so pleased to speak to the members of Rolling Thunder as you attend the annual Ride for Freedom. I want to thank you for your leadership. You might tell them, Artie, that it was my honor to host you in the Oval Office—you and Mike Cobb and Gary Sheffmeyer and Jay Fairlamb and other special guests. I really appreciated you coming by to say hello.

I also received a letter from you last week, if you know, Artie. I thought you were going to offer me riding lessons—turned out you offered me Rolling Thunder's national endorsement for my reelection, and I want to thank you for your support. I'm really proud to have you stand by me—and the membership.

But more importantly, I appreciate the tremendous service that the members of Rolling Thunder perform on behalf of our veterans and active duty Armed Forces. I'm not surprised you're doing such good work because, like you, Artie, most are veterans. You understand the definition of sacrifice.

This weekend, as you mentioned, is Memorial Day, a day we honor the memory of the heroes who have fallen in battle. And I want to thank you for recognizing that, Artie, and I want to thank your vast membership for recognizing that as well.

I'm also calling to thank you because for 17 years you've worked to see that our war veterans are remembered, returned home, and reunited with their families. I know that your work and your persistence and your diligence means a lot to relatives all over our country who wonder about their loved one—the fate of their loved one. In the Oval Office, I looked you in the eye as you told me about your relentless pursuit of finding out the plight of many of our POW/MIAs, and I appreciate so very much your concern, your care, and your persistence.

I also want to thank you and your organization, Artie, for honoring the men and women of our military who fight today in Afghanistan and in Iraq. You and I know—both know that they're carrying out this mission, a mission which will make America more secure and the world more free, with incredible courage and compassion and skill.

I am proud to be the Commander in Chief of these brave Americans. I will do—I will always honor their service. I will do everything in my power to ensure that they and their families receive the gratitude and respect of our great Nation.

It's a high honor, Artie, to serve as President of this great country. I work every day to be worthy of that honor. And I'm calling to tell you how much I appreciate the great faith you and your organization have placed in me by endorsing me for a second term.

Ride safe. May God bless you. May God bless your families, and may God continue to bless our great country. Thanks a lot.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:40 p.m. from the Residence at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Artie Muller, president, Mike Cobb, chairman of the board, Gary Sheffmeyer, vice president, and Preston B. "Jay" Fairlamb, second vice president, Rolling Thunder, Inc.

Remarks at a Memorial Day Ceremony in Arlington, Virginia
May 31, 2004

Thank you all very much. Thank you all. Welcome. Mr. Secretary, thank you for your great leadership as Secretary of Defense for our country. General Myers, members of the United States military, veterans, honored guests, and fellow Americans. This morning I had the honor of placing a wreath before the Tomb of the Unknowns. This custom is observed every Memorial Day on behalf of the American people as a mark of gratitude and respect.

And when this ceremony is concluded and all of us have gone on our way, the Honor Guard will keep watch over the tomb. Every hour of every day, on the coldest nights, in the hardest rain, there is a sentinel of the 3d U.S. Infantry standing guard. The soldiers entrusted with that duty count it a privilege. And today, as we reflect on the men and women who have died in the defense of America, all of us count it a privilege to be citizens of the country they served.

In the military tradition, no one is left behind on the field of battle. And our Nation is determined to account for all of the missing. The same spirit can be seen in the respect we show to each life laid down for this Nation. We receive them in sorrow, and we take them to an honored place to rest. At this and other cemeteries across our country and in cemeteries abroad where heroes fell, America acknowledges a debt that is beyond our power to repay.

This weekend, we dedicated the World War II Memorial, which will stand forever as a tribute to the generation that fought that war and the more than 400,000 Americans who fell. Some here today can turn their minds back across 60 years and see the face of a buddy who never made it home. You are veterans who have not forgotten your comrades, and America will always honor the achievements and the character of your brave generation.

Through our history, America has gone to war reluctantly because we have known the costs of war, and the war on terror we're fighting today has brought great costs of its own. Since the hour this Nation was attacked, we have seen the character of the men and women who wear our country's uniform. In places like Kabul and Kandahar, in Mosul and Baghdad, we have seen their decency and their brave spirit. Because of their fierce courage, America is safer; two terror regimes are gone forever; and more than 50 million souls now live in freedom.

Those who have fought these battles and served this cause can be proud of all they have achieved. And these veterans of battle will carry with them for all their days the memory of the ones who did not live to be called veterans. They will remember young soldiers like Captain Joshua Byers, a West Point man born in South Carolina who died in Iraq. When this son of missionaries was given command of a 120-man combat unit, he wrote this to his parents: "I will give the men everything I have to give. I love them already, just because they're mine. I pray with all my heart that I will be able to take every single one of them home safe when we finish our mission here."

Sergeant Major Michael Stack, who was laid to rest at Arlington, wore the uniform for 28 years and is remembered as a soldier's soldier. The sergeant major must have been quite a guy. When he was a young platoon sergeant, the recruits gave him a nickname, No Slack Billy Jack Stack. [*Laughter*] By all accounts, he was the kind of man you want in charge of a tough situation. And by the account of his mother, he finished his goodbyes with these words: "Mom, I'm going because I believe in what

I am doing. And if I don't come back, we will meet in a better place."

Those who risked their lives on our behalf are often very clear about what matters most in their own lives, and they tell it to those they love. Master Sergeant Kelly Hornbeck of the Special Forces was killed in action last January, south of Samarra. To his parents back in Fort Worth, Texas, he wrote this: "I am not afraid, and neither should either of you be, for I trust in my God and my training, two powerful forces that cannot be fully measured."

After Private First Class Jesse Givens of Springfield, Missouri, was lost last May, his family received a letter he had written to them in the event of his death. He wrote this to his son, Dakota: "You've taught me that life isn't so serious, and sometimes you just have to play. You have a big, beautiful heart. Through your life, you need to keep it open and follow it. I will always be there in our park when you dream, so we can play." To his wife, Melissa, Private Givens wrote, "Do me a favor after you tuck the children in. Give them hugs and kisses from me. Go outside and look at the stars and count them. Don't forget to smile." This is the quality of the people in our uniform.

And this is the loss to our Nation. Markers on these hills record the names of more than 280,000 men and women. Each was once or still is the most important person in someone's life. With each loss in war, the world changed forever for the family and friends left behind. Each loss left others to go on, counting the years of separation, and living in the hope of reunion.

Although the burden of grief can become easier to bear, always there is the memory of another time and the feeling of sadness over an unfinished life. Yet, the completeness of a life is not measured in length only. It is measured in the deeds and commitments that give a life its purpose. And the commitment of these lives was clear to all: They defended our Nation; they liberated the oppressed; they served the cause of peace. And all Americans who have known the loss and sadness of war, whether recently or long ago, can know this: The person they love and miss is honored and remembered by the United States of America. May God bless our country.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:24 a.m. in the Amphitheater at Arlington National Cemetery. The Prayer for Peace, Memorial Day proclamation of May 26 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks at the White House National Conference on Faith-Based and Community Initiatives
June 1, 2004

Thank you all for coming. Thank you all. Please be seated, thanks for coming. Thank you so much.

I want to thank you all for caring about your country enough that you are here to inspire others as to how to save lives. Welcome to Washington, DC. I want to thank Tonja Myles, the director of Set Free Indeed, from Baton Rouge, Louisiana, for introducing me. Tonja is—when I talk about people involved in saving people's lives, I'm speaking about people like Tonja and those on the stage with me. You heard their stories. I have too. And on behalf of a grateful nation, I thank them and you for serving in the army of compassion.

By feeding the hungry, by healing the addicted, by loving and caring for refugees, you represent the true strength, the real strength, the genuine strength of the

United States of America. And I am grateful for what you do.

We're here to talk today about the relationship between people of faith and Government policy. I believe it is in the national interest that Government stand side by side with people of faith who work to change lives for the better. I understand in the past, some in Government have said Government cannot stand side by side with people of faith. Let me put it more bluntly, Government can't spend money on religious programs simply because there's a rabbi on the board, cross on the wall, or a crescent on the door. I viewed this as not only bad social policy—because policy bypassed the great works of compassion and healing that take place—I viewed it as discrimination. And we needed to change it.

So we've hosted regional conferences to raise the issue. I try to talk about the Faith-Based Initiative a lot. Part of my job is to say to the American people, "Here is a fantastic opportunity to help America become what we want it to be, a land of hope and promise and love and compassion."

And so we're—and we're having regional conferences like this. I'm proud to report that we've reached more than 10,000 faith-based and community groups with the message that we want your help, that the Federal Government now welcomes your work, and do not fear being discriminated against by the Government.

Listen, I fully understand there are people in the faith community who have said, "Why do I want to interface with the Federal Government?" [*Laughter*] "Why would I want to interface with a group of people that want to try to get me to not practice my faith?" It's hard to be a faith-based program if you can't practice faith, and the message to you is, "We're changing the culture here in America."

And we're making progress. We're changing the attitude here in Washington, DC. I want to thank the Cabinet Secretaries who are here. It should indicate to you that my Cabinet not only has gotten the directive from the President that I expect all Cabinets to be open to faith-based programs, but it should speak to the character of the people who I've called to serve the country. Secretary Ann Veneman, Elaine Chao, Rod Paige, Tony Principi, thank you all for coming today. Hector Barreto of the SBA and Andrew Natsios of USAID, thank you all for coming. I see the Justice Department is represented by Deputy Attorney General Jim Comey. Thank you all for coming. This is a—HUD is represented.

Listen, what I'm telling you is, is that I told our Government, the people in my Government, "Rather than fear faith programs, welcome them. They're changing America. They do a better job than Government can do." [*Applause*] Thank you all.

I know Jim Ryun is here, the Congressman from Kansas, and his wife, Anne. Thanks for coming. There he is. My advice is don't go jogging with him. [*Laughter*]

I have to tell you, I came from a—what we call a roundtable—the table happened to be square, but it's one of those Government things—[*laughter*]—where I met with some healers and doers and community changers.

Mark Franken is the executive director of Migration and Refugee Services of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops—is with us. Wintley Phipps is the founder, president, and CEO of the U.S. Dream Academy, from Columbia, Maryland. Archbishop Harry Flynn of the Archdiocese of Minneapolis; Bishop Don Wuerl, the Bishop of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; my friend from the great State of Texas, Tony Evans of the Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship. There's a few Texans here, Tony, that know of you. Pastor Rick Warren of Saddleback Church, Lake Forest, California; Reverend Cheryl Anthony Mobley is the founder and CEO of the Judah International, from Brooklyn; and from a local church here,

Jim Sprouse, the pastor of Trinity United Methodist.

We talked about what they see, what they hear, the frustrations in dealing with the Government. It's part of making sure—this outreach is part of making sure that I hear as best I can firsthand from people whether or not the strategy is being properly implemented, because I understand amongst our prosperity there is suffering still and despair in America. And that troubles every American, regardless of their political standing or where they're from. Where there is despair, we must work to provide hope. Where there is loneliness, we must work to provide love.

There are men and women in our country who doubt, who have serious doubts about what we call the American Dream. And that—as the President of a country who has heralded the American Dream, that's troubling to realize that some citizens simply cannot connect with that notion of dreaming about the future. There are—there is loneliness, and you know what I'm talking about. There are people who are so addicted to alcohol and drugs that their vision is clouded, that they can't see a more hopeful tomorrow. These are the types of problems we face.

As well our great Nation receives tens of thousands of refugees, which is good, by the way, that America be a welcoming society. These souls flee persecution and need help when they come to our country. Not only are there people in our neighborhoods who are addicted and lonely and homeless and hungry; there are people who've come from faraway lands that need the same concern and care and love that our fellow citizens receive.

We've got teenage mothers in America who feel abandoned and in need. There are children in America, whose mom or dad is in prison, wondering whether or not there's any hope. In other words, we got problems in this society, and those of us who have been given the high honor of holding office must utilize every resource, every power we have to help solve those problems for the good of the country.

See, I understand the limitations of government. Governments can hand out money. But governments cannot put love in a person's heart or a sense of purpose in a person's life. The truth of the matter is that comes when a loving citizen puts their arm around a brother and sister in need and says, "I love you, and God loves you, and together we can perform miracles."

And miracles happen all the time in America. They happen because loving souls take time out of their lives to spread compassion and love. And lives are changing. Listen, our society is going to change, one heart and one soul at a time. It changes from the bottom up, not the top down. It changes when the soldiers in the armies of compassion feel wanted, encouraged, and empowered. And that's what the Faith-Based and Community Initiative is all about. How do we gather up the strength of the country, the vibrancy of faith-based programs? The social entrepreneurs, how do we encourage them?

And one way to do so is to hold conferences like these that, frankly, give me a chance and a platform to speak to the country and say as clearly as I can, "We welcome the army of compassion. We understand the power of faith in America, and the Federal Government will assist—not discriminate against you."

There is no better way to clarify for our fellow citizens the power of faith-based programs than to speak about examples, to hold up stories about lives who have been changed, starting with Veronica Braewell.

I just met with Veronica. The folks I told you were at the roundtable met with Veronica. Veronica is—was from Liberia. She's a refugee. She was telling us what it's like to see the violence and horror that took place in that country as rebel groups swept through the land, taking lives if they just felt like it. And this young lady clearly has got a large heart and deep concern

for her fellow citizens. She came, and the Catholic Social Agency in Allentown, Pennsylvania—a faith-based group, by the way—took her and her family into their collective bosom and loved them. And they helped her find jobs and a place to live and clothing and transportation.

You can imagine what it would be like to be a young girl coming from Liberia, having been traumatized by violence, to a strange country. Fortunately, her arrival was aided by people who said, "Gosh, what can I do to help change somebody's life and to help them?" She's just completed her training to be a nursing assistant. Soon, she'll start work at a senior care facility near her home. She said this, "It's like a second hope again. I believe in myself. I am grateful to God." Thanks to the Catholic Social Agency in Allentown, Pennsylvania, a soul has been lifted.

Elijah Anyieth is with us. He was born in a rural village in Sudan. He fled as a young man when his village was bombed, and he just wandered—talked about sleeping on the ground, looking for food. Fortunately, the Commonwealth Catholic Charities helped rescue him, and he found a home near Richmond, Virginia. With the help of the program, he graduated from high school with honors. Last month, he finished his first year of college. He's studying to be a mechanical engineer. Here's what he said, "When I imagine my life now and how it would have been, I can't find ways to thank them enough." He's talking about the Commonwealth Catholic Charities staff. See, the faith-based program helped save this guy's life and helped him have a bright future.

I met Derrill Frazier. He should be up here, not me. Needless to say, when his story is—he's a young guy. He's never seen his mom or rarely sees his mom, never met his dad, who is in prison, serving a lifetime in prison. By the way, his grandmother, Constance Morgan, brought him here today. It was my honor to meet Constance. You know what she told me? She said, "Mr. President, I pray for you."

Derrill joined the U.S. Dream Academy. It's a mentorship program funded by the Health and Human Services. See, Health and Human Services is now funding a faith-based program that encourages mentors, people to interface in the lives of a fellow like Derrill who wonders whether there's any hope for him. He plays basketball, and he talks about his favorite subject—this is with his mentor—U.S. history. I kind of liked U.S. history too. [*Laughter*]

Here's what he said: "I don't sit around just watching TV anymore. I like school. If I don't go to school, I can't reach my goals—to go to college and become a lawyer." See, here's a fellow who all of the sudden has got a goal. He's been inspired by something government really can't provide, which is a loving person to interface with him in a way that helps—changes his life.

The grant came out of the Federal Government to help fund this mentoring program. It is money well spent. The taxpayers of the country must understand that we should not focus on the process; we ought to focus on the results.

Let me tell you about this story. It is a success story because of a faith-based program. Brad Lassiter—he's the youngest of 17 children. He spent most of his childhood without a home. His education ended in the fourth grade. Essentially, he was abandoned and lived on the street, got addicted to drugs, took a bullet in the mouth, actually, at one point in his life, went to prison. And Gospel Rescue Ministries gave him a place to live when he came out of prison. See, he started reading the Bible in prison. It is a powerful change agent when you start reading the Bible in prison. And this guy was lost, and now he's found.

He said this—here's what Brad said. Brad said, "God blessed me. The mission gave me an opportunity to change my life spiritually, education-wise, and to build character. They made me want to change."

Actually, they were the agents, Brad. They were just the messenger. When he finished his recovery—I want you to hear the story—this is a guy abandoned on the streets, drug addict, couldn't read beyond the third grade. He now has a job at the World Bank, and he's going to college to study computer science.

America changes one heart at a time, one soul at a time, and while our fellow citizens can't do everything, they can do something to help change America one soul at a time. That's the philosophy behind the faith-based groups. It is the Government's strong desire to empower this fabric, this social fabric of our society where faith-based programs large and small feel empowered, encouraged, and welcomed into changing lives.

Look, I fully understand it's important to maintain the separation of church and state. We don't want the state to become the church, nor do we want the church to become the state. We're on common agreement there. But I do believe that groups should be allowed to access social service grants so long as they don't proselytize or exclude somebody simply because they don't share a certain faith. In other words, there's a way to accomplish the separation of church and state and, at the same time, accomplish the social objective of having America become a hopeful place and a loving place. And so I want to—so the question this administration is starting to ask or is asking is, "Are you getting the results?" That's all we care about. Are you meeting the standards of church and state, and are you getting results? And if so, if you say, "Yes," the Federal Government, rather than being fearful of you, ought to say, "Thank you. Thank you for doing your mission to change the United States of America."

So I wanted to make sure that the faith-based groups simply got equal access and equal treatment when it came to the billions of dollars we spend at the Federal level. That was the first step toward making sure the Faith-Based Initiative was strong and vibrant.

And of course, it got stuck in the Congress. [*Laughter*] It's a process debate that takes places up on Capitol Hill rather than a results-oriented debate. If you're a results-oriented debater, you say, "All I care about is making sure that the addict receives help. And if it takes changing a person's heart to change addiction, we ought to welcome the power that changes a person's heart in our society."

So I got frustrated and signed an Executive order. [*Laughter*] And it said that—it directed the Federal agencies, which are run by some of the folks here, that we will reverse regulations that discriminate against faith-based organizations. There were regulations on the books that made it nearly impossible for people of faith—all faiths, by the way. When you hear me talk about faith, I'm talking about all faiths, whether it be the Jewish faith or the Christian faith or the Muslim faith or the Hindu faith. All faiths have got the power to transform lives.

In other words, they made it easier for people of all faith to access the billions—we spend billions of dollars here in Washington, DC. And those billions ought to be open for grantmaking. In other words, if you're able to show that you're successful at meeting social objectives, then you ought to be allowed to access the money. That's my attitude.

And so we're making progress. I'm here to give you a progress report. They spent $1.1 billion on grants to faith-based groups. It's kind of hard to fully account for it. I would call that an estimate; $1.1 billion, it's an increase of 15 percent over 2002. That's good progress. However, there's a lot more money available. That's what I hope the conference explains to you, that there is money throughout our Government available for faith-based programs. And the idea is to teach you how to access that money, how to make sure the grantmaking process is understandable, and how to make

sure that people in your communities do not fear the bureaucracy interfering in your mission, which is a vital part of having a strong, vibrant, Faith-Based Initiative.

The other thing that's important is I wanted to make sure that as we—as people access Federal money, that it not go to the same programs over and over and over again. In other words, part of what we're trying to do is spur entrepreneurship, is to provide money for new programs to flourish and bloom. Remember, a faith-based program can be a mega-church—and by the way, there's some fantastic churches in our country who spread faith throughout their ministry—or it can be a five-person staff. What we're interested in is the ability for programs to change lives. That's what we're interested in.

I was talking to Tony Evans. Tony and I—he's come up with a fantastic idea, by the way, to encourage more leverage in the faith community: Inner-city churches need to work with suburban churches and become the conduit for monies going into the inner city. The reason why is, is that the inner-city church is what we call at the grassroots. They understand the programs that work and the programs that don't work. Evans also assures me that as of being—as a result of being a successful church, in the sense that it's got a lot of building, a lot of members, and a pretty good-sized budget—by the way, he started with a—in a house; he started small and grew big—that he is willing to help young churches and faith-based programs in inner-city Dallas, Texas, as to how to accomplish the mission, how to grow from little to big, how to grow from wanting to be vibrant to successful. And that's what the Faith-Based Initiative is meant to do. It's meant to allow for access of Federal money but at the same time spawn the entrepreneurial spirit, what I call social entrepreneurs, and encourage their growth.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development awarded $113 million in grants to first-time faith-based recipients. So in other words, what I'm telling you is, it's one thing to make sure that the grant process is open. It's another thing to make sure that as we—as money goes out the door, that it does so not only to achieve results but to encourage the development and expansion of faith-based programs throughout the country. There's a lot to do. Don't get me wrong. One of the great things about these meetings is we get feedback to improve the regulatory process. Look, I fully concede there's a lot of regulations in Washington. [*Laughter*] And we can always work to further reduce the impact of regulation, and we expect feedback from people who are frustrated and/or happy with the process you see.

The Departments of Labor, Agriculture, Health and Human Services have issued new regulations. In other words, we're constantly fine-tuning regulations to enforce the principle of equal treatment throughout their agencies. Education and Veteran Affairs have now completed theirs. And so one of the things that we've got to constantly work here on Washington is to make sure we take your feedback and change practice, obviously within the law, so that we can better hear the voices of those who are changing our country.

USAID—many of you who have got operations overseas have interfaced with USAID. I appreciate Andrew Natsios changing—proposing regulations to end the discrimination against faith-based groups receiving foreign grants.

So to make sure all this is coordinated, I picked Jim Towey. Where are you, Towey? There he is. Yes, he's over in the corner. See, he—Towey was Mother Teresa's lawyer. [*Laughter*] Now that is a litigious society if Mother Teresa needs a lawyer. [*Laughter*] Anyway, he's a good one.

So he has an office in the White House. I see Towey a lot because this is an initiative that is important for America and the future. Jim's job has been to set up these meetings to listen to people out in the field, to answer questions. His job is to answer

my questions, like how much money has gone out the door? It's one thing to have a Faith-Based Initiative, but if nobody is getting any grants, it's just paper. I'm not interested in paper. I'm not—I'm here—I'm not here—I'm here to try to make a change for the better. I'm interested in results. Towey has heard me say it a lot. "Are we succeeding? And if not, what is causing us—what is frustrating—where are the bottlenecks to success? Where are the problems?" He's constantly asking those questions.

That's why we set up faith-based offices in the Cabinet—in our Cabinet agencies. See, I want somebody responsible so when they report to the Secretary and I get on the Secretary, the Secretary can take it back down the chain of command and say, "Why are we frustrating people here? How come we haven't done a better job?" They're constantly asking the questions of their faith-based offices to make sure that the mission is accomplished.

Now, look, one of the—part of the feedback we've gotten is that there's a bottleneck at the State and local governments. Some of the money—[*applause*]—yes, see what I mean? [*Laughter*] Some of the money is block-granted to States. And therefore, if there's not a Governor who has a faith-based office who understands the vast potential of changing their State, you'll be frustrated. I know that. So part of our mission is to work with you to help change the attitude at the State level. We got our hands full here, by the way, too. Don't get me wrong. [*Laughter*] There's a bureaucratic mindset that we're working to change in Washington, but we also want to help you with the Governors and mayors.

There are—there's 20 Governors and over 100 mayors who have faith-based offices. I think when people realize that more money is now available to the faith communities, they'll change their attitude about whether or not to be accommodating to faith-based programs. I think they'll change their attitude. They should change their attitude because if they dig into their societies, get in the cities, and find out the lives that are being changed and realize their communities are better for it, they will say, "Give me the results." They'll say, "I'm a better mayor or Governor because lives are changing, not because of me but because of the faith community that's changing America one heart at a time."

I have called upon Congress. Not only do we want to make sure that the monies being spent now are accessible to the faith community but we want to make sure that—I've called upon for some specific programs to help the faith community. One is called Access to Recovery. It is a $100 million initiative to help the addict—is what it is. It's an interesting approach to funding social programs. In this case, we actually fund the addict. In other words, the money goes to the addict, and the addict gets to choose the program that is best for her or him. It's a change in attitude. Generally, we kind of tend to fund the program, oftentimes not asking whether they're effective or not. This time we're sending the money to the addict so that the addict can make the decision that meets his or her needs. I will tell you, the cornerstone of any good recovery program is the understanding there is a Higher Being to which—to whom you can turn your life and therefore save your life. It is the crux of many, many a successful addiction program. It—and our Government ought to understand that. Congress needs to provide ample money for the Access to Recovery initiative to help addicts change their lives by saving their lives.

I am deeply concerned about a society in which many boys and girls need love. They need—and I mentioned to you my concern about a child whose mom or dad is in prison. It's got to be incredibly lonely to have your mom or dad in prison, wondering whether or not—she's wondering whether there's any hope, you know?

And there is hope, particularly when that child feels love. And so I've asked Congress

to provide money for mentoring programs, particularly for a child who—whose mom or dad is in prison. And many of those mentoring programs come right out of inner-city churches and suburban churches. Listen, some of the best mentoring programs in America happen out of our churches and synagogues and mosques. And we ought not to be afraid of funding of those programs.

After all, if you exist because you've heard the universal call to love a neighbor like you'd like to be loved yourself, if that is the creed, the cornerstone, then surely out of that organization will come people who are willing to do so. And part of loving your neighbor like you'd like to be loved yourself is mentoring a child and saying, "You may be lonely, but I love you," and "What can I do to help lift your spirit?" So I put in funding requests for programs such as this.

Six hundred thousand—more than 600,000 inmates will be released from prison this year. Those are a lot of souls that need help coming into our society. I can't think of a better place for a prisoner to go—is to a church or a synagogue or a mosque and say, "I need help. I have just come out of incarceration, and can you help me with my life and the future? Can you provide guidance for me?" And so we've got a $300 million initiative I put before Congress to help with these prison reentry programs, all of which will give our faith community a chance to heal the broken heart.

One of the things—I'll never forget this—when I was the Governor of Texas, one of the early initiatives in my governorship, one of the faith-based initiatives, was to turn over a part of the prison unit to a faith program, Chuck Colson's program. He convinced me that this would be a great opportunity to change lives. And it would be better than stamping license plates. And so we put a voluntary program in the prison unit in Fort Bend County, Texas—the Sugarland, Texas, area. And I went over to see the program, and sure enough, I was talking about it on the microphones and out comes the prison choir. Now, this wasn't exactly a really large choir. It was probably 10 people. And I got in the mood and starting singing "Amazing Grace" with the Sugarland Prison choir, from this unit that was a faith-based unit. And I'm rocking back and forth with a guy, and on the front page of the Houston Chronicle is a picture—[*laughter*]—is a picture of me and a guy who has been in prison for 19 years for murder. [*Laughter*] The other day, we have a meeting in the White House, in the Roosevelt Room, and sure enough, sitting next to me is the guy who I rocked with who is now—[*laughter*]—whose life was changed and saved because of faith.

I'm telling America we need to not discriminate against faith-based programs. We need to welcome them so our society is more wholesome, more welcoming, and more hopeful for every single citizen.

I want to thank you all for coming. Thank you all. One last word: I want to thank you for coming. It warms my heart to know that I am the President of a country full of so many decent, caring people. The strength of this country is not our military or the size of our wallets. The strength of this country is the hearts and souls of the American people. That is the thing, in my judgment, that makes this country unique and different and strong. My job as the President of the United States is understand that and, as best as I humanly can, to elevate the spirit of the country, to call upon people to follow their hearts, to say to the Federal Government, "Stand beside these soldiers, not against them. Be a wind at their back, not at their face, so that America can reach its full potential, so every citizen, regardless of race, creed, background, can have a chance to realize the full promise, the full extended promise of the greatest country on the face of this Earth."

May God bless you and your works, and may God continue to bless the United States of America. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:22 a.m. at the Washington Hilton and Towers. In his remarks, he referred to Charles W. Colson, founder, Prison Fellowship Ministries. The related Executive order of June 1 on responsibilities of the Departments of Commerce and Veterans Affairs and the Small Business Administration with respect to faith-based and community initiatives is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

The President's News Conference
June 1, 2004

Iraqi Interim Government

The President. Good morning. Today in Baghdad, U.N. Special Envoy Lakhdar Brahimi and Iraqi Prime Minister Ayad Allawi announced the members of Iraq's new interim government. Consulting with hundreds of Iraqis from a variety of backgrounds, Mr. Brahimi has recommended a team that possesses the talent, commitment, and resolve to guide Iraq through the challenges that lie ahead.

On June 30th, this interim government will assume full sovereignty and will oversee all ministries and all functions of the Iraqi state. Those ministries will report to Prime Minister Allawi, who will be responsible for the day-to-day operations of Iraq's interim government. Dr. Allawi is a strong leader. He endured exile for decades and survived assassination attempts by Saddam's regime. He was trained as a physician, has worked as a businessman, and has always been an Iraqi patriot.

Prime Minister Allawi and Mr. Brahimi announced Iraq's interim President, Ghazi al-Yawr, an engineer from northern Iraq. They also announced two Deputy Presidents, Dr. Ibrahim Jafari, who is a physician born in Karbala, and Dr. Rowsch Shaways, a prominent political and military leader who also has been a longtime opponent of Saddam's tyranny.

The new 33-member cabinet announced today reflects new leadership, drawn from a broad cross section of Iraqis. Five are regional officials, six are women, and the vast majority of government ministries will have new ministers. The foremost tasks of this new interim government will be to prepare Iraq for a national election no later than January of next year and to work with our coalition to provide the security that will make that election possible. That election will choose a transitional national assembly, the first freely elected, truly representative national governing body in Iraq's history.

Earlier today I spoke to Secretary-General Kofi Annan. I congratulated him on the U.N.'s role in forming this new government. We also discussed the preparation for national elections and our common work on a new Security Council resolution that will express international support for Iraq's interim government, reaffirm the world's security commitment to the Iraqi people and encourage other U.N. members to join in the effort of building a free Iraq.

Last week, I outlined the five steps to helping Iraq achieve democracy and freedom. We will hand over authority to a sovereign Iraqi government, help establish security, continue rebuilding Iraq's infrastructure, encourage more international support, and move toward a national election that will bring forward new leaders empowered by the Iraqi people. The naming of the new interim government brings us one step closer to realizing the dream of millions of Iraqis, a fully sovereign nation with a

representative government that protects their rights and serves their needs.

Many challenges remain. Today's violence underscores that freedom in Iraq is opposed by violent men who seek the failure not only of this interim government but of all progress toward liberty. We will stand with the Iraqi people in defeating the enemies of freedom and those who oppose democracy in Iraq. The killers know that Iraq is the central front in the war on terror. The return of tyranny to Iraq would embolden the terrorists, leading to more bombings, more beheadings, and more murders of the innocent around the world.

The rise of a free and self-governing Iraq will deny terrorists a base of operation, discredit their narrow ideology, and give momentum to reformers across the region. A free Iraq will be a decisive blow to terrorism at the heart of its power and a victory for the civilized world and for the security of America. The will of Iraqis and our coalition is firm. We will not be deterred by violence and terror. We will stand together and ensure that the future of Iraq is a future of freedom.

I'll take some questions. Hunt [Terence Hunt, Associated Press].

Terrorism in Iraq/International Support for Iraqi Transition

Q. Mr. President, you just spoke about more international support. With the new government and the expected Security Council resolution, do you expect—what do you expect in the way of other countries to come forward with major pledges of troops for Iraq? And do you think there's going to be more violence as the turnover occurs?

The President. I think, on the second half of that question, yes, I believe there will be more violence, because there are still violent people who want to stop progress. Listen, their strategy is—hasn't changed. They want to kill innocent lives to shake our will and to discourage the people inside Iraq. That's what they want to do, and they're not going to shake our will.

In terms of whether or not there would be a major—you said major commitment of new troops? Is that the adjective you used, "major"?

Q. Yes, sir.

The President. I don't know if there will be a major commitment of new troops, but I think there will be a major focus on helping Iraq to become a free country. And the next step in this process is to get a United Nations Security Council resolution. And to this end, I have been speaking with a variety of world leaders to encourage them to—by telling them we're willing to work with them to achieve language we can live with but, more importantly, language that the Iraqi government can live with.

And Kofi and I talked today, and he wants to hear from the new Iraqi government, and I don't blame him. And we heard from the new Iraqi government, by the way, today, and the new Prime Minister who stood up and thanked the American people, for which I was grateful. He was speaking to the mothers and dads and wives and husbands of our brave troops who have helped them become a free country, and I appreciated his strong statement.

Steve [Steve Holland, Reuters].

Iraqi Governing Council's Role in Selection Process

Q. Sir, were you surprised at the way the Governing Council took command of the selection process? And are you concerned that the new President has had some criticisms of the United States?

The President. No, I don't—from my perspective, Mr. Brahimi made the decisions and brought their names to the Governing Council. As I understand it, the Governing Council simply opined about names. It was Mr. Brahimi's selections, and Ambassador Bremer and Ambassador Blackwill were instructed by me to work

with Mr. Brahimi. As we say in American sports parlance, he was the quarterback. And it seemed like a good group to me. I mean, they're diverse; as I mentioned, a number of women are now involved in the government, which is a positive step for the citizens of Iraq.

Go ahead.

Iraqi Interim Government

Q. The new President has had some criticisms of the United States. Are you——

The President. The new President has had some criticisms?

Q. ——concerned about that?

The President. Well, Mr. Brahimi put together a government that's going to be, first and foremost, loyal to the Iraqi people. And that's important. It's a government with which I believe we can work. Mr. Allawi said some strong statements today about security matters on the ground, about how he wants to work with the coalition forces to provide security so that the country can go toward elections.

But you know, I'm—what I'm most for is for people who are willing to work toward a free Iraq. That's my concern. And it sounds like to me that these men are patriots—men and women are patriots who believe in the future of Iraq. And if there is some criticism of the United States, so be it. My—what I—the end result is a peaceful Iraq in the heart of the Middle East.

Gregory [David Gregory, NBC News].

Coalition Security Arrangement With Iraqi Interim Government

Q. Mr. President, this new Iraqi government and others on the Security Council have expressed an interest in this interim government having substantial power over decisions—military security decisions. This Government has been clear that when it comes to protecting U.S. troops, American commanders will do everything that has to be done.

The President. Right.

Q. Well, as you go to Europe now, in the next couple of days, what are you prepared to do to bridge that gap, to give this new independent government the sort of independence it's really asking for while retaining this essential role that you have to have in, you know, securing Iraq?

The President. No, I think—listen, the American people need to be assured that if our troops are in harm's way, they will be able to defend themselves without having to check with anybody else, other than their commander. At the same time, I can assure the Iraqi citizens as well as our friends in Europe that we have done these kind of security arrangements before. Witness Afghanistan. There is a sovereign government in Afghanistan. There are U.S. troops and coalition troops there, and they're working very well together.

The Iraqis will have their own chain of command. And that's going to be very important. In other words, the Iraqi army will report up to a chain of command of Iraqis, not coalitions or Americans. And I think that's going to be an important part of the spirit and the capabilities of an Iraqi army. But I'm confident we can bridge any gap, David, because we have done it in country after country.

Terry [Terry Moran, ABC News].

Iraqi Interim Government

Q. Mr. President, some will see the presence of Iraqi exiles, some of whom have received money from the United States Government in the past, as proof, in their minds, that this is a puppet government of the United States. Could you answer that criticism and explain what role, if any, you had in the names, as they——

The President. I had no role. I mean, occasionally, somebody said, "This person may be interested, or that," but I had no role in picking—zero.

Secondly, in terms of whether or not our Government helped, we did help some of the figures now in the interim government.

We helped them because they were fierce anti-Saddam people. We helped their organizations, which were—which believed that the tyranny of Saddam was bad for the Iraqi people.

Now, it's going to be up to the leaders to prove their worth to the Iraqi citizens. In other words, the leaders are going to have to show the Iraqis that they're independent, smart, capable, nationalistic, and believe in the future of Iraq. And our job is to work with them.

But the decisionmaking process is very important for our citizens to understand. The decisionmaking process is changing. Bremer comes home, and the new government replaces Ambassador Bremer. And at the same time, we stand up an Embassy that will interface with the new, sovereign Iraqi government.

One of the interesting things I've heard, Terry, from other leaders, "Are you really going to pass full sovereignty?" And the answer is, yes, we're going to pass full sovereignty. And the Iraqi government will need the help of a lot of people, and we're willing to be a participant in helping them get to the elections.

And Terry asked whether there will be more violence. I think there will be. You know, I hate to predict violence, but I just understand the nature of the killers. This guy, Zarqawi, an Al Qaida associate—who was in Baghdad, by the way, prior to the removal of Saddam Hussein—is still at large in Iraq. And as you might remember, part of his operational plan was to sow violence and discord amongst the various groups in Iraq by coldblooded killing. And we need to help find Zarqawi so that the people of Iraq can have a more bright—bright future.

The other thing we've got to do is work on reconstruction, to help rebuild parts of that country that suffered mightily under Saddam and are being, you know—parts of which are being destroyed by these terrorists.

Plante [Bill Plante, CBS News].

U.S. Troops and Command Structure in Iraq

Q. Mr. President, if the decisionmaking is now fully in the hands of the Iraqis, will that extend to them asking us to leave, pull out U.S. troops? And will you accede to that if they ask?

The President. Well, Mr. Allawi said today the troops need to be there. And so——

Q. But all of them?

The President. Well, whatever it takes to get the mission done, and we look forward to working with the Iraq Prime Minister and the Iraq Defense Minister to help secure the country. As you know, circumstances change on the ground, and I've told the American people and our commanders that we'll be flexible, and we'll meet those circumstances as they arise.

And what is important for the American people to know is that if a troop is in harm's way, that troop—the chain of command of that troop will be to a U.S. military commander. In terms of the strategy as to how to help Iraq become secure enough to have free elections, we'll work closely with the new Iraqi government to achieve those objectives. There may be times when the Iraqis say, "We can handle this ourselves. Get out of the way. We're plenty capable of moving into secure a town or to secure a situation." And there may be times when they say, "You know, we've got our hands full. Why don't you join us in an operation." And we will collaborate closely with the new defense ministry.

It's a change of attitude in Iraq, in that they now have got the decisionmaking capabilities. Mr. Allawi today, I repeat, stood up in front of the world and said two things that caught my attention. One, he thanked America, and I appreciated that a lot. And I think the American people needed to hear that, that in the new leader there is this understanding and appreciation for the sacrifices that our country has been

through. And he also said, "We look forward to working with the coalition and forces to help secure the country."

Stevenson [Richard Stevenson, New York Times].

Q. Given the perception——

The President. I'm converting this into a full-blown press conference. It's such a beautiful day. [*Laughter*] Do I get credit for it? [*Laughter*]

Q. Absolutely.

The President. Okay, good.

Confidence in Iraqi Interim Government

Q. Given the perception out there, especially in Iraq and among some at the U.N. that Brahimi was strong-armed, are you confident that this new interim government has enough legitimacy within Iraq to hold together all the various factions there that threaten to go at each other's throats?

The President. No, I think that's a—listen, yes, I am confident. But time will tell whether or not the leaders turn out to be as capable and strong as Mr. Brahimi thinks they will be.

One of the things I think, Richard, that will keep the country intact is the—is this notion of free elections. I mean, it appears to me that one of the things that does unite the Iraqi people is the deep desire to be able to elect their government. And as we head toward free elections, I think it will make it easier for the interim government to do their job.

Eddie [Ed Chen, Los Angeles Times].

Situation in the Middle East

Q. Mr. President——

The President. Yes, Ed, I'm anxiously awaiting.

Q. I'd like ask you about your goals for this—your trip coming up later this week to Europe, vis-a-vis your plan on the Middle East peace initiative. What do you hope in a concrete way to bring home?

The President. I'm giving a speech at the Air Force Academy that will help answer your question.

Q. I won't be there. [*Laughter*]

The President. Ed, they do have C–SPAN, you know. [*Laughter*] I'll be glad to rent it for you for an hour. [*Laughter*]

I'm going to talk about the war on terror, the clash of ideology. Part of winning the war on terror is to spread freedom and democracy in the Middle East. The speech will help set up the types of conversations I will continue to have overseas and at Sea Island, Georgia, which is the need for us to understand that democracy can take hold in the Middle East.

It's important for our partners to understand that I don't view it as American democracy, nor do I think it's going to happen overnight. I will remind them that the Articles of Confederation was a rather bumpy period for American democracy. And so we're talking about reform in their image but reform at the insistence and help—with the help of the free world.

And I think it's possible and I know it's necessary that we work toward democracy in the Middle East, because a society that is not free and not democratic is a society that's likely to breed resentment and anger and, therefore, a society that is—makes the recruitment of young terrorists more likely.

And that's what—and so the idea is to find common spirit in our willingness to work in a variety of ways in the greater Middle East to achieve democratic societies, to work with reformers, to work on education processes that teach people to read and write and add and subtract, not to hate, and always reminding people that the war on terror is not a war against a particular religion and that the war on terror is not a war against a particular civilization. It's a war against people who have got this perverted vision about what the world should look like.

And at my Air Force Academy speech, which you won't be at, I'll remind people that part of their objective is to drive the United States from a country—countries in the Middle East so that they can flow their

hatred into a vacuum. And it's very important that we not retreat but not only stay the ground but also work toward democratic institutions and reform.

Yes, sir.

Coalition Security Arrangement With Iraqi Interim Government

Q. Mr. President, are you confident this interim government wants U.S. troops to stay, at least for the short term?

The President. I am confident, yes, sir. And I am confident because of the remarks of Mr. Allawi, and I am told by people on the ground there that they feel—that they, the Iraqis, feel comfortable in asking for us to stay so that we can help provide the security.

Listen, the Iraqis I have talked to are the first to say that the security situation must be improved. And they recognize that there is a lot of work between now and the election in order to improve the security situation, starting with making sure the chain of command within the Iraqi army and the civilian forces and the police forces is strong and linked, as well as to make sure that these Iraqi forces are equipped and properly trained.

As I said in the statement last Monday, a week ago yesterday, that we saw that there were some weaknesses on the ground in Iraq when the heat got on. Some didn't stand up and do their duty. And we're addressing those weaknesses now, and it's going to take time to fully address them.

But there is a deep desire by the Iraqis, don't get me wrong, to run their own affairs and to be in a position where they can handle their own security measures. And I think they will be in that position, but I know that they're not going to ask us to depart until they're comfortable in that position. And Mr. Allawi—again, I referred to his statements today. I thought they were good, strong statements.

Yes.

Ahmad Chalabi/Situation in Iraq

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. Chalabi is an Iraqi leader that's fallen out of favor within your administration. I'm wondering if you feel that he provided any false information, or are you particularly——

The President. Chalabi?

Q. Yes, with Chalabi.

The President. My meetings with him were very brief. I mean, I think I met with him at the State of the Union and just kind of working through the ropeline, and he might have come with a group of leaders. But I haven't had any extensive conversations with him.

Mr. Brahimi made the decision on Chalabi, not the United States. Mr. Brahimi was the person that put together the group. And I haven't spoken to him or anybody on the ground as to why Chalabi wasn't taken.

In terms of information——

Q. I guess I'm asking, do you feel like he misled your administration in terms of what the expectations were going to be going into Iraq?

The President. I don't remember anybody walking into my office saying Chalabi says this is the way it's going to be in Iraq.

Let me step back there and remind you that going into Iraq, we had some—we had a belief that certain things—that we had to plan for certain courses of action, one, that the oil production, the Iraqi oil production, would be disrupted through sabotage or Saddam's own whims. And it didn't happen. We also thought there would be major refugee flows, and that didn't happen, or a lot of hunger, and it didn't happen.

What did happen was, as a result of us storming through the country, many of Saddam's elite guard kind of saw what was happening, laid down—well, didn't lay down their arms—stored their arms and hid

and then regrouped. As well as what happened was is that some of the foreign fighters there were encouraged and bolstered by a foreign fighter that had been there during the period, Mr. Zarqawi. And it's been tough, tough fighting. I fully recognize that.

However, I just want to remind you that the mission of the enemy is to get us to retreat from Iraq, is to say, "Well, it's been tough enough, now it's time to go home," which we are not going to do. We will stand with this Iraqi government.

Today the reason I'm out here is because this is a major step toward the emergence of a free Iraq. This is a very hopeful day for the Iraqi people and a hopeful day for the American people, because the American people want to see a free Iraq as well. They understand what I know: A free Iraq in the heart of the Middle East is going to be a game-changer, an agent of change. It's going to send a clear signal that the terrorists can't win and that a free society is a better way to lift the hopes and aspirations of the average person.

Yes, Holly [Holly Rosenkrantz, Bloomberg News].

Energy

Q. So far, sir, Congress hasn't responded to your call to do anything about rising oil prices. I mean, you've already said you want them to pass your energy bill, and they aren't. So what are you——

The President. Yes, so go ask Congress why they haven't passed the energy bill. And I'll repeat it again: Congress, pass the energy bill.

Q. But what more can you do as prices rise?

The President. I can continue calling upon Congress to pass the energy bill and to make sure the American consumers are being treated fairly. But what you're seeing at the gas pumps is something I've been warning for 2 years, and that is that we're hooked on foreign sources of energy and that if we don't become less dependent on foreign sources of energy, we will find higher prices at our gas pumps. It's precisely what happened.

Had we drilled in ANWR back in the mid-nineties, we'd be producing an additional million barrels a day, which would be taking enormous pressure off the American consumer.

Yes, ma'am.

Possibility of Visits to Iraq and Afghanistan

Q. Mr. President, you were saying that the United States wants to stand with Iraqi people. Would you like to go to Iraq before the end of the year and stand with the interim government and——

The President. I would like to, but I'm not so sure that would be wise yet.

Q. It's not secure?

The President. Well, I don't know. You're asking me to project 6 months down the road and—5 months down the road. And that's the classic hypothetical: Will Iraq be secure enough for me to go to Iraq? I would hope it would be. And if it is, then whether or not I can go is another question.

Q. Would you like to go, though?

The President. I'd love to go back to Iraq at some point in time. I really would. I'd like to be able to stand up and say, "Let me tell you something about America. America is a land that's willing to sacrifice on your behalf. We sent our sons and daughters here so you can be free. And not only that, we are a compassionate country. We want to help you rebuild your schools and your hospitals." I'd like to do that. I really would.

I'd like to also go to Afghanistan. And by the way, the reports from Afghanistan, at least the ones I get, are very encouraging. You know, we've got—people who have been there last year and have been back this year report a different attitude. And they report people have got a sparkle in their eye and women now all of a sudden no longer fear the future but believe that we're there to stay the course and we

will help a free society emerge—both of which, a free society and a free Afghanistan, are very important to a future, a future world that is peaceful, because freedom is the bulwark of the value system inculcated in those countries.

Yes. Yes, you, Dallas Morning News, Hillman [G. Robert Hillman].

Proposed U.N. Security Council Resolution on Iraq

Q. How close are you to an agreement with the United Nations for a new resolution on Iraq?

The President. Well, I think our negotiator, the Secretary of State, feels we're making good progress.

Q. A week? Two weeks?

The President. I don't know, Hillman. That's like saying, "Can I go to Iraq in 5 months?" Please. I thought I set the tone for hypotheticals. I don't know what it is.

But as soon as possible—I'd like to get it done tomorrow, if possible. And so we're working with all the parties. But you know how the United Nations is. Sometimes it can move slowly, and sometimes it can move quickly, and the quicker the better as far as I'm concerned, because it sends a message to the new Iraqi government: The world stands with you.

Yes, sir. Only one question per major paper. Nice try. [*Laughter*]

International Support for Iraqi Transition

Q. You're about to have a series of meetings with foreign leaders in which Iraq certainly will loom very large. You ruled out, a moment ago, when you said you don't expect a major commitment of troops to come out of those meetings.

The President. Right.

Q. What, realistically, do you expect to come out of these meetings regarding——

The President. A commitment to work together, a commitment that we all understand the importance of succeeding in Iraq, an understanding that terrorism will flourish and be emboldened if we're not successful in promoting a free government in Iraq, and a—and I think, from my conversations, people understand that. But it will give us a chance to sit in the same room and talk about that. And that's an important commitment.

In other words, once you get that in your mind, that a free Iraq is important for world security, then it makes it easier for us to work together on certain matters. And look, we're still getting beyond the period where we had disagreements about Iraq. And now there's common ground, that a free Iraq is essential to our respective securities and, more important, is a very important signal to people in the Middle East that it's possible to live in a free society. And that's an important message as well.

It's important for the Iranian freedom—those who love freedom in Iran to see. I mean, listen, a free Iraq on the border of Iran is going to send a very clear signal to those who want to be free that a free society is very possible. It's a hopeful period.

And I'm so appreciative of the United Nations and Mr. Brahimi's work. It's hard work in Baghdad to do what he did. He did a lot of good work and came up with what looks like a very strong government.

Deans [Bob Deans, Cox Newspapers], fine looking suit—the white's back. So are the bucks. [*Laughter*]

Proposed U.N. Security Council Resolution on Iraq/Upcoming G–8 and NATO Summits

Q. Thank you, sir. Mr. President, there have been several questions about this tightly sequenced statesmanship you have coming up in the next several weeks. I'm wondering if you can say, first, do you expect—how soon do you think representatives of this interim government will actually go to the U.N. Security Council and plead their case for a resolution?

The President. Right.

Q. And two, do you expect to use the G–8—do you have the—will the resolution be on the agenda there at the G–8? And

where do you think you'll be by the time we get to Istanbul?

The President. Yes. I would hope that the new government sends somebody to New York soon. As a matter of fact, I don't think you're going to see much on the resolution, to answer your question, Bob, until the Iraqis come and make their case about why a resolution is needed. And I would like to see that person come as quickly as possible.

We are going to have leaders from the greater Middle East in Sea Island. And as to whether or not a member of the new government shows up in Sea Island from Iraq, I just don't know. But we will talk about Iraq. We'll talk about Iraq in the context of the spread of democracy. And the countries that will be there will be sharing their experiences with democratic institutions in the Muslim world. And that will also serve as a reminder to the people of Iraq that they can succeed.

In terms of NATO, obviously we'll be discussing Iraq at NATO. Again, I don't expect any additional troop commitments out of NATO. I do expect there to be continuing NATO interest in Iraq. As you know, NATO has provided a headquarters for—or support for the Polish multinational division—Polish-led multinational division. But we'll also make sure that we continue to focus NATO on Afghanistan. A peaceful and free Afghanistan is essential to the—to our mission, to our objectives of encouraging the spread of democracy.

President Karzai, who I believe is coming soon—and will be at Sea Island, by the way—another good example of someone who has assumed responsibility in a country that had been savaged by barbaric leadership, is doing a fine job. And he will be able to help people understand how to ask for help as well as what help is available. He's—I am very impressed by him and impressed by his leadership.

Last question.

Peace Efforts in Sudan

Q. Mr. President——

Q. Mr. President, could you speak about Sudan, the peace agreement in Sudan and how that nation has turned away from terrorism?

The President. Yes, I appreciate that. The question is on Sudan. Recently, there was a signature on a document that took us a step closer toward achieving our objective. However, it is very important for the Sudanese Government to understand we're watching very carefully the hunger, the brutal human conditions in the western part of their country and that we expect there to be an accommodation to the relief agencies as well as the American Government to get aid to those people. We're closer to an agreement in Sudan. It's a very important agreement. And we will continue to work the issue really hard.

Situation in Iraq

Q. Mr. President, can I ask about one of the things that the new Prime Minister in Iraq has said about your administration? He has said that many of the postwar problems in Iraq have been from lack of proper planning and that America bears direct responsibility for that. How do you answer that?

The President. I would answer him that we had a plan in place, we succeeded in making sure that the oil flow continues so that he as Prime Minister has now got roughly 2.5 million barrels a day of Iraqi oil for the benefit of the Iraqi people, that there wasn't major disruptions of food so that people didn't starve. In other words, we were very successful in certain things.

But there is no question that the security situation on the ground is hard and tough. And my comment to him is we will be flexible and wise and work with him to continue to secure Iraq, that our mission is his mission, which is to get to elections so the country can be a free country.

Again, I think it's instructive that Mr. Brahimi picked leaders who are willing to

speak their mind, which is fine with me. I fully understand a leader willing to speak their mind. I kind of like doing it myself, you know. And all the new Prime Minister needs to know is that I look forward to a close relationship with him, to do what's best for the Iraqi people. That's our interest. Our interest is a free Iraq. It's in their interest, and it's in the world's interest. And it's something—these are historic times. And I am pleased with the progress, the political progress being made today, and vow to the people of Iraq that we will finish the mission. We will do our job. And we expect them to do their job, and we'll work with them to do so.

Thank you all very much.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 11:30 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary-General Kofi Annan of the United Nations and Lakhdar Brahimi, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; L. Paul "Jerry" Bremer III, Presidential Envoy to Iraq; Robert D. Blackwill, Deputy Assistant to the President and Coordinator for Strategic Planning to the National Security Adviser; Defense Minister Hazim Qutran al-Khuzai al-Shalan of the new Iraqi interim government; Iraqi Governing Council Member Ahmad Chalabi; and President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting a Report on Federal Expenditures for Climate Change Programs and Activities
June 1, 2004

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Consistent with division D, title V, section 555(b) of Public Law 108–199, the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2004, I transmit herewith an account prepared by my Administration of Federal expenditures for climate change programs and activities. This report includes both domestic and international programs and activities related to climate change, and associated expenditures by line item as presented in the FY 2005 President's Budget Appendix.

Sincerely,

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Ted Stevens, chairman, Senate Committee on Appropriations; and C.W. Bill Young, chairman, House Committee on Appropriations.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Sanctions Under the Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act
June 1, 2004

Dear _____ *:*

I transmit herewith my designation of the following eight foreign persons and two foreign entities as appropriate for sanctions under section 804(b) of the Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act, 21 U.S.C. 1901–1908, and report my direction of sanctions against them under that Act:

Arellano Felix Organization
Eduardo Ramon Arellano Felix
Francisco Javier Arellano Felix
Carrillo Fuentes Organization

Armando Valencia Cornelio
Norris Nembhard
Leebert Ramcharan
Fernando Melciades Zevallos Gonzales
Iqbal Mirchi
Haji Bashir Noorzai

Sincerely,

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Richard G. Lugar, chairman, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations; John W. Warner, chairman, Senate Committee on Armed Services; Charles E. Grassley, chairman, Senate Committee on Finance; Pat Roberts, chairman, Senate Select Committee on Intelligence; Orrin G. Hatch, chairman, Senate Committee on the Judiciary; Henry J. Hyde, chairman, House Committee on International Relations; Duncan Hunter, chairman, House Committee on Armed Services; Christopher Cox, chairman, House Select Committee on Homeland Security; Porter J. Goss, chairman, House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence; F. James Sensenbrenner, Jr., chairman, House Committee on the Judiciary; and William M. Thomas, chairman, House Committee on Ways and Means.

Remarks at a Victory 2004 Reception in Denver, Colorado
June 1, 2004

Thank you all. Thanks for coming. I appreciate you all being here. I want to thank you all for coming tonight. What we have done is we have made sure we're going to carry Colorado again. I love coming to this State. It's a State where the cowboy hats outnumber the ties. It's great to be here, and I cannot tell you how grateful I am that you all have taken time to come by to say hello.

I bring greetings from First Lady Laura Bush. She is a fabulous First Lady, and she is a wonderful wife. I was a lucky guy when she said yes. There I was on bended knee in Midland, Texas. I said, "Would you marry me?" She said, "Just so long as you don't get into politics." [*Laughter*] She is—she's come to realize what I know, that in this job you can do things to help influence people's lives in such a positive way. She speaks clearly about literacy. She's got a passion for helping people learn to read.

I'll never forget the time she did the radio address, the Presidential radio address, and she spoke to the hopes and aspirations of the women in Afghanistan. And the feedback she got was such incredibly positive feedback. People said—people from that desperate part of the world sent word back that they so appreciated the fact that Laura lifted their souls and sights and spirits with just some kind and gentle words. I think there's a lot of reasons you need to put me back in office, but perhaps the most important is so that Laura can be the First Lady for 4 more years.

I look forward to working with the Vice President for 4 more years. I'm very proud of the job that Dick Cheney has done. He's steady. He's strong. He's reliable. He is an excellent Vice President. I used to say he's the best Vice President we ever had, until one day Mother yelled out, "Wait a minute, buster." [*Laughter*] But he's a good, solid friend and a good man.

I really appreciate Governor Owens. He's one of the most articulate spokesmen for compassionate conservatism in the country. I'm proud to call him friend. I'm proud that Frances is here along with him. I appreciate your service, Governor, and thank you very much for what you've done for the State.

I want to thank Benson—Bruce Benson. I knew he would amount to something one of these days. [*Laughter*] Thank you very much for leading this effort, Bruce. You and Marcy have been longtime friends, and I appreciate that. You know, in this line of work, if you can't count on your friends, it's going to be an empty journey. And the Bensons have been long-time friends, for which I'm grateful.

I want to thank my friend Mercer Reynolds from Cincinnati, Ohio, who has been in charge of the Bush-Cheney fundraising effort and is now in charge of raising money for the Victory committees. Victory committees mean that we're going to have a little water in the bucket to water the grassroots, to turn out the vote. And for those of you who are what they call grassroots activists, I want to thank you for what you're fixing to do, which is to put up the signs, find the voters, and turn them out—find out who they are and say, "You owe it to our country to participate in democracy."

And don't be afraid to talk to discerning Democrats and independents too, because we've got a good, positive message. We've got something that lifts—our message lifts the spirits of this country. First, when you're convincing them, remind them that this administration has confronted serious challenges. We—when we came to office, the stock market was in decline and the economy was headed into recession. But we acted. We delivered historic tax relief. And over the past year, this economy of ours is the fastest growing of any industrialized—major industrialized nation in the world.

We uncovered corporate crimes. Those corporate crimes affected the American people. And we worked with Congress to pass tough laws—I mean, tough laws—and made it abundantly clear we're not going to tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America.

We saw war and grief arrive on a September morning, and so we have pursued the terrorist enemy across the world. We have been steadfast and strong in our—doing our duty, which is to protect America. We've captured or killed many of the key leaders of the Al Qaida network, and I assure you, the rest of them know we're on their trail.

We confronted the dangers of state-sponsored terror and the spread of weapons of mass destruction. We ended two of the most violent and dangerous regimes on Earth. And now, thanks to our brave troops and coalition troops, 50 million people live in freedom.

When we got to Washington, the military was underfunded and not very well appreciated. We anticipated the problem. We worked with Congress to pass robust defense budgets. And today, no one can question the skill or the strength or the spirit of the United States military. And tomorrow I look forward to going to the Air Force Academy to congratulate the newest class of Air Force officers and to thank them on behalf of a grateful nation for the service they're going to render.

See, I hope you can tell that I understand it is the President's job to confront problems, not to pass them on to future Presidents and future generations. This is an important election. The man who sits in the Oval Office will set the course of the war on terror and the direction of the economy. The security and the prosperity of our country are at stake in this election.

And I've got a tough race. I'm looking forward to it—I'm looking forward to it. I'm running against an experienced United States Senator. He has been in Washington long enough to take both sides of just about every issue. [*Laughter*] He voted for the PATRIOT Act, for NAFTA, for the No Child Left Behind Act, and for the use of force in Iraq. Now he opposes the PATRIOT Act, NAFTA, the No Child Left Behind Act, and the liberation of Iraq. He's kind of like the Colorado weather—[*laughter*]—if you don't like it, just wait a few minutes and it will change.

I'm running hard to seek the endorsement of the American people. My opponent claims he's picked up some endorsements as well, from foreign leaders. [*Laughter*] He just won't tell us who they are. [*Laughter*] He was asked this question on TV one time, and he said, "What I said is true"—this is what my opponent said—he said, "What I said is true. I mean, you can go to New York City, and you can be in a restaurant, and you can meet a foreign leader." I think this whole thing is a—[*laughter*]—is a case of mistaken identity. [*Laughter*] Just because somebody has an accent—[*laughter*]—a nice suit, or a good table at a fancy New York restaurant does not make them a foreign leader. Foreign leaders will not be deciding this election. Fortunately, the American people will be deciding this election, and we are going to win 4 more years.

The voters will have a unmistakable choice in the campaign. I mean, it's a clear choice. It's a choice between keeping the tax relief that's moving this economy forward or putting the burden of higher taxes back on the American people. It's a choice between an America that leads the world with strength and confidence or an America that is uncertain in the face of danger.

I look forward to the debate. I look forward to laying out exactly where I want to lead this Nation. I've got a clear vision of how to make sure this economy continues to grow and for people to be able to realize their dreams. I know exactly what we need to do to win the war on terror and to bring freedom and peace to the world.

I look forward to debating the issue of taxes. It's a big issue for every American family. With the largest tax relief since Ronald Reagan was the President, we have left more money in the hands that earned it. And by spending and investing and helping to create new jobs, the American people have used their money far better than the Federal Government would have.

We've been through recession, corporate scandal, emergencies, and war. And yet, our economy is strong, and it is getting stronger. In April, America added 288,000 new jobs. Manufacturing jobs have increased for 3 straight months. Since August, the economy has added 1.1 million new jobs. The first quarter of 2004, the economy grew at a rate of 4.4 percent. Over the past year, economic growth has been the fastest in nearly 20 years. Business investment is up. Inflation is low. Mortgage rates are down. More people own a home in America than ever before. The economy is strong. It is getting stronger. The tax relief we passed is working.

And there is a big difference in this campaign when it comes to taxes. I want you to remind your friends and neighbors, Republican and Democrat and independent, that when we passed the child credit to help families, my opponent voted against it. When we increased the child credit to help families, he voted against it. When we reduced the marriage penalty, he voted against it. When we created a lower 10-percent rate for working families, he voted against it. When we reduced the tax rate on dividends that helps a lot of America's seniors, he voted no. When we passed tax relief to help small businesses, he voted no. I think we see a pattern here. It's a lot easier to get a "yes" vote out of him as a United States Senator when it comes to raising taxes. You make sure your friends and neighbors understand that as a United States Senator, he voted over 350 times for higher taxes on the American people.

We're now in the middle—we're now in the beginning of a campaign, and my opponent, thus far, has proposed $1.9 trillion of new spending at last count. And we really haven't gotten into the main thrust of the campaign. He said he's going to pay for it by taxing the rich. You can't raise enough money from the so-called rich in order to pay for all these new spending promises. There is a tax gap. And given his record, I know how he's going to fill

the tax gap. He's going to have to tax the working people of the United States. But the good news is, he's not going to have that opportunity.

It is very important for our citizens to understand that higher taxes will destroy economic growth. The American people will reject higher taxes. They're going to reelect a pro-growth, pro-entrepreneur, pro-small-businessowner President, George W. Bush.

This campaign really is going to be a debate about who understands how to make sure America has the best economy in the world by making sure we're the best place to do business in the world. In order for people to find work, this has to be a good place to do business, a place that's competitive with other countries around the world.

First, we've got to have spending discipline in Washington, DC. I look forward to working with the Congress to hold the line on spending the people's money. We've got to have—make sure that our country has got reasonable tort reform. There's too many junk and frivolous lawsuits that make it difficult for people to expand the job base.

We've got to work to control the cost of health care through health savings accounts and association health care plans as well as medical liability reform at the Federal level. People in this country have got to understand that these lawsuits against our docs are running docs out of business and running up the cost of medicine.

I've been—in order to make sure we're competitive, in order to make sure people can find work in this country, we need an energy policy. I've been calling upon the United States Congress to pass an energy plan for nearly 2 years, but they haven't listened. And now, people are going to the pump and finding out what I was talking about. We are too dependent on foreign sources of oil. Of course we need to encourage conservation and develop alternative sources of energy. But for the sake of national security and economic security, we need to be finding natural gas and crude oil right here at home, in environmentally friendly ways.

We need to reject economic isolationism and be confident in our ability to compete around the world. There's some who want to shut down markets. Not me—I want to open markets. I know we're good at things. We're good at growing things. We're good at building things. Just give us a chance to compete on a level playing field, and we can out-compete anybody, anytime, anywhere in the world.

I look forward to the debate on how to make sure this country stays competitive so people can find work. We've got the right philosophy in this campaign: The role of Government is not to create wealth; the role of Government is to create an environment in which the entrepreneur can flourish.

The future of this country also depends on this Nation's leadership in the world. The momentum of freedom is strong, but we still face serious dangers. Al Qaida is wounded; Al Qaida is not broken. Terrorists are testing our will in Afghanistan and Iraq. Regimes in North Korea and Iran challenge the peace. If America shows weakness or uncertainty in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This is not going to happen on my watch.

We are strong, and we are confident in the cause of freedom. We know that freedom is not America's gift to the world but the Almighty's gift to every person in this world. Today, nobody doubts the word of the United States of America, and the world is more peaceful for it.

America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Afghanistan. The Taliban chose defiance; the Taliban is no longer in power. America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Iraq. The dictator chose defiance; the dictator sits in a prison cell. September the 11th, 2001, taught a lesson this Nation must

never forget: We must confront threats before they fully materialize.

In Iraq, my administration looked at the intelligence, and we saw a threat. Members of Congress looked at the intelligence, and they saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence, and it saw a threat. The previous administration and previous Congress looked at the same intelligence and made regime change in Iraq the policy of our country.

In 2002, the U.N. Security Council yet again demanded a full accounting of Saddam Hussein's weapons programs. They were worried about Saddam Hussein. I was worried about Saddam Hussein. After all, he had attacked countries in his neighborhood. He had terrorist ties. Zarqawi, who's now running loose in Iraq, was in Baghdad prior to our arrival. He had funded terrorist activities. He paid suiciders to kill—the families of suiciders who killed innocent Israelis. He had used weapons of mass destruction on his own people. The world spoke and said, "Disarm." And as he had for over a decade, he refused to comply. So I had a choice to make: either to take the word of a madman or to defend the security of this country. And given that choice, I will defend America every time.

My opponent admits that Saddam was a threat. He just didn't support my decision to remove him from power. Maybe he was hoping Saddam would lose the next election. [*Laughter*] We showed the dictator and a watching world that America means what it says. Because we acted, because our coalition acted, Saddam's torture chambers are closed. Because we acted, Iraq's weapons programs are ended forever. Because we acted, nations like Libya have gotten the message and renounced their own weapons programs. Because we acted, an example of democracy is rising at the heart of the Middle East. Because we acted, the world is more free and America is more secure.

The work in Iraq has been hard. It's been tough. We've—we faced the changing conditions of war. And that has required perseverance and sacrifice and the ability to adapt. Instead of being killed or captured on the battlefield, some elements of Saddam's repressive regime and secret police were able to escape, and they have since reorganized, and they've adopted sophisticated terrorist tactics. That's what you're seeing.

They've linked up with foreign fighters. I mentioned the guy Zarqawi. He's an Al Qaida associate. He's a coldblooded killer. He and these others are trying to sow chaos by killing innocent people. They're trying to shake our will. They're trying to frighten the Iraqis. They don't know this country, obviously. America will never be intimidated by thugs and assassins.

We will honor our duty to those who've fallen on the battlefield, to complete the mission. We will honor our word to the Iraqi people when we say we'll stand with them as a free society emerges. This is an historic times. This is a great moment in history. As a free country emerges, it serves as an example in a part of the world that's so desperate for freedom, a part of the world where people are angry and hostile because they don't have any hope.

The world will see that free societies are peaceful societies. And the Middle East will see that free societies are societies that meet the aspirations and hopes of moms and dads who yearn for the same thing we yearn for: a child to be educated, their child to have a chance at realizing a dream. These aren't easy tasks, I know that. I've asked a lot of this country, and I've asked a lot of our coalition. But they are essential tasks. They're necessary tasks. We will finish what we have begun, and we will win this essential victory in the war on terror.

I look forward to the debate on national security. Americans have a clear choice. My opponent says he approves of bold action in the world, but only if other countries do not object. I'm all for united action—so are the over 30 countries that are working with us in Iraq today. But I will never

turn over America's national security decision to leaders of other countries.

And we have another disagreement that I look forward to debating. My opponent has said the war on terror is far less of a military operation and far more of an intelligence-gathering, law enforcement operation. I disagree. Our Nation followed this approach after the World Trade Center was bombed in 1993. The matter was handled in the courts and thought by some to be settled. But the terrorists were still training in Afghanistan. They were still plotting in other nations, and they were drawing up more ambitious plans.

After the chaos and carnage of September the 11th, it is not enough to serve our enemies with legal papers. The terrorists and their allies declared war on the United States of America, and war is what they got.

And winning this war requires a great military, and a great military requires giving our troops the best training and best equipment in the world. And that's why I went to the Congress last fall and proposed an $87 billion supplemental appropriation. Most of that money went to our troops to make sure they're well-equipped. My opponent voted against the 87 billion. You might remember his answer when they asked him why he voted against it. And here is what he said: "I actually did vote for the $87 billion, before I voted against it." The American President must speak clearly and mean what he says.

Our men and women in the military take great risks on our behalf. And if you've got a loved one in the military, you tell him the Commander in Chief is incredibly proud. And I know you are as well.

The conduct of those people inside that prison was disgraceful, and their action does not represent the true character of the United States military. I have seen the great decency and courage of our troops. And I assure you, ladies and gentlemen, the cause of freedom is in good hands.

This Nation is strong, and it is prosperous. Yet, we need to remember, our greatest strength is in the hearts and souls of our citizens. We're strong because of the values we try to live by: courage and compassion, reverence and integrity. We're strong because of the institutions that help give us direction: our families, our schools, and our religious congregations. These values and institutions are fundamental to our lives, and they deserve the respect of the Government.

We stand for the fair treatment of faith-based groups so they can receive Federal support for their works of healing and compassion. We stand for welfare reforms that require work and strengthen marriage, which have helped millions of Americans find independence and dignity. We stand for a culture of life in which every person counts and every person matters. We stand for institutions defended by judges who strictly and faithfully interpret the law.

We stand for a culture of responsibility in America. The culture of this country is changing from one that has said, "If it feels good, just go ahead and do it," and, "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each of us understands we're responsible for the decisions we make in life. If you're fortunate enough to be a mother or a father—if you're fortunate enough to be a mom or a dad, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart. If you're worried about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you're responsible for doing something about it. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you're responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And in a responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourself.

You know, for all our country, these years in our history will always stand apart. There are quiet times in the life of a nation when little is expected of its leaders. These aren't one of those times. You and I are

living in a period when the stakes are high and the challenges are difficult, a time when firm resolve is needed.

I know none of us will ever forget the week when one era ended and another began. On September the 14th, 2001, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers. It was a day I'll never forget. I remember people in hardhats shouting at me, "Whatever it takes." People were kind of grabbing me as I was walking by and say, "Don't let me down."

As we did that day, and as I'm sure you did, and I know those men and women felt, we were—we took it personally. I took it personally. I will never relent in bringing justice to our enemies. I will defend the security of America, whatever it takes.

And during these tough times, I have also seen the character of this country. You know, it wasn't so long ago people had doubts about America. They had doubts about our character. They had doubts about our capacity to meet a serious challenge or to serve something greater than self-interest. But Americans gave their answer loud and clear. I've seen the unselfish courage of our troops. I've seen the heroism of Americans in the face of danger. I've seen the spirit of service and compassion renewed in our country. I saw America, just like you did, unite when it mattered most.

We're going to need all these qualities for the work ahead. We have a war to win. The world is counting on our country to lead the cause of freedom and peace. We have a duty to spread opportunity to every corner of America. This is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it. And we know that for our great land, the best days lie ahead.

May God bless you all. Thanks for coming. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:45 p.m. at the Lawrence C. Phipps Memorial Conference Center. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Bill Owens of Colorado and his wife, Frances; Bruce D. Benson, Victory 2004 Colorado finance chairman, and his wife, Marcy; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Interview With RAI Television of Italy
June 1, 2004

Europe-U.S. Relations

Q. Mr. President, it will be in a few days the anniversary of the D-day. Italy and Europe are grateful to the United States for the liberation from fascism and the nazism. But today, Europe and America are still divided about Iraq. When you go in Europe, there will certainly be some demonstration against you. What is the responsibility of this situation?

The President. Yes, look, first of all, we share the same values—we being America and Europe. And one of the values we share is the freedom for people to express themselves. So I have no problem with people saying, "I disagree." Matter of fact, I think it's a healthy sign, and I think it's positive.

Secondly, there are—there is common agreement that Iraq must be free and peaceful. We had disagreements about the decision to enforce the U.N. Security Council resolution, but there's common agreement in Europe with America that it's in the world's interest that Iraq be free and peaceful. Today I just talked to the new Prime Minister and had a very good conversation with him. And he said, "Thank you for giving us a chance, and thank you for standing with us." And when he said

thank you, he wasn't talking just to me. He was talking to the Italian people and the American people and the Brits and all the people in our coalition that are now helping in Iraq.

So I'm very upbeat and very—as I head over to honor what happened 60 years ago, I think we're now seeing unity to work toward common good today. And I'm looking forward to it.

Proposed U.N. Security Council Resolution/ Situation in Iraq

Q. Yes, but some Europeans blame you for having kept them out of the decision to go to the war in Iraq.

The President. Yes.

Q. Do you think this is the real reason for present difficulties?

The President. Well, first of all, I don't see many difficulties. You mean in Iraq?

Q. In Iraq.

The President. Oh, in Iraq.

Q. And at the U.N. as well.

The President. Well, I think you'll see——

Q. The ground and the——

The President. Yes. No, I think you'll see in the U.N. there's going to be common agreement. I think we'll get a new Security Council resolution. Remember, 1441—at the Security Council, we voted unanimously to say to Saddam Hussein, "Disarm, or face serious consequences." Then it became clear he didn't disarm and didn't disclose, and so we had a debate about the definition of serious consequences.

My attitude is, when you say something, you better do it. In other words, the world said, "Serious consequences, Mr. Hussein." And had there not been serious consequences, I think he would have been extremely dangerous, and the United Nations would have been viewed as very weak.

And so, the United States, along with a lot of other nations, agreed that we must enforce serious consequences. But everybody had a chance to participate. Everybody had a chance, particularly on the Security Council, to say yes or no. But that is now behind us, and that's what is important for the people of your great country to understand. There is a better day ahead.

Now, in terms of Iraq, it's tough. And the reason it's tough is because there are killers in that country who want to stop the march to freedom. The worst thing they fear is free elections, but they're not going to stop us. That's what you've got to understand. We are not going to be intimidated by killers in Iraq or anywhere else, for that matter.

Q. Some have said that you never admit to any shortcomings, much less failures. Looking back at the past year, do you have anything to reproach yourself regarding what has gone wrong? Did you make any mistakes?

The President. Listen, any time you go to war, circumstances change. And the fundamental question is, were we flexible enough to change with the circumstances? And we have been. Could we—this is all hypothetical, when you think about it. We are changing a country from tyranny to freedom, a country where people were brutalized, tortured, raped, killed, maimed, to a country which is going to govern itself. And it has been hard work.

A lot of things didn't happen that we thought might happen, the oil production, for example. We thought that would be blown up, and it would cost the Iraqi citizens a lot of money. It wasn't. We thought that people would go hungry or there would be mass refugees, neither of which happened.

What did happen is, is that we moved too quickly. Our troops stormed through to Baghdad, and then it caused—it enabled some of the Saddam loyalists, some of them, to disperse. In other words, they didn't stay and fight. They ran off. They regrouped and came back to fight. And I—and our troops were given the flexibility on the ground to deal with that. Now, I wish the Iraqi people had overwhelmingly said, "Thank you for coming." I think they

will. But some didn't. Some said, "Let's fight them."

Iraqi Interim Government

Q. But don't you think that now this new government could been seen as a puppet government because there are a lot of elements close to America—America gives them money?

The President. Well, we—look, you're talking about the current Prime Minister.

Q. Yes.

The President. And you bet we supported a group that he headed. We didn't support him. We supported his group. You know why? Because he wanted to get rid of Saddam Hussein, and the reason why he did is not because of America. He wanted to get rid of Saddam Hussein because Saddam Hussein killed and tortured his fellow citizens. You remember what Saddam Hussein is like. He was a tyrant. He was brutal. He had torture rooms. There was mass graves we discovered. I had the other day in the Oval Office seven men whose hands had been cut off by Saddam Hussein.

Q. We have shown this picture.

The President. Have you? Good.

Q. Yes, we have.

The President. A very touching moment.

Q. Are you happy with this new government in Iraq?

The President. I am happy that Mr. Brahimi did what he said he would do. The government was picked by the United Nations. Mr. Brahimi went under very difficult circumstances and consulted with a lot of people and came up with what appears to be a very diverse government.

Now, I have just spoken to the Prime Minister and the new President. And I told them two things: One, thank you for taking on a very difficult assignment, thank you for leading; and two, America and our coalition will help you succeed, but it's up to you to succeed. You're in charge, and we will work with you to succeed.

Prisoner Abuse at Abu Ghraib Prison/U.S. Credibility

Q. How much has the abuse of prisoners at Abu Ghraib damaged the American moral authority and credibility?

The President. Yes. Well, that's a very good question. Obviously, it was a shameful moment when we saw on our TV screens that soldiers took it upon themselves to humiliate Iraqi prisoners, because it doesn't reflect the nature of the American people or the nature of the men and women in our uniform. And what the world will see is that we will handle this matter in a very transparent way, that there will be rule of law, which is an important part of any democracy. And there will be transparency, which is a second important part of a democracy, and people who have done wrong will be held to account for the world to see.

That will stand—this process will stand in stark contrast to what would happen under a tyrant. You would never know about the abuses in the first place. And if you did know about the abuses, you certainly wouldn't see any process to correct them.

President's Upcoming Visit With Pope John Paul II

Q. You will visit the Pope as well on June 4th.

The President. Yes, sir.

Q. The Vatican opposed the war and now recommends, look forward and pay more attention to the religious and moral sensitivity of the Iraqi people. What's your opinion about this recommendation?

The President. Well, I can understand. Look, a lot of people didn't like the war. I understand that completely, and I don't like war. But I'm the guy who has to decide, for our case, whether or not a Saddam Hussein would be a threat to peace, and made a very difficult decision. After having tried all diplomacy, war was the last option.

Secondly, I will tell the—His Holy Father I appreciate his positions—he is a

great man—and that I look forward to working with the Iraqis to put in place the conditions so that human rights prevail, something that didn't happen under Saddam Hussein, looking forward to the development of a society in which boys and girls can go to schools and not be filled with hateful propaganda but with knowledge. I look forward to working with the health care workers in Iraq so that people can get decent health care. I will assure His Holy Father that we will do everything we can to elevate the human condition so that people can live in peace and freedom and remind him that a free Iraq in the midst of the Middle East will serve as a great moment of change, will serve as an example for others to follow. You see, when the people in the Middle East see that a free society can exist in the Muslim world, they'll demand the same thing. And free societies are peaceful societies. Free societies are hopeful societies. And in the long run, the best way to defeat terror is to promote freedom, and that's what we're going to do.

Q. Last question.

The President. Sure.

Proposed U.N. Security Council Resolution/ Future of Iraq

Q. If you cannot succeed with the United Nations, do you have a plan B as an exit strategy in Iraq?

The President. We will succeed—we will succeed with the United Nations.

Q. It's sure?

The President. I'm confident. I'm an optimist. I've talked to most of the leaders on the Security Council. I've talked to the Russians, the Chinese, the Germans, the French, of course the Brits, and I know there is a consensus that we must work together for the good of the Iraqi people. This isn't about America. This is about Iraq and the citizens of Iraq who suffered under tyranny for so long. And now we have a chance to work together to promote a free society in a part of the world, by the way, that is desperate for free societies. And I know we'll succeed. I've got great faith in the future. And having talked to the new leadership—some of the new leadership in Iraq—I can tell you they share that same sense of destiny, the same great hope for their people.

Q. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Good to see you, sir.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 2:55 p.m. in the Library at the White House for later broadcast. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 2. In his remarks, the President referred to Prime Minister Ayad Allawi and President Ghazi al-Ujayl al-Yawr of the Iraqi interim government; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; and Lakhdar Brahimi, Special Adviser to the U.N. Secretary-General. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Commencement Address at the United States Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado
June 2, 2004

Secretary Roche and General Jumper, General Rosa, Attorney General Ashcroft, Congresswoman Heather Wilson, Air Force Academy graduate 1982, Academy staff and faculty, distinguished guests, officers, cadets, members of the graduating class, and your families: Thanks for the warm welcome. And thanks—thank you for the honor to visit the United States Air Force Academy on your 50th anniversary.

You've worked hard to get to this moment. You survived "Beast," spent 7 months eating your meals at attention, carried boulders from Cathedral Rock, and endured countless hours in Jacks Valley. In 4 years, you've been transformed from "basics" and "smacks"—[*laughter*]—to proud officers and airmen, worthy of the degree and the commission you receive. Congratulations on a great achievement.

Your superintendent has made a positive difference in a short time. I thank him for helping to restore the Academy's tradition of honor, which applies to every man and woman without exception. I thank the superb faculty for your high standards and dedication to preparing Air Force officers. And I thank the parents here today for standing behind your sons and daughters as they step forward to serve America.

This is a week of remembrance for our country. On Saturday we dedicated the World War II Memorial in Washington, in the company of veterans who fought and flew at places like Midway and Iwo Jima and Normandy. This weekend I will go to France for the ceremonies marking the 60th anniversary of D-day, at a place where the fate of millions turned on the courage of thousands. In these events, we recall a time of peril and national unity and individual courage. We honor a generation of Americans who served this country and saved the liberty of the world.

On this day in 1944, General Eisenhower sat down at his headquarters in the English countryside and wrote out a message to the troops who would soon invade Normandy. "Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen of the Allied Expeditionary Force," he wrote, "the eyes of the world are upon you. The hopes and prayers of liberty-loving people everywhere march with you."

Each of you receiving a commission today in the United States military will also carry the hopes of free people everywhere. As your generation assumes its own duties during a global conflict that will define your careers, you will be called upon to take brave action and serve with honor. In some ways, this struggle we're in is unique. In other ways, it resembles the great clashes of the last century between those who put their trust in tyrants and those who put their trust in liberty. Our goal, the goal of this generation is the same: We will secure our Nation and defend the peace through the forward march of freedom.

Like the Second World War, our present conflict began with a ruthless surprise attack on the United States. We will not forget that treachery, and we will accept nothing less than victory over the enemy.

Like the murderous ideologies of the 20th century, the ideology of terrorism reaches across borders and seeks recruits in every country. So we're fighting these enemies wherever they hide across the Earth.

Like other totalitarian movements, the terrorists seek to impose a grim vision in which dissent is crushed and every man and woman must think and live in colorless conformity. So to the oppressed peoples everywhere, we are offering the great alternative of human liberty.

Like enemies of the past, the terrorists underestimate the strength of free peoples. The terrorists believe that free societies are essentially corrupt and decadent and with a few hard blows will collapse in weakness and in panic. The enemy has learned that America is strong and determined, because of the steady resolve of our citizens and because of the skill and strength of the Army, Navy, Marines, Coast Guard, and the United States Air Force.

And like the aggressive ideologies that rose up in the early 1900s, our enemies have clearly and proudly stated their intentions: Here are the words of Al Qaida's self-described military spokesman in Europe, on a tape claiming responsibility for the Madrid bombings. He said, "We choose death, while you choose life. If you do not stop your injustices, more and more blood will flow, and these attacks will seem very

small compared to what can occur in what you call terrorism."

Here are the words of another Al Qaida spokesman, Suleiman Abu Gheith. Last year in an article published on an Al Qaida web site, he said, quote, "We have the right to kill 4 million Americans—2 million of them children—and to exile twice as many and wound and cripple hundreds of thousands. Furthermore, it is our right to fight them with chemical and biological weapons."

In all these threats, we hear the echoes of other enemies in other times—that same swagger and demented logic of the fanatic. Like their kind in the past, these murderers have left scars and suffering. And like their kind in the past, they will flame and fail and suffer defeat by free men and women.

The enemies of freedom are opposed by a great and growing alliance. Nations that won the cold war, nations once behind an Iron Curtain, and nations on every continent see this threat clearly. We're cooperating at every level of our military, law enforcement, and intelligence to meet the danger. The war on terror is civilization's fight. And as in the struggles of the last century, civilized nations are waging this fight together.

The terrorists of our day are, in some ways, unlike the enemies of the past. The terrorist ideology has not yet taken control of a great power like Germany or the Soviet Union. And so the terrorists have adopted a strategy different from the gathering of vast and standing armies. They seek instead to demoralize free nations with dramatic acts of murder. They seek to wear down our resolve and will by killing the innocent and spreading fear and anarchy. And they seek weapons of mass destruction so they can threaten or attack even the most powerful nations.

Fighting this kind of enemy is a complex mission that will require all your skill and resourcefulness. Our enemies have no capital or nation-state to defend. They share a vision and operate as a network of dozens of violent extremist groups around the world, striking separately and in concert. Al Qaida is the vanguard of these loosely affiliated groups, and we estimate that over the years many thousands of recruits have passed through its training camps. Al Qaida has been wounded by losing nearly two-thirds of its known leadership and most of its important sanctuaries. Yet many of the terrorists it trained are still active in hidden cells or in other groups. Homegrown extremists incited by Al Qaida's example are at work in many nations.

And since September the 11th, we've seen terrorist violence in an arc from Morocco to Spain to Turkey to Russia to Uzbekistan to Pakistan to India to Thailand to Indonesia. Yet the center of the conflict, the platform for their global expansion, the region they seek to remake in their image is the broader Middle East.

Just as events in Europe determined the outcome of the cold war, events in the Middle East will set the course of our current struggle. If that region is abandoned to dictators and terrorists, it will be a constant source of violence and alarm, exporting killers of increasing destructive power to attack America and other free nations. If that region grows in democracy and prosperity and hope, the terrorist movement will lose its sponsors, lose its recruits, and lose the festering grievances that keep terrorists in business. The stakes of this struggle are high. The security and peace of our country are at stake, and success in this struggle is our only option.

This is the great challenge of our time, the storm in which we fly. History is once again witnessing a great clash. This is not a clash of civilizations. The civilization of Islam, with its humane traditions of learning and tolerance, has no place for this violent sect of killers and aspiring tyrants. This is not a clash of religions. The faith of Islam teaches moral responsibility that ennobles men and women and forbids the shedding of innocent blood. Instead, this is a clash of political visions.

In the terrorists' vision of the world, the Middle East must fall under the rule of radical governments, moderate Arab states must be overthrown, nonbelievers must be expelled from Muslim lands, and the harshest practice of extremist rule must be universally enforced. In this vision, books are burned; terrorists are sheltered; women are whipped; and children are schooled in hatred and murder and suicide.

Our vision is completely different. We believe that every person has a right to think and pray and live in obedience to God and conscience, not in frightened submission to despots. We believe that societies find their greatness by encouraging the creative gifts of their people, not in controlling their lives and feeding their resentments. And we have confidence that people share this vision of dignity and freedom in every culture because liberty is not the invention of Western culture. Liberty is the deepest need and hope of all humanity. The vast majority of men and women in Muslim societies reject the domination of extremists like Usama bin Laden. They're looking to the world's free nations to support them in their struggle against the violent minority who want to impose a future of darkness across the Middle East. We will not abandon them to the designs of evil men. We will stand with the people of that region as they seek their future in freedom.

We bring more than a vision to this conflict. We bring a strategy that will lead to victory. And that strategy has four commitments:

First, we are using every available tool to dismantle, disrupt, and destroy terrorists and their organizations. With all the skill of our law enforcement, all the stealth of our special forces, and all the global reach of our air power, we will strike the terrorists before they can strike our people. The best way to protect America is to stay on the offensive.

Secondly, we are denying terrorists places of sanctuary or support. The power of terrorists is multiplied when they have safe havens to gather and train recruits. Terrorist havens are found within states that have difficulty controlling areas of their own territory. So we're helping Governments like the Philippines and Kenya to enforce anti-terrorist laws, through information sharing and joint training.

Terrorists also find support and safe haven within outlaw regimes. So I have set a clear doctrine that the sponsors of terror will be held equally accountable for the acts of terrorists. Regimes in Iraq and Afghanistan learned that providing support and sanctuary to terrorists carries with it enormous costs, while Libya has discovered that abandoning the pursuit of weapons of mass murder has opened a better path to relations with the free world.

Terrorists find their ultimate support and sanctuary when they gain control of governments and countries. We saw the terrible harm that terrorists did by taking effective control over the Government of Afghanistan, a terrorist victory that led directly to the attacks of September the 11th. And terrorists have similar designs on Iraq, on Pakistan, on Saudi Arabia, and many other regional governments they regard as illegitimate. We can only imagine the scale of terrorist crimes were they to gain control of states with weapons of mass murder or vast oil revenues. So we will not retreat. We will prevent the emergence of terrorist-controlled states.

Third, we are using all the elements of our national power to deny terrorists the chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons they seek. Because this global threat requires a global response, we are working to strengthen international institutions charged with opposing proliferation. We are working with regional powers and international partners to confront the threats of North Korea and Iran. We have joined with 14 other nations in the Proliferation Security Initiative to interdict—on sea, on land, or in the air—shipments of weapons of mass destruction, components to build

those weapons, and the means to deliver them. Our country must never allow mass murderers to gain hold of weapons of mass destruction. We will lead the world and keep unrelenting pressure on the enemy.

Fourth and finally, we are denying the terrorists the ideological victories they seek by working for freedom and reform in the broader Middle East. Fighting terror is not just a matter of killing or capturing terrorists. To stop the flow of recruits into terrorist movement, young people in the region must see a real and hopeful alternative, a society that rewards their talent and turns their energies to constructive purpose. And here the vision of freedom has great advantages. Terrorists incite young men and women to strap bombs on their bodies and dedicate their deaths to the death of others. Free societies inspire young men and women to work and achieve and dedicate their lives to the life of their country. And in the long run, I have great faith that the appeal of freedom and life is stronger than the lure of hatred and death.

Freedom's advance in the Middle East will have another very practical effect. The terrorist movement feeds on the appearance of inevitability. It claims to rise on the currents of history, using past America withdrawals from Somalia and Beirut to sustain this myth and to gain new followers. The success of free and stable governments in Afghanistan and Iraq and elsewhere will shatter the myth and discredit the radicals. And as the entire region sees the promise of freedom in its midst, the terrorist ideology will become more and more irrelevant, until that day when it is viewed with contempt or ignored altogether.

For decades, free nations tolerated oppression in the Middle East for the sake of stability. In practice, this approach brought little stability and much oppression. So I have changed this policy. In the short term, we will work with every government in the Middle East dedicated to destroying the terrorist networks. In the longer term, we will expect a higher standard of reform and democracy from our friends in the region. Democracy and reform will make those nations stronger and more stable and make the world more secure by undermining terrorism at it source. Democratic institutions in the Middle East will not grow overnight. In America, they grew over generations. Yet the nations of the Middle East will find, as we have found, the only path to true progress is the path of freedom and justice and democracy.

America is pursuing our forward strategy for freedom in the broader Middle East in many ways. Voices in that region are increasingly demanding reform and democratic change. So we are working with courageous leaders like President Karzai of Afghanistan, who is ushering in a new era of freedom for the Afghan people. We're taking aside reformers who are standing for human rights and political freedom, often at great personal risk. We're encouraging economic opportunity and the rule of law and government reform and the expansion of liberty throughout the region.

And we're working toward the goal of a Palestinian state living side by side with Israel in peace. Prime Minister Sharon's plan to remove all settlements from Gaza and several from the West Bank is a courageous step toward peace. His decision provides an historic moment of opportunity to begin building a future Palestinian state. This initiative can stimulate progress toward peace by setting the parties back on the roadmap, the most reliable guide to ending the occupation that began in 1967. This success will require reform-minded Palestinians to step forward and lead and meet their roadmap obligations. And the United States of America stands ready to help those dedicated to peace, those willing to fight violence, find a new state so we can realize peace in the greater Middle East.

Some who call themselves realists question whether the spread of democracy in the Middle East should be any concern of ours. But the realists in this case have

lost contact with a fundamental reality. America has always been less secure when freedom is in retreat. America is always more secure when freedom is on the march.

All our commitments in the Middle East—all of the four commitments of our strategy—are now being tested in Iraq. We have removed a state sponsor of terror with a history of using weapons of mass destruction. And the whole world is better off with Saddam Hussein sitting in a prison cell. We now face Al Qaida associates like the terrorist Zarqawi, who seek to hijack the future of that nation. We are fighting enemies who want us to retreat and leave Iraq to tyranny so they can claim an ideological victory over America. They would use that victory to gather new strength and take their violence directly to America and to our friends. Yet our coalition is determined, and the Iraqi people have made clear: Iraq will remain in the camp of free nations.

The Iraqi people are moving forward in clear, steady steps, with our support, to achieve democracy. Iraq now has a designated Prime Minister, Ayad Allawi, a respected Iraqi patriot once targeted by Saddam Hussein's assassins. I spoke with the Prime Minister yesterday. He recognized the sacrifice of brave Americans who have given their lives in Iraq, and he pledged that his country would be a friend and ally of America in peace.

Along with a President and two Deputy Presidents, Prime Minister Allawi will lead a government of 33 ministers, which take office immediately and begin preparing for the transfer of full sovereignty by June the 30th. America and Great Britain are now working with the United Nations Security Council and Iraq's new leaders on a resolution that will endorse the sovereign government of Iraq and urge other nations to actively support it.

The Iraqi people are looking to us for help, and we will provide it. Many fine civilian professionals are now working in that country, helping Iraqis to rebuild their infrastructure and build the institutions of a free country. Along with the United Nations, we will help Iraq's new government to prepare for national elections by January 2005. This free election is what the terrorists in the country fear most. Free elections are exactly what they are going to see.

Our military is performing with skill and courage, and our Nation is proud of the United States military. Many brave Iraqis have stepped forward to fight for their own freedom, and we are working closely with them to disband and destroy the illegal militia, to defeat the terrorists, and to secure the safe arrival of Iraqi democracy. We're stepping up our efforts to train effective Iraqi security forces that will eventually defend the liberty of their own country.

At every stage of this process, before and after the transition to Iraqi sovereignty, the enemy is likely to be active and brutal. They know the stakes as well as we do. But our coalition is prepared, our will is strong, and neither Iraq's new leadership nor the United States will be intimidated by thugs and assassins.

As we fight the war on terror in Iraq and on other fronts, we must keep in mind the nature of the enemy. No act of America explains terrorist violence, and no concession of America could appease it. The terrorists who attacked our country on September the 11th, 2001, were not protesting our policies. They were protesting our existence. Some say that by fighting the terrorists abroad since September the 11th, we only stir up a hornet's nest, but the terrorists who struck that day were stirred up already. If America were not fighting terrorists in Iraq and Afghanistan and elsewhere, what would these thousands of killers do, suddenly begin leading productive lives of service and charity? [*Laughter*] Would the terrorists who beheaded an American on camera just be quiet, peaceful citizens if America had not liberated Iraq? We are dealing here with killers who have made the death of Americans the calling

of their lives. And America has made a decision about these terrorists: Instead of waiting for them to strike again in our midst, we will take this fight to the enemy.

I am confident of our cause in Iraq, but the struggle we have entered will not end with success in Iraq. Overcoming terrorism and bringing greater freedom to the nations of the Middle East is the work of decades. To prevail, America will need the swift and able transformed military you will help to build and lead. America will need a generation of Arab linguists and experts on Middle Eastern history and culture. America will need improved intelligence capabilities to track threats and expose the plans of unseen enemies.

Above all, America will need perseverance. This conflict will take many turns, with setbacks on the course to victory. Through it all, our confidence comes from one unshakable belief: We believe, in Ronald Reagan's words, that "the future belongs to the free." And we've seen the appeal of liberty with our own eyes. We have seen freedom firmly established in former enemies like Japan and Germany. We have seen freedom arrive on waves of unstoppable progress to nations in Latin America and Asia and Africa and Eastern Europe. Now freedom is stirring in the Middle East, and no one should bet against it.

In the years immediately after World War II ended, our Nation faced more adversity and danger with the rise of imperial communism. In 1947, Communist forces were pressing a civil war in Greece and threatening Turkey. More than 2 years after the Nazi surrender, there was still starvation in Germany. Reconstruction seemed to be faltering, and the Marshall plan had not yet begun. In 1948, Berlin was blockaded on the orders of Josef Stalin. In 1949, the Soviet Union exploded a nuclear weapon, and Communists in China won their revolution.

All of this took place in the first 4 years of the cold war. If that generation of Americans had lost its nerve, there would have been no "long twilight struggle," only a long twilight. But the United States and our allies kept faith with captive people and stayed true to the vision of a democratic Europe, and that perseverance gave all the world a lesson in the power of liberty.

We are now about 3 years into the war against terrorism. We have overcome great challenges. We face many today, and there are more ahead. This is no time for impatience and self-defeating pessimism. These times demand the kind of courage and confidence that Americans have shown before. Our enemy can only succeed if we lose our will and faith in our own values. And ladies and gentlemen, our will is strong. We know our duty. By keeping our word and holding firm to our values, this generation will show the world the power of liberty once again.

For 4 years, you have trained and studied and worked for this moment. And now it has come. You are the ones who will defeat the enemies of freedom. Your country is depending on your courage and your dedication to duty. The eyes of the world are upon you. You leave this place at a historic time, and you enter this struggle ahead with the full confidence of your Commander in Chief. I thank each of you for accepting the hardships and high honor of service in the United States military. And I congratulate every member of the Rickenbacker Class of 2004.

May God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:17 a.m. at Falcon Stadium. In his remarks, he referred to Gen. John P. Jumper, USAF, Air Force Chief of Staff; Lt. Gen. John W. Rosa, Jr., USAF, Superintendent of the U.S. Air Force Academy; Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan; Prime Minister

Ariel Sharon of Israel; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi; and Prime Minister Ayad Allawi, President Ghazi al-Ujayl al-Yawr, and Deputy Presidents Ibrahim al-Jafari and Rowsch Shaways of the Iraqi interim government.

The President's News Conference With Prime Minister John Howard of Australia
June 3, 2004

President Bush. Good morning. Thanks for coming. A couple of opening statements and then we'll answer two questions from each side.

It is my honor to welcome back to the White House my friend and our ally, Prime Minister John Howard. He is a close friend of mine. I appreciate the frequent discussions we have. I value his advice. I appreciate his clear vision.

Our two nations were allies in every major conflict of the last century. We've each lost citizens in the first war of the new century. I will never forget standing with the Prime Minister on September the 10th, 2001, the day before the world changed forever.

Americans will never forget the vicious attack in Bali which claimed the lives of dozens of innocent Australians. Today, Australians and Americans are standing together on the frontlines of freedom. As members of the common coalition, our two nations helped to free the people of Afghanistan and Iraq from the grip of tyranny. Today, we're working together to help the Afghan and Iraqi people build free societies and prevent tyranny's return.

Today the Prime Minister and I discussed our coalition's progress in Iraq. That country took a major step 2 days ago when the new interim government was named. That government will assume full sovereignty later this month. Our coalition will remain in Iraq to help them along the path of freedom. The new Iraqi government's foremost task will be to prepare Iraq for a national election no later than January of next year and to work with our coalition to provide the security that will make that election possible. A sovereign Iraq deserves the full support of the international community as it works to establish a representative and freely elected system of government in the months ahead.

We're working toward a new Security Council resolution that will express international support for Iraq's interim government, reaffirm the world's security commitment to the Iraqi people, and encourage other U.N. members to join in the effort of building a free Iraq. I appreciate the Prime Minister's advice and support for the ongoing process. Today I'll leave for Europe, and then we'll host the G–8 summit.

I will discuss—continue to discuss with world leaders our common responsibility to help the new government of Iraq and our common opportunity to help the—advance the momentum of freedom in the broader Middle East. Freedom must succeed in Iraq. In the long run, the defeat of terror requires the triumph of hope. A free Iraq rising in the heart of the Middle East will show the people of that region a clear alternative to the bitterness that feeds terror. Freedom is the true foundation of stability, prosperity, and peace. By working for freedom in the Middle East, we make America, Australia, and the world safer.

The United States and Australia are committed to the principles of human dignity. Today I assured the Prime Minister that my Nation will conduct a full accounting

of the cruel and disgraceful abuse of Iraqi detainees. He strongly reflected his Government's and the Australian people's desires to make sure that the Australians being held in Guantanamo are not only treated fairly but their cases are brought to finality. And I appreciated your candid discussion, Mr. Prime Minister.

We also, of course, discussed issues that affect our economies. Just last month, our two nations signed an important free trade agreement that would eliminate nearly all tariffs on manufactured goods, open international markets, and deepen our strong economic ties. This agreement is good for both countries. And our Congress and the Australian Parliament should ratify the free trade agreement as soon as possible. I assured the Prime Minister that I'll work with leadership in the Congress—in our Congress to move this agreement forward.

Australia and the United States have never been closer. Our closeness is based on a shared belief in the power of freedom and democracy to change lives. As the Prime Minister has said, "The war on terror is not a contest of civilization. It is a contest of convictions." Our victory hinges on the free world's willingness to protect and encourage democratic values. I look forward to seeing the Prime Minister in France later this week as we commemorate the Normandy landings. It will be a fitting time to remember our partnerships in past wars of freedom as well as the sacrifices we have made together in our current struggle.

Mr. Prime Minister, welcome.

Prime Minister Howard. Thank you, Mr. President. May I express to you personally and to your wife, Laura, and to the members of your administration my gratitude for the very warm welcome that you've extended to me and my wife and the other members of my party. You reminded me, Mr. President, that the first occasion on which we met in our respective positions was, indeed, the 10th of September, 2001, at the naval dockyard not far from here, and then we later continued our discussions at the White House.

Since then, we have worked together not only as leaders of two countries that share the values of democracy, share the values of aspirational people who believe in economic achievements and individual liberty, but we've also worked together very closely in the war against terror. We continue to work closely with you and share your aspirations for a free and democratic Iraq.

The establishment of the Iraqi interim government is a major step forward. It is a light to the future, so far as Iraq is concerned. It is a visible demonstration of the willingness of Iraqi leaders to stand before their people and to show leadership.

The Western World, the countries of the free world have a lot at stake in relation to Iraq. If the democratic future of Iraq can be achieved, that will have beneficial consequences not only in Iraq, but it will also be a wonderful demonstration in the Middle East and around the world that democracy is not something which is confined to countries that have historically enjoyed it. I regard that as something of an arrogant attitude on behalf of those who think that in some way democracy cannot be extended to countries that haven't regularly enjoyed it over past decades.

In recent weeks, the news out of Iraq has not been as positive as we would have liked, and the reasons for that are understood. But that has not altered Australia's view. We will keep a presence in Iraq. We will maintain a presence in Iraq until the job assigned to the individual force elements of the ADF have been completed. This is not a time—it is the worst time imaginable—for allies to be showing any weakness in relation of the pursuit of our goals in Iraq. And I express my strong support for the leadership that the President has continued to display, particularly through some of the more difficult aspects of recent weeks.

We did take the opportunity of canvassing the free trade agreement, and I

share very much the President's hope that the legislative processes in both of our countries can be disposed of as soon as possible. From Australia's point of view, this is a great opportunity to link our strong economy with the strongest economy the world has ever seen.

The economic relationship between Australia and the United States can only get better in so many areas, and I had the opportunity in California of discussing growing energy links between our two countries.

I've welcomed the assurances the President has given me regarding the proper treatment of the two Australian detainees in Guantanamo Bay.

I also want to take this opportunity of emphasizing that the relationship between our two countries, which goes back a long way, to which the President referred, is very much a relationship which is built on shared values. We are both countries that treasure the democratic tradition. We are both countries that treasure individual freedom. We are both countries that believe in individual effort and reward for that effort.

Ours is a society, as is the United States, that encourages people to work hard and to seek reward for that hard work and, providing they pay their fair share of tax, to keep what they earn and to build on it and to invest for the future. Unless you have an aspirational society built on those principles, economic progress cannot be achieved.

We have been through, as nations, many struggles together. As the President said, we've been engaged together in every major conflict, beginning in World War I. But the thing that binds us together more than anything else is a common belief in certain fundamental values. And for me, the greatest opportunity that an occasion such as this presents is to reaffirm that common commitment.

We will differ. We will have changed emphasis. We will not agree on everything, but at the end of the day, if you share values in common, the relationship between two nations will always be sure, will always be predictable, and above all, will be enduring.

President Bush. Thanks, John.

Terry [Terence Hunt, Associated Press].

CIA Employee Identity Disclosure Investigation

Q. Mr. President, why have you consulted an attorney in the CIA leak investigation? Have you received any indication from prosecutors that they want to question you? And what could you tell them that might shed some light on this case?

President Bush. I've told our administration that we'll fully cooperate with their investigation. I want to know the truth, and I'm willing to cooperate myself. And you need to refer your questions to them.

In terms of whether or not I need advice from my counsel, this is a criminal matter. It's a serious matter. I have met with an attorney to determine whether or not I need his advice, and if I deem I need his advice, I'll probably hire him.

Q. Mr. President——

President Bush. Yes.

Australian Detainees at Guantanamo Bay

Q. The Prime Minister said he got an assurance from you that the two Australians in Guantanamo Bay will get fair treatment. Can you give a guarantee they haven't been mistreated to this point, and when will you make a decision, or when will there be a decision made on whether they face trial?

President Bush. Yes. It is my understanding that Hicks—the Hicks case will be referred to the military shortly and that the other case is proceeding as well. And we are—the military is fully investigating any allegations as to whether or not they have been mistreated.

Let's see here. Morgan—David Morgan [Reuters]. Is that you?

Q. That's me.

President Bush. Okay.

Coalition Security Arrangement With Iraqi Interim Government

Q. Mr. President, Secretary Powell has made it clear that Iraq would have no veto power over U.S.-led forces after the formal handover on June 30th. Why do you believe that countries like France and Russia would back a U.N. Security Council resolution if the understanding is that it would leave the Iraqi government powerless to stop an unwelcome military offensive within its borders?

President Bush. Let me tell you this: The government of Iraq will be fully sovereign. And that means that our coalition will be there with the consent of the fully sovereign government, and that's what the U.N. resolution is going to say.

Now, Prime Minister Allawi has made it clear that he wants help from the coalition to deal with the security issues so that the country can have free elections. That's what he has said. He is the Prime Minister, and that's what he had said. We've had these arrangements before, these security arrangements, with other countries. We're good about forging relationships on the ground, respecting the sovereignty of the country, and at the same time being able to do our jobs that the host government expects to be done. And I am confident we'll work out a mutually acceptable security arrangement with the fully sovereign Iraqi government.

No other questions? This is unbelievable. You better hurry—no, no, no—Australian—sorry, Elisabeth [Elisabeth Bumiller, New York Times], you're not Australian. That's the second time in a row.

Prime Minister Howard. Mr. Lewis, Steve Lewis, The Australian.

President Bush. Nice try, though. She tried to become Australian. [*Laughter*]

Q. President Bush, if I could ask you a question——

President Bush. Where are you? There you are.

Q. Just here.

President Bush. Thank you.

Australian Elections and Commitment to Iraq

Q. Mr. Howard and yourself reaffirmed the commitment that Australia and the U.S. have to staying the course in Iraq. But you would be aware the alternative Prime Minister in Australia, Mark Latham, has promised to withdraw Australian troops from Iraq by Christmas——

President Bush. Yes.

Q. ——if he wins the election. What signal——

President Bush. That, that——

Q. What signal would that send to the Iraqi people and the other members of the coalition?

President Bush. I think that would be disastrous. It would be a disastrous decision for the leader of a great country like Australia to say that, "We're pulling out." It would dispirit those who love freedom in Iraq. It would say that the Australian Government doesn't see the hope of a free and democratic society leading to a peaceful world. It would embolden the enemy who believe that they can shake our will. See, they want to kill innocent life because they think that the Western World and the free world is weak, that when times get tough we will shirk our duty to those who long for freedom, and we'll leave. And I—anyway.

Q. Mr. President, can I ask you and Prime Minister Howard——

President Bush. No, you can't anymore. Thank you all very much for coming.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 9:53 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Australian citizen David Hicks, a detainee at the U.S. Navy base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba; and Prime Minister Ayad Allawi of the Iraqi interim government. Prime Minister Howard referred to his wife, Janette.

Remarks on the Resignation of George J. Tenet as Director of Central Intelligence

June 3, 2004

Today George Tenet, the Director of the CIA, submitted a letter of resignation. I met with George last night in the White House. I had a good visit with him. He told me he was resigning for personal reasons. I told him I'm sorry he's leaving. He's done a superb job on behalf of the American people. I accepted his letter. He will serve at the CIA as the Director until mid-July, at which time the Deputy Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, John McLaughlin, will serve as the Acting Director.

George Tenet is the kind of public service you like—servant you like to work with. He's strong. He's resolute. He served his Nation as the Director for 7 years. He has been a strong and able leader at the Agency. He's been a strong leader in the war on terror, and I will miss him. I send my blessings to George and his family. I look forward to working with him until the time he leaves the Agency. And I wish him all the very best.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:26 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House.

Message to the Congress Transmitting a Determination on Trade With Belarus

June 3, 2004

To the Congress of the United States:

I hereby transmit the document referred to in subsection 402(d)(1) of the Trade Act of 1974 (the "Act"), as amended, with respect to the continuation of a waiver of application of subsections (a) and (b) of section 402 of the Act to the Republic of Belarus. This document constitutes my recommendation to continue this waiver for a further 12-month period and includes my determination that continuation of the waiver currently in effect for Belarus will substantially promote the objectives of section 402 of the Act, and my reasons for such determination.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
June 3, 2004.

NOTE: The Presidential determination of June 3 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Message to the Congress Transmitting a Determination on Trade With Turkmenistan
June 3, 2004

To the Congress of the United States:

I hereby transmit the document referred to in subsection 402(d)(1) of the Trade Act of 1974 (the "Act"), as amended, with respect to the continuation of a waiver of application of subsections (a) and (b) of section 402 of the Act to Turkmenistan. This document constitutes my recommendation to continue this waiver for a further 12-month period and includes my determination that continuation of the waiver currently in effect for Turkmenistan will substantially promote the objectives of section 402 of the Act, and my reasons for such determination.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
June 3, 2004.

NOTE: The Presidential determination of June 3 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Message to the Congress Transmitting a Determination on Trade With Vietnam
June 3, 2004

To the Congress of the United States:

I hereby transmit the document referred to in subsection 402(d)(1) of the Trade Act of 1974 (the "Act"), as amended, with respect to the continuation of a waiver of application of subsections (a) and (b) of section 402 of the Act to Vietnam. This document constitutes my recommendation to continue in effect this waiver for a further 12-month period and includes my determination that continuation of the waiver currently in effect for Vietnam will substantially promote the objectives of section 402 of the Act and my reasons for such determination.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
June 3, 2004.

NOTE: The Presidential determination of June 3 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Interview With Paris Match Magazine
May 28, 2004

France-U.S. Relations

Q. You'll be walking on Omaha Beach in Normandy, France. Does that mean that you're not angry at us anymore?

The President. I've never been angry at the French. France has been a long-time ally, and I—look, I made a difficult decision, and not everybody agreed with it. But I understand that. And now is the time to work together to promote the values we

believe in, which is human rights and human dignity and rule of law and freedom and justice.

And Omaha Beach is a symbol of working together to uphold the values that unite us. It's an interesting time in history to be going to Omaha Beach.

Q. For 200 years, America and France have walked hand in hand, sharing the same values you are speaking about. Last year, for the first time we were not allies. What went wrong?

The President. I don't—you need to talk to the French leadership.

Q. Speaking of the French leadership——

The President. For whom I have great respect.

Q. Yes. But Jacques Chirac was a good friend of your father. He was one of the first—I think the first President to congratulate you in person on your election day.

The President. Right here, that's right.

Q. Yes. He also was the first in New York after 9/11, the first foreign leader to fly over the ruins of the World Trade Center. I mean, it's—for the French people, people don't understand what happened between the two of you.

The President. I just think he just didn't agree with upholding the Security Council resolution that said, "Disarm. Prove you disarm, or face serious consequences." He voted—France voted for that resolution, as did the United States. It was the "face serious consequences" part. And friends can disagree. I've got—I've had friends all my life, who I call friends, who didn't agree with every decision I made. And Jacques made it perfectly clear to me, he didn't believe the use of military force was necessary, and we discussed it as friends would discuss it.

Q. Does that mean now that the French President will be invited in Crawford in the near future?

The President. If he wants to come and see some cows, he's welcome to come out there and see some cows. [*Laughter*]

Proposed U.N. Security Council Resolution on Iraq

Q. You're now asking the United Nations to help you find a solution to the Iraqi crisis. Is it——

The President. No—may I stop you? May I? No, we're going to the United Nations again to pass a resolution which supports a new government to which full sovereignty has been transferred.

You know, after World War II, a lot of people didn't think Germany could be free and democratic, nor Japan. And there were people that just didn't believe it was true. Fortunately, there were optimists and people who adhered to their principles and value systems, based upon rule of law and democracy, justice. And they had the day. They ruled the day—fortunately, their opinions did—so that now some of our strongest allies in the war are Germany and Japan. No, it's never too late to believe people can be free.

Situation in Iraq

Q. But it's obviously more difficult than you expected.

The President. Well, some parts are, and some parts aren't. I thought going in, there would be mass refugee flows, mass starvation, oil fields would be blown up. None of that happened. What did happen was, is that we moved so quickly through the country——

Q. But I'm speaking about——

The President. Let me finish. We moved so quickly through the country that many of the former Saddam loyalists just melted into the countryside and have come back to try to stop the advance of freedom. And the other thing that's happened is foreign fighters are in Iraq, who are convincing suiciders to kill innocent Iraqis.

And it's tough. It's hard work. But we will prevail, because people want to be

free, and that's important. And that's why it's necessary for the world to come together at this point, to be able to help the Iraqi people form their government—not an American government, not something that looks like America, but something uniquely Iraqi. And that's what we're doing.

Nature of the U.S. Presence in the World

Q. The whole world remembers you addressing the firemen in the ruins of the World Trade Center. You were healing the wounds and uniting the world at that time. Today, your message through the megaphone doesn't reach the world. Don't you feel isolated?

The President. No, I feel very comfortable with what I'm doing.

Q. Yes, but all the nations——

The President. Let me finish my—you ask a question. I give you the answers. And then if you want to ask another question, you're allowed to do so.

I believe that the United States must continue to work with other nations. And there are a lot of nations working in Afghanistan and in Iraq to not only deal with terror, the immediate effects of terror—and that is, finding people before they hurt somebody again—but also to spread freedom. Free societies are peaceful societies. Free societies are hopeful societies. And there's a lot of nations working to get her to do so.

I also believe that the United States must work to feed the hungry. We're the most generous nation on the face of the Earth when it comes to feeding hungry people or fighting the pandemic of HIV/AIDS in Africa, for example. I've asked our Congress, and the Congress has passed $15 billion over 5 years to help fight that pandemic. And we are a nation that is tough when we have to be tough to protect our security and compassionate when it comes to the suffering of others. And hopefully, people will see the results of that—of the generosity of the American people.

Now, your followup question.

Abu Ghraib Prison

Q. Talking about the photo of torture and abused prisoners, the First Lady said, "This is unbearable." The moral leadership of a President is his highest power of all. Do you feel responsible in any way for this moral failure in Iraq?

The President. First of all, I feel responsible for letting the world see that we will deal with this in a transparent way, that people will see that justice will be delivered. And what I regret most of all is that the great honor of our country has been stained by the actions of a few people, the first of whom is going to jail—or has been tried and convicted and will be sentenced—please correct that; I'm not going to deem the sentences—been tried and convicted, in an open way, for people to see, which stands in stark contrast to a tyrannical society in which prison abuse would never even come forth in the first place. And the contrast is going to be instructive for people in the world to see.

And Laura is just like me. We both reacted the same way. It was a stain on our honor.

Q. Do you still feel that stain on your honor today?

The President. Of course. I mean, this is—you know, America is a great and generous and decent country. And the behavior of a few, you know, does not reflect the true nature of the men and women who wear our uniform, overseas or at home, or the character of the American people.

Arrest of Saddam Hussein/President's Meeting With Tortured Iraqis

Q. That morning when—now I'm going to go to more positive—I mean positive news—when you learned that——

The President. It's positive news. You're giving me a chance.

Q. ——they had arrested Saddam, was this the best moment of your Presidency?

The President. It was a big moment in my Presidency. No, I wouldn't say it's the best moment. The best moment happened when—you know, when I meet people who do heroic things, whether it's to help somebody who hurts or whether it's a generous citizen who lifts up the spirit of a person. And I fully realize that those thousands of acts of kindness lift up the whole spirit of the country. Those are the best moments.

The capture of Saddam was a satisfying moment. It wasn't the best moment. It was satisfying because it was part of our mission, was to free the people from this brutal dictator.

I'll tell you a great moment in my Presidency, not the best but a good moment. The other day seven people came in to see me. They had had their right hands cut off by Saddam Hussein. These were merchants in Baghdad—or in Iraq. I think most of them lived in Baghdad—small businessmen. And the currency in Iraq had begun to devalue, and Saddam Hussein needed a scapegoat. And so he chose these merchants, who he claimed were manipulating the currency, and he had their hands cut off for doing so. And then they had an X carved in their foreheads.

An American filmmaker made a documentary of this, reminding people of the brutality of Saddam Hussein, how he just would whimsically torture or maim people. And a guy in Houston, a man in Houston who works in the television business, has a foundation, saw the documentary, put the money up, and flew these seven men to give them new hands, the latest technologies.

And they came to the Oval Office to see me. It was an incredibly touching moment. They were so grateful to the United States and the free world for liberating their country from Saddam Hussein and incredibly grateful to the generosity of these individual Americans who decided to do something about their plight. Now, those are the kind of great moments I love.

Situation in Iraq/Transfer of Sovereignty

Q. Six months, though, after the capture of Saddam, each day brings the terrible news of American soldiers killed in action. Why the Iraqis are turning their guns against their liberators?

The President. Well, because there are some who can't stand the thought of being—can't stand the thought of freedom emerging in their country. In other words, they understand what free societies will do. A free society will change the habits and raise the aspirations and hopes. There are foreign fighters who come into Iraq to make this a front in the war on terror because they want to stop the advance of freedom.

A free society is how you solve the long-term issue of terror. In other words, hopelessness breeds fanaticism and terrorism. Freedom helps defeat hopelessness.

Q. If you were an Iraqi, would you understand that—would you feel the occupation as a burden?

The President. Yes.

Q. Could you understand that?

The President. Of course I can.

Q. I mean, being——

The President. I say it all—I say it all the time publicly. Yes, I wouldn't want to be occupied.

Q. So you cannot say that these are people—you cannot say that all these people are terrorists and——

The President. No. I agree. Not all of them are. But I am convinced——

Q. Even the ones that, you know, takes——

The President. The suiciders—and some of them aren't. And they don't like to be occupied, and neither would I, and neither would anybody. That's why we're handing over sovereignty. Full sovereignty will be transferred here very shortly. I mean, you're talking—I'm not sure when your magazine is coming out.

Q. Next Thursday.

The President. Well, full sovereignty will happen on June 30th. You'll begin to see the government to whom full sovereignty will be passed.

Q. The names of people?

The President. I think so, yes. Absolutely. Not only the names of people, but there will be, shortly thereafter, a U.N. Security Council resolution that will embrace the new government. And that's important. But I fully understand people not wanting to be occupied. I wouldn't either.

Belief in God/Concept of Freedom

Q. Could you understand—your political action is inspired by God, you say a number of times——

The President. I said what?

Q. Is inspired by God, I mean, your——

The President. My political action? I've never said that.

Q. You've never said that? I mean, I'm not quoting you.

The President. No, I've never said that.

Q. I said, in general, you relate to God as a——

The President. You said, my political action is caused by God, I think.

Q. No, no, no, no, I said your political action is inspired by God.

The President. No, my political action is—my life is inspired by God.

Q. But this has a political consequence when you speak about freedom, the notion of freedom, you relate it to God.

The President. Oh, I see what you're saying. What I say is, I say that freedom is not America's gift to the world. In other words, I'm making it clear to people that freedom is more universal than a country. Freedom is more universal than man. See, I believe freedom is the Almighty's gift to everybody in the world. And the reason I say that is because I don't want people to think that there is such thing as—that we want the world to look like America. I understand it's not going to. But freedom is universal. Freedom is applied here. Freedom is applied in France. Freedom is a part of—will be a part of a new Iraq.

President's Daughters

Q. Do you ever worry about the judgment your daughters might make years from now——

The President. No.

Q. ——as they reflect on your current actions?

The President. No. I don't worry about the judgments my daughters are going to make. They're adults. They'll be able to make their own decisions. The only thing I can do with my daughters is tell them I love every day, which I try to do.

Cannes Film Festival Palme d'Or

Q. At the moment, the relationship with France is getting better.

The President. I hope so.

Q. Yes. I really do too. How did you react when the Cannes Film Festival jury gave the award, the Palme d'Or, to Michael Moore's movie?

The President. I didn't pay any attention to it.

Q. Thanks.

The President. I didn't. Thank you.

Q. Thank you very much.

The President. Good luck to you.

NOTE: The interview began at 1:08 p.m. in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House, and the transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 4. In his remarks, the President referred to President Jacques Chirac of France; Spc. Jeremy C. Sivits, USA, who was convicted of abusing Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib Prison; Don North, documentary film producer; Marvin Zindler, member, board of directors, Agris-Zindler Children's Fund; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Remarks on Presenting the Presidential Medal of Freedom to Pope John Paul II at the Vatican City State
June 4, 2004

The President. Your Holiness, thank you very much for receiving Laura and me and our delegation. I bring greetings from our country, where you are respected, admired, and greatly loved.

I also bring a message from my Government that says to you, sir, we will work for human liberty and human dignity, in order to spread peace and compassion, that we appreciate the strong symbol of freedom that you have stood for, and we recognize the power of freedom to change societies and to change the world.

And so, sir, we're honored to be here. Perhaps the best way I can express my country's gratitude to you and our respect to you is to present to you the Medal of Freedom from America. And if you might allow, I'd like to read the citation attached to that honor:

"A devoted servant of God, His Holiness Pope John Paul II has championed the cause of the poor, the weak, the hungry, and the outcast. He has defended the unique dignity of every life and the goodness of all life. Through his faith and moral conviction, he has given courage to others to be not afraid in overcoming injustice and oppression. His principled stand for peace and freedom has inspired millions and helped to topple communism and tyranny. The United States honors this son of Poland who became the Bishop of Rome and a hero of our time."

And so, on behalf of the American people, Your Holiness, I would be honored if you would accept our Medal of Freedom.

[*The President and the First Lady presented the medal and congratulated Pope John Paul II.*]

Pope John Paul II. I am very grateful, Mr. President, for this thoughtful gesture. May the desire for freedom, peace, a more humane world symbolized by this medal inspire men and women of good will in every time and place.

God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:58 p.m. at the Epistolic Palace. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Statement on House of Representatives Passage of Worker Reemployment Accounts Legislation
June 4, 2004

I commend the House for passing the "Worker Reemployment Accounts Act," which establishes a pilot program for Personal Reemployment Accounts.

Personal Reemployment Accounts are an important reform in Federal job training, because workers decide how to use the funds to maximize their likelihood of securing a job. A Personal Reemployment Account gives unemployed Americans additional choices and flexibility to help them return to work more quickly. They can use funds from their account to pay for what they need most to help find a job—special training, childcare, transportation, relocation assistance, or a combination of these. Finally, there is a reemployment bonus that lets workers who return

to work quickly keep any leftover funds from their account.

These innovative accounts that I proposed last year put decisionmaking and resources directly in the hands of individuals who need the most help getting back to work. I urge the Senate to pass this important legislation so that we can help every American who wants to work find a job.

Remarks to Reporters in Rome, Italy
June 4, 2004

National Economy

Today's job report shows that the American economy is strong and it's getting stronger. Two hundred forty eight thousand jobs for last month is good for the American workers. It shows that our economy is vital and growing. We've added 900,000 jobs over the last 3 months and 1.4 million jobs since last August. The policies in place are working. The entrepreneurial spirit is strong. The small-business sector of our economy is vibrant. And I'm pleased the American worker is doing their job.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:36 p.m. at the U.S. Ambassador's residence. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

The President's Radio Address
June 5, 2004

Good morning. This has been an important week for the future of Iraq, for the Middle East, and for America's security. On Tuesday in Baghdad, Iraq's new Prime Minister, Ayad Allawi, and United Nations Special Envoy Lakhdar Brahimi announced the members of Iraq's new interim government. Iraq's President is Sheikh Ghazi al-Yawr, an engineer from northern Iraq. There will also be two Deputy Presidents and a 33-member Cabinet.

This interim government reflects new leadership drawn from a broad cross-section of Iraqis. The new government brings together men and women of varied backgrounds who represent Iraq's ethnic and religious diversity. Five were regional officials; six are women; and all are Iraqi patriots dedicated to building a brighter future for their country.

Naming this new government advances our five-step plan to help Iraq achieve democracy and freedom as a united and Federal nation. It brings us closer to realizing the hope of millions of Iraqis, a fully sovereign nation with a representative government to protect their rights and serve their interests. It brings us closer to seeing a Middle East that knows the blessings of liberty, and it brings us closer to defeating a ruthless enemy that has killed thousands of innocents and still threatens the peace of the world.

This new government will follow the political process outlined in the transitional administrative law and prepare Iraq for a national election no later than January of next year. And while the enemy will continue to spread violence and fear, our coalition will work in full partnership with the

new Iraqi government to provide the security that will make that election possible. In that election, the people of Iraq will choose a transitional national assembly, the first freely elected, truly representative national governing body in Iraq's history.

Iraq is on the path to democracy and freedom, and the international community is helping Iraq complete the journey. We're working with allied Governments and with Iraq's new leaders on a new United Nations Security Council resolution that will express international support for Iraq's interim government, reaffirm the world's security commitment to the Iraqi people, and encourage other U.N. members to join in the effort of building a free Iraq.

And this month, I am traveling to foreign capitals and international summits to discuss with world leaders our common responsibility to help a free Iraq succeed. Yesterday I was in Italy, where I met with the Holy Father. I also met with Prime Minister Berlusconi and joined in marking the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Rome. Today in France, I will meet with President Chirac, and on the 6th of June, I will join him in commemorating the D-day landings at Normandy. From France, I will go directly to this year's G–8 summit in Sea Island, Georgia. This month, I will also attend the U.S.-EU summit in Ireland and the NATO summit in Turkey. These meetings provide an opportunity for world leaders to show our solidarity with the Iraqi people as they build a free and democratic government.

The challenges of our time extend beyond Iraq. The war on terror is being fought on many fronts, and since September the 11th, we have seen terrorist violence from Morocco to Indonesia. Yet the center of this conflict remains the Middle East. If that region is abandoned to dictators and terrorists, it will be a constant source of violence and alarm, exporting killers of increasing sophistication and destructive power. If that region grows in democracy, prosperity, and hope, the terrorist movement will lose its sponsors, lose its recruits, and lose the festering grievances that keep terrorists in business. It is our work to win this struggle.

We're now about 3 years into the war against terrorism. We've met great challenges, and there are more ahead. This is no time for impatience or self-defeating pessimism. We have work to do in the defense of our country and for the good of humanity, and by doing our duty and holding firm to our values, this generation will give the world a lesson in the power of liberty.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 12:40 p.m. on June 4 at the U.S. Ambassador's residence in Rome, Italy, for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on June 5. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 4 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. In his address, the President referred to Lakhdar Brahimi, Special Adviser to the U.N. Secretary-General; Deputy Presidents Ibrahim al-Jafari and Rowsch Shaways of the Iraqi interim government; Pope John Paul II; Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi of Italy; and President Jacques Chirac of France. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

The President's News Conference With Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi of Italy in Rome
June 5, 2004

Prime Minister Berlusconi. Ladies and gentlemen, welcome. Welcome to Villa Madama today, which has been around for more than 500 years. I'd like to very cordially and warmly welcome the President of the United States. I welcome him on my own behalf and on behalf of the Government and on behalf of the Italian people that has really welcomed the U.S. President very warmly because we remember what the people of the U.S. have done for us and for our freedom.

Later on during this press conference, I'm certain that I'll have the time to go into these issues that link us and connect us to the United States because of our past. But I would like also to mention to you why we feel very close to the United States today, and we will so in the future.

And I'd like for the President to now take the floor.

President Bush. Mr. Prime Minister, thank you very much. Laura and I are so pleased to be in Rome to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Allied liberation of the Eternal City. I'm proud to stand with you, Mr. Prime Minister, my friend. I always look forward to our conversations. I listen to your advice. I trust your judgment. I take you for your word.

We are bound together by ties of family history and shared values. The friendship between our two nations has withstood many trials, including those perilous times in 1944 that we recall and we honor today. Over two centuries, our Governments have been allies and adversaries. And today, the affection between our peoples have never been stronger.

For the last 60 years, our Alliance has helped secure the peace of the world. Italy stood on the frontlines of freedom throughout the cold war. Italy's membership in NATO has given strength and purpose to that vital Alliance. And today in the Balkans and in Afghanistan and in Iraq, Americans and Italians are once again defending freedom against the forces of oppression and terror.

All Americans join me in honoring the more than 20 Italians who have fallen in the cause of liberty in Iraq. Their sacrifice was worthy of the ideals of this great nation. Their service will help make Italy, America, and the world more secure, as a free and democratic Iraq arises in the heart of the Middle East.

Our coalition is moving forward with a plan to help Iraq achieve democracy and freedom. Later this month, we'll hand over authority to a sovereign Iraqi government. The members of that government were announced earlier this week in Baghdad, and they are a team of Iraqi patriots that reflects the religious—ethnic and religious diversity of the Iraqi nation.

Italian and American military forces will remain in Iraq to help Iraqis establish the security so that the Iraqi people can live their lives free of fear and so that democracy can take root. Our countries will continue to rebuild Iraq's infrastructure and help Iraq's economy grow and prosper, and we will help Iraq move toward a national election that will bring forward new leaders empowered by the Iraqi people.

These efforts deserve the full support of the international community. More importantly, a free Iraq deserves our best efforts, our hard work. Members of the U.N. Security Council and Iraq's new leaders are working toward a new resolution that will express international support for Iraq's interim government. The Security Council resolution will reaffirm the world's security commitment to the Iraqi nation and encourage other U.N. members to join in helping the Iraqi people as they establish

a representative government. I want to thank you for your help in this resolution, Mr. Prime Minister.

I also look forward to joining the Prime Minister in Sea Island, Georgia, next week and in Turkey at the NATO conference—of course, at Sea Island we'll be having the G–8—where we'll discuss the role our great alliances can play in helping Iraq and the role we can play in helping spread democracy throughout the world.

This war on terror we face, Mr. Prime Minister, is the challenge of our time. Democracy and prosperity are the antidotes to the bitterness and hatred that feed terrorism. As freedom advances in the Middle East, more and more people in that region will be inspired—inspired to peace, inspired to dedicate their lives to the welfare of their families and to the success of their nations. The bitterness and burning hatreds that feed terrorism will fade away, and America and Italy and the rest of the world will be more safe.

I want to thank you, Mr. Prime Minister, and I want to thank the Italian people for their friendship and courage and vision and hope for the future. We remember the sons of Italy who have given their lives to ensure a better future. I look forward to continuing to work with you to make the world a more secure and better place.

Thank you, sir.

Prime Minister Berlusconi. Thank you, Mr. President, and I wish to reaffirm here before you and before the press from the U.S. the feelings that are shared by a large majority of the Italian people towards your country that has welcomed millions of Italians that sought a better future in your country. And it was, for them, a very generous home. This is a first reason why we feel great gratitude towards you and your country.

There's another reason, actually, why this celebration is taking place and why you accepted to personally be here to celebrate this important date. Sixty years ago there were 25,000 young Americans who sacrificed their life to make happier, to make more prosperous and more secure our life here, to give our country freedom. And we will be eternally grateful to you for this.

We're also grateful because in the postwar period, we faced very difficult times, and America's generosity contributed to the growth of our economy with the Marshall plan.

We have yet another reason to be grateful to you, sir. Through NATO and, therefore, through the contribution of U.S. citizens, Europe and Italy has been able to defend itself against a Soviet Union which at that time had its missiles and nuclear arsenals pointed towards our cities.

And today too we're here together in the name of this spirit of deep friendship, to work together in the effort to make democracy grow and advance throughout the world, to combat this attack to the West that comes from terrorism and from fundamentalism. We think that it's a wrongful idea to think that there are peoples for whom democracy simply does not work. There is nothing that is more wrong than that perception. Democracy means respect for human rights. It means an open and free market. And these, of course, are the fundamental pillars of a world that hopes to look to the future in peace, in security, and well-being.

For all this, Mr. President, we are very close to you, and we're close to you not as allies that always feel that the other is an ally but as loyal friends, and therefore, we feel that whenever criticism is due, we can have the freedom to make that criticism.

I wish to thank you, sir, for the way in which you've always listened to us. I thank you for always having given us the opportunity. We're not part of the U.N. Security Council, of course, but we thank you for having given us the opportunity to have a say in matters and to work together to contribute to the drafting of this last resolution. And we certainly hope that the U.N. is going to approve this next

week. And we're going to be available by participating with our men and women in the peace missions.

Let me just say one last word regarding the reasons why our troops are in Iraq and will stay in Iraq until the new government—the government that will be elected in January next—until that government, I was saying, feels that the troops and the other countries can be helpful in maintaining peace, and the construction of a democracy. We're in Iraq exactly for the same reasons why we are in Bosnia, why our men are in Macedonia, why we're in Kosovo, and why we're in Afghanistan, where this morning I guaranteed to the President of the United States—where I was saying Italy will participate with troops; it will participate in Afghanistan's effort to become a democratic country through the elections that are going to be held in the month of September. We're in Iraq for the very same reasons why we have deployed our men in these countries, together with the U.S. forces.

If anyone were to think that it would be advisable to withdraw troops from Iraq, then we would have to do the same from all the other countries in which we have our troops. And we think that this is actually the opposite of what should be done in order to secure peace in these countries, to make sure that they experience no civil wars and that they prosper until they become established democracies.

So thank you for your visit, Mr. President, and thank you very much for everything that the United States will continue to do to spread democracy throughout the world.

With our press offices, we actually established that there will be two questions addressed to the U.S. President and two to the Italian President. So I open the floor for questions. The Americans first.

President's Visit to Italy and the Vatican/ Iraqi Transition

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, you got strong statement of support just now from the Prime Minister. This country has troops in Iraq with the United States troops, and yet, there were many street demonstrations yesterday. There were concerns expressed by the Pope about the U.S. mission. Do you think that your trip to Europe is mending fences or stirring the pot?

And to the Prime Minister, do you anticipate that the troops that you have in Iraq will remain at the same levels for the next coming months? Or will there be more or less?

President Bush. I think—first of all, democracy is a beautiful thing, and I am pleased to be in a country where people are allowed to express their opinion.

I believe the world understands the importance of a free Iraq emerging in the Middle East. There may have been differences of opinion about Saddam Hussein and the enforcement of a U.N. Security Council Resolution 1441. Now the world understands the importance of working with the Iraqis to encourage the development of a free society.

And that's why it is important for me to remind people that there will be a transfer of full sovereignty to an Iraqi government and that the Iraqi people will be making the decisions as to how to proceed forward. And we are there to help them. People in Europe have heard the comments of Prime Minister Allawi and the Foreign Minister, both of whom—who have asked for help in making Iraq secure enough to get to free elections, and we're there to help them do that. And we're there to help them reconstruct their country.

And I sense a spirit of unity in terms of working with the new Iraqi government. That's why we're working closely with nations to get a United Nations Security Council resolution that confirms that which

I just said. And I am confident we will get one soon, and I want to thank the Prime Minister for working toward that end.

Q. Second question for the American President.

The President. But one—on the Holy Father. First of all, I had a great visit yesterday. I was honored to be in his presence again. This was my third meeting with His Holiness. And it was such an honor to be in the presence of a strong, godly man. And he and I share concerns about treating people with human dignity.

And I, like His Holiness, I was repulsed by the pictures I saw about the treatment by some of our troops toward Iraqi prisoners. That treatment did not reflect the spirit of America. Those people stained our honor, and there will be a full investigation in a transparent way about the actions that took place, which will stand in stark contrast to what takes place in a society that is run by a tyrant. And it's important for the people of the Middle East to see the rule of law and to see somebody being held to account in a transparent way. But the visit yesterday was a very constructive, positive visit.

You want one more from the American side? I'll pick one. Steve [Steve Holland, Reuters].

Q. Thank you, Mr. President.

President Bush. His name is Steve.

Director of Central Intelligence/War on Terror

Q. After the resignation of George Tenet, how do you keep morale from dropping in the intelligence community at a critical time? Should he be blamed for intelligence failures, and what is the status of those reforms you've been talking about?

President Bush. First, let me say what I said on the way out of town the other day. George Tenet did a superb job for America. It was a high honor to work with him, and I'm sorry he left. He chose to do so for personal reasons. When he came to see me at the White House the night before he departed—the night before he delivered his letter, the night before I departed, I talked about morale within the Agency. And he assured me that morale would remain high because the people inside the Agency understand the vitality of their mission.

The CIA plays a really important role in fighting the war on terror. In order for us to find the thugs who hide in caves and who plot against free people, we must gather intelligence and share intelligence with our friends, so we can bring people to justice before they hurt us again. And the people inside the Agency know that role and know how important that role is.

Secondly, John McLaughlin, who has been at the Agency for a long period of time, has my confidence but, more importantly, has the confidence of the people who work in the Agency.

And finally, in terms of reform, I look forward to working with all the commissions that are looking into the intelligence-gathering apparatus of the United States—including the Silberman/Robb Commission which is now gathering information and will present a report to the country within a year—to come up with recommendations to make sure that we get the best intelligence possible. You cannot win the war on terror unless your intelligence agency has got high morale and is well-structured to fight and win the war of the 21st century.

Make no mistake about it, we're still at war. It's important for the people of Italy to understand, there's still a terrorist network that wants to murder and kill, and what they're trying to do is shake our will. They want us to retreat from the world. They want us to forget our values. They want us to become fearful. They want us to throw up our hands and surrender, which I refuse to do. For the sake of the security of free people, I refuse to relent to the killers, refuse to surrender one inch

to people who have hijacked a great religion and who will murder innocent women and children. And fortunately, I've got a strong ally in that view in the Prime Minister of Italy.

Prime Minister Berlusconi. I can't but agree with what the American President has just said. Also, in terms of humiliations on the Iraqi prisoners, I must highlight and stress the deep difference between a dictatorship, where torture is the usual, standard practice and is continuous, and the democracy, which has the ability to denounce, to report the mistakes, and to punish in a very clear way, an open way, the culprits, the perpetrators. That's the big difference between totalitarianism and a true, real democracy.

Once again, I would like also to add that the behavior of a few, where in democracy you have the basic principles that responsibility and accountability is personal, the crime of one or a few people cannot be blamed on a whole population.

If you have questions for the Italian Prime Minister, I'm here, ready to answer them.

Anniversary of the Liberation of Rome/60th Anniversary of D-Day

Q. I'd like to ask both of you something about the celebrations tomorrow in Normandy. I would like to ask President Bush, don't you feel insulted that one of your allies has not been invited to a celebration—since Italy participated through resistance in the liberation fight.

And I would like to ask Prime Minister Berlusconi whether he doesn't think and believe that those who exclude Italy and continue to imagine Europe being led just by three countries actually want to have an influence in the domestic choices made in our country.

Prime Minister Berlusconi. The information sources of our friend journalist are very disputable. I must say that the reality is the following. This is the situation: There was a kind of embarrassment by the French President because Italy—because of the historical situation which had taken place in Italy at the D-day. I personally got rid of this embarrassment for the French President, because since I had invited the American President, President Bush, to come to Italy before the celebrations of D-day to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Rome, I believed that it was much more desirable to have just for Italy, only for Rome and for us, a representative of the American people, rather than being part of one celebration where there are going to be 17 Prime Ministers. So I'd rather have him here, alone, than going there, one of 17.

And this is the reality. And I thank, once again, President Bush for accepting to come here.

President Bush. I am honored to have this invitation to come. Yesterday at our Embassy, I had the great honor of addressing some of the Americans who came to liberate Italy. In other words, it was a part of a series of events that I have been attending to commemorate what we have called in our country the Greatest Generation. A week ago or so, I was on The Mall in Washington, DC, where we commemorated a new World War II Memorial. And as part of that series of events to honor young men who came here to sacrifice for the liberty of others, my visit to Rome is very appropriate and necessary. I think they're called—some of them were called the Devil's Brigade. These were young guys from all across America who came into Rome, and I had the honor and chance to thank them personally. And it's necessary the American President honor these folks on Italian soil for the job they did.

And then, of course, I'll be able to pay honor for those who came to Normandy as well. I think it's appropriate, and I appreciate the invitation to be here to do so.

Prime Minister Berlusconi. I'd like to add, Mr. President, that we visited together the cemetery of the American soldiers, and

together we were moved and touched, 60 years later, in reading those names on the tombstones, in seeing their birth date and their death date. They were 22, 23, 25 years, so very young lives which sacrificed themselves for a higher ideal, that of freedom, and liberate Italy and Europe from totalitarianisms, which had been the diseases affecting our continent. And America twice came here to—[*inaudible*]—after being a rib from Europe, America came back here to give its contribution to Europe to keep Europe in freedom. And today this new Europe, which was joined by other 10 countries which have been subject for 70 years to the communist totalitarianism, I think that this new Europe will be more capable and able to feel the unity and unification with United States and to be together with United States to make up the West.

Italy is working for this. Italy is working in order to keep European Union close to United States to strengthen our friendship, because only through joint action we will succeed in fighting this recent war, the war caused by the terror attacks. We can win together. We must win together. We will win together. Fine, we thank you very much.

Another question?

Iraqi Transition/Proposed U.N. Security Council Resolution

Q. Good morning.

Prime Minister Berlusconi. Do you have the same sources as your colleague?

Q. No, I don't think I do. No, really I have a question for both Presidents. I'd like to know exactly what's the role of Italy in the development of what might be a new U.N. resolution for Iraq?

Prime Minister Berlusconi. Well, you want to know the highlights?

Q. Yes, I'd like to know about Italy's role in that development.

Prime Minister Berlusconi. I see. Well, I think perhaps it should be the President to answer that question.

President Bush. Well, I'll be glad to answer it. Last week the Prime Minister came to the Oval Office. He wanted assurances that there would be a full transfer of sovereignty to an Iraqi government. You might remember—7 days ago, I guess it was, that you were there—that there was some doubt in people's minds as to whether or not we intended to participate in a full transfer of sovereignty. I assured him that not only that was our intention, that would be—his desires would be reflected in the United Nations Security Council resolution.

There's a variety of issues that he sought assurances on. He fully understands, for example, that our troops must be there at the request of a sovereign government. In other words, when you transfer full sovereignty, the government must say, "We welcome your help." And that's precisely what is happening.

Again, I repeat what I said before. The Prime Minister as well as the Foreign Minister not only thanked us for our contributions but asked us to stay there to help the Iraqis step up the security forces necessary to make sure the country is peaceful enough for elections to be held. That's what they want; they want to hold elections.

And by the way, the terrorists don't want elections, and that's just their nature, see. They're frightened of freedom. And that's why they kill indiscriminately, to stop—to try to stop this march toward a free society. And it will be a major defeat in their cause.

These terrorists, by the way, hold—have an ideology that is very much like that ideology which subjected the people of Afghanistan to brutality, that basically demeans women, that doesn't believe in rule of law, that doesn't believe in free thought or free religion. That's what they want, and they would like to spread that ideology, particularly in the Middle East.

And I equate the struggle we have today with the struggle we had with communism in Europe after World War II. And the free world could have either yielded to

communism or stood up to communism right after World War II. And fortunately, we stood up to communism, and now, Europe is free, whole, and peaceful. And we have the same issue today. And the fundamental question is: Will we hold the line and uphold our values and work to spread democracy, or will we yield to terrorism and resentment and hatred?

And this is a turning point in history. It's an important moment. And one of the reasons why I'm proud to stand here with the Prime Minister is he understands the stakes; he understands the importance. And like me, he shares a great sense of optimism about the future.

And so I'm proud to be with you, Mr. Prime Minister. It's great to be back in this beautiful city. You've got a fantastic country. And our country is better off because of the contributions of millions of Italian Americans, I might add. And thanks for having me. God bless.

Prime Minister Berlusconi. I have to give my answer——

President Bush. I thought you wanted me to answer the question. [*Laughter*]

Prime Minister Berlusconi. It was addressed to me too, Mr. President. I simply wish to say that we've been very, very happy to have been able to give our contribution, in spite—and this is something we ought to remember—in spite of the fact that we're not members of the U.N. Security Council, which I don't think is something that this Government is responsible for.

There is one point, I believe, that was not introduced, a point that I was able to discuss with the President of the Russian Federation, Mr. Putin, which has to do with the calling of an international conference on Iraq. And I'd like to explain the reasons why this point was not discussed, or is not found in the current draft of the resolution. As this resolution—or rather, as sovereignty will be transferred to the new Iraqi government, it was believed that it will be precisely the new Iraqi government to decide on whether or not it may be useful and possible to hold an international conference. And this too I think is evidence of the sovereignty that is not just words but that is something that we believe in seriously, concretely, and transparently.

Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you to the press, from the U.S. especially. Thank you to everyone, and best of luck in your work.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at approximately 11:15 a.m. at the Villa Madama. In his remarks, he referred to former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; Prime Minister Ayad Allawi and Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari of the Iraqi interim government; and Pope John Paul II. Prime Minister Berlusconi referred to President Jacques Chirac of France; and President Vladimir Putin of Russia. Prime Minister Berlusconi spoke in Italian, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

The President's News Conference With President Jacques Chirac of France in Paris, France
June 5, 2004

President Chirac. Very well, ladies and gentlemen. First of all, let me tell you how happy I am to welcome the U.S. President most warmly. He has come to Europe on the occasion, of course, of the commemoration of the 60th anniversary of D-day. And tomorrow during the course of the ceremonies which will take place in Normandy

and in presence of the veterans and, in particular, of the American veterans of Operation Overlord, I will have the opportunity to say to America and to Americans just how deeply grateful we are to them today, how grateful we are in the knowledge of the sacrifices they made, of the blood that they spilled—their own blood—for the liberation of our country and of Europe as a whole. And I will say to them that France says thank you and that France does not forget.

Now, on the occasion of the celebratory ceremonies, President Bush, who has come to Europe, went first to Italy, as you know, and today has joined us in France, which has enabled us to run through a certain number of issues, especially in light of the up-and-coming summits, major summits that are going to be taking place in June, the G–8 in Sea Island in a few days time and the Istanbul Summit, later summit at the end of the month.

As you can imagine, we had very open, earnest, confident discussions on a host of different issues pertaining to the world today. I say open and sincere and trusting, because from time to time, I read comments that are not actually very reflective of the truth. France and the U.S. have 200 years of shared history, and for 200 years now, for two centuries now, we have defended the same and upheld the selfsame values, which are the values of democracy, of peace, of human rights. And therefore, dialog has always been easy and made easy because of that, on those matters on which we see likewise and also on other issues. And there's a number of issues in which we are standing shoulder to shoulder, and we've discussed them and run through them, and that is all that pertains to peace and stability throughout the world.

We, of course, touched upon our very strong cooperation in terms of our fight against terrorism, and in that connection, we have, over the last 2 years, considerably strengthened our cooperation, our collaboration. Likewise, in combating proliferation, a subject and a dossier on which we have like-minded views and exemplary cooperation, as indeed evidenced by PSI program cooperation or the vote on Resolution 1540 of the U.N. Security Council.

We touched upon regional crises and, in particular, operations to maintain peace where French and American soldiers are working together. I think here of Afghanistan, where France is part and parcel of Operation Enduring Freedom; likewise also, still in connection with Afghanistan, the international force which is going to be commanded shortly by a French general in Kabul. We also have excellent cooperation in the Balkans, be it in Bosnia, be it in Kosovo. We have cooperated to avoid, to stem off the worst in Haiti, and that's also in quite exceptionally good ways.

We have expressed our common anxiety in light of what is happening in Africa and, in particular, what we see looming in Kivu—in the Kivu region, and all that this means in terms of threats to peace and stability in the region. And we're very worried about the peace and stability of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Now, on the subject of Iraq, where we all know that our countries have had somewhat different approaches and solutions and a vision of the situation which was not similar. That being said, we share one and the same conviction today, namely, that there is no alternative to restoring peace and therefore to restoring security and development in Iraq and that no effort must be spared in achieving this.

And evidently, the discussions taking place within the U.N. Security Council basically aimed at adopting a resolution which, given the present state of affairs in Iraq, must say loud and clear that the international community is hellbent on achieving one objective, which is returning sovereignty to an Iraqi government, which will give hope to Iraqis and the people of Iraq. So we are entirely like-minded on that.

And I believe that things are moving in the right direction. Discussions have been

characterized by a very positive spirit, and I very much hope that very shortly, in the next few days, we will come up with a resolution which indeed reflects what to us is of the essence, namely, to give the Iraqis themselves the sense that they have recovered their own sovereignty and that their own destiny is in their own hands, because that seems to us a *sine qua non* for any future solution to the problems which this country necessarily faces.

Of course, we also touched upon the conflict in the Middle East because, as I said to the President, we are very worried when we see that this conflict is continuing to spread, with all the knock-on effects, regionally speaking and beyond the region. And we cannot ignore the Israeli-Syrian and Israeli-Lebanese dimensions of the problem. And on the subject of Lebanon, precisely, we have expressed renewed conviction and belief that Lebanon has to be ensured that its independence and sovereignty are guaranteed.

Within a few days, we'll be meeting again at the G–8 summit at Sea Island, where we will discuss decisions to be taken, talks to be entered into in respect of a certain number of issues having to do with growth, development, employment, security, obviously, the fight against terrorism, and proliferation, but also development in general and sustainable development in particular.

So, before I give the floor to President Bush, I should like to conclude by once again expressing to him my warmest welcome.

President Bush. Thank you, Mr. President. Laura and I are honored to be back in this beautiful country on the anniversary of a momentous day in the history of freedom.

Tomorrow I will join the President and other leaders at the Normandy beaches to commemorate the Allied landing 60 years ago. We will honor the many thousands of veterans, living and lost, who took part in that battle. It will be a time to reflect on the sacrifices that helped to defeat fascism and to restore the liberty of France and of Western Europe.

We will also remember the timeless lessons that D-day teaches, that sacrifices must always be borne in the defense of freedom, that free nations working together can overcome danger, and that the deepest source of strength of any army is the values for which it fights.

I appreciate all the hard work, Mr. President, that went into planning this year's D-day ceremonies, and I congratulate you and all those involved. It's going to be a spectacular day.

I also appreciate the chance to talk to the President and to hear his views on a variety of issues, on the common challenges we face. Today we discussed the future of Iraq as a free and democratic state. Our coalition will soon hand over full sovereignty to an Iraqi government. Iraq's new Prime Minister Allawi and his cabinet are working hard to provide security and to prepare their country for national elections that will bring forward new leaders empowered by the Iraqi people. The interim government is the first step in a political process, outlined in the transitional administrative law, which will lead to the first democratic elections in Iraq's history, elections to take place no later than January 2005. At the request of the interim government, the request of the Prime Minister, multinational forces will remain in Iraq to help this new government succeed in its vital work.

Free Iraq deserves the full support of the international community, and I appreciate our discussions. The Iraqi people want and deserve freedom, peace, and prosperity, and the nations of the world have a responsibility to help them achieve that. Members of the U.N. Security Council are working with Iraq's new leaders toward a new resolution that will express international support for Iraq's interim government, that will reaffirm the world's security commitment to the Iraqi nation, and encourage other U.N. members to help in

joining the Iraqi people as they establish a representative government.

The President and I discussed our common goals in the broader Middle East. We seek freedom and the peace that freedom brings. We seek political and social reform, the true stability that results when people are free to live and think and worship as they choose. We know that freedom cannot be imposed from abroad, but free nations can and must choose to ally ourselves with reformers wherever they are and with reform wherever it occurs.

I fully know that democratization is not the same as Westernization. Nations as different as Romania and the Philippines, Nicaragua and Senegal and Turkey show that freedom takes different forms around the globe and that new liberties can find an honored place amidst ancient traditions. Democratic governments in the Middle East will reflect their own cultures and their own traditions. America and France are working with many allies and friends in the region and beyond to support the increase of reform, which will serve as the antidote to terror.

As the President mentioned, we'll be going to Sea Island, Georgia, where we will discuss ways to build partnerships between the world's great democracies and the nations of the broader Middle East. I look forward to those discussions. Later this month we'll bring the same message and the same challenge to the NATO summit in Turkey.

The President and I also share—had discussions about the Holy Land. We seek two states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. I support the establishment of a Palestinian state that is viable, contiguous, sovereign, and independent. And I realize that security is the foundation for peace and the starting point for all progress in the Middle East.

I believe that Israel needs a truly responsible partner in achieving peace. I believe the Palestinian people deserve democratic institutions and responsible leaders. So for the sake of peace, I'm committed to helping the Palestinian people establish a democratic and viable state of their own, and I look forward to working with President Chirac to achieve that objective.

The United States and France also agree that the people of Lebanon should be free to determine their own future, without foreign interference or domination.

Our two nations are working together to bring peace and security to other parts of the globe. We're in Haiti together. We're in Afghanistan together. We're working to ensure that Iran meets its commitments to the IAEA and does not develop nuclear weapons. The President talked about our mutual concerns on the continent of Africa.

We're proud countries with deep traditions rooted in freedom and equality and justice. These common values enable us to work together for the good of world peace, and I look forward to doing that with you, Mr. President.

Thank you for your hospitality.

Now—Jim Angle [FOX News].

Coalition Security Arrangement With Iraqi Interim Government/U.N. Security Council Resolution

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. As we understand, there has been an exchange of letters between the new interim government in Iraq and the coalition. I wonder if you could tell us a little something about that, Mr. President.

And President Chirac, if I may, sir, I assume you've been told about this. Do you now believe that the new Iraqi government will get full sovereignty? And do you have any remaining objections about a new U.N. resolution?

President Bush. One of the issues that I had been asked about quite frequently was whether or not the Iraqi government would be able to determine its security needs. And I said, "Absolutely. That's the definition of sovereignty." And I also assured the American people at several news conferences that we have entered into

these kind of security agreements in the past that recognize the sovereignty of the host government. And the exchange of letters does just that. The exchange of letters between the Prime Minister and the coalition lays out the parameters of security, of the security cooperation in Iraq. And this is a positive step forward.

President Chirac. On the subject of the resolution, again I repeat what I said earlier on. I think we have progressed. We have moved forward positively, and we should be able to put the finishing touches to this text very shortly. Now, yes, we still have to qualify the matter pertaining to security arrangements that establish relations between the Iraqi government—the government that, obviously, we wish to see sovereign and full authority—and the multinational force. And as you rightly said, an exchange of letters between the Iraqi government and the international force whose thrust has to be picked up in the language of the resolution is happening right now. And I hope all of this can take place very speedily.

In my view, in my view, what is important here, in all the technicalities of all of this, what is important is to ensure that the Iraqi people—that the Iraqis truly have the sense that they have recovered their independence, their sovereignty, and that they hold their own destiny in their hands. I think that that is the only way forward if we want to solve the considerable problems that are arising in this country and to be able to contain the very strong forces in situ, as it were. And I feel it's very important that we send no negative signal to the Iraqis in the sense that we might in any way be undermining their sovereignty, because that would undermine their confidence.

Yes, a question?

France-U.S. Relations/Abu Ghraib Prison

Q. Thank you, sir. I would have a question for Mr. Bush. Once, President Kennedy said, "Everyone has two countries, their own and France." And why is it that your policy tends to be pushing your country and France to divorce?

Second point, some in public opinion have accused you of state terrorism, and do you not believe that what has happened in Abu Ghraib has put you in the same basket, as it were, as Saddam Hussein, especially in the eyes of an international tribunal and especially in light of the unfound weapons of mass destruction?

President Bush. To paraphrase President Kennedy: There's America, and then there's Texas.

We have great relations with France. We work closely with the French Government on a lot of issues. I just laid out a lot of the issues that we're working together on, as did the President. We're working to stop proliferation. We're working in Haiti. We're working on the continent of Africa. We're working to feed the hungry. We're working to make sure that the pandemic of AIDS gets—that the people get the help they need to arrest the pandemic of AIDS in Africa. No, there are a lot of issues we work on.

As for the prison abuse issue, I am—I was humiliated, as was most of my country. Those soldiers didn't reflect the character of the American people. They didn't—they stained our honor, and the world will see a full investigation of those—of that humiliation, which will stand in stark contrast to what takes place in states run by tyrants. And there will be a full investigation in a transparent way, and those that violated rules will be held to account.

Gregory [David Gregory, NBC News], *Monsieur* Gregory [*Laughter*]

France's Role in the Middle East/Iraqi Weapons of Mass Destruction

Q. President Chirac, given the fact that your Government also believed that there were weapons of mass destruction in Iraq prior to the war, do you believe that there was a worldwide intelligence failure? And

despite your opposition to the war, do you believe that Iraq is better or worse off today?

Mr. President, what role specifically would you like the French to play in Iraq going forward? *Merci.*

President Bush. Listen, the French are going to provide great advice. President Chirac has got good judgment about the Middle East, and he understands those countries well. The French are going to work together to put out a U.N. Security Council resolution that sends a clear signal the free world is united in helping Iraq. And those are great contributions, for which I am grateful, and so is my Nation.

Q. President Chirac—*Monsieur le Presidente*?

President Chirac. Yes, you said that the French Government, if I've understood you rightly, prior to the war had stated that there were weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, and that is not correct. I have always said that I had no information that would lead me to believe that there were or were not, for that matter, weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. That's a fact. All the information available to us at that time and on that subject did not allow us to take a stand or to reach any conclusion, which is why I said to President Bush that I, personally, was incapable of saying whether or not there were weapons of mass destruction.

Conditions in Iraq

Q. Do you believe that—despite your opposition to the war, do you believe that today Iraq is better or worse off?

President Chirac. Well, one thing is for certain sure, which is the tyrannical regime of Saddam Hussein is no longer in power, and that is a positive thing. It's a positive step. What's less positive is that there is a degree of chaos prevailing, and our problem today is to try and contain—or build upon what has been achieved in positive terms. In other words, open the way to what could be a form of democracy and ensure that the forces which are in a confrontational mode be pacified. But this is something we will see further down the road. We have certainly not put the difficulties behind us. Do not believe that. We are in a situation which is extremely precarious.

A question from the back? I saw a hand going up.

Q. Mr. President, to what extent is the comparison made by President Bush between the liberation of Europe from nazism 60 years ago, which you're celebrating today, or tomorrow rather, and the liberation of Iraq by American forces a year ago—to what extent do you feel that this comparison is just and justified?

President Chirac. I fully understand what led President Bush to establish or to make this comparison, if only for reasons of circumstance. I mean, what are we celebrating today and tomorrow? And I think, nonetheless, that history does not repeat itself, and it is very difficult to compare historical situations that differ, because history is not repetitive. And there is a situation which we defined earlier on in Iraq, prevailing in Iraq, which has to be contained and has to be mastered. There's a lot to be done. We are going to have to roll up our sleeves and put a lot of our hearts and our minds into doing this. And perhaps—perhaps, we will succeed.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 7:41 p.m. at the Elysee Palace. In his remarks, President Bush referred to Prime Minister Ayad Allawi of the Iraqi interim government. President Chirac referred to former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. President Chirac spoke in French, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks, in Paris, on the Death of President Ronald Reagan
June 6, 2004

This is a sad hour in the life of America. A great American life has come to an end. I have just spoken to Nancy Reagan. On behalf of our whole Nation, Laura and I offered her and the Reagan family our prayers and our condolences.

Ronald Reagan won America's respect with his greatness and won its love with his goodness. He had the confidence that comes with conviction, the strength that comes with character, the grace that comes with humility, and the humor that comes with wisdom. He leaves behind a nation he restored and a world he helped save.

During the years of President Reagan, America laid to rest an era of division and self-doubt. And because of his leadership, the world laid to rest an era of fear and tyranny. Now, in laying our leader to rest, we say thank you.

He always told us that for America, the best was yet to come. We comfort ourselves in the knowledge that this is true for him too. His work is done, and now a shining city awaits him.

May God bless Ronald Reagan.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:41 a.m. at the U.S. Ambassador's residence. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks. The related proclamation and Executive order of June 6 are listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume. The related proclamation of July 2 is in the *Federal Register* at 69 *FR* 41179.

Remarks on the 60th Anniversary of D-Day in Colleville-sur-Mer, France
June 6, 2004

Mr. President and Mrs. Chirac; Secretary Powell and Secretary Principi; General Myers; Members of the United States Congress; my fellow Americans; and ladies and gentlemen: It is a high honor to represent the American people here at Normandy on the 6th of June, 2004.

Twenty summers ago, another American President came here to Normandy to pay tribute to the men of D-day. He was a courageous man himself and a gallant leader in the cause of freedom. And today we honor the memory of Ronald Reagan.

Mr. President, thank you for your gracious welcome to the reunion of Allies. History reminds us that France was America's first friend in the world.

With us today are Americans who first saw this place at a distance, in the half-light of a Tuesday morning long ago. Time and providence have brought them back to see once more the beaches and the cliffs, the crosses and the Stars of David. Generations to come will know what happened here, but these men heard the guns. Visitors will always pay respects at this cemetery, but these veterans come looking for a name and remembering faces and voices from a lifetime ago. Today we honor all the veterans of Normandy and all their comrades who never left.

On this day in 1944, President Franklin Roosevelt addressed the American people, not with a speech but with a prayer. He prayed that God would bless America's sons and "Lead them straight and true." He continued, "They will need Thy blessings. They will be sore tired, by night and by day, without rest—until victory is won. The darkness will be rent by noise and flame.

Men's souls will be shaken with the violences of war."

As Americans prayed along, more than 12,000 Allied aircraft and about 5,000 naval vessels were carrying out General Eisenhower's order of the day. In this massive undertaking, there was a plan for everything, except for failure. Eisenhower said, "This operation is planned as a victory, and that's the way it is going to be."

They had waited for one break in the weather, and then it came. Men were sent in by parachute and by glider. And on this side of the Channel, through binoculars and gunsights, German soldiers could see coming their way the greatest armada anyone had ever seen. In the lead were hundreds of landing craft carrying brave and frightened men.

Only the ones who made that crossing can know what it was like. They tell of the pitching deck, the whistles of shells from the battleships behind them, the white jets of water from enemy fire around them, and then the sound of bullets hitting the steel ramp that was about to fall. One GI later said, "As our boat touched sand and the ramp went down, I became a visitor to hell."

Hitler's Atlantic Wall was composed of mines and tank obstacles, trenches and jutting cliffs, gun emplacements and pillboxes, barbed wire, machinegun nests, and artillery trained accurately on the beach. In the first wave of the landing here at Omaha, one unit suffered 91 percent casualties. As General Omar Bradley later wrote, "Six hours after the landings, we held only 10 yards of beach." A British commando unit had half its men killed or wounded while taking the town of St. Aubin. A D-day veteran remembers, "The only thing that made me feel good was to look around and try to find somebody who looked more scared than I felt. That man was hard to find."

At all the beaches and landing grounds of D-day, men saw some images they would spend a lifetime preferring to forget. One soldier carries the memory of three paratroopers dead and hanging from telephone poles "like a horrible crucifixion scene." All who fought saw images of pain and death, raw and relentless.

The men of D-day also witnessed scenes they would proudly and faithfully recount, scenes of daring and self-giving that went beyond anything the Army or the country could ask. They remember men like Technician Fifth Grade John Pinder, Jr., whose job was to deliver vital radio equipment to the beach. He was gravely wounded before he hit shore, and he kept going. He delivered the radio and, instead of taking cover, went back into the surf three more times to salvage equipment. Under constant enemy fire, this young man from Pennsylvania was shot twice again and died on the beach below us.

The ranks of the Allied Expeditionary Force were filled with men who did a specific assigned task, from clearing mines to unloading boats to scaling cliffs, whatever the danger, whatever the cost. And the sum of this duty was an unstoppable force. By the end of June 6th, 1944, more than 150,000 Allied soldiers had breached Fortress Europe.

When the news of D-day went out to the world, the world understood the immensity of the moment. The New York Daily News pulled its lead stories to print the Lord's Prayer on its front page. In Ottawa, the Canadian Parliament rose to sing "God Save the King" and the "Marseillaise." Broadcasting from London, King George told his people, "This time the challenge is not to fight to survive but to fight to win." Broadcasting from Paris, Nazi authorities told citizens that anyone cooperating with the Allies would be shot, and across France, the Resistance defied those warnings.

Near the village of Colleville, a young woman on a bicycle raced to her parents' farmhouse. She was worried for their safety. Seeing the shattered windows and partially caved-in roof, Anne Marie Broeckx

called for her parents. As they came out of the damaged house, her father shouted, "My daughter, this is a great day for France."

As it turned out, it was a great day for Anne Marie as well. The liberating force of D-day included the young American soldier she would marry, an Army private who was fighting a half a mile away on Omaha Beach. It was another fine moment in Franco-American relations. [*Laughter*]

In Amsterdam, a 14-year-old girl heard the news of D-day over the radio in her attic hiding place. She wrote in her diary, "It still seems too wonderful, too much like a fairytale. The thought of friends in delivery fills us with confidence." Anne Frank even ventured to hope, "I may yet be able to go back to school in September or October."

That was not to be. The Nazis still had about 50 divisions and more than 800,000 soldiers in France alone. D-day-plus-1 and D-day-plus-2 and many months of fierce fighting lay ahead, from Arnhem to Hurtgen Forest to the Bulge.

Across Europe, Americans shared the battle with Britains, Canadians, Poles, Free French, and brave citizens from other lands taken back one by one from Nazi rule. In the trials and total sacrifice of the war, we became inseparable Allies. The nations that liberated a conquered Europe would stand together for the freedom of all of Europe. The nations that battled across the Continent would become trusted partners in the cause of peace. And our great Alliance of freedom is strong, and it is still needed today.

The generation we honor on this anniversary, all the men and women who labored and bled to save this continent, took a more practical view of the military mission. Americans wanted to fight and win and go home. And our GIs had a saying: "The only way home is through Berlin." That road to V-E Day was hard and long and traveled by weary and valiant men, and history will always record where that road began. It began here, with the first footprints on the beaches of Normandy.

Twenty years after D-day, former President Eisenhower returned to this place and walked through these rows. He spoke of his joy of being a grandfather, and then he said, "When I look at all these graves, I think of the parents back in the States whose only son is buried here. Because of their sacrifice, they don't have the pleasure of grandchildren. Because of their sacrifice, my grandchildren are growing up in freedom."

The Supreme Commander knew where the victory was won and where the greatest debt was owed. Always our thoughts and hearts were turned to the sons of America who came here and now rest here. We think of them as you, our veterans, last saw them. We think of men not far from boys who found the courage to charge toward death and who often, when death came, were heard to call, "Mom," and "Mother, help me." We think of men in the promise years of life, loved and mourned and missed to this day.

Before the landing in Omaha, Sergeant Earl Parker of Bedford, Virginia, proudly passed around a picture of Danny, the newborn daughter he had never held. He told the fellows, "If I could see this daughter of mine, I wouldn't mind dying." Sergeant Parker is remembered here at the Garden of the Missing. And he is remembered back home by a woman in her sixties who proudly shows a picture of her handsome, smiling young dad.

All who are buried and named in this place are held in the loving memory of America. We pray in the peace of this cemetery that they have reached the far shore of God's mercy.

And we still look with pride on the men of D-day, on those who served and went on. It is a strange turn of history that called on young men from the prairie towns and city streets of America to cross an ocean and throw back the marching, mechanized

evils of fascism. And those young men did it. You did it.

That difficult summit was reached, then passed in 60 years of living. Now has come a time of reflection, with thoughts of another horizon and the hope of reunion with the boys you knew. I want each of you to understand, you will be honored ever and always by the country you served and by the nations you freed.

When the invasion was finally over and the guns were silent, this coast, we are told, was lined for miles with the belongings of the thousands who fell. There were lifebelts and canteens and socks and K-rations and helmets and diaries and snapshots. And there were Bibles, many Bibles, mixed with the wreckage of war. Our boys had carried in their pockets the book that brought into the world this message: Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

America honors all the liberators who fought here in the noblest of causes, and America would do it again for our friends. May God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:27 a.m. at the World War II Normandy American Cemetery and Memorial. In his remarks, he referred to President Jacques Chirac of France and his wife, Bernadette; and Gen. Richard B. Myers, USAF, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of President Jacques Chirac. The D-Day National Remembrance Day proclamation of June 5 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks Prior to Discussions With Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan and an Exchange With Reporters at Sea Island, Georgia
June 8, 2004

President Bush. It's my honor to welcome my friend and a strong leader, the Prime Minister of Japan, to Sea Island, Georgia. I've really been looking forward to this lunch because every time I meet with the Prime Minister, we have a constructive and important dialog.

The first thing, of course, I will do is congratulate him on the fact that the Japanese economy is improving under his leadership. We will talk about security issues. We'll talk about our mutual desire to fight terror. We will talk about North Korea. We will talk about Iraq, and in doing so, I know I'm talking with a leader I can trust and a leader who has got good, sound judgment.

Mr. Prime Minister.

Prime Minister Koizumi. First of all, I would like to express my condolences to the pass away of President Reagan. I would like to pay respect to his numerous achievements, especially in strengthening our Japan-U.S. bilateral relationship.

Today I was very much looking forward to meeting with President Bush in order to discuss Iraq, North Korea, and those issues from a viewpoint of Japan-U.S. alliance in the global context. As the international community has to cooperate in order to reconstruct Iraq, I would like to pay respect to his strong leadership of President Bush in meeting this international coordination.

And also on the North Korean issue, President Bush has strongly supported the Japanese policy, and we would like to—Japan and the U.S. would like to coordinate together, consult together in the issue of North Korea in order to come up with a peace in Korean Peninsula.

And even in the difficult and hard conditions, President Bush has shown his strong determination and commitment, and he is a man of determination. So with President Bush, we would like to maintain our Japan-U.S. cooperation in order to come up with peace and stability in the world. Thank you.

President Bush. A couple of questions. Tom [Tom Raum, Associated Press].

Proposed U.N. Security Council Resolution/ Troop Levels in Iraq

Q. Mr. President, originally you had hoped that a U.N. resolution on Iraq would lead to more troops. Now you're on the verge of getting that U.N. resolution, and yet, we haven't heard much about more troops. In fact, France, Germany, Russia, and Canada have said they won't send troops under any circumstance. Have you pretty much given up on getting these allies to send troops, or is there still hope that you can persuade them?

President Bush. First, I'm delighted that we're about to get a Security Council resolution. There were some who said we'd never get one. And it looks like if things go well, it's going to be a unanimous vote, thereby saying to the world that members of the Security Council are interested in working together to make sure that Iraq is free and peaceful and democratic. I think this is a very important moment on the—on making sure that our objective is achieved.

These nations understand that a free Iraq will serve as a catalyst for change in the broader Middle East, which is an important part of winning the war on terror. I expect nations to contribute as they see fit. But of course, the key to long-term security in Iraq is for all of us to work together to train Iraqi troops to handle their own security measures. And that's precisely what we are doing on the ground and we will work with other nations to do as well.

President Ronald Reagan

Q. Mr. President, there are a lot of remembrances about Ronald Reagan this week. What lessons have you learned from the Presidency of Ronald Reagan? And have you modeled your political style after him at all?

President Bush. Ronald Reagan will go down in history as a great American President because he had a core set of principles from which he would not deviate. He understood that a leader is a person who sets clear goals and makes decisions based upon principles that are etched in his soul, and our Nation will miss him. I had the honor of speaking to Mrs. Reagan from Paris, France, and expressed Laura's and my condolences to her and her family, and the Nation will be doing so as well on Friday.

Thank you. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:31 p.m. at Dunbar House. Prime Minister Koizumi spoke in Japanese, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks Prior to Discussions With Prime Minister Paul Martin of Canada at Sea Island

June 8, 2004

President Bush. I'm so honored to have a chance to visit with you again, Mr. Prime Minister. I look forward to our discussions. We've got great relations, and relations with Canada are, as far as I'm concerned, very important relations.

And we will continue our discussions on mad cow and softwood lumber. You've always been a strong advocate of Canadian interests, of course, and I appreciate that. Hopefully we can resolve the mad cow quickly—that you've asked me to do and that we will continue to work on a softwood lumber agreement that's beneficial to both countries.

Canada is a great friend, and you've been very cooperative at figuring out ways to cooperate in the war on terror. The Prime Minister has got a clear vision about the dangers that face the free world, and for that I'm grateful too. So I look forward to our discussions, sir.

Prime Minister Martin. Well, thank you very much. First of all, Mr. President, I thank you for having us all here. This is an absolutely spectacular, beautiful spot. And I think that we're all very, very glad to be here.

In terms of the war on terror, this is a—we feel every bit as strongly about it as you. And the fact is that we are all at peril here, and we have all got to win this war. And Canada certainly intends to do our part, and we stand with you foursquare in the battle against global terrorism.

If you'll also allow me simply to say, now that I'm here, I really—certainly on my own behalf and on behalf of all of the Canadian people, how—how much we regret the passing of President Reagan and what a tremendous contribution he made to the free world. I don't think there's any doubt that he is one of the great influential people in the second half of the last century. His effect in bringing the cold war to an end is one for which historians will laud him forever. And so I think that you—at the same time, while you feel very badly, I'm sure you feel very, very proud, and I think the American people can feel proud.

President Bush. Thank you, Paul. Appreciate it.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:58 p.m. at Dunbar House.

Remarks Prior to Discussions With Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder of Germany at Sea Island
June 8, 2004

President Bush. Mr. Chancellor, welcome, thanks. It's great to see you. I want the folks to know how much I appreciate your willingness to work on promoting freedom around the world, and it's an important statement, and I appreciate your Government's good work.

I appreciate very much the Chancellor's help in Afghanistan. That country is improving, and that's important. I appreciate our mutual work on the U.N. Security Council resolution on Iraq. I look forward to continuing our dialog in a spirit of cooperation and friendship, and I'm glad you're here.

Chancellor Schroeder. Thank you very much. And let me say, I love to be here, particularly since the weather, compared to what we are used to, so nice and so favorable. [*Laughter*]

And I think what we're talking about here at this meeting will be essentially something that, indeed, forms part of one whole and something that is an indissoluble, namely a good world economy on the one hand and stable political situation—a stable political environment on the other.

We are willing to give our contribution, and we, indeed, gave our contribution to this in Afghanistan, for example, but also

on the Balkans. And let me say that I'm gratified to know that this is appreciated.

I am confident that the resolution, the United Nations Security Council resolution on Iraq, will be adopted today. Whatever we can do to bring this about, we will certainly do. We think that this resolution will be a good basis, a good foundation for enhancing stability, for also improving the chances for the Iraqi people, and also to enhance stability all around in that region that is—I think we would all agree—a difficult one. And I think that this is, indeed, our common task. It is something that we shall work on together. And well, thank you again for your gracious hospitality.

President Bush. Thanks, Gerhard. Appreciate you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:43 p.m. at Dunbar House. Chancellor Schroeder spoke in German, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks Following Discussions With President Vladimir Putin of Russia at Sea Island

June 8, 2004

President Bush. I always enjoy talking to my friend Vladimir Putin. He's a strong leader who cares deeply about the people of his country and understands the issues that we face. We just had a long discussion about a variety of issues. And I had the opportunity to thank him for working together on important issues such as the United Nations Security Council resolution.

The vote today in the United Nations Security Council was a great victory for the Iraqi people. The international community showed that they stand side by side with the Iraqi people. The U.N. Security Council resolution supports the interim government, supports free elections, and supports the multinational force. America supports strongly the idea of a free society in the midst of hatred and intolerance, and I appreciate your help, Vladimir, on getting that Security Council resolution through today.

It is my honor to welcome Vladimir to Georgia, and it is my pleasure to continue to work with you as we make sure our relations are as close as they possibly can be.

President Putin. Thank you. First of all, I would like to thank the U.S. President for having invited me to such a wonderful place. Indeed, we had a very thorough discussion which pertained to virtually the entire spectrum of the U.S.-Russia relationship.

I have congratulated the U.S. President with the positive change currently underway with the U.S. economy, which has to be acknowledged as his merit. And this happens with the background of the unreasonable growth for costs and pricing for the energy resources. We're all interested in these positive changes, because in the contemporary world of today, when we live, it is important for all of us that the U.S. economy improves—for the entire world, for Russia included.

I'd like to point out the fact that our relationship has been developing all across the board, including such sensitive areas as the military cooperation.

Now, as regards the adoption of the United Nations Security Council resolution, without any exaggeration I would state that it is a major step forward. And I hope I will express the view which is held by all members of the Security Council that, indeed, we have witnessed a very constructive dialog which was in progress over the past few days in this area. And this is not

about passing a new document in the Security Council regarding Iraq. This is about a quality change in the status in Iraq and with regards to the presence of the military troops there. This is about a quality change of the impact the United Nations have over the situation in Iraq. Naturally, it will take quite a long time before this adoption of the document will have any impact on the real change on the ground in Iraq.

But we can convincingly and comfortably state that the situation is ripe for adopting such a serious and such a concrete document concerning this country. If prior to this document it was primarily the burden and the responsibility which was upheld by the United States with regards to this country, it seems now it will be the Iraqi government themselves who will have the whole spectrum of the sovereignty rights which will be enjoyed by them, with a major influence now to be exercised by the entire world community with regards to the situation in that country.

Therefore on this occasion, I would like to congratulate the U.S. President with this achievement and to express our wish that the situation is going to be changing in a better way there.

President Bush. Thank you, sir.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:41 p.m. at Dunbar House. President Putin spoke in Russian, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Message to the Congress on the Death of President Ronald Reagan
June 8, 2004

To the Congress of the United States:

By this Message, I officially inform you of the death of Ronald Reagan, the fortieth President of the United States.

Ronald Reagan was a great leader and a good man. He had the confidence that comes with conviction, the strength that comes with character, the grace that comes with humility, and the humor that comes with wisdom.

Through his leadership, spirit, and abiding faith in the American people, President Reagan gave our Nation a renewed optimism. With his courage and moral clarity, he enhanced America's security and advanced the spread of peace, liberty, and democracy to millions of people who had lived in darkness and oppression. As America's President, he helped change the world.

The sun has now set on Ronald Reagan's extraordinary American life. Just as he told us that our Nation's best days are yet to come, we know that the same is true for him.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
June 8, 2004.

NOTE: The related proclamation and Executive order of June 6 are listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume. The related proclamation of July 2 is printed in the *Federal Register* at 69 *FR* 41179.

Remarks at Saint Simon's Island, Georgia
June 8, 2004

Thank you all very much for working at what you're doing. It's a great example of Federal, State, and local cooperation. I appreciate many of you taking time away from your families to make sure this event goes the way we want it to go, secure and peaceful. I know that you're working long hours, and I've come to thank you very much for what you're doing. It means a lot to me, and it means a lot to the people whose lives you're protecting.

So I want to thank you very much, and I ask for God's blessings on you all and the country. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:32 p.m at the Multi-Agency Command Center.

Remarks Following Discussions With Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom and an Exchange With Reporters at Sea Island, Georgia
June 9, 2004

President Bush. Mr. Prime Minister, thank you very much for your steadfast leadership, your clear vision, and your friendship.

Yesterday was a important day for the Iraqi people. The United Nations Security Council unanimously expressed the desire for Iraq to be free and peaceful, and I want to thank you for your leadership on that issue. It's really important for leaders to have allies that they can count on and rely on and who's got good judgment, and you do. Welcome to America.

Prime Minister Blair. Thanks. Well, thanks very much, Mr. President, and thank you for your help and support in getting the resolution through. I think it's been a really important time.

I think that the crucial thing now is that the people of Iraq know they've got the whole of the international community on side for Iraq as a stable and democratic country. And the terrorists and the fanatics and the extremists who are trying to stop this democracy happening know they've got the whole of the world against them, and that's the key thing.

President Bush. A couple of questions. Tom [Tom Raum, Associated Press].

NATO Involvement in Iraq/Iraqi Security Forces

Q. Mr. President and Mr. Prime Minister, do you think you can translate this momentum from yesterday's vote into getting more debt relief for Iraq? And also, what are you looking for now as a next step in terms of NATO involvement in the process?

President Bush. We discussed NATO—the NATO involvement over breakfast, and we believe NATO ought to be involved. We will work with our NATO friends to at least continue the role that now exists and hopefully expand it somewhat. There is going to be some constraints, obviously. A lot of NATO countries are not in a position to commit any more troops. We fully understand that. But I do think NATO ought to stay involved, and I think we have a good chance of getting that done.

Prime Minister Blair. I think that's right. And I think also the key next step in this is going to be for the new Iraqi government to sit down with the multinational force

and work out how, over time, the Iraqi capability for security can be established and built up. I mean, there is a capability that it is there at the moment, but we know that there are gaps in that capability. And we're there to help them and make sure that the Iraqis ultimately can take care of their own security, because that's, as the Iraqi Prime Minister has been saying, that's the key issue, and that's the one they want to deal with.

Iraqi Democracy

Q. I mean, given what's wrong in Iraq as well as what's gone right—if you see what I mean—is there any way you think that what's happening in Iraq can be a model for the rest of the Middle East, particularly given the fact that countries like Saudi Arabia have declined to come here?

Prime Minister Blair. Well, I think that—the one thing that's interesting, when you talk to the Iraqi Prime Minister and the new Iraqi government, is that they do see the possibility of a democratic Iraq being a force for good in their region as well as obviously being good for the people of Iraq.

I mean, I think this is a process of change, and we've got to help people manage it. And really what we're doing today is to say, "Look, sensible people sitting down and looking at the situation in the Middle East know that there needs to be a process of reform and change." Now, that's not for us to dictate to people, but it is for us to help them get there. And that's what this is about. And I think it's all part of the same picture, which is to say to people, the security challenge we face obviously has to be dealt with by security measures, but it's not just about security measures. It's not just about force. It's also about political and democratic reform, and it's about helping people to get to where they know, I think, really, but they need to be, that they need some help to get there.

President Bush. Steve [Steve Holland, Reuters].

President's Upcoming Meeting With President Yawr of Iraq

Q. Mr. President, you're seeing the new President of Iraq today. What are you going to tell him? What do you want to hear from him? And how can he and the other leaders function properly in the atmosphere of violence there?

President Bush. I'm going to tell him we're pulling for him and pulling for the people of Iraq, particularly those who have a deep desire to live in a free society. I'm going to thank him for having the courage to stand up and lead and tell him that America will help him. I'm also going to tell him that when we say "transfer full sovereignty," we mean transfer full sovereignty. He is the President of a sovereign nation, and therefore, he and the Prime Minister and the rest of the ministers must make decisions on—wise decisions on behalf of the Iraqi people.

I'm looking forward to the meeting with the man, and in one of my conversations with him, he thanked me for the sacrifices of coalition troops, for which I was most grateful. The American people need to know that there are people in Iraq who are deeply grateful for the fact that our sons and daughters have died for their freedom. And I'm sure the people of Great Britain want to hear that same message. I look forward to reminding him of what he told me in that phone call.

Final question—we've got to get ready. I've got to go over—I'm the host, so I've got to greet people. [*Laughter*]

Iraqi Opposition Forces

Q. What do you both say to the men of violence in Iraq, who will probably want to take no notice of this resolution?

President Bush. I will tell them that freedom will eventually prevail and that they are not going to drive us out of Iraq because of their random killing, that we will

not be intimidated by their murderous ways.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:50 a.m. at Dunbar House. In his remarks, he referred to President Ghazi al-Ujayl al-Yawr and Prime Minister Ayad Allawi of the Iraqi interim government.

Remarks Following Discussions With President Ghazi al-Ujayl al-Yawr of Iraq at Sea Island
June 9, 2004

President Bush. Mr. President, thanks for being here. This has been a special day for me and those of us in my administration who are here, because I really never thought I'd be sitting next to an Iraqi President of a free country a year and a half ago, and here you are. Not only are you here to visit with me—and we've had a wonderful talk—but you're here to talk to the leadership of the G–8, leaders of the free world. And I am so grateful you are here. Please convey my best wishes to your Prime Minister as well.

Yesterday the United Nations sent a clear message that the world supports a free Iraq. And the United States supports a transfer of full sovereignty to you, Mr. President, and your government. And having visited with you, having talked to you, and having listened to you, I have got great faith in the future of your country, because you believe in the hopes and aspirations of the Iraqi people.

It's been a proud day for me. I'm glad you're here.

President Yawr. Thank you. First of all, I'd like to, on behalf of the Iraqi people, to thank you for giving us this chance to attend the G–8 summit, where, again, thanks to the American people, for the leadership of President George Bush, without which we couldn't have been here into the G–8. Mr. President, I'd like to express to you the commitment of the Iraqi people to move toward democracy. We are moving in a steady—steady steps toward it. We're determined to have a free, democratic, federal Iraq, a country that is a source of stability to the Middle East, which is very important for the rest of the world.

Again, Mr. President, I'd like to thank the American people for the sacrifices that the brave men and women of the United States toward trying to liberate Iraq. We're working with all our hearts to make sure that all these sacrifices of the Iraqis, as well as our friends in the coalition, will not go to avail, that all these will be to the benefit of the Iraqi government.

Thank you very much, sir.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:49 p.m. at Dunbar House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Ayad Allawi of the Iraqi interim government.

G–8 Leaders' Statement on Trade
June 9, 2004

We face a moment of strategic economic opportunity: by combining an upturn in growth in various regions with a global reduction in barriers to trade, we can deepen,

broaden, and extend this economic expansion.

Trade liberalization is key to boosting global prosperity. It is one of the most effective ways to generate economic growth, and represents great potential for development and raising living standards.

We are committed to the multilateral trading system as the best means of achieving greater and effective trade liberalization and stronger global trade rules. The WTO has played a key role in driving global growth, and must continue to do so. The G–8 is committed to expanding economic growth, development, and opportunity by achieving ambitious results in the global trade negotiations, the Doha Development Agenda (DDA) of the WTO. We are encouraged by the reinvigoration of the negotiations in recent weeks. Working in cooperation with other WTO members, we are determined to move expeditiously before the end of July to complete the frameworks on key issues that will put these far-reaching negotiations on track toward a rapid and successful conclusion. We call on all WTO members to work constructively and swiftly so we can meet our shared commitment to the DDA.

Our most pressing task is to focus on the core issues in the negotiations, which are drivers of economic development and growth: substantially reducing trade-distorting agricultural subsidies and barriers to access to markets; opening markets more widely to trade in goods; expanding opportunities for trade in services; overhauling and improving customs rules and other relevant procedures to facilitate trade; and advancing the development of all countries, especially the poorest, within the WTO system. A consensus appears to be emerging on a way forward for these issues. We must ensure that we maintain a high and consistent level of ambition in all areas, while bearing in mind all members' sensitivities.

In agriculture, we are on the verge of an historic opportunity to meet our objectives established at Doha for fundamental agricultural reform encompassing strengthened rules and specific commitments on support and protection in order to correct and prevent restrictions and distortions in world agricultural markets. The next step is to secure the framework, by July, for these comprehensive negotiations on all forms of export competition, domestic support and market access. All three pillars of the agriculture negotiations must be treated with equal ambition. Cotton, a matter of primary concern to our African partners, can best be addressed ambitiously as part of the agricultural negotiations, while at the same time working on development-related issues with the international financial institutions.

Movement on agriculture will help generate progress in other core issues of the DDA, including agreement to launch negotiations on trade facilitation, as well as continuing to liberalize trade in manufactures and services, and strengthening WTO rules. In addition to expanding trade between developed and developing countries, it is particularly important that the DDA encourage the expansion of South-South trade. Open markets and domestic reform go hand in hand, offering the best means to further integrate developing countries into the global economy. We must ensure that as we look forward, the poorest are not left behind, but that they too develop the capacity to participate in the global trading system. We recognize that different countries will need to move at different speeds towards this aim.

The progressive integration by developing countries of trade into their development policies and poverty reduction strategies is crucial for their integration in the global economy, and will increase the benefits they derive from the multilateral trading system. We call on developing countries to further increase their efforts in this regard, and pledge to provide strong support in the form of technical assistance to build trading capacity.

We are determined to seize this moment of strategic economic opportunity. Therefore, we direct our ministers and call on all WTO members to finalize the frameworks by July to put the WTO negotiations back on track so that we can expeditiously complete the Doha Development Agenda.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Remarks Following Discussions With President Jacques Chirac of France at Sea Island

June 10, 2004

President Bush. It's good to have yet another discussion with Jacques Chirac. We had a wonderful visit in Paris. And again, I want to thank you for your hospitality. The food was superb, the hospitality warm——

President Chirac. Here, also.

President Bush. ——and our discussions were meaningful.

We continued our discussions about world poverty and world peace. Of course, we talked about Iraq. We had our differences in the past. But we're friends, and friends are able to discuss the future. And our hope is for peace and freedom around the world.

We consulted on some NATO—we're partners in NATO. We talked about a lot of issues, and one of the issues that we talked about was NATO and whether or not there is a continued role in Iraq for NATO. I assured the President we will continue to consult closely. The point is, is that we understand that the Iraqi people need help to defend themselves, to rebuild their country, and most importantly, to hold elections.

And I appreciate the chance to visit with Jacques.

President Chirac. Can I first of all say, as I said yesterday, tell President Bush our gratitude and our feelings of gratitude and our feelings of gratitude of the French people as a whole, in the context of the D-day celebrations. D-day was something that was terribly important for all the French people, and once again I'd like to thank the President for having made the trip and having heard, himself, the French people speak their words of thanks and gratitude and friendship. It was very moving for us.

And I also wanted to come and congratulate him for the way in which the G–8 was organized and conducted. It is a success.

We had an opportunity during the summit to discuss a number of issues. We've just reviewed some with our colleagues from the Middle East yesterday; we'll be doing so with our colleagues from Africa today. And this gave us an opportunity of reviewing the major areas of concerns for today's world, to better understand each other and also to prove our efforts for peace, development, and human rights.

And as I said, I'd like to thank once again the President for the hospitality here. The President was kind enough to mention French cuisine, but I can tell you that over the last few days, this cuisine here in America was certainly on a par with French cuisine, and I ask the President to convey my thanks to the chef.

President Bush. He particularly liked the cheeseburger he had yesterday. [*Laughter*]

President Chirac. It was excellent. [*Laughter*]

President Bush. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:45 a.m. at Dunbar House. President Chirac spoke in French, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

G–8 Statement on Sudan
June 10, 2004

We, the Leaders of the G–8, warmly welcome the May 26 signing by the Government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) of protocols on Power Sharing, Abyei, and on the Two Areas (of Southern Blue Nile and Nuba Mountains). We urge the parties to reach a final and comprehensive agreement which includes a timetable and security arrangements as quickly as possible. We hope that this agreement and its faithful implementation will end one of the world's most painful conflicts and begin a new era of Sudanese peace and prosperity.

We also wish to express our grave concern over the humanitarian, human rights, and political crisis in Darfur. We welcome the N'djamena ceasefire agreement of April 8, and the announcement on May 20 by the Government of Sudan that restrictions on humanitarian access will be eased. However, there are continuing reports of gross violations of human rights, many with an ethnic dimension. We call on all parties to the conflict to immediately and fully respect the ceasefire, allow unimpeded humanitarian access to all those in need, and create the conditions for the displaced to return safely to their homes. We call especially on the Sudanese government to disarm immediately the "Janjaweed" and other armed groups which are responsible for massive human rights violations in Darfur. We call on the conflict parties to address the roots of the Darfur conflict and to seek a political solution.

We support the African Union as it assumes the leading role in the monitoring mission which is now being sent to the Darfur region to supervise the cease-fire agreement.

We pledge our countries' assistance in ending the conflicts in Sudan and in providing humanitarian aid to those in need. We call on all parties to the conflicts in Sudan to commit themselves to respecting the right of all Sudanese to live in peace and dignity.

We look to the United Nations to lead the international effort to avert a major disaster and will work together to achieve this end.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

G–8 Statement: Gaza Withdrawal and the Road Ahead to Middle East Peace
June 10, 2004

The G–8 welcomes the prospect of Israeli withdrawal from all Gaza settlements and from parts of the West Bank, following the Israeli Cabinet decision to endorse Prime Minister Sharon's initiative. The G–8 looks forward to the implementation of

this decision in 2005, recalling the Quartet statement of 4 May that it "welcomes and encourages such a step, which should provide a rare moment of opportunity in the search for peace in the Middle East." The G–8 hopes that this disengagement initiative will stimulate progress towards peace in the region, the realization of Palestinian national aspirations and the achievement of our common objective of two states, Israel and a viable, democratic, sovereign and contiguous Palestine, living side by side in peace and security.

The G–8 views the Quartet Roadmap as the way forward towards a comprehensive settlement and calls on all parties to abide by their obligations under the Roadmap. The G–8 countries will join with others in the international community, led by the Quartet, to restore momentum on the Roadmap, to enhance humanitarian and economic conditions among the Palestinian people and to build democratic, transparent and accountable Palestinian institutions. We will also work to help ensure security and stability in Gaza and the areas of the West Bank from which Israel withdraws. We call on both sides to end all acts of violence.

In furtherance of these goals, the G–8 calls upon the Quartet to meet in the region before the end of this month, engage with Israeli and Palestinian representatives and set out its plans for taking forward in practical terms its declaration of May 4.

We support and commend all efforts, including those by Egypt, to resolve critical security issues relating to Gaza, and urge that this important work continue. We urge and support the rebuilding and refocusing of Palestinian security services in accordance with the Roadmap, so that they enforce the rule of law, mount effective operations against all forms of terrorism, and report to an empowered Interior Minister and Prime Minister.

We believe the important work of the Local Aid Coordinating Committee to alleviate the humanitarian situation in Gaza and the West Bank must continue. We suggest that preparations should begin now for a meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee with the aim of revitalizing the Palestinian economy. We welcome and encourage international support for the World Bank-established Trust Fund as an accountable and transparent mechanism for receipt of international assistance. We also welcome plans of the Palestinian Authority to hold municipal elections beginning at the end of the summer, and believe that the Task Force on Palestinian Reform should meet soon to assist in preparations to assure that these and subsequent elections will be fair and transparent, and serve as the building block of democratic reform.

The G–8 welcomes the international conference on UNRWA in Geneva and supports close coordination between all groups involved in international assistance.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

The President's News Conference in Savannah, Georgia
June 10, 2004

The President. Thank you all. Thanks for coming. We just completed a very successful summit. The nations of the G–8 are united in our desire to help bring stability and democracy to Iraq. We came together to support reform in the broader Middle East. We pledged to work together to build a more secure, peaceful, and prosperous world.

Laura and I thank the citizens of this part of our country. This was a successful summit because the people here made it successful by being so warm and gracious. The Southern hospitality was strong. The citizens of Sea Island and Brunswick and Savannah, as well as people from around Georgia, were just really great, and we thank them. All the leaders with whom I talked asked me to express my appreciation to the people of this part of the world.

I also thank the world leaders and their staffs who traveled so far to come here.

I especially want to thank the leaders for their kind words of condolence for President Ronald Reagan. Laura and I look forward to paying our respect to President Reagan tonight at the Capitol, and we look toward—forward to our visit with Nancy and the Reagan family at the Blair House tonight. Ronald Reagan was a great man, an historic leader, and a national treasure. I'm honored to speak tomorrow at the memorial service on behalf of a grateful nation.

This year's G–8 summit came at a crucial time. Our nations face a grave threat to our common security. We also face a moment of opportunity to undermine the appeal of terror by supporting the advance of liberty and prosperity throughout the world, especially in the broader Middle East. The momentum of freedom there is building. A free Iraq is rising in the heart of that vital region.

Across the Middle East, a consensus is emerging on the need for change. In Alexandria, Istanbul, the Dead Sea, Sona, and Aqaba, political, civil society, and business leaders have met to discuss modernization and reform and have issued stirring calls for political, economic, and social change. The nations of the G–8 recognize our special responsibility to help the people of the Middle East achieve the progress they seek. And here at Sea Island, we pledged that our nations will help further the causes of freedom and reform to help an increasing number of people join in the progress of our times.

I appreciate the support of the G–8 nations for the new United Nations Security Council resolution that expresses international support for Iraq's interim government and lays out a clear path to Iraqi democracy. The Iraqi people can know that the world stands with them in their quest for a peaceful, democratic, and prosperous future. And the enemies of freedom in that nation know that they are opposed by the might and resolve of free nations.

I'm grateful to the new President of the Iraqi interim government, President al-Yawr, for making the trip to Sea Island. I had a really good visit with him. He shared his thinking on the need to improve security, to make progress toward national elections no later than January of next year.

The nations of the G–8 are committed to the success of Iraq's government, to the defeat of its enemies, and to the future of Iraq as a free and democratic state. The defeat of terror worldwide and the success of freedom in Iraq are the challenges of the moment. The spread of freedom throughout the broader Middle East is the imperative of our age.

This year, G–8 nations and Turkey have united around a common agenda to use the energies and resources of our nations to support the momentum of freedom in the nations of the Middle East and North Africa. Working with leaders from the region, we have established the Partnership for Progress and a Common Future with nations of the broader Middle East. This partnership will seek to advance the universal values of human dignity, freedom, democracy, the rule of law, economic opportunity, and social justice.

We've also agreed to establish a Forum for the Future, which will bring together senior government officials from the Middle East with their G–8 counterparts and also regional business and civil society leaders with corresponding leaders from G–8 nations. In the forum, leaders will discuss

ideas that can help the nations of the Middle East create jobs, increase access to capital, improve literacy and education, protect human rights, and make progress toward democracy.

Reform must reflect the needs and realities of each country and be driven by the desires of the people. We have an obligation to support them in their search for a freer, more prosperous future. We will meet that obligation.

I thank the many leaders from the Middle East who came to this summit to describe their goals for their nations and who pledged their support for this project. The people of the broader Middle East yearn for democratic change, and their leaders understand and support the need for reform.

I also thank the spouses of the G–8 leaders and prominent women from the region who met to explore ways in which all of our nations can improve education and expand opportunities for women in the broader Middle East. I want to thank Laura for hosting that important meeting and for all that she has done over the past 3 years on behalf of the women and girls of the broader Middle East.

At this summit, we also agreed to take new action to stop the spread of weapons of mass destruction. Within the recent addition—with the recent addition of Russia, all G–8 member nations now participate in the Proliferation Security Initiative, which is designed to stop the trade in deadly weapons and the means to make and deliver them. Seven new donor nations have agreed to contribute funds to the global partnership to reduce and secure dangerous weapons and materials. We will expand the partnership's cooperation to address proliferation threats beyond the nations of the former Soviet Union.

G–8 nations have agreed to my proposal to establish a special committee within the International Atomic Energy Agency that will focus intensively on safeguards and verification. We're calling on all nations to sign and implement the additional protocol which will expand the IAEA's ability to inspect nuclear activities and facilities. We agreed that over the next year, our nations will not initiate any new transfers of uranium enrichment and reprocessing technology to additional nations, as we work toward a permanent means to keep these materials out of the hands of outlaw nations seeking nuclear weapons.

And the G–8 agreed for the first time to take concrete steps to expand national and international capabilities to prevent, detect, and respond to attacks with biological weapons.

Finally, we moved forward on our common efforts to make the world not only safer but better. We launched a new effort to train and equip 75,000 peacekeepers over the next 5 years to help bring stability and security to troubled regions, with an initial focus on the continent of Africa.

We established the Global HIV Vaccine Enterprise to accelerate the efforts of scientists to defeat HIV/AIDS. We pledged to break the cycle of famine in the Horn of Africa. We met with the heads of government from six African nations to discuss their ongoing work to improve health care, institute reform, and build prosperity for their peoples, as reflected in their commitment to the New Partnership for Africa's Development.

Over the long term, trade is the most certain path to lasting prosperity. Free and fair trade is the key engine of growth in the world. And as we spur growth in our own countries, we must continue to reduce the trade barriers that are an obstacle to growth in the developing world. G–8 nations reaffirmed our commitment to the success of the Doha Round of WTO trade negotiations. We directed our trade ministers to take action to get the negotiations back on track toward a successful conclusion.

The past several days have been full and productive. We've taken up many important tasks, and now we'll translate our consensus

into action. The United States looks forward to fulfilling the commitments we made at Sea Island. And the nations of the G–8 will stand together to advance the values of freedom and peace and human dignity.

Now I'll be glad to take a couple of questions. Tom [Tom Raum, Associated Press].

Iraqi Security

Q. Mr. President, you emphasized earlier today that Iraq needs help. But where, specifically, do you see this help coming from? Despite a U.N. resolution and despite the harmony here at the summit, no one else has stepped forward offering more debt relief or more troops. Doesn't it appear that the American face will be on the security of Iraq for a long time to come? So where——

The President. No, it doesn't appear that way. There will be an Iraqi face on the security of Iraq. The Iraqis will secure their own country. And we are there to help them do so. And we had great discussions today about how to help Iraq.

Tom, the resolution just got passed. I know we live in a world where everything is supposed to happen yesterday, but it doesn't work that way. And we're waiting for the Iraqi government to assess the situation and make requests to the free world. We'll respond to their requests when sovereignty is fully transferred. That's the definition of full sovereignty. You see, when a government is fully sovereign, they then make requests on behalf of their people.

And the response here at the G–8 has been very encouraging. In other words, the G–8 leaders have said, "We'll wait for their requests and see if we can't help." But just let me make the point again: Most of the security in Iraq will be provided by Iraqis, and we are there to help them.

Steve [Steve Holland, Reuters].

NATO's Role in Iraq

Q. Thanks, Mr. President. President Chirac said yesterday that NATO should not intervene in Iraq. Is that what you were proposing? Is a common ground possible before the Turkey summit?

The President. I suggested to the leaders of the G–8 that we listen to the needs of the Iraqi leadership. And if they ask for more training, for example, a good organization to provide that training would be NATO. As I said, I think, in your presence, as a matter of fact, I don't expect more troops from NATO to be offered up. That's an unrealistic expectation. Nobody is suggesting that. What we are suggesting is for NATO, perhaps, to help train. Now, that would come at the request of the Iraqi government. And I found a common spirit of wanting to help Iraq progress and become a peaceful country. People understand the stakes involved here. A democracy in the heart of the Middle East is going to be an important change for that region, that troubled region.

And I understand some in the world say this country can't be free and self-governing. Well, I disagree. I strongly believe it will be free and prosperous. And they need our help, and they'll have our help. And when they're free and prosperous, it will serve as a symbol, an example of that which is possible for other countries and other people.

See, I believe free societies best meet the aspirations of the people living in those societies. And we look forward to helping Iraq achieve that—the dream of being at peace and free and a country in which the people are able to express their opinions.

Sanger [David Sanger, New York Times].

Justice Department Advisory Opinion on Treatment of Prisoners

Q. Mr. President, the Justice Department issued an advisory opinion last year declaring that as Commander in Chief, you have the authority to order any kind of interrogation techniques that are necessary

to pursue the war on terror. Were you aware of this advisory opinion? Do you agree with it? And did you issue any such authorization at any time?

The President. No, the authorization I issued, David, was that anything we did would conform to U.S. law and would be consistent with international treaty obligations. That's the message I gave our people.

Q. Have you seen the memos?

The President. I can't remember if I've seen the memo or not, but I gave those instructions.

John [John King, Cable News Network], yes.

Libya

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Sir, I wanted to ask you about this Libyan plot to assassinate Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia. My understanding of it is that it came to the White House's attention in early April. The White House officials do believe that Qadhafi had some kind of involvement in it. I'm wondering if you could confirm that. Also, have you sent any kind of a message to Qadhafi about it? And what does it say about his intentions to truly renounce terrorism and rejoin the community of nations?

The President. Yes, I appreciate that question. What I can tell you is, is that we're going to make sure we fully understand the veracity of the plot line. And so we're looking into it, is the best way I can tell you. And when we find out the facts, we will deal with them accordingly.

Q. Was there any kind of message sent to him, sir?

The President. I don't talk to Colonel Qadhafi. I have sent a message to him that if he honors his commitments to resist terror and to fully disclose and disarm his weapons programs, we will begin a process of normalization, which we have done. We have begun that process. And now there's—we will make sure he honors his commitment.

John [John Dickerson, Time].

Middle Eastern Allies/Reform in the Middle East

Q. Mr. President, thank you. In the past and here at this summit, you have made crystal-clear how important this Middle East initiative is to you. And yet, key U.S. allies in the region, like Egypt, like Saudi Arabia, like Kuwait, refuse to send representatives to engage in the discussions. Do you take that as a personal slap, sir?

The President. No. [*Laughter*] Okay, I'll give your question more answer. [*Laughter*] This initiative is not important for me; it's important for the people of the region. That's what's important, for the people of the region to have a chance to live in a free society. And obviously, I believe it's possible that there will be free, self-governing countries in this vital part of the world. And so do others, including the leaders that came and spoke to us.

And look, I fully understand—look, there was some concern when the initiative was first proposed that this was America trying to make the world look like America. It's not going to happen. I fully understand that a free society in the Middle East is going to reflect the culture and traditions of the people in that country, not America.

I also understand it takes a while to adopt the habits of a democratic society and a free society. After all, it took our own country a while. You might remember the period of the Articles of Confederation. You do remember the period of the Articles—[*laughter*]—it just took us a while. It's not easy work. It's hard work, but we believe it is necessary work, because free societies are peaceful societies. The best way to defeat terror is to speak to the aspirations and hopes of women and men.

And so I understand, John, that there's a certain nervousness about whether or not people can adapt the institutions of freedom. But they shouldn't be nervous. They ought to welcome reform.

And you mentioned my friend the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia. He and I have discussed reform before. He understands the need to reform—it's not going to—you know, it's not going to meet the expectations of every American. But nevertheless, he understands the need to speak to the hopes and aspirations of his people.

And so it was a very positive meeting yesterday. And the statement ought to be very positive.

I had a very interesting moment when the Minister of—I think that her title is Minister of Displaced Persons in Iraq. She came with the President's delegation. And she took me aside and said, "You must understand, Mr. President, when you speak about reform in the Middle East, there are a lot of brave people who hear your words." And I shared that with my counterparts at the G–8, that people hear our words. Because, you know—and they're anxious that we honor what we say because they want to be free. They want to be free people.

Let's see here. Let's make sure we get fair—Jimmy Angle [FOX News]. Where are you? No show. Jon [Jonathan Karl, ABC News].

Q. Mr. President——

The President. ——it's very kind of me to call upon your network, even though the guy's name here, who was supposed to be here, didn't show. [*Laughter*] I haven't seen you in a while. Why are you covering Congress and not the White House?

Q. Well, I'm glad to be here, Mr. President.

The President. Okay, good. [*Laughter*]

Treatment of Prisoners

Q. Returning to the question of torture, if you knew a person was in U.S. custody and had specific information about an imminent terrorist attack that could kill hundreds or even thousands of Americans, would you authorize the use of any means necessary to get that information and to save those lives?

The President. Jonathan, what I've authorized is that we stay within U.S. law.

Gregory [David Gregory, NBC News].

Iraqi Security

Q. Yes, sir. Thank you, Mr. President. I was struck by something you said that it's the Iraqis who are going to be primarily responsible for their own security.

The President. Correct.

Q. How is that the case when you have said repeatedly that the terrorists and the killers in Iraq understand the stakes of this particular time and that they're only going to intensify their insurgency? I mean, isn't the reality that——

The President. Yes, go ahead.

Q. Haven't you said that?

The President. I have said that. No, I wasn't—I was just kind of—I'm trying to get to where your question is leading.

Q. Well, I guess I'm challenging the notion——

The President. I should not anticipate. I'm sorry.

Q. Okay, no, what I'm trying to do is challenge the notion that it's Iraqis who are going to be primarily responsible for their security when we've come through a period where, as you've noted, many of them are running away from their posts; they're not adequately trained. Isn't the reality that the United States is still very much alone in Iraq, going forward, even after the handover, in terms of securing the country?

The President. Well, first of all, David, there is a coalition on the ground in Iraq. If you're here to ask Prime Minister Blair a question, I would hope you wouldn't ask the question, "Do you think America is alone in Iraq?" He's got a lot of troops in Iraq, and other nations have troops in Iraq, all aiming to help the Iraqi people. But the long-term solution is going to be for the Iraqi people to secure their own country, David. That's the only way this

country is going to evolve into a prosperous, free society.

And I believe the full transfer of sovereignty is going to—will help the Iraqis understand the stakes. They will be responsible. It's their responsibility. We are there to help. And yes, the main security will be provided by the Iraqi citizens. It's—that's the duty of a government, is to train and equip and provide police and army to protect their people from people who are willing to kill innocent life.

Now, look, I fully concede, and have publicly, that I think things are still going to be tough there. The transfer of sovereignty isn't going to stop Zarqawi, an Al Qaida associate who, by the way, was in Baghdad prior to our arrival and still operates in the country. He's willing to kill innocent life. His desire is to kill anybody in his way, to try to shake the confidence of the Iraqi citizens as well as the citizens of the free world. He operates, and we're there to help the Iraqi citizens find him and bring him to justice. No question it's still going to be dangerous.

But the solution for Iraqi security is going to be provided by the Iraqis. That's what Prime Minister Allawi has said so clearly. I haven't met the Prime Minister yet, but he sounds like a very strong, courageous individual who says, "Look, we want—we want your help, but it's our responsibility to secure our country." And we're there to help.

Let's see here. I'm trying to curry favor with everybody, of course. [*Laughter*]

Q. ——in the back.

The President. I will in a minute. Hold on for a second. Dick [Richard Keil, Bloomberg News]. Yes, Dick. Sorry. I just got some—I've got some mandatories I've got to call on here. [*Laughter*] See, I have to live with these people. I don't have to live with you. [*Laughter*]

Q. Thank you for that, Mr. President.

Q. In that case, can I ask you another one?

The President. Yes, exactly, Roberts [John Roberts, CBS News]. [*Laughter*]

CIA Employee Identity Disclosure Investigation

Q. Given recent developments in the CIA leak case, particularly Vice President Cheney's discussions with the investigators, do you still stand by what you said several months ago, a suggestion that it might be difficult to identify anybody who leaked the agent's name?

The President. That's up to——

Q. And do you stand by your pledge to fire anyone found to have done so?

The President. Yes. And that's up to the U.S. Attorney to find the facts.

Q. My final point would be—or question would be, has Vice President Cheney assured you——

The President. It's up to the——

Q. ——subsequent to his conversations with them, that nobody——

The President. I haven't talked to the Vice President about this matter, and I suggest—recently—and I suggest you talk to the U.S. Attorney about that.

Hold on for a minute. I'm kind of observing for a second. I've got to call on the Texas newspaper. Hillman [G. Robert Hillman, Dallas Morning News].

U.S. Troops in Iraq

Q. Yes, Mr. President. In the wake of the U.N. resolution this week and the discussions here at Sea Island, what can you tell the American people about when U.S. troops might be coming home from Iraq in large numbers?

The President. When the job is done. Judy [Judy Keen, USA Today].

Honoring President Ronald Reagan

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Sir, since President Reagan's death, there seems to be new momentum behind efforts to rename the Pentagon for him or to put his image on American currency. Do you support either of those?

The President. Judy, look, I am going to Washington to pay honor to Mrs. Reagan and her family. I'll give a speech tomorrow, and then I will reflect on further ways to honor a great President.

Lakely [Jim Lakely, Washington Times].

United Nations and Iraq

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Many in this country and around the world believe that the United Nations' involvement in Iraq is necessary because the way you've conducted the war in Iraq is illegitimate and has lowered the moral standing of the United States around the world. However, one could also argue that the United Nations has moral authority problems of its own with the oil-for-food scandal in Iraq, for instance. How do you respond to those who think that the United Nations has greater moral standing in the world than the United States? Or do you think the United States maybe is held to a higher standard than the United Nations?

The President. I think the United States is a strong, compassionate nation. And as President of a strong, compassionate nation, I'll do what it takes to defend us. We're at war. We're at war with an enemy who killed thousands of our citizens on September the 11th, 2001. And since that time, they've killed hundreds elsewhere. They're killers, and I have an obligation to defend our country.

And the war on terror is a different kind of war. It requires international cooperation to fight it, and there's excellent international cooperation in the war against terror. There's excellence—there's excellent intelligence-sharing, not only with nations in the G–8 but nations throughout the world. There's excellent law enforcement operations—joint operations. We have got special forces from Europe side by side with special forces in the United States in remote regions of Afghanistan trying to find remnants of the Taliban and Al Qaida. There's substantial cooperation.

And that's the reason I went to the United Nations, to encourage cooperation. Plus, I wanted the United Nations to be a body that had the respect of the world, and when it said something, it meant it.

And so I went and took the case of Iraq to the United Nations. We got a unanimous United Nations Security Council resolution. It said, "Mr. Saddam Hussein, disclose your weapons programs. If you don't, face serious consequences." In my judgment, when a body or a person says "face serious consequences," you better mean it. Otherwise, future words ring hollow, and it would have made it less likely that international cooperation would have been effective in the war on terror.

So that's why I went to the United Nations. I have respect for the United Nations. I was pleased with the U.N. Security Council resolution at the United Nations. It had a positive effect on the Iraqi people to hear the world speak. It also had a practical effect on allowing world leaders to go to their parliaments and say, "The U.N. has spoken. Therefore, let us continue missions." And I think it's a positive development when the U.N. is able to work together, and we are working together. We're working together a lot, on a lot of fronts, and that's what's going to have to continue to happen as we fight the war on terror.

Let me say it again: There's an enemy which lurks out there that is willing to kill on a moment's notice. They're trying to shake the world's confidence. They want us to retreat. They want us to surrender. They want us to say, "You win. We'll leave regions of the country." And so long as I'm the President of the United States, we'll be determined and firm and committed to fighting this enemy, for the good of all free people, so people can grow up without fear.

All right, I'm going to do a little something here. Clive, BBC [Clive Myrie]. Where are you, Clive?

Q. He's not here, but I'll—[*laughter*].

The President. You qualify. [*Laughter*] It's about—you've been to almost all my press conferences, and you've never asked a question.

Q. Well, thank you very much, Mr. President.

The President. Where is Clive?

Q. Back here, sir. [*Laughter*]

The President. Back where? Clive, I'm sorry.

Q. Sorry, Clive. [*Laughter*]

The President. There's a surrogate Clive here. [*Laughter*]

Treatment of Prisoners

Q. Mr. President, I wanted to return to the question of torture. What we've learned from these memos this week is that the Department of Justice lawyers and the Pentagon lawyers have essentially worked out a way that U.S. officials can torture detainees without running afoul of the law. So when you say that you want the U.S. to adhere to international and U.S. laws, that's not very comforting. This is a moral question: Is torture ever justified?

The President. Look, I'm going to say it one more time. If I—maybe I can be more clear. The instructions went out to our people to adhere to law. That ought to comfort you. We're a nation of law. We adhere to laws. We have laws on the books. You might look at those laws, and that might provide comfort for you. And those were the instructions out of—from me to the Government.

All right, Al Hurra. Good, thank you for coming.

Saddam Hussein/President's Meeting With Tortured Iraqis

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. You do have now the personal gun of Saddam Hussein. Are you willing to give it to President al-Yawr as a symbolic gift, or are you keeping it? [*Laughter*]

The President. What she's referring to is a—members of a Delta team came to see me in the Oval Office and brought with me—these were the people that found Saddam Hussein, the dictator of Iraq, hiding in a hole. And by the way, let me remind everybody about Saddam Hussein, just in case we all forget. There were mass graves under his leadership. There were torture chambers. Saddam Hussein, if you—we had seven people come to my office. Perhaps the foreign press didn't see this story. Seven people came to my—they had their hands cut off because the Iraqi currency had devalued. And Saddam Hussein needed somebody to blame, so he blamed small merchants, and their hands were chopped off, their right hand.

Fortunately, a documentary filmmaker went to Baghdad and filmed the—filmed these seven men. And their story was picked up around the Nation, particularly in Houston, Texas, where a person named Marvin Zindler, who runs a foundation, took great sympathy and flew them over and had new hands put on. The latest prosthesis was put on their hand—was put on their arms. And their hands worked. I remember the guy signing "God Bless America" with his new hand in the Oval Office.

So this is the person. So needless to say, our people were thrilled to have captured him. And in his lap was several weapons. One of them was a pistol. And they brought it to me. It's now the property of the U.S. Government. And I am—it—I'm grateful for their bravery. I'm also grateful that that part of the mission was accomplished, for the good of the Iraqi people.

Deans [Bob Deans, Cox Newspapers]. This is your area, right?

Q. Yes, sir.

The President. Yes.

Q. Thank you so much.

The President. Is any local press here, at all, by the way? Any local? Okay.

Iraqi Weapons of Mass Destruction

Q. Mr. President, a year ago in Evian, there was an expectation that in the ensuing months weapons such as chemical or biological weapons would be found in Iraq.

I wonder if you can share with the American people your conclusions, based on what you've learned over the past 15 months, sir, as to whether those weapons were—existed and they were hidden; were they destroyed; were they somehow spirited out of the country; or perhaps they weren't there before the war—and whether you had a chance to share this with your G–8 partners.

The President. Right, no—Bob, it's a good question. I don't know—I haven't reached a final conclusion yet because the inspectors—inspection teams aren't back yet. I do know that Saddam Hussein had the capacity to make weapons. I do know he's a dangerous person. I know he used weapons against his own people and against the neighborhood. But we'll wait until Charlie gets back with the final report, and then I'll be glad to report.

Local man, thanks.

G–8 Summit at Sea Island

Q. Mr. President, Sonny Dixon, WTOC in Savannah. I'm a native of this region, by the way. Stating the obvious, begging the indulgence of these fine people, this has been a terrific undertaking for our region of the country. We appreciate your words regarding hospitality. But in terms of logistics, facilities, and security, your observations on this G–8 summit.

The President. Thank you. First, I want to thank the local citizens for putting up with all the security. I was riding my bike down the road in Sea Island, and a lady was just driving along the road, very happy, and the next thing she knows, some friendly agents were heading right in her way. [*Laughter*] And she, of course, pulled over, and I zoomed by. I felt like stopping to tell her, "Thanks. I apologize for the inconvenience."

I also had the honor of going by and thanking the local, State, and Federal folks who provided the security at the airport over there on St. Simons Island. The cooperation was fantastic. The local sheriffs and police chiefs need to be commended and so do their people for working so well with the State and Federal people.

It—look, this is—we made the right choice to come down here for this summit. The people were just spectacular. And I'll tell you, I generally don't put words in a foreign leader's mouth, but today Jacques Chirac said the food was great. [*Laughter*] And so, of course, I told the chefs. And they recognize that it's a heck of a lot better to hear the food is great from Jacques Chirac than George W. Bush. [*Laughter*] But it's really good.

Thank you for asking that, because it's been a spectacular success, primarily because the people are so wonderful down here.

Let's see here—Andrei Sitov from ITAR-TASS. Andrei, good to see you. How are you?

Q. Doing great.

The President. That's good.

Jacques Chirac/Vladimir Putin

Q. G–8s are supposed to be about informal contacts between leaders, so I wanted to ask you, sir, how do policy differences that sometimes happen between you and your foreign partners, how do they affect your personal relationship with those leaders? Thank you, sir.

The President. Yes. Well, we go to different corners of the room, and we face the wall—no. [*Laughter*] Look, there is—we're united by values. We're united by common values. And therefore, it's a easy place to start conversations. And it's to be expected that nations don't always agree on every issue. But we do agree in the power of free societies. We do agree in a free press. We don't necessarily agree everything the free press writes, but we agree in a free press. We agree with free religions. There's great agreement. And so therefore, it's—this is a—it facilitates good and healthy conversation. And look, there was obviously a disagreement over whether or not we enforced the demands of the

U.N. I fully understand that, but now that's past.

And I know there's great speculation about the relationship between the United States and France. Let's face it. Most people say the United States and the world differ. No, it's the United States and France. That's where the focus generally is, and as Jacques Chirac said yesterday, relations with the United States are excellent. He's right. That doesn't mean we agree every time we speak. But nevertheless, we've got very good relations, and I appreciate my working relationship with him.

And so the meetings are very cordial. And you probably want me to say something about Vladimir Putin. Yes, well, it's because you—I've always had good relations with Vladimir, ever since the first time I met him. You remember where I met him first?

Q. Slovenia.

The President. Very good. Very good, yes. [*Laughter*] That's impressive. But he's a—you know, he is a person who's got strong opinions, and I admire his strong opinions. I like courageous leaders, people who express their opinions. It's—to me, it's hard to have a good meeting with somebody if you're always wondering what their opinion is, and you kind of leave feeling somewhat empty. That's not how you get things done, as far as I'm concerned. When you sit around the table, you say what's on your mind—you know, "Here's what I think. What do you think?"—and if there's a difference, try to explain the differences and try to find common ground to work together.

We've got too much to do in a world beset by terror, poverty, and disease to allow a policy difference to prevent us from working together. And that's why these G–8 summits are meaningful and worthwhile. And that's why I'm really glad to have been the host here in Georgia.

Putting the hook on me? Okay. Listen, we're off to Washington. I've got a—I've got the—I will be paying tribute to President Reagan here in about an hour and a half or so and then will be visiting with Mrs. Reagan at the Blair House. I appreciate your understanding for the need for us, whoever is traveling with me, to get moving so that we can be on time for a solemn night and a day of remembrance tomorrow for a magnificent world leader.

God bless you all. Thanks for coming.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 3:27 p.m. at the International Media Center. In his remarks, he referred to President Ghazi al-Ujayl al-Yawr, Minister of Displacement and Migration Pascale Isho Warda, and Prime Minister Ayad Allawi of the Iraqi interim government; Col. Muammar Abu Minyar al-Qadhafi, leader of Libya; Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia; Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom; senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi; Don North, video producer; Marvin Zindler, member, board of directors, Agris-Zindler Children's Fund; Charles Duelfer, head of the Iraq Survey Group; President Jacques Chirac of France; and President Vladimir Putin of Russia.

Eulogy at the National Funeral Service for President Ronald Reagan
June 11, 2004

Mrs. Reagan, Patti, Michael, and Ron; members of the Reagan family; distinguished guests, including our Presidents and First Ladies; Reverend Danforth; fellow citizens:

We lost Ronald Reagan only days ago, but we have missed him for a long time. We have missed his kindly presence, that reassuring voice, and the happy ending we had wished for him. It has been 10 years since he said his own farewell, yet it is still very sad and hard to let him go. Ronald Reagan belongs to the ages now, but we preferred it when he belonged to us.

In a life of good fortune, he valued above all the gracious gift of his wife, Nancy. During his career, Ronald Reagan passed through a thousand crowded places, but there was only one person, he said, who could make him lonely by just leaving the room.

America honors you, Nancy, for the loyalty and love you gave this man on a wonderful journey and to that journey's end. Today our whole Nation grieves with you and your family.

When the sun sets tonight off the coast of California and we lay to rest our 40th President, a great American story will close. The second son of Nelle and Jack Reagan first knew the world as a place of open plains, quiet streets, gas-lit rooms, and carriages drawn by horse. If you could go back to the Dixon, Illinois, of 1922, you'd find a boy of 11 reading adventure stories at the public library or running with his brother, Neil, along Rock River and coming home to a little house on Hennepin Avenue. That town was the kind of place you remember where you prayed side by side with your neighbors, and if things were going wrong for them, you prayed for them and knew they'd pray for you if things went wrong for you.

The Reagan family would see its share of hardship, struggle, and uncertainty. And out of that circumstance came a young man of steadiness, calm, and a cheerful confidence that life would bring good things. The qualities all of us have seen in Ronald Reagan were first spotted 70 and 80 years ago. As the lifeguard in Lowell Park, he was the protector keeping an eye out for trouble. As a sports announcer on the radio, he was the friendly voice that made you see the game as he did. As an actor, he was the handsome, all-American good guy, which in his case required knowing his lines—and being himself.

Along the way, certain convictions were formed and fixed in the man. Ronald Reagan believed that everything happens for a reason and that we should strive to know and do the will of God. He believed that the gentleman always does the kindest thing. He believed that people were basically good and had the right to be free. He believed that bigotry and prejudice were the worst things a person could be guilty of. He believed in the Golden Rule and in the power of prayer. He believed that America was not just a place in the world but the hope of the world.

And he believed in taking a break now and then, because, as he said, "There's nothing better for the inside of a man than the outside of a horse."

Ronald Reagan spent decades in the film industry and in politics, fields known on occasion to change a man—but not this man. From Dixon to Des Moines to Hollywood to Sacramento to Washington, DC, all who met him remembered the same sincere, honest, upright fellow. Ronald Reagan's deepest beliefs never had much to do with fashion or convenience. His convictions were always politely stated, affably argued, and as firm and straight as the columns of this cathedral.

There came a point in Ronald Reagan's film career when people started seeing a future beyond the movies. The actor Robert Cummings recalled one occasion. "I was sitting around the set with all these people, and we were listening to Ronnie, quite absorbed. I said, 'Ron, have you ever considered someday becoming President?' He said, 'President of what?' 'President of the United States,' I said. And he said, 'What's the matter, don't you like my acting either?' " [*Laughter*]

The clarity and intensity of Ronald Reagan's convictions led to speaking engagements around the country and a new following he did not seek or expect. He often began his speeches by saying, "I'm going to talk about controversial things." And then he spoke of communist rulers as slavemasters, of a Government in Washington that had far overstepped its proper limits, of a time for choosing that was drawing near. In the space of a few years, he took ideas and principles that were mainly found in journals and books and turned them into a broad, hopeful movement ready to govern.

As soon as Ronald Reagan became California's Governor, observers saw a star in the West, tanned, well-tailored, in command, and on his way. In the 1960s, his friend Bill Buckley wrote, "Reagan is indisputably a part of America, and he may become a part of American history."

Ronald Reagan's moment arrived in 1980. He came out ahead of some very good men, including one from Plains and one from Houston. What followed was one of the decisive decades of the century, as the convictions that shaped the President began to shape the times.

He came to office with great hopes for America and more than hopes. Like the President he had revered and once saw in person, Franklin Roosevelt, Ronald Reagan matched an optimistic temperament with bold, persistent action. President Reagan was optimistic about the great promise of economic reform, and he acted to restore the rewards and spirit of enterprise. He was optimistic that a strong America could advance the peace, and he acted to build the strength that mission required. He was optimistic that liberty would thrive wherever it was planted, and he acted to defend liberty wherever it was threatened.

And Ronald Reagan believed in the power of truth in the conduct of world affairs. When he saw evil camped across the horizon, he called that evil by its name. There were no doubters in the prisons and gulags where dissidents spread the news, tapping to each other in code what the American President had dared to say. There were no doubters in the shipyards and churches and secret labor meetings where brave men and women began to hear the creaking and rumbling of a collapsing empire. And there were no doubters among those who swung hammers at the hated wall that the first and hardest blow had been struck by President Ronald Reagan.

The ideology he opposed throughout his political life insisted that history was moved by impersonal tides and unalterable fates. Ronald Reagan believed instead in the courage and triumph of free men, and we believe it all the more because we saw that courage in him.

As he showed what a President should be, he also showed us what a man should be. Ronald Reagan carried himself, even in the most powerful office, with a decency and attention to small kindnesses that also defined a good life. He was a courtly, gentle, and considerate man, never known to slight or embarrass others.

Many people across the country cherish letters he wrote in his own hand to family members on important occasions, to old friends dealing with sickness and loss, to strangers with questions about his days in Hollywood. A boy once wrote to him requesting Federal assistance to help clean up his bedroom. [*Laughter*] The President replied that, "Unfortunately, funds are dangerously low." [*Laughter*] He continued, "I'm sure your mother was fully justified in proclaiming your room a disaster. Therefore, you are in an excellent position to launch another volunteer program in our Nation. Congratulations." [*Laughter*]

See, our 40th President wore his title lightly, and it fit like a white Stetson. In the end, through his belief in our country and his love for our country, he became an enduring symbol of our country. We think of his steady stride, that tilt of the head and snap of the salute, the big-screen

smile, and the glint in his Irish eyes when a story came to mind.

We think of a man advancing in years with the sweetness and sincerity of a Scout saying the Pledge. We think of that grave expression that sometimes came over his face, the seriousness of a man angered by injustice and frightened by nothing. We know, as he always said, that America's best days are ahead of us, but with Ronald Reagan's passing, some very fine days are behind us, and that is worth our tears.

Americans saw death approach Ronald Reagan twice, in a moment of violence and then in the years of departing light. He met both with courage and grace. In these trials, he showed how a man so enchanted by life can be at peace with life's end.

And where does that strength come from? Where is that courage learned? It is the faith of a boy who read the Bible with his mom. It is the faith of a man lying in an operating room who prayed for the one who shot him before he prayed for himself. It is the faith of a man with a fearful illness who waited on the Lord to call him home.

Now death has done all that death can do. And as Ronald Wilson Reagan goes his way, we are left with the joyful hope he shared. In his last years, he saw through a glass darkly. Now he sees his Savior face to face.

And we look for that fine day when we will see him again, all weariness gone, clear of mind, strong and sure and smiling again, and the sorrow of this parting gone forever.

May God bless Ronald Reagan and the country he loved.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:09 p.m. at the National Cathedral. In his remarks, he referred to Episcopal minister and former Senator John C. Danforth of Missouri. The related proclamation and Executive order of June 6 are listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume. The related proclamation of July 2 is printed in the *Federal Register* at 69 *FR* 41179.

The President's Radio Address
June 12, 2004

Good morning. This week, America mourned the passing of President Ronald Reagan. We remembered a gentle, decent man and one of the greatest leaders our Nation has known. He was a courageous patriot whose leadership transformed the country and the world he leaves behind.

In this time of sadness, we think especially of Nancy Reagan, a loyal, loving wife of 52 years, and the President's three children and the rest of the Reagan family.

Ronald Wilson Reagan entered the world more than 93 years ago in an apartment above a local bank in Illinois. His life would include success in careers from sports broadcasting to film acting to public office. Along the way, his deepest convictions were formed, and through all the trials of life, those convictions never wavered.

Ronald Reagan believed that everything happens for a reason and that we can trust in God's purposes. He believed that people are basically good. He had no tolerance for bigotry or injustice. Above all, he believed in the courage and triumph of free men and in the capacity of the American people to overcome any obstacle.

President Reagan brought those convictions to the White House in 1981, and he departed 8 years later with achievements that have endured. With bold, persistent action, he restored the confidence of our

Nation, strengthened the spirit of free enterprise, challenged and shamed an oppressive empire, and inspired millions with his conviction and moral courage.

As he showed what a President should be, he also showed us what a man should be. Ronald Reagan carried himself with a decency and attention to the small kindnesses that also define a good life. He was a courtly, gentle, and considerate man, never known to slight or embarrass others. From the Oval Office, he took time to answer letters from schoolchildren and grandmothers and countless strangers curious about life in the White House.

Ronald Reagan deeply loved the United States of America, and that love is being returned. Over the past week, tens of thousands of mourners stood in line in California and in Washington, DC, to pay their final respects. There were 21-gun salutes and dignified processions and homemade memorials at a funeral home in Santa Monica.

Now that Nancy Reagan has taken her husband to his place of rest, we offer our gratitude. Our country is stronger and our world is freer for the brave leadership of this modest son of America. Ronald Reagan always told us that for America, our best was yet to come. We know that is true for him too. His work is done, and now a shining city awaits him.

May God bless Ronald Reagan. Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 10:01 a.m. on June 11 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on June 12. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 11 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address. The related proclamation and Executive order of June 6 are listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume. The related proclamation of July 2 is printed in the *Federal Register* at 69 *FR* 41179.

Remarks at an 80th Birthday Celebration for President George H.W. Bush in Houston, Texas

June 12, 2004

Thank you all. As you can see, I have been given the high honor to represent my three brothers, my sister, and our respective families at the 80th birthday party for our dad, our Gampy.

You're probably wondering how I got to be the family spokesman. [*Laughter*] Well, we polled the family, and rumor has it, somewhere in our large family, the tiebreaking vote for tonight's speaker was cast by a fourth cousin by the name of Chad. [*Laughter*] While holding his son above the crib, Chad's father reports that the lad burped, and it sounded like "George W." [*Laughter*] Once again, my life was affected by a dangling chad. [*Laughter*]

Yesterday we said farewell to a good man, our 40th President, Ronald Reagan. Today we honor another good man. I want to thank you all for coming to wish our dad a happy birthday.

We thank those who worked so hard to make this event a great success. We thank the entertainers for coming. Right before I came on the stage, I had a chance to say hello to Dennis Miller. He was somewhat disappointed. I said, "Why?" He said, "I thought we were raising money for a thousand pints of light." [*Laughter*]

We thank the underwriters, the sponsors, and the organizing committee. We thank the honorary chairman, Dan Quayle. Dan's not only a good friend; he's one of our three favorite Vice Presidents—you know, Dick, Dan, and Dad. [*Laughter*]

Most of you are here because over the years you have come to know and love our dad—as well as his rather shy and retiring wife. [*Laughter*] He has touched you because of his decency and warmth, his humility and humor. You know what we know, that we are all fortunate to have George Bush as a part of our lives.

Some of you are here to pay tribute to a man who has made your life's calling a little easier. Because of our honoree's sense of duty and service, millions have been raised to heal hurt and disease as well as educate our young. Some are here to see the 80-year-old dude who tomorrow will strap on a helmet, zip up a suit, and launch forth from a perfectly safe aerospace vehicle, arms sprayed, back arched, yelling at Father Time, "Take this, you old man." One or two of you thought the Astros were at home. [*Laughter*]

Jeb, Neil, Marvin, Doro, and I are here with our families because of our deep and pure love for our dad. We love his enthusiasm for life and his dedication to his faith, his family, his friends, and his country. We respect and honor the example he has set in service to our Nation, as a fighter pilot, a Representative, a diplomat, and a President. We take comfort in knowing that he was the same caring, decent man before, during, and after his time in the arena.

We like to do things with him. He is a fun guy. We like to fish, throw a shoe, play peggity, or play golf with him. We like to talk and laugh with him. We still get a kick out of his dirty shirt joke or "show him a clean one" line. We understand his gentle tease and have learned the art of the effective needle from him. We appreciate those times when he gives us ample material with his weird taste in clothes. [*Laughter*]

We are awed by his energy, his zest for life. If ever there was a guy who could say his dance card was completely full, it is our dad. We love the fact that he loves Mother. And we are amazed and deeply touched by his unconditional love for us.

So here's to you, young fella. May God grant you health, joy, and many years of happiness. God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:30 p.m. at Minute Maid Park.

Remarks on the Unveiling of the Official Portraits of President William J. Clinton and First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton
June 14, 2004

Good morning. Thank you, Henry. Laura and I appreciate you all coming. President Clinton and Senator Clinton, welcome home. All who live here are temporary residents. The portraits that are presented today will be held permanently in the White House collection for all the ages. And so beginning today, the likenesses of President William Jefferson Clinton and First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton will take their place in a line that began with George and Martha Washington.

Laura and I are pleased to welcome members of the Clinton and Rodham family. Thank you all for coming. It's great to see Chelsea. The fact that you survived your teenage years in the White House—[*laughter*]—speaks to the fact that you had a great mom and dad. We are pleased that Mrs. Dorothy Rodham is here. Welcome.

We're glad you're here and those two boys you're still trying to raise. [*Laughter*] Hugh and Tony, thank you for coming. We're glad you're here.

It's good to see so many who served our Nation so ably in the Clinton administration. Thank you all for coming back. Thanks for your service to the country, and welcome back to the White House. We're really glad you're here, and I know the President is as well.

As you might know, my father and I have decided to call each other by numbers. [*Laughter*] He's 41; I'm 43. It's a great honor to—it's a great pleasure to honor number 42. We're glad you're here, 42.

The years have done a lot to clarify the strengths of this man. As a candidate for any office, whether it be the State attorney general or the President, Bill Clinton showed incredible energy and great personal appeal. As Chief Executive, he showed a deep and far-ranging knowledge of public policy, a great compassion for people in need, and the forward-looking spirit that Americans like in a President. Bill Clinton could always see a better day ahead, and Americans knew he was working hard to bring that day closer.

Over 8 years, it was clear that Bill Clinton loved the job of the Presidency. He filled this house with energy and joy. He's a man of enthusiasm and warmth, who could make a compelling case and effectively advance the causes that drew him to public service.

People saw those gifts very early in Bill Clinton. He is remembered in Hope, Arkansas, and other places along the way as an eager, good-hearted boy who seemed destined for big things. I was particularly struck by the story of a nun at St. John's School in Hot Springs who decided that Billy Clinton should get a C in deportment. That was a rare grade for the future Rhodes scholar and President. [*Laughter*] So Bill's mother gave the nun a call to see what was wrong. The sister replied, "Oh, nothing much. But let me tell you, this boy knows the answer to every question, and he just leaps to his feet before anyone else can." [*Laughter*] She went on, you know, "I know he'll not tolerate this C, but it'll be good for him. And I promise you, if he wants to be, he will be President someday."

People in Bill Clinton's life have always expected him to succeed, and more than that, they wanted him to succeed. And meeting those expectations took more than charm and intellect. It took hard work and drive and determination and optimism. And after all, you've got to be optimistic to give 6 months of your life running the McGovern campaign in Texas. [*Laughter*]

He won his first statewide office at age 30, sworn in as Governor at 32. He was a five-time Governor of Arkansas, the first man from that State to become the President. He's also the first man in his party since Franklin Roosevelt to win a second term in the White House. And I could tell you more of the story, but it's coming out in fine bookstores all over America. [*Laughter*]

At every stage in the extraordinary rise of Bill Clinton, from the little ranch house on Scully Street to 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, he and Roger had a wonderful, loving mother, and I am certain that Virginia Kelley would be filled with incredible pride this morning.

And so would Hugh Rodham, Senior. Mr. Rodham did have the joy of seeing his only daughter become America's First Lady. And I know he would not be surprised to see her as she is today, an elected United States Senator and a woman greatly admired in our country.

From the earliest days of her youth in Park Ridge, Illinois, Hillary Rodham impressed her family and friends as a person of great ability and serious purpose. At Maine Township High School South, at Wellesley College, and at Yale Law School, classmates saw her not just as an achiever but as a role model and as a leader. She

inspires respect and loyalty from those who know her. And it was a good day in both their lives when they met at the library at Yale Law School. [*Laughter*]

Hillary's commitment to public service continued when she left this house. Listen, New York politics is a serious business—[*laughter*]—it's rough business. It takes an extraordinary person to campaign and win the United States Senate. She has proven herself more equal to the challenge, and she takes an interesting spot on American history today, for she is the only sitting Senator whose portrait hangs in the White House.

The paintings of the Clintons are the work of a fine American artist, Simmie Knox. Mr. Knox has rendered portraits of a Supreme Court Justice, a Cabinet minister, a mayor, and Members of Congress. And today we thank him for putting his skilled hand to the portraits that are about to be unveiled.

More than 40 years have passed since a boy of 16 came here to the White House with a group from the American Legion Boys Nation. On that day in the summer of 1963, Bill Clinton of Arkansas looked into the face of John F. Kennedy and left the Rose Garden feeling very proud that he had shaken the hand of a President. Today he can be even prouder of decades of service and effort and perseverance that brought him back to this place as the 42d President of the United States.

My congratulations to you both, and now will you join me on the stage for the presentation.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:35 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Henry A. Dudley, Jr., chairman, White House Historical Association.

Exchange With Reporters in Liberty, Missouri
June 14, 2004

Medicare Drug Discount Card

Q. How much did she save, Mr. President?

The President. Seventeen dollars. Her total cost is $1.90.

Q. Not bad.

The President. So, like, if you add $17 to $1.90—[*laughter*]—here, Wanda, come over here. Give us your card.

One of the reasons we're here is we want people to understand the benefits of this card so more people use it.

Wanda Blackmore. This is my Medicare card.

The President. Yes, brand new. When did you get it?

Ms. Blackmore. I got this Saturday, and this is the second time I've used it.

The President. What's that going to do for you?

Ms. Blackmore. Keep my blood flowing.

The President. Keep your blood flowing. [*Laughter*]

NOTE: The exchange began at 3:11 p.m. at the Hy-Vee pharmacy. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Remarks in a Discussion at the Liberty Community Center in Liberty *June 14, 2004*

The President. Thank you very much. Thanks for coming. We're glad to be in Liberty, aren't we? What a great town. Gosh, I want to thank the citizens for lining the street and waving to us coming in. [*Laughter*] I really appreciate it. Mr. Mayor—I know the mayor is here, Steve Hawkins. Mayor, thank you for—please thank the citizens of your city for being so kind, and it's really great to be here.

You're wondering why I'm on stage with some local citizens, important Washington, DC-type personalities—[*laughter*]—it's because we're going to talk about something really important that's happening in the country, and that is, we're going to talk about how to make sure our seniors get the best health care possible. That's what we're here to talk about. We've got some—this is going to be a very interesting discussion, one that I think you'll find to be educational, one that will help illuminate what's going on with a good piece of law in a practical way.

Before I do, I want to say something about my friend Sam Graves. Congressman Graves, thank you for coming. I asked him what he did to lose weight. [*Laughter*] He looks a lot prettier now than he used to. [*Laughter*] He said he quit eating sugar. But he is a fine Congressman. I really enjoy working with him. And I appreciate you being here, Sam. He's from a farming background. He's plenty capable and plenty smart. And I'm saying that because I want him to feel good as he gets back in the limousine. I'm giving him a ride on Air Force One back to Washington. [*Laughter*]

I'm with my friend Mark McClellan. I'll tell you about him in a minute.

Today when I landed, I met a lady named Ruth Blake. Where are you, Ruth? Yes, there she is. Ruth, thank you for coming. You're probably wondering why I'm introducing Ruth. The reason why is she's from Shepherd's Center, which is a—[*applause*]—sounds like you brought your family. [*Laughter*] Ruth is a volunteer. She manages the adult education program that educates and empowers seniors. And the reason I bring that up is I just want our fellow citizens here in Liberty, Missouri, to understand that I know the great strength of the country is the heart and souls of the American people, that our greatest strength—[*applause*].

I see some of our military folks here. That's a strength of America. We'll keep the military strong. And we've got to keep the military strong to make the world—to help the world be a peaceful world. It's incumbent upon America to lead and work with other nations to spread freedom. Free countries are peaceful countries. And I believe we have an obligation to work toward freedom and peace, not only for our own security, not only because we must never forget the lessons of September the 11th but because, in this Nation, we understand that freedom is not America's gift to the world. Freedom is the Almighty God's gift to each man and woman in this world.

Another strength of America is the fact that we're a wealthy nation, and that's important. It's important that we stay that way, so people can find work; they can put food on the table; people can do their duty as a mom or a dad.

But our true strength is the fact that we've got loving citizens who are willing to volunteer to help change America, one heart and one soul at a time. My call to our fellow citizens is to join the army of compassion, which exists in every neighborhood in every city of our great land. Make a difference by teaching a child or an adult to read, by providing food to the hungry, shelter to the homeless, and together, we can make sure the great promise and hope

of America is extended to every corner of our great country.

I'm honored you're here. Thanks for coming. Thanks for representing the best of America.

Nearly 39 years ago, not far from here, President Lyndon Baines Johnson signed the Medicare law, the first Medicare law. And interestingly enough, the first Medicare card was handed to Harry Truman. You might remember him—[*laughter*]—a fine President, I might add. But Medicare, which had done a great job for many years, got stuck in the past. In other words, medicine began to change, but Medicare wouldn't change with it.

For years, politicians talked about modernizing Medicare. Nothing got done, though. As a matter of fact, as you might remember, it became, in political parlance, "Medi-scare." In other words, somebody would talk about it, and they'd use it against him as a political weapon. And it was time to get rid of that kind of talk because Medicare is too important a program for our seniors.

We were willing to provide money for operations, but we weren't willing to pay for the drugs that would prevent the operation from needing to happen in the first place. See, it was stuck in the past. The procedures were too old, and it required bureaucratic action to make sure that the modern medicine was available to our seniors. It kind of crept along. It wasn't doing its job. So we called Congress to task—I called Congress to task. I said, "Let's do our duty as elected officials to make the system work better on behalf of our senior citizens." Congress passed the law. I proudly signed it, and it's going to make a positive difference, a big difference in the lives of our seniors.

We're really in a three-stage process. We're going to talk about the first stage of Medicare modernization today, which is the issuance of drug discount cards. The second stage is what happens next year when Medicare begins to pay for preventative medicine, maintenance, and screenings for seniors. In other words, for the first time in Medicare's history, we're now going to diagnose problems before they become acute. That seems to make sense, particularly if you're worried about taxpayers' money. In other words, if you act early to prevent problems from happening in the first place, it's good for the taxpayers. Medicare didn't do that in the past. We're going to do it now.

And starting in '06, for the first time ever, there will be a prescription drug benefit available for people in Medicare. It's a—by the way, one of the things I insisted on was that somebody who is happy with the current Medicare system doesn't need to change. I mean, I fully understand there's a lot of seniors who don't want to change. I know that. We needed to change the system to make sure there was a prescription drug benefit available. But for seniors who are happy with Medicare, plus the prescription drug benefit, you're in great shape. As a matter of fact, the program just got better in 2006. And if you're a poorer senior, the Government will help you afford the cost of doing—the cost of medicine.

For other seniors, there's going to be more choices—for all seniors there's more choices. I mean, if you're happy with Medicare, fine. If you like the current Medicare+Choice, which will be called Medicare Advantage, that's going to be more robust, more available. If you want other options available to you, I always felt it was best to trust people, not Government, in order to—in the decisionmaking process.

And so we're moving down the road to make sure the system is modern and to make sure the system works. But today we're going to talk about the issuance of cards, drug discount cards that are now available to our seniors. And we've got some problems. One problem is there's misinformation about these cards. Another problem is, is that people—they feel like

it may be too complicated, the procedures may be too complicated to get a drug discount card. Some of them say, "Well, it's not going to matter anyway." They've heard political promises before, and a lot of times they fall empty. So today we're going to talk about how to make sure our seniors understand that the drug discount card works.

We're going to talk to two folks who have used their card. As a matter of fact, I witnessed Wanda going to the pharmacy, local pharmacy here, and putting her card down, and her drugs—I think which would have cost her $19, cost her $1.70, something like that, just about the range we're talking about. I may not have the numbers exact.

Wanda Blackmore. That's about right.

The President. Yes, I didn't pay for it. [*Laughter*] The receipt is in her purse, I know. [*Laughter*] It was something like that.

And that's what we're here to talk about. I want our seniors to understand—and this will be repeated several times—that if you have any questions about the drug discount card, there is a way to get information that will help you, or there's a way for your son or daughter to get information to help you, and that is to call 1–800–MEDICARE. That's all you've got to do: Pick up the phone, 1–800–MEDICARE. And people will answer the phone—is it 24/7—24/7. In other words, that means 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, somebody will be there to help and answer questions.

You're going to hear Mark talk about what the Federal Government is trying to do to make sure that you understand this information is available. There's other ways to—you can log on, if you happen to be a high-tech person, and use the Internet. You can go to www.medicare.gov. It's not all that hard, and there will be all kinds of information available to you.

And you're going to hear that there's a lot of different choices. You bet. That's what we want. We want there to be choices, different cards available. That's how you meet different needs. We don't want a "one size fits all." That's not a consumer-driven system. That's a Government-driven system. A consumer-driven system is one that allows consumers to make the choices on what's best for them.

So there's different cards, is what I'm telling you, to meet your needs. And I understand, for some that's going to be—it's going to be complicated, and some people just don't want their lives complicated. And—but you've got to know there's help. And just because it may seem complicated, that's not a good—I think people should not use that as an excuse to participate, because you're going to find there's good discounts; there's good savings. Fifteen percent on brand-name drugs, minimum. Isn't that right? Is "minimum" the right word to use—minimum? Thirty percent on generic drugs. Those are the drugs that, after a patent has expired, that do the exact same thing as the brand-name drug but at a much cheaper cost.

And by the way, he was the head of the FDA before I put him in this position, and his job was to speed up generic drugs to the markets. People shouldn't be afraid of using generic drugs. They accomplish the same thing, and you're going to save a lot of money. They asked Wanda—they said, "This is a generic drug, Wanda." She said, "Fine, let me have the generic drug. I know it's going to do the same thing as the brand-name drug, but it's going to cost me a heck of a lot less."

In other words, this discount card is going to save our seniors a lot of money. And I'm just about running out of air—[*laughter*]—you'll be happy to hear. [*Laughter*] Want me to keep talking? Okay. [*Laughter*] But she can tell it better than me.

But first, I want to start off with my friend Mark McClellan. He is a doctor and a Ph.D. He's from Texas. [*Laughter*] And he is the Administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. That's his

job. His job is to make sure the Medicare system works well and that as the law kicks in—in other words, as the system becomes more modern, his job is to make sure it happens for the benefit of our seniors. I picked a smart guy to do this. He understands health care, and he understands the task. And the task is to make sure our seniors get the best health care possible and our taxpayers get the best deal possible as our seniors get the best health care possible.

And so, Mark, welcome. Thanks for coming. As I mentioned to you, he at one time was the head of the FDA, and he did such a fine job there that I gave him a tougher job. And so, Mark, thanks for coming. Share some stuff with us. Tell us what's on your mind. Tell us how our seniors can benefit from this program.

Mark B. McClellan. Thank you, Mr. President. It's a real pleasure to be here with you, with all of you here in Liberty, and especially to be working with Medicare at such a critical time. It's just 6 months since this new Medicare law was passed, and we already are having the opportunity to get drug costs down for seniors that need help right now and who have been waiting too long. There's been a lot of talk for a long time. We're actually implementing steps right now that are getting those costs down.

And that's coming about through a couple means. The cards is a start, but with the cards, you get a chance to band together, to stick together to get lower prices on your drugs, just like people who have had insurance for their drugs have been able to do for a while. That gets negotiated prices down from manufacturers, and that leads to savings. And on top of that, we're giving people more information on where they can get the best prices so they can comparison shop more easily.

You talked about the fact that consumers can really help us find better deals for Americans in many areas, but that's been tough in drugs. It's been hard to get prices and hard to know exactly what you can—what kind of deal you can get at different pharmacies and through different means available, through mail order, through other options like that. And we're going to put all that information in front of you with this program.

And as you said, Mr. President, what we're seeing through the drug card program is now savings of, very often, 15 to 30 percent or more off the list prices for brand-name drugs and much larger savings for generic drugs. And we'll also tell you about the generics when they're available, so you can find out about more ways to save through using generics, whenever they are available.

And some seniors have been able to get a little bit of help. They've been trying hard to find good deals. But often when you go to your neighborhood pharmacy, the best you can get is a pharmacy discount card that may give you a few percent off the drug store prices but don't let you negotiate to get those much lower prices. And that's where these real savings are coming from.

And the most important thing is, for people who are having drug costs that are causing them trouble right now or they're struggling with their costs, is to find out about this program. As you said, Mr. President, there's some easy ways to do that. You can call us at 1–800–MEDICARE, any time, day or night. You can go to the web site, www.medicare.gov.

And we've also made help available for the first time ever through some expanded programs in local areas. Joe is going to talk about this in a few minutes. But you can get face-to-face help. If you don't think you can follow through with a phone call, if you really want to talk to somebody face to face about this program, you can do that. Right here in Missouri, we're working with CLAIM. It's a State health insurance assistance plan that provides this personalized help for seniors, often working through volunteers who know this program well. So

those are some simple ways that you can find out about what's in this program for you.

And the people who need help the most get the most help right away with this program. If you're struggling with drug costs today because you don't have good drug coverage, you should find out about it. But especially if you've got a limited income, below about $1,400 a month for a couple, about $1,040 a month for a single senior—about 7 million Medicare beneficiaries who are in that category, below those income levels, they can get not only the discounts but some direct financial help on their card—$600 this year, $600 next year, and there's some additional discounts coming from the drug manufacturers for them as well. So it amounts to literally thousands of dollars in savings. And you can find out about it right now just by calling us at 1–800–MEDICARE, and we'll put you in touch with a face-to-face person if you want to get help that way.

The President. Good job, thanks. Do we have the program up and running where somebody can actually dial up—put in their ZIP Code, the pharmacies come up, they show the different prices for drugs in their neighborhood?

Dr. McClellan. That's exactly right.

The President. In other words, it's kind of a virtual market. It's kind of an interesting concept, isn't it? One of the things I believe is that markets have got a fantastic way of rewarding consumers with better quality and better price. And you can get on your web page or you can get on the computer, and you can shop—price shop right now in your particular ZIP Code. And that's a way, also, to make sure that better price is available for our seniors.

Dr. McClellan. That's right. And if you don't want to go on the web, we can help you over the phone and send you something, a personalized brochure, that gives you as much or as little detail as you want about the best options for your own personal needs at the pharmacies that you want to use.

The President. Joe Tilghman is with us. Joe is the Administrator. He works with Mark. Don't worry about all the cameras. [*Laughter*] He is the Regional Administrator. He has been charged with helping people in this area understand the benefits of the drug discount card. He will then, once he completes that task here this year, he'll then be in charge of the '05 modernization of information, and then in '06 will be in charge with helping Mark implement the brand new law. And it's good. I'm telling you, it's going to make a big difference in our seniors' lives.

Joe, thanks. Welcome.

[*Joe Tilghman, Regional Administrator, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, Department of Health and Human Services, Kansas City Regional Office, Kansas City, MO, made brief remarks.*]

The President. See, what you're hearing is, is that Mark has asked his team to go out and educate people. People need to understand the truth and the facts and what's available. That's what we're trying to get done here. And that's what we're trying to get done all around the country. And you're doing a fine job at it. Thank you.

Mr. Tilghman. Thank you, sir.

The President. Just keep putting the word out. This is a program that helps people. If you've got a mom or a dad out there that may be nervous about hearing the change in Medicare, talk to them. Call the number because this will help. And look, you're probably saying, "Another guy is showing up from Washington, laying out something that's just not true." Well, it's true.

And I'll tell you, who best to testify is Wanda, Wanda Blackmore. She and I, as I told you, we just went to a pharmacy. She—I was going to say, you whipped out your card, but you left your card there before, right? Anyway, they had her card, and

she bought some drugs that is a blood thinner, right?

Wanda Blackmore. Right.

The President. Yes. Okay, talk into the mic. [*Laughter*]

Ms. Blackmore. Yes, sir. [*Laughter*] I was afraid you would try to over talk me if——

The President. That's right. [*Applause*] Are your grandkids here?

Ms. Blackmore. I can't see them.

The President. Yes, your grandkids are here. She's talking to me like she does her grandkids. That's okay. [*Laughter*] I'm used to strong women. [*Laughter*]

Ms. Blackmore. I'm old enough to be your grandmother too.

The President. Okay. Let's get to work, will you? [*Laughter*]

[*Ms. Blackmore, senior citizen, Kansas City, MO, made brief remarks.*]

The President. So here's the thing. Let me see if I can distill it, summarize what she just said. She got her card. The first time she used it was June 7th. On a prescription that usually cost $10, she paid $1.14. That's called savings. It looks like—we kind of did some rough math, didn't we, and it looks like you're going to save about $750 this year. And that's a lot. That's an awful lot for some people in this country, and I'm telling, you this thing is working. And I appreciate you coming to testify.

Ms. Blackmore. Yes, sir.

The President. There you go. She drove in with the limo—we're a little familiar with each other because she was in the limousine from the airport to here. [*Laughter*]

Ms. Blackmore. I got him lined out. [*Laughter*]

The President. That's right. All right, you're not the only person on the stage here. [*Laughter*]

Ms. Blackmore. I will be, if you keep talking like that. [*Laughter*]

The President. That's right.

Ms. Blackmore. I'll throw him out.

The President. All right, here we go. [*Laughter*] Yes, ma'am. [*Laughter*]

Ms. Blackmore. Thank you, sir.

The President. Gladys Cole.

Gladys Cole. Mr. President, I can tell you that your drug card is working.

The President. Okay, why can you say that?

Ms. Cole. Well, because I went and got my medicine that I had to give $120 for, and when I got through, I gave $20-something for that same medicine. So there's no doubt in my mind that it is working and working quite well.

The President. All right, how did you find out about the card? See, people are wondering out there how these two ladies found out about the card, and they may not have heard about it.

Ms. Cole. Well, my pharmacist knew that I had no prescription card, and so he knew what a price I'd been paying for my medicine. So when the leaflets come in for us to fill out, he asked me, would I take them home and fill it out. And he said, "I'll fax them in if you'll just fill them out." So I thought, "Oh, well, maybe 5 or 10 dollars," but 5 and 10 dollars looked awful good to me. So I said, "All right." And when he got my medicine card and I took it in and he told me what the savings was, I about dropped my false teeth. [*Laughter*]

The President. We're talking about teeth up here. [*Laughter*] Now that you've recovered your false teeth—[*laughter*].

Ms. Cole. So I'm sold on it, and anytime I can tell you people out there that are of our age, try it out. See if it fits for you. And then if it don't, well, fine. But you need to at least try it and see.

The President. There you go. I appreciate you, Gladys. Thanks very much for sharing that.

It's estimated that over the next 7 months, she's going to save $700 for the year. That's good. Yes, that's a lot of money. These ladies qualify for the $600 subsidy. At a certain income level, people can qualify for additional help, not only

get the card. If you don't qualify, you use the card anyway, because you're going to get your discounts. But you get $600 additional a year help.

Ms. Blackmore. This is the only time I've been glad to be poor. [*Laughter*]

The President. Who's writing your material for you? [*Laughter*]

Ms. Blackmore. I'm not going to tell.

The President. We didn't have enough room on the stage—well, we have plenty of room. Anyway—[*laughter*]—Roberta Sims and Betty Sten is with us too. Where are you? There you go. Thanks for coming, ladies. I appreciate you all being here. She got her—Roberta got her card, and she used it at Liberty Wal-Mart on June the 5th. She purchased over $300 in prescriptions and paid 22.62. That's a fact. It better be a fact. [*Laughter*] Betty got her card recently too and is going to save a lot of money, $500.

In other words, this is important. The reason we're here is to share information. We're trying to fight through the clutter, the noise, so that people can understand that there is a great opportunity to take advantage of a good piece of legislation. That's what we're here to talk about.

We want our seniors to be able to have the benefits of modern medicine in a way that is best affordable. That's what we're here to talk about, and if you don't believe me, just listen to the two ladies here on the stage. They go to their pharmacies; they put down their money; and they've seen the difference between what they had been charged and what they're paying now. And it's a real savings, and it's important savings. And I want to thank them for coming to share their stories. You have made the day much more credible—[*laughter*]—much more lively too.

Let me conclude by telling you this: I—you know, our country has been challenged. We're challenged to make sure that we're defended from an enemy that can't stand what we believe in. We're challenged because the economy has been through quite a bit. It's now getting better, I might add. We've been challenged in a lot of ways. Our hearts are challenged every day when we realize amidst our plenty there are people who hurt.

The thing I want to share with you and remind you about, that this great country can overcome any challenge we face. This is a great country because of the values we believe in. It's a great country because of the citizens who inhabit her. And there's nothing—there's not one thing we can't do together to make sure the world is more free, the country is secure, and America is the best possible place it can be for all our citizens to call home.

Thanks for greeting us today. I'm so honored you came. May God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:32 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Stephen P. Hawkins of Liberty, MO.

Statement on Signing Legislation Supporting the Participation of Taiwan in the World Health Organization

June 14, 2004

Today, I have signed into law S. 2092, an Act concerning participation of Taiwan in the World Health Organization. The United States fully supports the participation of Taiwan in the work of the World Health Organization, including observer status. The United States has expressed publicly its firm support for Taiwan's observer status and will continue to do so.

Consistent with the President's constitutional authority to conduct the Nation's foreign affairs, the Executive shall construe the Act to be consistent with the "one China" policy of the United States, which remains unchanged, and determine the measures best suited to advance the overall goal of Taiwan participation in the World Health Organization. The executive branch also shall construe the reporting requirement in section 1(c) of the Act in a manner consistent with the President's constitutional authority to withhold information the disclosure of which could impair foreign relations, the national security, the deliberative processes of the Executive, or the performance of the Executive's constitutional duties. As a matter of comity, the Secretary of State will continue to keep the Congress appropriately informed of the matters addressed by the reporting requirement.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
June 14, 2004.

NOTE: S. 2092, approved June 14, was assigned Public Law No. 108–235.

Memorandum on the Proposed Amendment to the United States/United Kingdom Agreement for Cooperation on the Use of Atomic Energy for Mutual Defense Purposes
June 14, 2004

Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of Energy

Subject: Proposed Amendment to the United States/United Kingdom Agreement for Cooperation on the Use of Atomic Energy for Mutual Defense Purposes

I have reviewed and concur in the recommendations in your letter of June 7, 2004, recommending approval of a proposed amendment to the Agreement Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland for Cooperation on the Uses of Atomic Energy for Mutual Defense Purposes. I note from your joint recommendation and concur with your assessment that the United Kingdom, by participating with the United States pursuant to an international agreement, is making substantial and material contributions to the mutual defense and security. The proposed Amendment will permit cooperation that will further improve our mutual defense posture and support our interests under the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. I hereby:

- approve the proposed Amendment to the 1958 Agreement;
- determine that performance under the proposed Amendment will promote and will not constitute an unreasonable risk to the common defense and security;
- approve the program outlined in this Amendment and determine that such program will promote and will not constitute an unreasonable risk to the mutual defense and security; and
- authorize the execution of the proposed Amendment for the Government of the United States in a manner specified by the Secretary of State.

GEORGE W. BUSH

Message to the Congress Transmitting a Proposed Amendment to the United Kingdom-United States Agreement for Cooperation on the Uses of Atomic Energy for Mutual Defense Purposes
June 14, 2004

To the Congress of the United States:

I am pleased to transmit to the Congress, pursuant to section 123d. of the Atomic Energy Act of 1954, as amended, the text of an amendment to the Agreement Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland for Cooperation on the Uses of Atomic Energy for Mutual Defense Purposes of July 3, 1958, as amended, and my written approval, authorization, and determination concerning the agreement. The joint unclassified letter submitted to me by the Secretaries of Energy and Defense that provides a summary position on the Amendment is also enclosed.

The Amendment extends for 10 years (until December 31, 2014) provisions that permit the transfer of nonnuclear parts, source, byproduct, special nuclear materials, and other material and technology for nuclear weapons and military reactors, and revises text, principally in the Security Annex, to be consistent with current policies and practices relating to personnel and physical security.

In my judgment, the proposed Amendment meets all statutory requirements. The United Kingdom intends to continue to maintain viable nuclear forces. In light of our previous close cooperation and the fact that the United Kingdom has committed its nuclear forces to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, I have concluded that it is in our interest to continue to assist them in maintaining a credible nuclear force.

I have approved the Amendment, authorized its execution, and urge that the Congress give it favorable consideration.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
June 14, 2004.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this message.

The President's News Conference With President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan
June 15, 2004

President Bush. Good day. Laura and I are pleased to welcome President Karzai back to the White House—really glad you're here.

President Karzai. Thank you very much.

President Bush. Thanks for the good visit, and I'm looking forward to having a good lunch with you and your delegation.

President Karzai. Well, I'm looking forward to that.

President Bush. President Karzai recently visited Fort Drum and thanked American troops on behalf of the Afghan people——

President Karzai. Yes.

President Bush. ——for their service and sacrifice. And Mr. President, that was a sign of a true friend. I want to thank you for doing that.

President Karzai. Thank you very much.

President Bush. I also appreciate your honor and your courage and your skill in

helping to build a new and democratic Afghanistan. You've been instrumental in lifting your country from the ashes of two decades of war and oppression. Under your leadership, Afghanistan's progress has been dramatic.

Three years ago, the Taliban had granted Usama bin Laden and his terrorist Al Qaida organization a safe refuge. Today, the Taliban has been deposed; Al Qaida is in hiding; and coalition forces continue to hunt down the remnants and holdouts. Coalition forces, including many brave Afghans, have brought America, Afghanistan, and the free world its first victory in the war on terror. Afghanistan is no longer a terrorist factory sending thousands of killers into the world.

Three years ago, 70 percent of Afghans were malnourished, and one in four Afghan children never saw their 5th birthday.

President Karzai. Yes.

President Bush. Today, clean water is being provided throughout the country; hospitals and clinics have been rehabilitated; and millions of children have been vaccinated against measles and polio.

Three years ago, women were viciously oppressed and forbidden to work outside the home and even denied what little medical treatment was available. Today, women are going to school, and their rights are protected in Afghanistan's Constitution.

President Karzai. Yes.

President Bush. That document sets aside a certain number of seats for women in the National Assembly, and women will soon compete for those seats in open elections this September.

Three years ago, the smallest displays of joy were outlawed. Women were beaten for wearing brightly colored shoes. Even the playing of music and the flying of kites were outlawed. Today, we witness the rebirth of a vibrant Afghan culture. Music fills the marketplaces, and people are free to come together to celebrate in open.

Afghanistan's journey to democracy and peace deserves the support and respect of every nation, because free nations do not breed the ideology of terror. Last week, at the G–8 summit, President Karzai talked with world leaders about the challenges of building a secure and stable country.

My Government reaffirms its ironclad commitment to help Afghanistan succeed and prosper. Security is essential for steady progress and growth. The forces of many nations are working hard with Afghans to find and defeat Taliban remnants and eliminate Al Qaida terrorists. We're helping to build the new Afghan national army and to train new Afghan police and border patrol. Together, we will maintain the peace, secure Afghanistan's borders, and deny terrorists any foothold in that country.

I'm proud to call President Karzai a strong ally in the war on terror.

The United States is also joining with Afghanistan to announce five new initiatives that will help the Afghan people achieve the peace, stability, and prosperity they deserve. First, the United States pledges its full support as Afghans continue to build the institutions of democracy. America will launch an ambitious training program for newly elected Afghan politicians and help newly elected Assembly members better serve those who elected them.

Second, Afghanistan and America are working together to print millions of new textbooks and to build modern schools in every Afghan province. Girls as well as boys are going to school, and they are studying under a new curriculum that promotes religious and ethnic tolerance. We pledge to continue this progress through a new $4 million women's teacher training institute in Kabul. Graduates of this innovative program will return to their provinces and rural districts to train other teachers in the crusade against illiteracy.

Education can be nurtured in other ways as well. Cultural exchange programs help to foster understanding and respect as well as accelerate progress. Last year, close to 100 Afghans studied here in various training programs. More want to come to learn

and to share their experiences, so our third initiative will expand these opportunities to include more than 250 qualified Afghans who will participate in Humphrey, Fulbright, Cochran, and other exchange programs.

Fourth, to promote bilateral economic ties, the United States and Afghanistan announced our intent to pursue a bilateral trade and investment framework agreement. Years of war and tyranny have eroded Afghanistan's economy and infrastructure, yet a revival is underway. Afghans are busy starting their own businesses. Some 15,000 licenses have already been issued for foreign businesses and investors to explore economic opportunities in Afghanistan. Working with Japan, we have rebuilt the Kandahar-Kabul highway, a vital commercial and transportation link between Afghanistan's two largest cities. A bilateral trade agreement will add new fuel to the economic revival.

And finally, we pledge to continue our efforts to create opportunities for women. The United States is dedicating $5 million to fund training programs and grants for small businesses. Under the Taliban, women were oppressed; their potential was ignored. Under President Karzai's leadership, that has changed dramatically. A number of innovative programs designed in collaboration with the Afghan Government are increasing the role of women in the private sector. The traditional funding we announce today—the additional funding we announce today will provide Afghan women with small-business grants and training in business management skills. As my wife, Laura, has said, no society can prosper when half of its population is not allowed to contribute to its progress.

The road ahead for Afghanistan is still long and difficult. Yet, the Afghan people can know that their country will never be abandoned to terrorists and killers. The world and the United States stands with them as partners in their quest for peace and prosperity and stability and democracy.

Welcome, President, glad you're here.

President Karzai. Thank you very much. Thank you. Mr. President, it's a tremendous privilege and honor for us to be invited again by you and the First Lady to the White House. It was a great honor for me today to be speaking to a joint meeting of the U.S. Congress. I will cherish that memory of talking to the representatives of the American people.

There, today I thanked America for the help that it gave us liberate ourselves and rebuild ourselves and prosper. That help has been the source of all growth in the past 2 years. Our economy in the year 2002 grew by 30 percent, in the year 2003 by 25 percent or more. In the year 2004, the growth is estimated to be 20 percent. And we are hoping, as some of the banks have predicted, that the Afghan economy will grow 'til 2008 by 15 percent, and beyond that, for another 5 years, by 10 percent.

Thank you very much. This could have not been possible without your help, without America's assistance.

We are sending today 5 million children to school. Almost half of those children are girls. Our universities are open. Our universities are coming up in all—all over the country, in all the provinces of the country.

We are building a national army, a vital institution for the defense of our country. You want us to stand on our own feet; you want us to defend our own sovereignty and provide security to our people; and you're helping us do that. The national army of Afghanistan is popular with the Afghan people. Wherever they go, people receive them with welcome. In Farah Province, where they went some months ago, school girls and boys gave them flowers. Thank you very much for that.

We are also building our police forces. We have a constitution that we have today which is the most enlightened in that part of the world. And that constitution has been made possible because of the liberation that you helped us gain and because of the stability that the United States

helped us have in Afghanistan. As a result of that, we have a constitution that sets us as an example of an Islamic democratic state. Thank you very much, Mr. President, for that.

We are looking forward in this relationship to a stronger relationship, and I'm sure the United States will remain committed to Afghanistan.

Afghanistan is, in the month of September, looking forward to elections—Presidential elections and elections of parliament and elections of the provincial assemblies and district assemblies. So far, we have registered 3.8 million voters, and out of the 3.8 million voters, Mr. President, 35.4 percent are, so far, women. And as the trend continues, as we move forward to the registration of more voters, the number of women registering will exceed, definitely, 40 percent. In certain parts of the country, in the central highlands, today I learned that the registration of women has exceeded that of men. They are more than 50 percent. This could have not been achieved in Afghanistan without your help and that of the international community.

Afghanistan has problems too. Among the problems is the question of drugs. The Afghan Government is adamant, the Afghan people are adamant to fight this menace, to end it in Afghanistan, and we seek your help in that.

Thank you very much, Mr. President. It's been nice visiting the United States again. One likes to stay here and not go, it's such a good country. [*Laughter*] Thanks very much.

President Bush. Get home and get to work, will you?

President Karzai. Thank you, yes. [*Laughter*]

President Bush. We'll answer some questions, in the tradition of democratic societies. Are you ready?

President Karzai. I'm ready.

President Bush. We'll start with Hunt [Terence Hunt, Associated Press].

President Karzai. I now know, Mr. President, what the free press means. We have it in Afghanistan.

President Bush. That's good.

Hunt.

Saddam Hussein/Usama bin Laden and Mullah Omar

Q. Mr. President, Iraq's Prime Minister says the new government expects to take custody of Saddam Hussein and all other detainees when sovereignty is transferred in about 2 weeks, and your spokesman says that that's under consideration. Will you turn him over by that date, and what factors are you weighing in that decision?

And President Karzai, who will try Usama bin Laden and Mullah Omar when they're caught?

President Bush. We're working with the Iraqi government on a couple of issues. One is the appropriate time for the transfer of Saddam Hussein, and secondly, we're working to make sure there's appropriate security. I mean, one thing, obviously, is that we don't want and I know the Iraqi interim government doesn't want is there to be lax security and for Saddam Hussein to somehow not stand trial for the horrendous murders and torture that he inflicted upon the Iraqi people. So we're working with them.

President Karzai. Usama and Mullah Omar have committed crimes against the Afghan people, against the people in the United States, and against the international community. They are international criminals. They are wanted by the international community. They are wanted by the world conscience. They have to be arrested and tried. And when they are arrested, we will consult the international community and find appropriate mechanism for their trial.

President Bush. Caren [Caren Bohan, Reuters].

Muqtada Al Sadr

Q. Mr. President, you've referred to Muqtada Al Sadr as a thug, and your administration has promised to bring him to justice. Is it appropriate for the new interim Iraqi government to now welcome him into the political fold?

President Bush. The interim Iraqi government will deal with Al Sadr in the way they see fit. That's—they're sovereign. When we say we transfer full sovereignty, we mean we transfer full sovereignty, and they will deal with him appropriately.

Let's see here. Do you want to run the table, or do you want to go eat lunch?

President Karzai. Go ahead.

President Bush. Run the table, okay.

Holly [Holly Rosenkrantz, Bloomberg News].

Q. Mr. President——

President Bush. Hold on a second, I'll get you in a minute, please. A little patience in front of the President here.

Holly.

U.S. Economy

Q. Mr. President, there are signs that inflation may be on the horizon in the U.S. economy. How concerned are you about this? What are you—I mean, do you think this might slow down the recovery that you've been so happy about? Also, if I can ask you a followup on the security about Saddam Hussein. What guarantee——

President Bush. How many questions? One question apiece. If we're going to stand out here in 100-degree temperature, let's just have one question.

Q. Okay.

President Bush. You can pass your question on to some other person, and I might call on them. I'm not so sure I'm going to be so international this press conference. [*Laughter*]

The first question was about am I concerned about economic vitality? I'm pleased with—what?

Q. ——inflation——

President Bush. No, I thought you said am I worried that inflation is going to—what I'm pleased about is the fact that our economy is strong and is getting stronger. All indications are—is that the economic stimulus plan we put in place is working. There's strong growth. There is—there are new jobs being added. Consumer spending is up. Disposable—after-tax disposable income is high. In other words, the ingredients for continued economic growth are present, and I'm very pleased. I'm particularly pleased because it means that workers are able to do their duties to their families.

And I am an optimistic person. I guess if you want to try to find something to be pessimistic about, you can find it, no matter how hard you look, you know? I'm optimistic. I have seen what we have come through. We've been through a recession, a national emergency, corporate scandals, a war, and yet, our economy is incredibly strong, which speaks to the great vitality of the American entrepreneurial spirit and the vibrancy of the small-business sector. And the plans we put in place are working.

There's more to do. We need an energy plan out of the United States Congress if we expect our economy to grow in the long term. We need tort reform. We need to make sure that the—we deal with the cost of health care in a rational way by not empowering the Federal Government, I might add, but by empowering consumers. And I've laid out such a plan to do so.

I mean, there's other things we need to do. We need to make sure that we don't become economic isolationists. And—no, I'm optimistic about the future.

Roberts [John Roberts, CBS News], I take it you had a question to ask.

Q. If I could just pick up on that, sir, about pessimism. Your presumed Democratic challenger is spending this week and next harshly critical of your economic policies. And while things have looked good in the last few months, could the case not be made that over the longer term of your administration, that you're still operating at

an economic deficit? And what do you plan to do to avoid the fate of Bush 41, who didn't get credit for an improving economy in an election year?

President Bush. Well, I think one thing the American people have seen is that I know how to lead. When I first came to office, the economy was headed into a recession, and we acted. We acted in a way that called upon the true strength of the American people, and that is, we encouraged the entrepreneurial spirit to flourish by letting people keep more of their own money. In other words, some might have said, "Well, let's strengthen the Federal Government." I made the decision to strengthen the pocketbooks of the people. And they had more money to spend, and our policy is working.

And not only that, we stimulated growth in the small-business sector. See, I recognized most new jobs are created by small-business owners, and a significant part of the economic stimulus plan was aimed at small businesses so that they would have confidence to expand and grow, and they have.

And we also have overcome corporate scandal, which we acted in a bipartisan fashion on to make it clear that we're not going to tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America. In other words, we acted, and the economy is getting better.

We've overcome a lot. We've overcome a lot through good policy, but we've overcome a lot because I have great faith in the American people, in the small-business owners and the entrepreneurs and the workers of the country. And we're getting—not only are we strong today, we're getting stronger. Our economy is the strongest of any major industrialized nation in the world, and there's more work to do, see.

Go ahead, Terry [Terry Moran, ABC News]. No, you've asked your question. Terry. Hold on for a second. Terry. Thank you, though.

Transfer of Iraqi Prisoners/Saddam Hussein

Q. Mr. President, back on the Iraqis being detained by U.S. forces. If the Iraqi government is truly going to be sovereign after June 30th, and if they are expressing the desire to take control over their own citizens——

President Bush. Right.

Q. ——and the coalition disappears, by what authority——

President Bush. And what coalition disappears?

Q. If the Coalition Provisional Authority, I'm sorry——

President Bush. Okay.

Q. ——the entity disappears——

President Bush. Yes.

Q. ——by what authority does the United States continue to hold the citizens of a sovereign country?

President Bush. I fully agree that it's a sovereign country. That's why we're working with them to make sure that there is good security. Look, nobody wants Saddam Hussein to leave, and when there's a transfer of responsibility, we want to make sure that he is secure. He's a killer. He is a thug. He needs to be brought to trial. We want to make sure that the transfer to a sovereign government is done in a timely way and in a secure way. That's what we're discussing with the government.

Yes, Stretch [Richard Keil, Bloomberg News]. And then you next.

2004 Election

Q. Mr. President, thank you. Just to follow up on John's question, in Afghanistan, things are improving, as you've mentioned. In Iraq, we're about to transfer sovereignty. And even domestically, the economy is booming. Why is it that you're having trouble pulling ahead of your opponent, John Kerry? I know you don't pay attention to the polls, but we are 4½ months from election day.

President Bush. Yes.

Q. What can you do to improve your political standing as the campaign moves forward?

President Bush. You see, I think you answered your own question. We are 4½ months from election day. In other words, there's a long time before the election. I'm just going to do my job, Stretch. My job is to continue to lead. My job is to say to the American people, "Follow me. The world is going to be better. The world will be more free. The world will be more peaceful. The world will be—America will be a stronger country because our economy will improve. America will be a better country because we're calling upon the compassion of our fellow citizens to help a neighbor in need."

Iraqi Security

Q. Mr. President, I want to follow up on this issue of Iraqi security because I'm detecting some reservation that you may have about the Iraqis' ability to really head up their own security after June the 30th, because you seem to signal that there are concerns about their ability to even continue to detain Saddam Hussein. So what will happen between now and June 30th that would help you overcome that concern? And just related to that, there was a report from Baghdad yesterday indicating that after the deadly bombing, car bombing, that Iraqi police, as crowds gathered against the United States, just stood around and didn't do anything. Why is that happening?

President Bush. Which question do you want me to answer?

Q. Well, I think they're related; both——

President Bush. No, they're not. [*Laughter*]

Q. Please, I'll say, please.

President Bush. Look, it's very hot out here. We've got a President from a—a respectful President here. Why don't you just ask one question, if you don't mind? I don't mean to be telling you how to do your business. All right, I'll answer both. [*Laughter*]

First, I just want to make sure that as—when sovereignty is transferred, Saddam Hussein is—stays in jail. That's just a matter of discussion and understanding the procedures. That's all we're saying. I'm confident that when it's all said and done, he will stay in jail. I just want to be assured.

Listen, we've got—we're over there for a reason. We're over there to make our country more secure, and one way to do so was to make sure Saddam Hussein was not in power. Secondly, we're there to help the Afghan—I mean, the Iraqi people. We want to make sure that he doesn't come back to power. And so therefore, it's a legitimate question to ask of the interim government, "How are you going to make sure he stays in jail?" And that's the question I'm asking. And when we get the right answer, which I'm confident we will, we will work with them to do so. Then we'll all be satisfied.

Wendell [Wendell Goler, Fox News].

Q. Mr. President——

Q. How about the second part?

President Bush. The second part was what? I forgot. It was so long ago that you asked it——

Q. I know. I apologize. I was long-winded.

President Bush. Oh, why did they stand back—look, the Iraqi people are going to have to figure out how to make sure their country is secure enough for a free government to emerge. And what you're watching is a government learning how to protect itself. The transfer of sovereignty to Iraq means not only will they have the freedom to make decisions on behalf of their people, but they will have to secure their own country. And you're watching this happen. You also heard the comments of Prime Minister Allawi, who made it very clear that these types of acts are terrorist acts against the Iraqi people.

Wendell.

Reactions of Iraqis and Afghans to Coalition Presence

Q. Mr. President, how do you explain why the success we've had in Afghanistan appears to be eluding us in Iraq? Is it possible that the Afghan people objected to the Taliban more strongly than the Iraqi people objected to the reign of Saddam Hussein?

President Bush. No, that's not possible. The Iraqi people objected to the reign of Saddam Hussein, and you would, too, if you lived there, where you couldn't express yourself, where you got tortured, where there was mass graves.

This is hard work, and it wasn't easy work in Afghanistan, by the way. I mean, it seems easy now that we're standing here, Wendell, after several years of working together with this great leader, but it was hard work. And out of kind of the desperate straits that the Afghan people found themselves is now a welcoming society beginning to grow. And the same thing is going to happen in Iraq.

These aren't easy tasks. I mean, somehow there's this expectation, "Well, all this is supposed to have happened yesterday." That's just not the way it works when you go from a society that has—that was subjugated to a tyrant—by a tyrant to a free society. And the President will tell you, it's hard work. It may look easy in retrospect, but it's not easy. And that's why it's very important for us to speak clearly to the people of Afghanistan and in Iraq that the United States will help them, will stay and help them fulfill the mission, which is a free and peaceful Afghanistan, a free and peaceful Iraq, which are in our Nation's interests.

First, it's in our interests that we defeat terrorists there than fight them here. That's our short-term security interests. Secondly, it's in our long-term interests that we work for free societies in parts of the world that are desperate for freedom. And the reason I keep saying that, Wendell, is because I know that a free society is a peaceful society. And America is interested in working with friends to promote the peace, and that's what we're doing. The short-term solution for our security problem is to find the terrorists and bring them to justice before they hurt Americans again, is to deny them training bases, is to deny them affiliates and allies in the war on terror. That's what we have done in Afghanistan and Iraq. The long-term solution is to promote free societies that are able to defeat the forces of pessimism, darkness, intolerance, and hatred.

Okay, a couple more questions. Yes. Let me work my way through the TV readers.

Q. On another issue, have you been——

President Bush. Which one, you or Sanger [David Sanger, New York Times]?

Q. Me. [*Laughter*]

President Bush. Okay.

CIA Employee Identity Disclosure Investigation

Q. On another issue, have you been called to answer questions regarding the CIA leak? And have you retained the attorney——

President Bush. You need to call—you need to talk to the counsel over there.

Yes, Elisabeth [Elisabeth Bumiller, New York Times].

Religion and Politics

Q. [*Inaudible*]—Ron Reagan's remarks at the former President's funeral——

President Bush. I didn't hear them.

Q. He said that politicians should not wear religious faith on their sleeve. And a lot of Republicans interpreted those remarks as being critical of you and your position on stem cell. I'd like to ask you about that.

President Bush. Whether or not a politician should wear their—I've always said I think it's very important for someone not to try to take the speck out of somebody else's eye when they may have a log in their own. In other words, I'm very mindful

about saying, you know, "Oh, vote for me. I'm more religious than my neighbor." And I think it's perfectly—I think it's important for people of religion to serve. I think it is very important for people who are serving to make sure there is a separation of church and state.

Yes.

Status of Military Contractors Under Iraqi Interim Government

Q. Mr. President, questions are being raised about the legal status of U.S. military contractors in Iraq. Your administration is asking for them to be granted immunity by the incoming Iraqi government. If they aren't going to operate under Iraqi law, will they operate under U.S. civilian law or under what legal jurisdiction?

President Bush. I need to make sure I stay in touch with the lawyers on this subject. They are the ones who are raising the issue. We'll continue to work the issue.

Q. So you haven't decided yet?

President Bush. Right.

Mike [Mike Allen, Washington Post].

Q. Mr. President——

President Bush. Yes. I'm getting distracted over here; there seems to be some noise.

Al Qaida-Saddam Hussein Relationship

Q. The Vice President, who I see standing over there, said yesterday that Saddam Hussein has long-established ties to Al Qaida. As you know, this is disputed within the U.S. intelligence community. Mr. President, would you add any qualifiers to that flat statement? And what do you think is the best evidence of it?

President Bush. Zarqawi. Zarqawi is the best evidence of connection to Al Qaida affiliates and Al Qaida. He's the person who's still killing. He's the person—and remember the e-mail exchange between Al Qaida leadership and he, himself, about how to disrupt the progress toward freedom.

Saddam Hussein also had ties to terrorist organizations as well. In other words, he was affiliated with terrorism—Abu Nidal, the paying of families of suiciders to go kill innocent people. I mean, he was no doubt a destabilizing force. And we did the absolute right thing in removing him from power, and the world is better off with him not in power.

I look forward to the debate, for people saying, "Oh, gosh, the world would be better off if Saddam Hussein were still in power." I think we'd have trouble finding takers, particularly those in Iraq as well. They're now living in a free society. And I repeat, it's hard work to go from Saddam Hussein to a free society, but we'll get there. And we'll get there because people want to be free. That's why we'll get there. People long to live in freedom. And the United States—and I will continue to make it clear that we will not abandon those who are building free societies, whether it be in Afghanistan or whether it be in Iraq.

Richard [Richard Benedetto, USA Today].

Movement Toward Democracy in Afghanistan

Q. Mr. President, there have been some reports that the Afghan Government has been cooperating with warlords, former warlords in Afghanistan, and I wondered if you talked about that with President Karzai today——

President Bush. Yes, I did.

Q. ——and how you feel about it?

President Bush. I did, and he can answer the question, what he told me.

President Karzai. Yes. See, Afghanistan is emerging from years of oppression to a free, democratic society. And in democracy, you are supposed to be talking to each other. You are supposed to be preparing the country for a better future by negotiating and by understanding each other. And as the Afghan President, it's my job to take that nation, the Afghan people, into a better future, through stability

and peace, to a higher degree of democracy, to the elections. It's my job to do that peacefully. It's my job to keep stability and peace in Afghanistan. And I will talk to anybody that comes to talk to me about stability and peace and about movement towards democracy.

No deals have been made. No coalitions have been made, and no coalition will be made. And they did not ask for it. First of all, we don't call them warlords. Some of those people are respected leaders of the Afghan resistance. Some of them are former Presidents, and we respect them in Afghanistan. Yes, there are bad people in the country as well with whom we're not making a deal, with whom we are not talking. This country is moving forward. It's a society now emerging with a strong civil society sense in institutions, and that's what we are doing there.

President Bush. Mr. President, thank you very much.

President Karzai. Thanks very much.

President Bush. Lunch awaits us.

President Karzai. Lunch awaits us, indeed. Thank you.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 11:27 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; Muqtada Al Sadr, Iraqi Shiite cleric whose militia engaged in an uprising in Iraq which began in early April; Prime Minister Ayad Allawi of the Iraqi interim government; senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi; and Palestinian terrorist Abu Nidal, who was found dead in Baghdad, Iraq, on August 19, 2002. President Karzai referred to Mullah Omar, head of the deposed Taliban regime in Afghanistan.

Joint Statement Between the United States of America and the Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan

June 15, 2004

The United States and Afghanistan are working together to keep Afghanistan irreversibly on the path toward constitutional democracy and toward an honored place in the world community as a nation that invests in its people and provides its citizens with economic opportunity and security. President Bush and President Karzai applaud the efforts of coalition and Afghan forces and of countless Afghan and international workers who have joined to build a new Afghanistan on the ruins of the old. Afghanistan today represents an enormous strategic success for the United States and the world and a political and economic success for the Afghan people who have endured a quarter century of conflict. A country that was seized by terrorists to serve as the global headquarters of hate and oppression is now returned to her people and has become a land of liberty and opportunity for Afghans and a strong ally in the international war on terror.

President Karzai conveys his heartfelt thanks to the American people for their continued support and recognizes the American servicemen and servicewomen who are fighting—and especially those who have died—alongside Afghan and other coalition forces to secure a better future for his country. President Karzai underscores that Afghan and coalition forces are winning the war against terror in Afghanistan, even as reprehensible but isolated attacks continue against aid organizations, coalition forces, and Afghan civilians. These attacks will not be allowed to deny the Afghan people their rightful future.

President Bush joins President Karzai in acknowledging the indispensable support of the United Nations, NATO, and many international partners in the historic effort to secure and rebuild Afghanistan. The effort has been a model of international collaboration, and its success will be a lasting tribute to all who have joined together with the Afghan people in this common task.

A Partnership for the Future

President Bush and President Karzai acknowledge the ties of mutual friendship and interest that bind the two countries together and pledge to build on these ties, forging a broad and lasting partnership for the future. This partnership will embrace a range of activities that represent shared interests in building democracy, investing in the Afghan people, creating economic opportunity, and strengthening security.

Promoting Democratic Governance

The United States and Afghanistan share the common conviction that democracy is the foundation of lasting stability. Afghanistan has a new constitution that offers a solid foundation for its future as a democracy that respects civil liberties and the rights of women and minorities. Presidential and Parliamentary elections are planned for September, and so far three million Afghans have registered to vote, including a million women.

The United States pledges its continued full support as Afghans go to the polls and begin to build the institutions of democracy, including a Parliament that is responsive to the needs of the people. The United States will launch a new two-year program to train parliamentarians and equip them to fulfill their constitutional role. This program complements the efforts of other international donors to support Afghanistan's democratic process.

Investing in People

The United States and Afghanistan share the common conviction that to invest in people is to invest in the future. Afghans will go to the polls amid countless tangible signs of progress, including hundreds of new schools, thousands of newly-trained teachers, and millions of new textbooks. Over 140 clinics have been constructed, 3,400 health workers have been trained, and over 4 million children vaccinated.

Afghanistan's richest resource is its people, and President Bush joins President Karzai in recognizing the central importance of training and education programs. The United States is now inaugurating a set of fellowship and exchange programs that will bring Afghan scholars and youth to the United States. The United States will also support a new $5 million Women's Teacher Training Institute in Kabul to remedy the critical shortage of certified teachers in the provinces. Graduates of the teacher training program will return to their provinces to train others, engaging thousands of children and young adults and building literacy in rural Afghanistan.

Strengthening Economic Opportunity

The United States and Afghanistan share the common conviction that with economic opportunity Afghan men and women will forge a new future for themselves and their country. Afghanistan has a stable currency and an economy that grew 30 percent last year. Its cities are bustling with commerce and investment is growing. It has thousands of new wells and irrigation works and hundreds of miles of new roads that are steadily drawing the country together again after decades of war and destruction.

President Karzai emphasizes his determination to set Afghanistan on the path to sustainable economic growth and financial self-sufficiency. He recognizes that international aid cannot and should not last forever and views private investment and market forces as the long-term engine of economic growth. Afghanistan has signaled that it is committed to integrating into the global economic community and plans to

seek WTO observer status. To promote bilateral economic ties, the United States and Afghanistan announce their intent to pursue a bilateral Trade and Investment Framework Agreement. The United States is also pleased to announce that work will begin this month on three new industrial parks that will spur foreign and domestic investment. The United States and Afghanistan see the power sector as a central priority in the next stage of Afghanistan's development and will work together to develop power generation capacity and electricity distribution networks. To help create opportunities for women, the United States is dedicating $5 million to fund training programs and grants for small businesses, providing Afghan women with sustainable jobs, management skills training, and a self-sustaining credit facility.

Enhancing Security

The United States and Afghanistan share a common conviction that success in establishing security and attacking the narcotics trade is essential for progress on all fronts. President Bush reaffirms the commitment of the United States to provide continued support in the security arena, and President Karzai reports that Afghanistan has already made significant progress. Its National Army is 9,500 strong and growing, and is being deployed to the far reaches of the country. Its U.S.- and German-trained police force now numbers 18,300 and will soon reach 24,500. The United States is encouraged by President Karzai's decree requiring the disarmament, demobilization, and integration of all militias and pledges to support its full implementation.

Building on this strong foundation, the United States and Afghanistan announce their intent to establish a long-term security relationship that will include continued training and materiel support. The United States will continue helping Afghanistan establish its National Army—including regional commands—and will further strengthen the capacity of the Ministry of Defense and General Staff. President Karzai reaffirms his commitment to build a strong economy, free of drug trafficking; and the United States is committed to assisting the Afghan Government in this endeavor.

A Long-Term Commitment

President Bush reaffirms the long-term commitment the American people have made to Afghanistan. He and President Karzai join in recommitting both countries to the challenge of building a democratic, prosperous, and secure future for the Afghan people.

Note: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Satellite Remarks to the Southern Baptist Convention
June 15, 2004

Thank you all. Thank you very much, Jack. Thank you all very much. Thank you all. Thanks a lot. I appreciate that kind introduction from a fellow Texan. And I'm grateful for the chance to speak to this annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention. Jack, you've done a great job, and I'm proud to call you friend.

Laura and I are also thankful for your prayers. I have felt them at crucial hours.

Your convention has a proud tradition going back to your first gathering in Augusta, Georgia, almost 160 years ago. You represent more than 16 million Southern Baptists and congregations all across our country and many others who serve as

missionaries far from home. And all of you are living out the high calling of spreading the good news and proclaiming the Kingdom of God.

Since I spoke to this convention 2 years ago, our country has been meeting great challenges. To defend our Nation, we have continued to pursue terrorists wherever they hide and plan, and one by one, we are bringing them to justice. In Afghanistan, we are standing with the Afghan people as they move toward free elections. In Iraq, America and our allies have set an entire nation free from the rule of a dictator. And at the end of this month, the world will see a sovereign government in Baghdad.

The rise of free societies in Afghanistan and Iraq will provide a powerful example of liberty in a troubled region, and it will make the American people more secure. There are tough challenges remaining in both these nations. In Afghanistan and Iraq, we will finish the job.

I appreciate your strong support for our efforts in the war on terror. I understand, as you do, that freedom is not America's gift to the world; freedom is the Almighty God's gift to every man and woman who lives in this world.

We are grateful for the blessing to live in a free nation with the strength to defend our Nation. And we will always be grateful to the brave men and women of the United States military who volunteer to defend us all.

Here at home, we're making tremendous progress, and we've made tremendous progress over the past few years. We've reduced the tax burden on America's families and small businesses, leaving more money in the hands that earned it and, therefore, adding momentum to the growth of our economy. We've created more than 1.4 million jobs since last August. And over the past year, our economy has grown at its fastest rate in nearly 20 years.

We brought high standards and accountability to the public schools so that no child is left behind. We've kept the commitments of Medicare by extending the benefits of modern health care and prescription drugs to millions of America's seniors and people with disabilities.

We will build on our achievements in other areas as well. I will keep working to build a culture of life in America. I've been proud to sign the Born-Alive Infants Protection Act and legislation supporting maternity group homes. Earlier this year, I signed the Unborn Victims of Violence Act. Common sense and conscience tell us that when an expectant mother is killed, two lives are ended, and the criminal should answer for both crimes. Last November, I signed a law to end the brutal practice of partial-birth abortion. This law is not only valid and constitutional; it is compassionate and urgently needed; and my administration will fight to uphold it.

We will also continue our support for crisis pregnancy centers, incentives for adoption, and parental notification laws. I proposed to double Federal funding for abstinence programs in schools and community-based programs. And I will work with Congress to pass a comprehensive and effective ban on human cloning. Life is a creation of God, not a commodity to be exploited by man.

My administration is defending the sanctity of marriage against activist courts and local officials who want to redefine marriage forever. The union of a man and woman is the most enduring human institution, honored and encouraged in all cultures and by every religious faith. And Government, by strengthening and protecting marriage, serves the interests of all. So I am calling for funding for healthy marriage programs, and I support a constitutional amendment to protect marriage as the union of a man and a woman.

I will continue our efforts to defend the liberty of religious organizations. Faith-based charities have a right to provide publicly funded social services, just like any other group. You see, our Government

should welcome faith. So I have signed an Executive order allowing religious charities who seek Government support to compete for funding on a level playing field. I call on Congress to codify my Faith-Based Initiative into law, so that people of faith can know Government will never discriminate against them again.

It is my responsibility as your President to make sure the judicial system runs well, and I am meeting that duty. I have nominated superb men and women for the Federal courts, people who will strictly interpret the law, not legislate from the bench as activist judges. Some Members of the Senate are resorting to unprecedented tactics to block votes on my good nominees. This is unfair to the nominees and damaging to the judicial system. Every nominee deserves a fair hearing and a timely vote on the Senate floor. It is time for those Senators to stop playing politics with American justice.

These years have brought trials we did not ask for and challenges we never expected to face. We have worked together, and we are rising to meet the duties of our time. Now we look forward with confidence and faith toward greater security and wider prosperity and a stronger culture of life. We pray always for God's guidance and strength in our lives and for this great nation.

I thank you for the opportunity to speak to this convention. I'm sorry I couldn't be there in person. May God bless all of you, and may God continue to bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke by satellite at 3:51 p.m. from the Map Room at the White House to the annual meeting in Indianapolis, IN. In his remarks, he referred to Jack Graham, president, Southern Baptist Convention; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Message to the Congress Transmitting a Notice of Intention To Enter Into a Free Trade Agreement With Bahrain

June 15, 2004

To the Congress of the United States:

Consistent with section 2105(a)(1)(A) of the Trade Act of 2002, (Public Law 107–210; the "Trade Act"), I am pleased to notify the Congress of my intent to enter into a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the Government of Bahrain.

This agreement will create new opportunities for America's workers, farmers, businesses, and consumers by eliminating barriers in trade with Bahrain. Entering into an FTA with Bahrain will not only strengthen our bilateral ties with this important ally, it will also advance my goal of a U.S.-Middle East Free Trade Area (MEFTA) by 2013.

Consistent with the Trade Act, I am sending this notification at least 90 days in advance of signing the United States-Bahrain FTA. My Administration looks forward to working with the Congress in developing appropriate legislation to approve and implement this free trade agreement.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,

June 15, 2004.

NOTE: The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks at the Congressional Barbecue
June 15, 2004

Thank you all for coming. So the Vice President and I were sitting around saying, "I wonder if we can get some people to come to a barbecue here on the South Lawn." We're glad you came. Laura and I and Lynne and Dick are really pleased to host you all for the annual Congressional Barbecue. We want to thank the Rich Davisfamily from Kansas City for providing the barbecue and the White House staff for providing the napkins. [*Laughter*]

I think the best thing I can tell you is how much I appreciate the families of the Members of Congress for supporting your husbands and wives and moms and dads as they serve our great country. It is a—the Members of Congress work really hard on behalf of the people of the country. And they're gone a lot from their homes, and I know it's hard. It's hard to wonder whether or not the service is worth it. I'm telling you, the service is worth it. We are a great nation because men and women from all walks of life are willing to serve our country. So we really appreciate you being here.

I also want to thank the Marine Band, the Army Band, the Navy Band, the Air Force Band, and the Old Guard Fife and Drum Corps for providing the entertainment tonight.

And our wish is that you enjoy yourself on the beautiful South Lawn of this majestic house that Laura and I are fortunate to live in. Every day we are reminded about the greatness of our country, and we are a great country. We're a great country because we believe in human dignity and the rights of every person. We're a great country because we believe that no matter who you are or where you're from, you can succeed in America. We're a great country because free men and women can self-govern in a peaceful way, and we're a great country because we are blessed by the Almighty God.

Thank you all for coming. May God bless. Enjoy yourself.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:15 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Rich Davis, founder, KC Masterpiece Barbecue and Grill restaurants.

Remarks at MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, Florida
June 16, 2004

Thanks for coming. Thanks for the warm welcome. It is great to be back in Florida with the fine men and women of MacDill Air Force Base. You know, I told my dad I was coming here today, and he suggested I drop in by parachute. [*Laughter*] I told him I thought I'd wait for my 80th birthday. [*Laughter*]

With us today by satellite are American service men and women in Afghanistan and Iraq. You are stationed in faraway lands, but you're always in the thoughts of your fellow Americans. You face hard duty. You've endured the heat of the Persian Gulf and the harsh winters of central Asia. You're serving with honor and pride. You're making our country safer, and your country is proud of you. Thank you for your service.

I also know that we're on Armed Forces radio and TV. We're carried to the bases

and ships around the world. Wherever your duty has taken you, I want you to know that you are a part of a great force for good in this world. The defense of our country, the security of our friends, and the peace of the world depend on you. Thank you for working hard and for bringing credit and honor to the United States military.

I want to thank General Lance Smith and his wife, Linda. I want to thank General John Abizaid, who is not with us today, and his wife, Kathy. I want to thank General Doug Brown. I want to thank Colonel Brian Kelly and wife, Susan. I want to thank a member of my Cabinet who's traveled here, a veteran of the United States military, the Secretary for the Department of Veteran Affairs, Secretary Tony Principi.

Someday you'll be veterans. Our Government will honor our commitment to our veterans, past, present, and future.

I want to thank Mayor Pam Iorio for being here today, the mayor of Tampa, Florida, and Mayor Rick Baker, the mayor of St. Petersburg, Florida. Thank you all for coming today. I'm honored you're here, and thank you for providing such important support for the men and women who wear our Nation's uniform.

I want to thank my friends Darryl Worley and Mark Wills for being here today. These boys can sing.

I know we've got people from the Tampa Bay Lightning here. It seems like it would be hard to skate on ice in this kind of weather. [*Laughter*] But I know the general manager, Jay Feaster, is with us, and John Tortorella, the coach, is with us. Congratulations on being champs.

I just had the honor of meeting Master Sergeant Gina Carnesecchi on Air Force One. I'll tell you why I want to bring up Gina. She is a veteran of—she's been deployed, let me put it to you that way. She came back; she helped start Operation Lighthouse here at MacDill. It's a program to encourage troops and their families. She helps organize care packages and makes sure families are able to communicate with a loved one abroad. She's a volunteer. She serves our Nation as a master sergeant. In her spare time, she volunteers to help make somebody's life better.

You see, the strength of America is the hearts and souls of the American people. The strength of this country is because we've got thousands of people from all walks of life who have heard the universal call to love a neighbor just like they would like to be loved themselves. For those of you who are helping to make somebody's life better, I thank you on behalf of a grateful nation.

MacDill is the home of the U.S. Central Command. The Command was activated in the early 1980s. Back then, America needed CENTCOM to help protect our allies from aggression and to support the Afghan freedom fighters. Now, at the start of a new century, the men and women of CENTCOM have liberated two nations and have rescued more than 50 million people from tyranny. Today, your Nation is counting on you to ensure the defeat of terrorists, to secure America, and to advance freedom throughout the Middle East. That's our mission.

I'm grateful to the fine men and women of the 6th Air Mobility Wing, which established the air bridge that got troops and supplies into the theaters of operations. Some of you deployed to Iraq with the 447th Air Expeditionary Group. Your job was to move cargo and passengers in and out of the Baghdad International Airport every day. Last Thanksgiving, I was one of those passengers, and I appreciated the on-time arrival.

MacDill is also the headquarters for our quiet warriors, the United States Special Operations Command. It is the nature of Special Ops that many of your victories are unseen and must remain secret, but I know about them. [*Laughter*] Our Special Operations force are the worst nightmare of America's worst enemies, and you're making us proud.

All who wear the uniform can know that America appreciates your service and your sacrifice. Our Government owes you more than gratitude. I made a commitment to the men and women of our military, a commitment to their loved ones: You will have the resources you need to fight and win the war on terror.

Here at CENTCOM, the Coalition Village flies the flags of 65 nations that are doing their part in the war on terror. On behalf of our country, I thank all our friends and allies for serving with America in the cause of freedom.

I last came to MacDill during the first week of Operation Iraqi Freedom. In that battle, we and our allies acted with speed and precision to destroy a brutal regime, while sparing innocent Iraqis. Our coalition showed the world, when we see a threat to America and our friends, we will take decisive action, and when we promise to act, we mean exactly what we say.

Because America and our allies acted, one of the most brutal, evil regimes is gone forever. This was a regime that tortured children in front of their parents. This was a regime that used chemical weapons against whole villages. It gave cash rewards to families of suicide bombers. It sheltered terrorist groups. Iraq was a country in which millions of people lived in fear and many thousands disappeared into mass graves. That was the life in Iraq for more than a generation, until the Americans arrived. Because America and our allies acted, an aggressive threat to the security of the Middle East and to the peace of the world is gone forever. America is safer because Saddam Hussein sits in a prison cell.

When our forces were bringing down the dictator and his regime, I said here at MacDill that our work would not end with the liberation of Iraq. I pledged that we would help the Iraqi people to find the benefits and assume the duties of self-government. We're keeping our commitment.

All of you understand that freedom in Iraq and freedom in Afghanistan have deadly and determined enemies. Our men and women in those countries are fighting freedom's enemies with skill and courage. You're showing great respect for the holy sites in those countries. You're helping to bring opportunity and security to nations that have known years of cruel oppression.

These are difficult tasks, but they are essential tasks. By fighting the terrorists in distant lands, you are making sure your fellow citizens do not face them here at home. By helping the rise of democracy in Iraq, in Afghanistan, and throughout the world, you are giving people an alternative to bitterness and hatred, and that is essential to the peace of the world.

Yesterday, President Karzai of Afghanistan came to the White House and to the U.S. Capitol and thanked the American people for helping to free his country and for being a friend to the Afghan people. The President of Iraq came to America last week and expressed his gratitude for the sacrifices of the American people and our troops. These two Presidents and the nations they serve know the character of the American Armed Forces. They're seeing the nature of your mission as well. We have come not to conquer but to liberate people, and we will stand with them until their freedom is secure.

We're moving forward with our five-point plan for Iraqi self-government. We're handing over authority to a sovereign Iraqi government. We're encouraging more international support for Iraq's political transition. We're helping Iraqis take responsibility for their own security. We're continuing to rebuild Iraq's infrastructure, and we're helping Iraq move to free elections. A turning point will come 2 weeks from today. On June the 30th, governing authority will be transferred to a fully sovereign interim government; the Coalition Provisional Authority will cease to exist; an American Embassy will open in Baghdad.

Iraq's new leaders are rising to their responsibilities. Together with our coalition and the United Nations, they are working to prepare the way for national elections by next January. In July, Iraqis from every part of the country will gather for a national conference that will choose an interim national council to advise and support Prime Minister Allawi and his cabinet. The U.N. Security Council has voted unanimously to endorse the Iraqi interim government and the plan for Iraq's political transition. The Iraqi people are making steady progress, and we will not let thugs and killers stand in the way of a free and democratic Iraq.

As Iraq gains self-government, it is essential that Iraq gain the means of self-defense. So we're now leading an international effort to help train Iraq's new security forces. There are now more than 200,000 Iraqis on duty and in training in various branches of the Iraqi security forces. We're working to build and strengthen Iraqi chains of command. We've learned from our experiences, Iraqi soldiers naturally want to take orders from Iraqi officers. So we're helping to prepare a new generation of Iraqi military commanders who will lead the security forces of a free and sovereign Iraq.

Those of you in Iraq are seeing results of your work. Iraqi police and Civil Defense Corps have recently captured several terrorists, including Umar Baziyani, a key lieutenant of the terrorist named Zarqawi. Recently, in Mosul, the Civil Defense Corps successfully repelled attacks on government buildings. The U.S. commander on the ground, Brigadier General Carter Ham, said the Iraqi forces stood strong. In Najaf, Iraqi police are now patrolling the streets. They're being greeted warmly by their fellow citizens.

You see, these brave Iraqis are stepping up. They're setting an example for their fellow citizens. They're staying in the fight, taking the battle to the terrorists and Saddam holdouts. They are securing a future of liberty and opportunity for their children and their grandchildren. And when the history of modern Iraq is written, the people of Iraq will know their freedom was finally secured by the courage and by the determination of Iraqi patriots.

There are many challenges yet to come. We can expect more violence in the weeks and months ahead, but the future of a free Iraq is now coming into view. As the interim government assumes authority and Iraqi security forces defend their country, our coalition will play a supporting role. And this is an essential part of our strategy for success. Terrorists who attack a self-governing Iraq are showing us and the Iraqis who they really are. They're not fighting foreign forces. They're fighting the Iraqi people. They're not just enemies of America. They're enemies of democracy and hope. They're enemies of a peaceful future in Iraq. As Prime Minister Allawi of Iraq said last week, "Anyone involved in these attacks is nothing more than a traitor to the cause of Iraq's freedom and the freedom of its people." He went on to say, "These are not freedom fighters. These are terrorists and foreign fighters opposed to our very survival as a free state."

The Prime Minister and I share the same resolve: The traitors will be defeated. Their greatest fear is an Iraqi government of, by, and for the Iraqi people. And no matter what the terrorists plan, no matter what they attempt, a democratic, free Iraq is on the way.

At the same time, our coalition is helping the Iraqi people to rebuild the basic infrastructure of their country. This is work that America has done before. I want you to remember this. In 1947, 2 years after the Nazi surrender, there was still starvation in Germany. Reconstruction seemed to be faltering. The Marshall plan had not yet begun. Soon Berlin would be blockaded on the orders of Joseph Stalin. Some questioned whether a free and stable Germany could emerge from the rubble.

Fortunately, America and our allies were optimistic. They stood firm. We helped the German people overcome these challenges and resist the designs of the Soviet Union. We overcame many obstacles because we knew that the only hope for a secure America was a peaceful and democratic Europe. And because we persevered, because we had faith in our values, because we were strong in the face of adversity, Germany became the stable, successful, great nation that it is today.

Fourteen months have passed since the fall of Baghdad, and today, in spite of terrorist insurgency, Iraq's economy is moving forward. Markets are beginning to thrive. New businesses have opened. A stable new currency is in place. Dozens of political parties are organizing. Hundreds of courts of law are opening across the country. Today in Iraq, more than 170 newspapers are being published, and I saw the other day that they've even got talk radio. I don't know if they've contacted Rush yet. [*Laughter*]

Life is better in other ways for the people of Iraq. Electric power is being restored and is no longer being distributed based on loyalty to Saddam Hussein's regime. Our coalition has rehabilitated nearly 2,500 schools, and over 1,200 more should be completed by the end of the year. All of Iraq's hospitals and most medical clinics are open and are serving the people. Since the liberation, the vast majority of Iraqi children under 5 years old have been vaccinated for polio, measles, tuberculosis, and other diseases. In the south of Iraq, our coalition is reflooding the wetlands that Saddam Hussein systematically drained to decimate the Marsh Arabs. We're bringing back a 5,000-year civilization to life.

This summer will bring another milestone for our friends the Iraqis. Under the dictatorship of Saddam Hussein, members of the Iraqi national soccer team were imprisoned and tortured when they failed to perform. Last month, inspired by love of country rather than the fear of a dictator, the Iraqi team won an upset victory over Saudi Arabia and earned its first trip ever to compete in the Olympic Games. All countries gathered in Greece will be able to cheer for the athletes from a free Iraq.

With each step forward on the path to self-government and self-reliance, the terrorists will grow more desperate and more violent. They see Iraqis taking their country back. They see freedom taking root. The killers know they have no future in a free Iraq. They want America to abandon the mission and to break our word. So they're attacking our soldiers and free Iraqis. They're doing everything in their power to prevent the full transition to democracy. And we can expect more attacks in the coming few weeks, more car bombs, more suiciders, more attempts on the lives of Iraqi officials.

But our coalition is standing firm. New Iraq's leaders are not intimidated. I will not yield, and neither will the leaders of Iraq. As the Iraqi President al-Yawr said last week, "They will try to increase the incidents and the violence for a while, but we're committed; we're consistent; we are focused."

The terrorists will fail. They will fail because the Iraqi people will not accept a return to tyranny. The terrorists will fail because the resolve of America and our allies will not be shaken. And the terrorists will fail because courageous men and women like you are standing in their way.

All who serve in the United States military—in Iraq, in Afghanistan, and at points across America and around the world—can take pride in the great work you have accepted. Your fellow citizens know that your work is not easy. The days are hot. Your mission is hard. Many of you have faced long deployments, sometimes longer than you expected. You've missed your families; your families miss you. Some of you have lost comrades, good men and women you will never forget, and America will never forget them either.

You're sacrificing greatly for our country, and our country has needed that sacrifice. By standing for the cause of freedom, you're making the world more peaceful. By fighting terrorists abroad, you're making the American people more secure here at home. And by acting in the best traditions of duty and honor, you're making our country and your Commander in Chief incredibly proud.

May God bless you. And may God continue to bless the United States.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:38 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Lt. Gen. Lance L. Smith, USAF, deputy commander, and Gen. John P. Abizaid, USA, combatant commander, U.S. Central Command; Gen. Bryan D. "Doug" Brown, USA, commander, U.S. Special Operations Command; Col. Brian T. Kelly, USAF, commander, 6th Operations Group, MacDill Air Force Base; country music entertainers Darryl Worley and Mark Wills; President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan; President Ghazi al-Ujayl al-Yawr and Prime Minister Ayad Allawi of the Iraqi interim government; senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi and his lieutenant Umar Baziyani, who was captured in Baghdad, Iraq, on May 30; Brig. Gen. Carter F. Ham, USA, commander, Task Force Olympia; and talk radio show host Rush Limbaugh.

Statement on the Report of the Commission on Implementation of United States Space Exploration Policy
June 16, 2004

I am pleased that Chairman Pete Aldridge and the members of the Commission on Implementation of United States Space Exploration Policy have developed recommendations supporting the vision for America's space program. I appreciate their hard work and service.

The Commission's report makes clear that this vision, which I announced in January, is a sustainable and affordable long-term human and robotic program to explore space. We will explore space to improve our lives and lift our national spirit. Space exploration is also likely to produce scientific discoveries in fields from biology to physics and to advance aerospace and a host of other industries. This will help create more highly skilled jobs, inspire students and teachers in math and science, and ensure that we continue to benefit from space technology, which has already brought us important improvements in areas as diverse as hurricane forecasting, satellite communications, and medical devices.

The Commission worked diligently to collect ideas from a variety of voices from across the country and to develop innovative recommendations. The Commission's recommendations will be reviewed and considered, and NASA will accelerate the transformation it has begun. I am confident that the Commission's report will help Congress, NASA, other Government agencies, the private sector, the international community, and the American public to work together to undertake the next steps in our journey into space for the benefit of generations to come.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Weapons-Usable Fissile Material in the Territory of the Russian Federation
June 16, 2004

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent the enclosed notice to the *Federal Register* for publication, stating that the emergency declared with respect to the accumulation of a large volume of weapons-usable fissile material in the territory of the Russian Federation is to continue beyond June 21, 2004. The most recent notice continuing this emergency was published in the *Federal Register* on June 12, 2003 (68 *Fed. Reg.* 35149).

It remains a major national security goal of the United States to ensure that fissile material removed from Russian nuclear weapons pursuant to various arms control and disarmament agreements is dedicated to peaceful uses, subject to transparency measures, and protected from diversion to activities of proliferation concern. The accumulation of a large volume of weapons-usable fissile material in the territory of the Russian Federation continues to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States. For this reason, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared with respect to the accumulation of a large volume of weapons-usable fissile material in the territory of the Russian Federation and maintain in force these emergency authorities to respond to this threat.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
June 16, 2004.

NOTE: The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Message to the Senate Transmitting the Canada-United States Agreement on Pacific Hake/Whiting
June 16, 2004

To the Senate of the United States:

With a view to receiving the advice and consent of the Senate to ratification, I transmit herewith the Agreement between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of Canada on Pacific Hake/Whiting (the "Agreement"), done at Seattle, November 21, 2003. I am also enclosing, for the information of the Senate, the report of the Secretary of State on the Agreement.

The Agreement establishes, for the first time, agreed percentage shares of the transboundary stock of Pacific hake, also known as Pacific whiting. It also creates a process through which U.S. and Canadian scientists and fisheries managers will recommend the total catch of Pacific hake each year, to be divided by a set percentage formula. Stakeholders from both countries will have significant input into this process.

The Agreement not only allows the Parties to redress the overfishing that had led to a recent decline in stock levels, but also provides long-term stability for U.S. fishers and processors and a structure for future scientific collaboration.

The recommended legislation necessary to implement the Agreement will be submitted separately to the Congress.

I recommend that the Senate give favorable consideration to this Agreement and give its advice and consent to ratification at an early date.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
June 16, 2004.

Remarks Following a Cabinet Meeting and an Exchange With Reporters
June 17, 2004

The President. I've just met with my Cabinet. We discussed primarily the economy, and I was pleased with the report I got. The U.S. economy is strong, and it's getting stronger. People are going back to work. There's a sense of optimism around this table, because these people have been out in the field and talking to people, talking to small-business owners and entrepreneurs. I'm pleased with the progress we're making.

There's more to do to make sure this growth is sustained throughout the decade. Primarily it requires a proper understanding of the role of Government to the economy. The role of Government is not to try to manage the economy; the role of Government is to create an environment in which the capital flows and entrepreneurs feel emboldened to take risk and to make sure workers are trained for the jobs of the 21st century. I will continue to talk to the American people about our progrowth strategy that I'm confident will work.

The other thing we talked about was our firm resolve to spread freedom and, therefore, peace around the world. We fully understand terrorists will try to shake our will, to try to shake our confidence, to try to get us to withdraw from commitments we have made in places like Afghanistan and Iraq, and they won't succeed. Iraq will be free, and a free Iraq is in our Nation's interest. A free Iraq will make the world more peaceful. A free Iraq will be an ally of those nations who honor human rights and human dignity and the aspirations of men and women everywhere. A free Iraq will make America more secure.

And we're making progress toward that goal. We've been there—it's been 14 months since the fall of Baghdad, and the work has been hard and difficult. Yet our military on the ground has done an excellent job of making sure the conditions are such that an Iraqi government can emerge and lead their nation to the better days.

I'll be glad to answer a couple of questions. Deb [Deb Riechmann, Associated Press], why don't you lead it off?

Al Qaida-Saddam Hussein Relationship

Q. Mr. President, why does the administration continue to insist that Saddam had a relationship with Al Qaida, when even you have denied any connection between Saddam and September 11th? And now the September 11th Commission says that there was no collaborative relationship at all.

The President. The reason I keep insisting that there was a relationship between Iraq and Saddam and Al Qaida, because there was a relationship between Iraq and Al Qaida. This administration never said

that the 9/11 attacks were orchestrated between Saddam and Al Qaida. We did say there were numerous contacts between Saddam Hussein and Al Qaida. For example, Iraqi intelligence officers met with bin Laden, the head of Al Qaida, in the Sudan. There's numerous contacts between the two.

I always said that Saddam Hussein was a threat. He was a threat because he had used weapons of mass destruction against his own people. He was a threat because he was a sworn enemy to the United States of America, just like Al Qaida. He was a threat because he had terrorist connections, not only Al Qaida connections but other connections to terrorist organizations. Abu Nidal was one. He was a threat because he provided safe haven for a terrorist like Zarqawi, who is still killing innocent inside of Iraq.

No, he was a threat, and the world is better off, and America is more secure without Saddam Hussein in power.

Let's see—Morgan [David Morgan, Reuters].

Defense Secretary Rumsfeld

Q. Mr. President, given your administration's assertions that it works closely with the International Red Cross, are you disappointed that Secretary Rumsfeld instructed military officials in Iraq to hold a member of Ansar Al Islam without telling Red Cross officials?

The President. The Secretary and I discussed that for the first time this morning, and he's going to hold a press conference today to discuss that with you. I'm never disappointed in my Secretary of Defense. He's doing a fabulous job, and America is lucky to have him in the position he's in. But the Secretary will hold a press conference today, and you might want to ask him that question at his press conference.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:57 a.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; Palestinian terrorist Abu Nidal, who was found dead in Baghdad, Iraq, on August 19, 2002; and senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi. A reporter referred to the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States (9/11 Commission). The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks to the National Federation of Independent Businesses
June 17, 2004

The President. Thank you all. Go ahead and be seated. Thanks for coming. Please be seated. I'm honored you're here. Thanks for coming. Welcome to the Nation's Capital. I'm honored to follow Denny Hastert. He is a fabulous Speaker of the House of Representatives. I enjoy—he is a good friend and a really good leader, and I've enjoyed working with him.

And I've enjoyed working with the members of the NFIB as well. I love to be in the presence of entrepreneurs. Wait, who's minding the store? [*Laughter*] I think if you look back on your record, you'll find I was an NFIB member in Midland, Texas, way back when. You're 600,000 strong. You have a good voice here in Washington. I want you to know that, and you need to make sure you continue to speak it clearly, because the policymakers need to hear from you about the need for less regulation,

good taxation, and less litigation in order for you to be able to do your job.

I know you know this: You've got friends on Capitol Hill. You have a friend in the White House too. There is a practical reason why I'm your friend. One of the practical reasons is, most new jobs—by far, the vast majority of new jobs are started by small businesses in America. See, I'm interested in our people working. I want the American people to be at work so they can fulfill their responsibilities as mothers and dads. And during a time of slowdowns, which we have been through, it's really important to make sure the small-business sector of the American economy is strong.

And so I'm about to talk about some policies we put in place to help you do your job better. The way I look at it is: What is good for small business is good for America.

We're here at a time of great promise and great opportunity. The economy is shifted into high gear, and that's good news. It's good news if you're trying to make a living. It's good news if you're trying to make a living, and it's good news if you're trying to meet a payroll. [*Laughter*] Factories are busier. Families are earning more. Homeownership rates—the homeownership rate is the highest ever in America. See, that is good news if you're interested in promoting an ownership society in our country. We want people owning their own business. We want people owning their own homes. You and I know this, that if you own something, you have a vital stake in the future of our country. The more ownership there is in America, the more vitality there is in America, and the more people have a vital stake in the future of this country.

We've got economic challenges. We've got economic momentum, and that's good. Because of the good policies, but more importantly, because of your hard work, because of working to realize your dreams, because of the spirit of the small-business owner in the country, the economy is strong, and it is getting stronger.

I want to thank Jack Faris for inviting me here. I'm honored to come right around the corner. I appreciate Tom Musser, the chairman of the board. I want to thank Dan Danner. He does all the work. [*Laughter*] But most of all, I thank you all. I've seen many of you as I've traveled the country. Part of my job has been to sell a pro-growth, pro-entrepreneur economic stimulus plan. And I was able to do so in your presence in different parts of America. And I want to thank you for showing up then and for showing up now. It's good to see you again.

I think every one of you knows full well what this economy has been through, and it's important for our country to remember what we have been through, because we have been through a lot. That's why I'm so optimistic about the future, because I've seen where we have come from.

Audience member. Four more years!

The President. I might as well quit on that note. [*Laughter*] Let me just remind you where we have been through—what we have been through. When I was the President-elect, sitting in Austin, Texas, I had a group of business leaders come down and see me, including Jack Faris. The universal message from those leaders was this: The economy was in trouble. In early January, when we showed up here to go to work, the economy was heading into a recession. The stock market had been declining. Factories were laying off workers, and these were tough times. And you know it as well as I. It's hard to be a small-business owner during a recession. It's hard to make your payroll. It's hard to fulfill your obligations to your workers when the economy is not growing. I understand that.

We began to recover somewhat, and then the enemy hit us on September the 11th. The attack not only affected our psychology; the attack affected the economy, and the two go hand in hand, as you know. Parts of our economy came to a standstill

right after September the 11th, 2001. Remember, airports were shut down. The stock market closed. We lost nearly a million jobs in 3 months.

And then we began to recover, because of policy and the spirit of America, and then we discovered some of our corporate citizens forgot what it meant to be a responsible American. They didn't tell the truth to their shareholders and their employees. We came together here in Washington, passed tough laws, and made it clear we're not going to tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America. We will hold people to account.

There is no question that we—the economy was affected by recession and attacks and emergencies, the march to war, corporate scandal, but we acted. We acted. I want to thank you for your help. We acted together. We went to Congress and said, "Let's lower the taxes on the American people. In order to get this economy moving, let's make sure people have got more of their own money in their pocket."

See, I believe—I think you may agree with me—that the people can use their money far better than the Federal Government can. And so we cut rates across the board. We said to Congress, "If we're going to have tax relief, let's make sure it's fair. If you're going to have tax relief, let's make sure everybody who pays taxes gets relief." And they listened, fortunately. The good news about reducing the individual tax rates across the board was that it helped small businesses.

You know what I know: Most small businesses pay tax at the individual income-tax rate. Because either being a Subchapter S corporation or other types of structures that, on the one hand, limit your liability and, on the other hand, cause you to pay tax at the individual rate level, about 90 percent of the small businesses across America pay tax at the individual income-tax rate level. And that's important. In other words, if you're interested in trying to get out of recession and recover from an attack, it's important to stimulate the small-business sector. And the definition of "stimulate," for people out there who are trying to understand—when I say "stimulate," the definition of "stimulate" means more money in your pocket. That's how you stimulate growth. That's how you encourage confidence.

We also helped families by doubling the child credit. We reduced the marriage penalty. I've never understood a society which penalizes marriage. It seems like you want to encourage marriage. [*Laughter*] But we reduced the marriage penalty.

And very important for the small-business owner in America, we put the death tax on the road to extinction. We had an interesting debate here in Washington about whether we needed a death tax or not. My position is, you shouldn't tax a person's assets twice, once while they're living, once when they move on. [*Laughter*] I mean, it's your property. You built your business, and you ought to be able to leave your business to whomever you choose.

And secondly, the people here in Washington must understand that many times, when a small-business owner passes on, the estate must be liquidated, the company must be liquidated in order to pay the burden of the taxes. Many times the asset base is illiquid. There's good capital worth, but they're illiquid. And the taxes are such that people have to sell their business, sell something they've loved, sell something they've tried to build up for the future.

Many moms and dads have got dreams about a—of leaving their businesses to generation after generation after generation. It's become one of the great parts of the American heritage, isn't it—whether it be a small business or a farm. People like that asset base in their own family. And yet the death tax makes it, in some cases, virtually impossible to do so. And getting rid of the death tax is a very important part of making sure the entrepreneurial spirit is strong in America.

We also created new incentives for the small businesses by quadrupling the annual expense deduction for equipment, up to $100,000, and that's important. See, that's important. It's an important part of stimulating the economy. We say, "Look, we're going to encourage you to invest." And our fellow citizens must understand that when small businesses invest, it means really what you're doing is you're purchasing something that somebody has to manufacture for you. And when they manufacture it for you, somebody is more likely to find work. It has a ripple effect throughout our economy.

The tax plan, that stimulation—the economic stimulation plan we passed was based upon a certain principle. It was based upon my optimism about people making the right decisions throughout our economy. See, I'm optimistic about our future because I've got great faith in the small-business entrepreneurs of America and the workers of America. And the economic plan we put forth to Congress, which they passed, is based upon that great trust and optimism and knowledge about how the small-business sector works and affects the future of the country.

Some looked at the problems—we had a debate here in Washington, of course, and that's good, and that's healthy for democracy. You like debates. You also like to win the debates. [*Laughter*] Some looked at the problems and offered familiar solutions. They said, "Look, what we really shouldn't have done is we shouldn't have cut the taxes on the American people. We shouldn't let people have more of their own money." It's kind of the old age—it's the age-old argument, "Do you want more Government or more money in people's pockets?" I came down on the side of more money in the people's pockets. Others would have had it that they want to increase the size of the Federal Government. I just don't think that increasing the size of the Federal Government will help you recover from a recession or emergency or corporate scandals.

They said they would—probably best to isolate America from the world. It was kind of a knee-jerk reaction to tough economic times to say, "Why don't we become isolationists, economic isolationists." I've rejected that point of view because that's too pessimistic, as far as I'm concerned, and I'll discuss that in a minute.

In other words, they were quick about pointing out the problems, but frankly, they didn't come up with many good solutions. And in my judgment, there wasn't a better solution than letting people have their money, stimulating the small-business sector, and it's paying off. The policies we have put in place have made sense.

Of course, recoveries don't happen overnight. Tax relief takes a while to have an impact, and people got impatient. The critics got impatient. You know, there was a lot of gloomy predictions around our country. Let me take a look at a few of them with you and see what's actually happened, thanks to tax relief.

We used to hear it said that America was in a jobless recovery. That term seems to have fallen out of use lately. [*Laughter*] Since August our policies have helped American businesses create 1.4 million new jobs. We've seen 4 straight months of manufacturing job gains. It's a clear sign of a broad and strong recovery. Even after the recovery began, some doubted whether it would really take hold. They predicted what they called a "double-dip" recession: There would be a recession, recovery, and then another recession. Yet in the past year, the economy has grown at the fastest pace in almost two decades. Since last summer, we now have the fastest growing major industrialized economy in the world. And the recession was one of the shallowest in modern American history, thanks to you, thanks to your hard work, thanks to the entrepreneurial spirit being revived.

The critics made a few other predictions. They said businesses and households would not spend their tax savings. Turns out business investment is up more than 9 percent

in the last year. Businesses are investing. They're spending capital. An NFIB survey shows nearly two-thirds of all small firms had capital spending projects in the last 6 months. Households have used their tax relief to help drive our economy forward as well. Consumption remained strong through the rough times and has accelerated since the tax relief was passed.

Some of the pessimists looked at this economic progress and claimed that the American families are still falling behind. Well, they didn't offer much evidence, because, in fact, as our economy has come back, American families are doing a lot better. Higher growth and higher productivity are leading to better paying jobs across America. Families are keeping more of their own money.

Since the beginning of 2001, real after-tax incomes, which are what people earn after inflation and taxes, have increased by 11 percent. That figure matters a lot. Let me see if I can put it in west Texas terms. That means you've got more money in your pocket. [*Laughter*] And it's your money to spend. You get to decide what to do with it, not the Federal Government.

Turns out when people have more money in their pocket, they make decisions that suit their own needs and at the same time has the cumulative effect of stimulating our economy. It's the millions of decisions by consumers and small-business owners and investors which drives our economy forward. It's not the decisions by bureaucrats in Washington, DC, that creates economic growth.

At every stage of our recovery, people were always looking for a cloud to stand under—or some were looking for a cloud to stand under here. One of my—I read something interesting that I'd like to share with you about an attitude that sometimes can take hold. On the morning after D-day in 1944, the Wall Street Journal ran a headline that read: "Invasion's Impact: Marks Beginning of End of War Economy; New Problems for Industry." [*Laughter*] That's kind of an interesting way to look at the liberation of Europe. [*Laughter*]

The economic—there are modern-day economic pessimists around who are quick to offer dire predictions and complaints. But you know what? They do not offer pro-growth economic policies. They can find the dark cloud, but they can't see the sunshine because they don't know where to take the country and they don't know where to lead.

You can't lead unless you understand the strengths of America. And one of the great strengths of our economy is the small-business sector of our economy, and I intend to keep it strong and vibrant and alive.

According to the NFIB, the small-business optimism has reached a 20-year high at the end of 2003, and that's good. Things are working. In your jobs survey, the last one you had, about half your members were looking to hire. Half your members are saying, "I see a better future, and I need somebody to help me make my business grow." And that's positive news for American workers. It's positive news when the small-business sector feels a wind at its back, where the owners are saying, "I see a better day. Therefore, I'm going to take a little more risk," or "I see a better day. I'm going to help—find somebody to help me make my business work better."

A guy named Mike Baldino from Fremont, Nebraska—he's a NFIB member—he owns Kelly Klosure Systems. They make steel buildings and enclosures. He's a Subchapter S—his company is a Subchapter S. He's a Subchapter S CEO. You know what that means. It means when you lower income taxes at the individual level, it affects his cashflow. He saved $30,000 last year. He's a small-business guy, has 30,000 more dollars in his pocket. He says he's going to invest. He's going to buy a conveyor system, a new conveyor system. Our citizens must understand that when Mike makes a decision like that and says, "I want to buy a new conveyor system," because

of the tax relief Congress passed, somebody's got to make the conveyor system. And somebody's got to provide the parts for the person who makes the conveyor system. In other words, has a ripple—Mike's decision has a ripple effect throughout our economy. He said this—he said, "I've been dragging my feet. The tax bill gave me the incentive."

See, the tax bill—and it's essential for our citizens to understand—when we passed the tax bill, it changed the decision-making process of millions of small-business owners. It changed the attitude of the decisionmakers in the small businesses of America. Not only are you more optimistic than you had been in the past, you've got a little more money to spend too, which makes you optimistic. And it's your decisions—it's the millions of decisions in the marketplace that have helped define the economic recovery we're going through, and Congress must understand that.

Mike added four new jobs. Now, that doesn't sound a lot to people who think in terms of a lot of zeros. But it meant a lot to the four people he hired. It meant a lot to Mike.

And when you think about it, there are a lot of Mikes out there who own their own small business. It's the cumulative effect of small-business hiring practices that have helped create this momentum in job hiring across the country. You know what I'm talking about. You've hired 1 or 2 or 3, 10, 20 people. And it's had an enormous effect. It's changing the dynamic of our economy. People are getting back to work. Small businesses are hiring. The future looks bright, and the fundamental question facing the country is, how do we make sure we continue to grow?

See, we've still got some problems. I want to discuss a few of them with you. I'm going to ask for your help in convincing your elected representatives to perhaps listen to our point of view about how to make sure this growth that we have going today not only lasts throughout the political cycle, more importantly, lasts throughout the decade. That's what we want, and the way I like to put it is, one way to do so is to make sure America is the best place in the world to do business. The best place for people to risk capital, the best place for people to try to realize their dreams must be America if we want our people working throughout the next decade.

And there are some things we must do. First, there must be certainty in the Tax Code. If you're a decisionmaker at a small business, you want to know what the future tax—your future taxes are going to look like. That's what you want to know. It's hard to make a decision if you're uncertain about what next year's taxes will look like, what the rates will look like, and so therefore, it's very important for Congress to understand and listen to the decisionmakers. As you know, some of tax relief is set to expire this year, and Congress must hear from you. They're going to continue to hear from me. Instead of raising taxes on the American people at this point, we ought to make sure the taxes stay where they are and stay low.

We need to make sure the child credit stays where it is, the marriage penalty stays down, the 10-percent rate stays in place. That's what we need to make sure. It will send a signal. It will send a signal that we intend to make the tax relief we put in place a permanent part of the Tax Code so our small-business owners can plan for the future.

And by the way, the death tax could conceivably come back to life. It's being phased out. It's going to be an unusual year—I think it's 2011 that it—see, it fades out to 2010. Then all of a sudden, it shoots back up in 2011. I guess a lot of people are going to have to be making some decisions in 2010. [*Laughter*] Congress needs to hear from you on this issue, I'm telling you. It's important to make sure that the death tax goes away forever—forever—that there's permanency.

One of the challenges that we have as our economy shifts is to make sure that we have a skilled workforce to fill the jobs of the 21st century. We're not going to be able to grow throughout the decades unless we make sure our workforce can do the jobs that are being created. In other words, if you can't find workers to be able to do the jobs that are necessary to compete in the 21st century, you'll look elsewhere. And so one of the economic realities is to make sure the education system works well. And I've worked with Congress to pass the No Child Left Behind Act. It is a strong piece of legislation. I'll tell you why. It sets high standards. And for the first time, it says, "In return for Federal money, show us whether or not a child can learn to read and write and add and subtract."

See, you live with accountability all your life, don't you? It's called the balance sheet and the income statement. A small-business person is held accountable every day. If you're in retail sales, you're held accountable when you close the register that evening. If you're in construction sales or building homes, you're held accountable every day, based upon progress you've made on a project that you've got.

The school systems need to be held accountable as well. And in return for money, we've said all we expect is for a child to read at grade level, starting at the third grade. That's not too much to expect. As a matter of fact, it's necessary to make sure the workforce works.

But we've got other programs to make sure our kids are ready. We've had a system, as you know, that has just simply shuffled some through the system without asking the hard question about education achievement, and they need help now. And so we've got programs for middle school kids and high school kids and intervention programs in English and math. We're working hard to promote science and engineering programs, both in high school and college.

But one of the most important initiatives that we have put forth here in Washington is to match up our community colleges with employers looking for workers, is to say to the workforce, "You can go back to school for a period of time—we'll help you in most cases—and train for jobs which actually exist." I don't know if you're having problems finding workers in your respective industries, but I can tell you, the health care industry's looking for nurses. I mean, there are a lot of jobs where people are looking to fill jobs, and one reason why they can't fill those jobs is because the education system hasn't responded. The education system must be flexible, available, and affordable. And the best place to do that is in the community college campuses all across America.

We're not going to be able to compete in the world and create the jobs we want to create over the next decades if we strangle our small-business owners and large-business owners with needless paperwork and regulation. The governments—and I say "governments" because I know the Federal Government has got a lot of paperwork you need to fill out, but so does the State government and local government. I can't guarantee you that we read all the forms we ask you to fill out. [*Laughter*] I would bet they don't read all the forms. [*Laughter*] And we've got to be mindful about what paperwork does to the job creators. We want you hiring people, not hiring—not filling out paperwork. That's what we want. The Treasury Department has simplified some tax forms, for example.

There's some practical things we must continue to do at the Federal level to make sure that we can compete and make sure people can find work. Our workers must understand that if we overburden our people, our entrepreneurs with paperwork, they're less likely to find a job. The Government has the responsibility to have oversight but not oppressive oversight.

In order for America to be a competitive place, the best place to do business, in

order for people to be able to find work over the next years, we must have a legal system that is fair and balanced. Today's legal system is not fair, and it's not balanced.

I want you to remind the people on Capitol Hill, you cannot be pro-small-business and pro-trial-lawyer at the same time.

And the Federal Government can set an example of good tort reform by passing a class-action reform, a reform where trial lawyers can't shop for courts all around the country and a reform that, if there ever is a verdict, the people who benefit are those who got injured, not the lawyers. That bill is stuck. We need to help get it unstuck, and you can help. You can help by contacting your United States Senators.

And we also need to reform our medical liability system. Now, when I came to Washington—when I came up here, I said, "Well, gosh, I think the best place to have reform on medical liability reform is at the State level." And then I looked at the impact of what the frivolous lawsuits were doing to Federal budgets. You see, if you're a doc and you're getting sued all the time, then you're going to practice defensive medicine. It means you practice more medicine than you need so if you ever get into a court of law, you can say, "I've done everything I could possibly do"—some of which was not necessary except for legal defense. And as a result of the lawsuits or the threat of being sued or the settlements that happen as a result of filing lawsuits, docs' premiums go up too. And therefore, so does your cost, and so does the cost to the Federal Government.

So I decided medical liability reform was a Federal issue that required a Federal solution and worked with the United States House of Representatives to get a good bill out, which says if you're truly harmed by a doctor, you're going to be compensated. But these outrageous settlements and these egregious awards must cease for the sake of our small-business owners.

I fully understand the pressure you're under when it comes to the cost of health care. You've got employees that you want to take care of. You have an obligation as an employer to make sure that somebody working with you has got good health care. That's what you want more than anything. And yet you know, like I know, the cost is going up. And one way, a part of controlling the cost of health care, is for the United States Congress to get rid of those frivolous and junk lawsuits that's running up the cost of health care and pass Federal medical liability reform.

Another way to help small businesses is to pass association health plans. Association health plans, see, they're necessary. If you're a small-business owner, a restaurant owner, say, and lucky enough to be in the great State of Texas—[*applause*]—there you go—it seems like you should be able to pool risk with a restaurant owner in the State of Florida. Except in many States, you can't do so. You know what I'm talking about. Big businesses are able to spread risk, because they've got a lot of employees over which to spread risk. Small businesses don't have that same purchasing power in the marketplace. It makes sense to me to allow small businesses to bind together in order to be able to better afford insurance for their company.

As well I want you to look into health savings accounts. This is an innovative new product that has emerged as a result of me signing the Medicare reform law. It's an interesting way for small businesses to take care of their employees. Employees basically are able to contribute tax-free into an account to help with routine medical expenses, and you pay for catastrophic care. The combination of the two will save money. It also makes sure that the decisionmaking process in medicine is between the doctor and the patient, not between Federal bureaucrats and the rest of the population. See, we must not allow the Federal Government to run the health care system of America.

In order for us to be competitive, in order for America to be a great place to do business, we need an energy policy. We need to become less dependent on foreign sources of energy. I proposed a plan to the United States Congress several years ago and said, "Look, we have got to do a better job of modernizing our electricity system, of exploring for more energy in environmentally friendly ways in our own country, by developing alternative sources of energy, biodiesel, ethanols." I mean, listen, I would love to be able to leave behind a legacy that says, "Gosh, the corn crop is up, and we're less dependent on oil from overseas." That would be a good thing to have happen, wouldn't it?

And it's very possible. It's very possible. We must continue to push research and development along those lines. And we've got to encourage conservation. But we need—the Congress needs to pass this bill. I mean, all they've got to do is go to the gas pumps and take a look at the price of gasoline, and you begin to understand what it means to be reliant upon foreign sources of energy. We need clean coal technology. We need to be exploring for natural gas. We need to have—be able to deliquefy liquefied natural gas off our shores. We need more energy in order to be able to have our economy strong and, at the same time, make sure we're strong from a national security perspective.

And finally, I want to talk about trade right quick. Do you know that 97 percent of all U.S. exporters are American small businesses? See, if you're good for—good at something, we want to encourage you to be able to sell your product everywhere. We're really good farmers and ranchers in America. We ought to be selling beef and corn and soybeans everywhere there's a market. We ought not to be afraid of competition in America. I don't like unfair competition. And so, the job of the President, it seems like to me, is to reject economic isolationism, is to say to countries, our markets are open for you, you open up your markets for us.

You see, all we want is a level playing field. Just give us a chance to compete. The chance to compete will be good for small businesses. A level playing field will be good for you. It will open up markets. It will give you more opportunity to sell that which you make in places other than the U.S.

In my judgment, good trade policy means better jobs for the American people. It's essential that we not become isolated from the world. It's essential we be confident in our ability to compete. Give us a level playing field, and America's entrepreneurs, small-business owners, farmers, ranchers, and workers can compete with anybody, anyplace, anywhere in the world.

What I'm telling you is, is that the economy's strong; it's getting stronger. But it's important to keep thinking down the road, and it's important to recognize that which is necessary to make sure we can compete. You want to be not only vibrant over the next 4 or 5 years; you want to be vibrant over the next 20 years. The role of the Government is not to create wealth but an environment in which the entrepreneur can flourish. And I've just laid out five or six ways to make sure that the entrepreneur can flourish in America.

We've got other challenges as well. I want to talk about two of them right quick. One, we will win the war on terror. [*Applause*] Thank you. We will win it in the short term because our troops will protect America from harm. We've got great troops. Sergeant, I'm glad you're here. The chief of staff of the NFIB's son is with us. He has served in Bosnia, Afghanistan, and Iraq. I'm honored you're here, Sarge. Thank you for your service.

Thanks to Sarge and others like him, we're running down Al Qaida; we've removed terror regimes who defied ultimatums; and we're doing the hard work now of defeating terror in the long run

by spreading freedom and democracy. It's not easy work; I understand that.

It's hard to go to from tyranny to freedom. It's hard to be—to go from a country which had mass graves and children being tortured in front of their parents, guys whose hands were chopped off because the currency was devalued. I remember the other day, seven people came to see me, and they had had their arms—their hands cut off. They were small-business owners, just like you, in Baghdad. And the currency had devalued, and Saddam Hussein needed to blame somebody. So he found these seven poor souls, and he cut off their hands, and he marked their foreheads with a X.

Fortunately, a filmmaker captured their story. And a guy in Houston named Marvin Zindler—he's a TV guy—put a foundation together and—had a foundation in place and saw the story, and he flew them over to the United States. And they came with their new hands to see me. A guy took his hand and put the pen in there and wrote "God bless America" in Arabic. That's the kind of society that used to exist. These seven people were overjoyed with the compassion of America and thrilled with the thought of living in a free society.

This is hard work, but we've done hard work before. After World War II, there were a lot of pessimists who doubted whether or not Germany could ever rise from the rubble or whether or not Japan could ever be a democracy. Fortunately, we had optimists in our country in those days who refused to listen to the pessimists. Fortunately, we had people in those days who had great faith in the values of America and great confidence that people deep in their souls want to live in free societies.

And that's the challenge we're faced with today. The killers and suiciders want us to leave Iraq, Afghanistan. They want us to renege on our word. They want us to lose confidence. They will fail. America will not be intimidated by these killers. We understand the stakes. We understand that our long-term security depends on the spread of free societies in parts of the world that are desperate for freedom. We have great confidence in our belief that freedom is the gift of the Almighty to every man and woman in this world.

We live in historic times. We live in historic times. This economy of ours is changing, and as it changes, it's getting stronger and providing fantastic opportunities for people, opportunities for those who dream the big dream and who work hard and take a risk. And we have a chance to leave behind a legacy of peace by spreading democracy and freedom. These are the challenges that have been placed before us. We accept the challenges, and we know that for our great country, the best days lie ahead.

Thank you for coming, and may God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:20 p.m. at the J.W. Marriott Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Jack Faris, president and chief executive officer, Thomas Musser, chairman of the board, Dan Danner, senior vice president for public policy, and Mary Blasinsky, chief of staff, National Federation of Independent Businesses; Mike Baldino, president and chief executive officer, Kelly Industries, Inc.; S. Sgt. Michael Blasinsky, USAF, son of Ms. Blasinsky; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; Don North, video producer; and Marvin Zindler, member, board of directors, Agris-Zindler Children's Fund. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

Remarks at a Reception for Senatorial Candidate George R. Nethercutt, Jr., in Spokane, Washington
June 17, 2004

Thank you all. Thanks for coming. And George, thanks for inviting me. I've come back to Spokane for one reason. I want to make it as clear as I possibly can that the right person to represent the State of Washington in the United States Senate is George Nethercutt.

Thank you for helping him. Thank you for what you're going to do to help him—[*laughter*]—starting with voting and turning out others to vote. And while you're getting the vote for George, why don't you get them to vote for me as well. Both of us are going to carry this State, and we're going to because we've got optimistic plans to make this country safer, stronger, and better.

There are a lot of reasons to be for George, but the best is the fact that he married well. [*Laughter*] Like me, he married above himself. [*Laughter*] He's got a wonderful family with Mary Beth and Meredith and Elliott. I want to thank them for joining us on the stage. You see, running for office is a family venture. You can't run unless you've got a good, strong marriage and a supportive family, and the Nethercutts are close. They love each other. They care for each other. And one of the reasons he's going to win is they set such a good example for people all across the State of Washington.

And the good news for me is, Laura hadn't run me off yet. [*Laughter*] She sends her very best. As a matter of fact, she is going to host an event for George in Washington, DC, very soon. She knows a good man when she meets one. [*Laughter*] I'm really proud of Laura. She is—I don't know if you remember, 4 years ago when I came here—and by the way, I remember vividly running the river. [*Laughter*] Unfortunately, I can't run as well anymore. It just goes to show what the Presidency does to your knees. [*Laughter*] But I said I was a lucky man when Laura said yes to marry me. She was a public school librarian when I first met her. She didn't care for politics or politicians. [*Laughter*] And now she's the First Lady of the United States, and she's doing a heck of a job. I'm really proud of her, and she sends her best.

I'm also really pleased that my friend Dirk Kempthorne is here, the great Governor of the State of Idaho. He is a—he's back in the corner, he and Patricia are back—I thought you'd get a better seat than that. [*Laughter*] But thanks for coming. He is a fabulous person and a great friend of mine, and I want to thank all the folks from Idaho who slipped across the border to say hi. And Governor, one of these days, I'm coming. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank Secretary of State Sam Reed for being here. I appreciate you coming, Sam. I had the honor of meeting Mayor Jim West. I want to thank the mayor. I like to tell mayors when I see them, thanks for serving, and fill the potholes. It works every time. [*Laughter*]

I appreciate saying hello to former Governor John Spellman. Thank you for serving your State. And I had the pleasure of saying hello to future Governor Dino Rossi. Dino is a good man. He's a good man. He's got a good, solid head on his shoulders, and he'll do a heck of a job as the Governor of this State.

It's a strong ticket we're running on here in Washington, if you really think about it. You've got Dino Rossi, and you've got George Nethercutt. You're lucky to have two great, honorable, decent souls. You know George here. When I say "decent," you know what I'm talking about. He is from Spokane. He grew up here. People know him well, and people can vouch for him. They can vouch for his integrity and

his decency and his compassion. And those are key ingredients to serve a group of people you care about.

He—I'll tell you, he's been a strong ally in Washington, DC. We've had to make some tough decisions. The job of a President is to confront problems, not to pass them on to future Presidents and future generations. It's easier to confront problems and to solve problems when you've got people like George Nethercutt in Washington, DC, who are willing to work with you.

Look, he doesn't agree with me 100 percent of the time. He's an independent thinker. That's the kind of person you want from the State of Washington, somebody who is independent. But when the big problems came up, we stood shoulder to shoulder on behalf of the American people.

Think about what we have confronted. This country has been through a recession. That means the economy was going backwards. It's been through corporate scandals. We had some of our citizens in our country forget what it means to be a responsible—responsible—citizen. They didn't tell the truth to their shareholders and their employees. It wasn't right what they did. We passed tough laws. I appreciate George's support. It is now abundantly clear to corporate CEOs that we will not tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America.

We got attacked on September the 11th, 2001. I made a tough decision to defend the country, and we went to war in Afghanistan and Iraq. All of those events made it very difficult on our economy. These were hurdles we had to overcome.

But we acted. We moved forward. And we moved forward on this principle: We have great faith that if the American people have more money in their pocket, it would help us overcome the obstacles that we confronted. We had great faith that if we could invigorate the entrepreneurial spirit in America, we could recover and people could find work. And I want to thank George for his strong and steady support for the economic stimulus plan that we got through the United States Congress, not once, not twice but three times, in order to make sure we overcame—[*applause*].

There's a difference in his campaign, a clear difference when it comes to taxation. There's a clear difference about—there's a clear difference in the philosophy of government. See, we believe that people can spend their money far better than the Federal Government can. We understand how the economy works. When a small-business owner has a little more money in his or her pocket, she's likely to make a new investment. An investment means somebody has to produce a capital good or a service, and when somebody produces a good or a service, somebody is more likely to find work.

The economic stimulus package we passed not only affected our citizens, the families of America—see, we raised the child credit, reduced the marriage penalty. And by the way, what kind of Tax Code is it that penalizes marriage? It's a lousy Tax Code that penalizes marriage. We ought to be encouraging marriage in our society. We created a new 10-percent bracket that will help lower income people.

We put the death tax on the road to extinction. Look, I like giving speeches where there's cowboy hats. [*Laughter*] It kind of reminds me of home. I see them. [*Laughter*] But one thing is for certain. We got a tax system that makes it hard for people to pass their family farm from one generation to the next. We got a tax system that's lousy on small-business owners being able to pass their assets. We need to get rid of the death tax forever. That's the clear difference in this campaign.

An integral part of the stimulus plan was to provide incentives to the small businesses to expand in America. See, 70 percent of new jobs are created by small businesses. And if your job base is lagging, it seemed to make sense to George and me that we would provide incentives to the small business. So we increased the amount of allowance for deductibility for capital

purchases. And by cutting individual taxes, we stimulated growth in the small-business sector, because most small businesses are Subchapter S corporations, and they pay tax at the individual income-tax rate.

Now, people in Washington, DC, were griping about this plan. I suspect perhaps your opponent was saying, "Oh, this is just rewarding the rich." We've heard that kind of class warfare language before, but look what's happened. The growth over the last year has been strong and steady. We've added 1.4 million new jobs since last August. The homeownership rate is the highest in American history. This economy of ours is strong; it is getting stronger. The tax relief we passed is working. The faith that George and I put into the American consumer, the American farmer, the American rancher, and the American entrepreneur is paying off.

There is a clear difference of opinion about how to grow an economy. One group of people say, "Let's raise your taxes and increase the size of the Federal Government and hope the economy grows." George and I believe that if you have more of your own money in your pocket, you make the decisions that help this economy grow, and the statistics and today's growth shows that our philosophy works.

Some of these tax—some of this tax relief is set to expire now. And if the United States Senate lets these taxes expire, it means they're raising taxes on the American people at the wrong time. A big issue in this campaign is going to be the issue on taxes. It's a big issue. There's a clear difference between the two running for the United States Senate. George wants you to keep your money. He doesn't believe the taxes ought to go up. He's willing to stand on the side of the small-business owner and the rancher and the farmer and the individual consumer. I can't say the same for his opponent.

See, the Senate needs to make sure that the tax relief that's set to expire doesn't expire. Otherwise, they're raising your taxes, and that will hurt our economy. We don't need to be raising our taxes right now. We've got plenty of money in Washington, DC, if we set our priorities. If we make sure we set our priorities, we can cut our deficit in half by 5 years. The tax relief that we passed must remain the same if we want this economy to continue to grow.

I'm running against a fellow who's already promised over a trillion dollars in new money, and we're just getting started. [*Laughter*] And he says he's going to pay for it by taxing the rich. There's not enough money to tax the rich to pay for a trillion dollars in new spending. You know who's going to end up paying for the new spending, don't you? You are, hard-working American people. Tax is an issue in this campaign. It's an issue, and the people of Washington must understand that by putting in George Nethercutt, he's not going to raise your taxes.

A fundamental issue in this campaign is who understands how to make sure the environment for economic growth continues, not just this year but beyond. See, I want America and George wants America to be the best place to do business in the world. We live in a global economy, and if we can't compete, our people aren't going to be able to work. That's just the way it is. And here's some things we can do to make sure that we've got—that we can compete in a global economy.

First, we need an energy plan. I submitted a plan 2 years ago. George supported it. His opponent voted against it. It's a plan that does a lot of things. One, it encourages conservation. It encourages alternative sources of energy. Look, I'd love to be the President that said, "The harvest is up recently. The corn harvest is up, and we're less dependent on foreign sources of oil." We need more energy here at home, though, folks. We can do so in environmentally friendly ways as well. But when you go to your gas pump, the reason that the gasoline prices are high is because

we're dependent. We're dependent on other nations for our energy. For the sake of economic security, for the sake of national security, we need an energy bill out of the United States Congress.

If we want to make sure our people work, we better make sure markets are open to U.S. products. There's some economic isolationists in Washington, DC, who believe the best way to deal with our economy is to shut it off from the rest of the world. I strongly disagree. I think that's too pessimistic. I'm confident we can compete with anybody. My job is to make sure the playing field is level. My job is to make sure other nations treat us like we treat them. And we're making progress there. Just ask your soybean growers and your wheat growers and your corn growers. We're selling products. Listen, if you're good at something, you ought to be selling it all around the world. We're good at making things. We're good at growing things. The best way to make sure we've got jobs out into the 21st century is to open up markets for U.S. products. America's producers and laborers can compete with anybody, anywhere, anytime if the playing field is level.

In order to make sure we've got a good economy in the out-years, you've got to make sure you've got a man up in Washington, DC, who understands something about agriculture, particularly for this part of the State. George Nethercutt understands agriculture. We've talked together, and we've got the farm bill moving. The ag sector, by the way, is strong right now. People are making a good living, and that's good for the U.S. economy.

Speaking about agriculture, you need to make sure you got the electricity to live out here in this part of the world. I told you when I came out here, we were going to be responsible when it came to the dams. I fully believed that we could make sure that the salmon runs were strong and that we could maintain the dams at the same time. I have fulfilled that promise. You better make sure he's in the United States Senate to keep it that way. I appreciated working with George on the Healthy Forest legislation, commonsense legislation.

And one thing else I want to talk to you about—about the domestic economy—is that in order to make sure jobs are available, we need people who are willing to vote for tort reform in the United States Senate. I got up to Washington, and I thought for a while that medical liability reform was a State issue, and then I saw the effects of the practice of defensive medicine on the U.S. budget. I mean, think about what the frivolous and junk lawsuits do to our budgets. We've got Medicare and Medicaid budgets and veterans health budgets. And these lawsuits are running up the cost to the U.S. taxpayers, make it hard for people—small businesses, in particular, to stay in business. It's running docs out. We've got docs leaving the profession all over our country, and that's not good. Listen, the doctors are compassionate, decent people who are healing on a daily basis. And if they can't make a living because of junk and frivolous lawsuits, our system will hurt; our communities will hurt.

And therefore, I decided that medical liability reform was a Federal issue and worked with the House of Representatives to put good legislation forward—good, sound legislation with real caps, legislation that will allow somebody who's been injured by a bad doc to have their day in court, but legislation which also will make sure we're not running good docs out of business. It passed the House. It is stuck in the United States Senate. Your Senator will not vote for medical liability reform. We need to get medical liability reform unstuck. One way to do is to put George Nethercutt in the United States Senate.

I have a duty to name good judges to the Federal benches. I have honored that duty. I have honored—I have put forth fine names, fine nominees, people who will strictly interpret the law, not legislate from the bench. It's what I said I would do

when I was running for President of the United States. I said, "These are the types of people I would nominate." And I put people from all walks of life up in front of the United States Senate. And unfortunately, some United States Senators are playing politics with my nominees, two of them right from this State. One of the reasons you ought to have George Nethercutt as the United States Senator is to make sure that good, honorable, decent judges are able to make it through the nominating process and the confirmation process of the United States Senate.

We—it's very important to have somebody represent you who clearly sees the threats to the United States of America, has a clear vision of the problems we face and the opportunities before us. I believe George Nethercutt is such a man.

The lessons of September the 11th must never be forgotten by any of us who have the honor of serving you. And here's the way I see the lessons: One, the nature of the enemy is such they'll kill indiscriminately in order to try to frighten the United States of America, in order to shake our will, in order to cause us to run from our duties. And therefore, it's very important for the United States to stay on the offense against these people. You can't negotiate with them. Therapy will not work. [*Laughter*] What is necessary is to use all the assets at our disposable to bring these people to justice before they hurt America again.

It's also very important that when the United States says something we mean it. In order to make the world a more peaceful place, it is essential that a leader, when they speak, means what he says. And when I say something to the enemy or to allies, I mean it. I understand the duty I have. And I said, "If you harbor a terrorist, you're just as guilty as the terrorist." And I meant that, and we acted on that. I want to thank George for his strong support.

We first acted on that in Afghanistan. Afghanistan was a place that had been brutalized by the Taliban. The Taliban is an indication of the ideology of these killers, see. Let me just put it to you this way: Young girls don't get to go to school. They're so backwards and so barbaric, they—their society—their view of society is dark and dim. A whole class of—a whole group of people are totally written off by the Taliban. In this case, they were also providing safe haven for Al Qaida. They were training there, and we issued an ultimatum. They defied the free world, and they no longer exist. And as a result, people have been freed.

They—there's individual Taliban moving around, and we're on the hunt with some really brave people. And I'm going to Fort Lewis tomorrow to thank a lot of the brave people on the hunt. But the government doesn't exist anymore. As a matter of fact, there's a—they're going to have elections in Afghanistan in September. They've got a modern constitution. They'll have women serving in their parliament.

President Karzai came to America, spoke in front of the Congress—George heard him—and he said, "I want to thank America. I want to thank America for your sacrifice. Thank you for your friendship. Thank you for standing with us." A free society in Afghanistan is going to make a difference for the peace of the world, and we're headed in that direction.

One of the lessons of September the 11th is that when we see a threat, we must take it seriously. We can no longer assume oceans protect us. If we see a threat materializing overseas, we must take every threat seriously, before it's too late. That's one of the really important lessons of that day.

I saw a threat in Iraq. I looked at the intelligence, and I saw a threat. The United States Congress, Republicans and Democrats, looked at the very same intelligence, and they saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence, and it saw a threat. And there's a reason why we saw threats. Saddam Hussein was

a brutal dictator who tortured his own people, who opened mass graves for innocent Iraqis and filled them, who harbored terrorists, who provided safe haven for people like Zarqawi who still kills in Iraq today, who used weapons of mass destruction on his own people. Yes, we saw a threat, and I remembered the lessons of September the 11th, that we must take threats seriously.

So I went to the United Nations, and I said, "Here's a threat." And unanimously, they said, "You're right. Mr. Saddam Hussein, disarm, disclose and disarm, or face serious consequences." When America speaks, we better mean what we say. When we say "serious consequences," we mean serious consequences. Saddam Hussein once again defied the free world. I had a choice to make, to trust the judgment of a madman or defend America. Given that choice, I will defend America every time.

And our troops have performed brilliantly. And I want to thank George Nethercutt for his strong support in making sure the President can look at the moms and dads and husbands and wives of those who serve in our military and say, we will make sure your loved one has everything he or she needs to defend the United States of America.

We're doing hard work in Iraq. You've seen how hard it is on your TV screens. It's hard, but it's necessary. And I'll tell you why it's necessary. In a short term, we will defeat the terrorists by hunting them down and bringing them to justice. In the long term, we will defeat the terrorists by spreading freedom and democracy. The best way to defeat hatred and bitterness and the lack of hope is to spread hope through freedom. That's what we believe in America. We've seen it work before.

Let me read you something I think you'll find interesting from the New York Times. [*Laughter*] Now, wait, wait a minute, wait. This was in—no—in 1946. [*Laughter*] It was a great year. [*Laughter*] I was born that year. [*Laughter*] Anyway, I just want you to read this—I mean, I want you to hear this as I read it: "Germany"—this is 18 months after the fall of Berlin—18 months after the fall of Berlin—"Germany is a land in an acute stage of economic, political, and moral crisis. The basic elements of recovery and peace are lacking. European capitals are frightened by the prospect of a German collapse. In every military headquarters, one meets alarmed officials doing their best to deal with the consequences of the occupation policy that they admit has failed."

Now, that was a pessimistic view of the future for Germany. Fortunately, my predecessors were not pessimistic people. Fortunately, they had great faith in the power of freedom to change societies. Fortunately, they understood that even though times were difficult, that if they were determined and strong and clear-sighted in the vision of a free society, ultimately, a free society would emerge.

At the G–8 at Sea Island, I was sitting at the table with not only Gerhard Schroeder, the Chancellor of Germany, free Germany, democratically elected Gerhard Schroeder; I was also sitting with democratically elected Prime Minister Koizumi of Japan. You see, because somebody was strong in their belief about the power of freedom, allies of the United States today are—were former enemies. Someday, an American President will be sitting, discussing world peace with a duly elected leader from Iraq.

These are historic times we're in, and it's such an honor to serve the American people during these times. But with America's leadership in the world and by being true to our values, we can change the world. We can make the world a more peaceful, hopeful place. That's what's happening. And it's hard, because there are a group of people who are trying to stop us. They're trying to shake our confidence. They're trying to dim our vision. They want us to quit. They want us to be people who

say one thing and do another. But they'll fail because we're not going to change. They'll fail because we believe strongly in the future. They will fail because America will continue to lead the world toward peace and freedom.

George understands what I'm talking about, and it's important to have him in the United States Senate to help us complete the missions.

Finally, I want to say one thing about our culture. See, I think cultures can change. I know they change. Baby boomer—I've seen one change in my lifetime. [*Laughter*] The culture today is changing—I like to describe it this way—"If it feels good, go ahead and do it," and, "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else"—[*laughter*]—to a culture in which each of us understands we are responsible for the decisions we make in life, that if you're a mom or a dad, you're responsible for loving your children with all your heart and all your soul. That's your responsibility. If you're worried about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you're responsible in Spokane, Washington, for doing something about it. It's your responsibility. You know how I feel about corporate CEOs in the responsibility era. They're responsible for telling the truth to their shareholders and employees.

Responsibility society is also one in which each of us loves our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourself. Government can hand out money, but Government cannot put hope in a person's heart or a sense of purpose in a person's life. That happens when a loving soul puts their arm around somebody and says, "I love you. What can I do to help you?" And it seems like to me that it's the responsibility of those of us in office to capture and rally the great strength of the country. And the great strength of America is in the hearts and souls of the American people. That's our true strength.

See, I believe and George believes societies change one heart and one soul at a time. And while we recognize you can't be the full change agent, you can be a person helping to change those hearts and souls.

And it's easy for George to say that because he's lived that kind of life. He helped people understand the joy of parenthood by promoting adoption. He founded a nursery to protect abused children. He's been a leader in diabetes research. He's an honorable, decent man who not only talks the talk, but he walks the walk and will make a great United States Senator.

Thank you all for coming. God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:30 p.m. in the International Agriculture Trade Center at the Spokane Center. In his remarks, he referred to Mr. Nethercutt's wife, Mary Beth, and their children, Meredith and Elliott; Gov. Dirk Kempthorne of Idaho and his wife, Patricia; Washington Secretary of State Sam Reed; Mayor Jim West of Spokane, WA; former Gov. John Spellman of Washington; Washington gubernatorial candidate Dino Rossi; President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan; senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi; and Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan. Representative George R. Nethercutt, Jr., was a candidate for Senate in Washington.

Remarks at Fort Lewis, Washington
June 18, 2004

The President. Thank you all very much. It's great to be here in the State of Washington. I think the Senator would say it's great to be out of Washington—the other

Washington. [*Laughter*] We're honored to be in your presence. We're honored to be with the soldiers who proudly wear our uniforms. And we're honored to be here with the families that support them.

I want to thank Senator John McCain for joining us. It is a privilege to be introduced to our men and women in uniform by a man who brought such credit to the uniform. When he speaks of service and sacrifice, he speaks from experience. The United States military has no better friend in the United States Senate than John McCain.

The men and women of Fort Lewis, Washington, have contributed mightily—mightily—to our efforts to defeat the terrorists, and I'm here to thank you for your efforts. I'm here to thank you on behalf of a grateful nation for what you have done, what you are doing, and what you will do to make sure America is more secure and the world is more peaceful.

Many of you have recently returned from Iraq. Thank you for your service. Some have returned from Afghanistan. Some are preparing to head out for a second tour. You're defending your fellow citizens. You're extending the reach of freedom. You're making America incredibly proud.

I appreciate General Jimmy Collins' hospitality. He found a pretty good sack for me last night. [*Laughter*] I also want to thank Linda for her hospitality as well.

Today Senator McCain and I are joined by another fine Member of the United States Senate, Senator John Ensign from the State of Nevada. Appreciate you coming.

Audience member. Yeah!

The President. Have you actually heard of Ensign, or are you from Nevada?

Audience member. I'm from Las Vegas.

The President. Vegas—okay, good. [*Laughter*] Congressman Adam Smith is with us today. I appreciate you being here, Congressman. Thank you for coming.

The Lieutenant Governor of the State of Washington, Brad Owen, and his wife, Linda, is with us. Thank you for coming, Governor. I appreciate you being here. I know we've got State and local officials here. If there's any mayors here, make sure you fill the potholes. [*Laughter*]

Yesterday I met Nadine Gulit. Nadine and her daughter, Sheryl, started what's called Operation Support Our Troops. I see a lot of heads nodding. You see, these women are soldiers in the army of compassion. These are volunteers who have decided to take time out of their lives to help others. Oftentimes we talk about the great strength of America being our military. We'll keep it strong. But the greatest strength of America is the hearts and souls of our fellow citizens, those of you who are willing to mentor a child, those of you who are willing to feed the hungry or find shelter for the homeless, those of you who are willing to love your neighbor just like you'd like to be loved yourselves. The reason I bring up—I want to thank Nadine for her compassion and for the example she has set.

I'm especially grateful to the families who are here today. I see the pictures and the ribbons. Military service is a family commitment. And it's a big commitment, especially when you have a loved one serving in faraway lands or preparing to deploy. By loving and supporting a person in uniform, you're serving your country, and our Nation is really grateful to you.

It's great to be here with "America's Corps." I'm told the I Corps is the most decorated corps in the United States Army. You have a proud history, and you continue to make history. You're bringing great credit to the United States of America. Each of you is a volunteer. You sacrifice in the service of a higher calling, the cause of your Nation, and we are grateful for that sacrifice. People all over our country will join me in saying, "Thank you for what you're doing for our country."

Our Government owes you more than gratitude. I've made a commitment—Senator McCain and Senator Ensign have

made the same commitment—to the men and women of our military and their families: You will have all the resources and all the capabilities you need to fight and win the war on terror.

On September the 11th, 2001, we learned that threats gathering on the other side of the world can arrive suddenly and bring tragedy to our great Nation. On that day, the enemy declared war on the United States of America, and war is what they got. I vowed to use every power, every tool, every asset at our disposal to bring justice to our enemies and to protect the American people. And that is exactly what we're doing today.

This is a different kind of war, as you all have learned. Against this kind of threat, our military must be able to move swiftly to strike the enemy with precision and lethal power. And so, as we fight the war to protect America, we are transforming our forces and investing in the future. And much of that transformation takes place here at Fort Lewis. You're on the leading edge of change. You're on the leading edge of making sure this country will protect our citizens.

We're working to develop more unmanned vehicles in space and on land, in air, and at sea. We're building better precision-guided munitions so we can strike freedom's enemies with greater effectiveness at greater distance and spare the innocent. We're developing better surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities so we can continuously locate and track moving targets from the air and from space, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

We're seeing every day that advanced weapons can make a critical difference in the war on terror, but the major difference in winning the war on terror is the people. The major difference is those who wear the uniform, a highly skilled, highly motivated, fantastic group of men and women.

The soldiers of Fort Lewis are serving on the frontlines of the war on terror, and you're on the cutting edge of military transformation, and I thank you for that. This is the home of the Army's first two Stryker Brigades. These combat teams are built around 21st century armored vehicles that can maneuver in urban terrain and get soldiers to the fight with unmatched speed and stealth and power. In Samarra, Iraqis have taken to calling the Stryker Brigades the "Ghost Riders" because they arrive in near total silence and strike the enemy without warning. The terrorists in Iraq have plenty to fear from the "Ghost Riders" of Fort Lewis, Washington.

Fort Lewis is also home to many of our Nation's Special Operations forces, who are redefining war on our terms. In Afghanistan, Special Ops with high-tech weapons joined with tribal warriors on horseback to help remove the Taliban regime in just 49 days. In Iraq, Special Operations teams fanned out across the country, pinpointing targets and preparing landing strips and securing oilfields and hunting for Scuds, all before the dictator even knew what hit him. Today, our Special Operation forces are hunting the enemies in Iraq and Afghanistan and elsewhere, carrying swift justice to those who would harm Americans.

These great capabilities are deployed in a great cause. America and free nations face a new totalitarian threat, a real threat to our security. It's not just from a single superpower but from networks of terrorists, allied with outlaw regimes. This enemy seeks to control nations in the Middle East. They seek to destroy moderate governments. They seek to impose a dark, dim vision of the world, a vision which subjugates women to second-class citizenry, a vision which will not allow others to express their opinion, a vision which will stamp out all forms of religion except their narrowly constructed view of religion.

These killers will kill innocent people in order to shake our will and confidence. They want us to forget our duty. They want us to cower in the face of their cowardice. They have vowed to destroy America. They want to gain weapons of mass destruction.

But like aggressors of another time, the terrorists have chose the wrong enemy in the United States of America.

You can't reason with these people. There's no need to negotiate with them. Therapy is not going to work. [*Laughter*] To win this war, we will stay on the offensive and bring them to justice. Thanks to your hard work, we're making progress. We are slowly but surely dismantling the Al Qaida network. There is no cave or hole deep enough to hide from American justice.

We will be strong and we will be relentless in our duty to protect our fellow citizens. To win this war, we will deal with states that harbor the terrorists. Right after September the 11th, I laid out a new doctrine which said, "If you harbor a terrorist, you're just as guilty as the terrorists." I also am mindful of this: When the President of the United States speaks, he must mean what he says.

I mean what I said, and the Taliban found that out, thanks to the United States military and our friends. Today, because our coalition acted, there are no terror training camps in Afghanistan. And if there are, if they're thinking about them, we will find them and destroy them. The Taliban regime no longer is in power. The country is free. Thanks to our coalition, hospitals and clinics are being built and rehabilitated. Thanks to the actions your loved ones and you have taken in Afghanistan, many young girls now go to school for the first time in their life. And this September, Afghans will hold free elections.

To win this war, we are confronting regimes with ties to terror that arm to threaten the peace. We will remove threats before they arrive, instead of waiting for the next attack, the next catastrophe. That is one of the lessons of September the 11th we must never forget.

Saddam Hussein's regime posed a threat to the American people and people around the world. Iraq was a country in which millions of people lived in fear and many thousands disappeared into mass graves. This was a regime that tortured children in front of their parents. This was a regime that had invaded its neighbors. This is a regime that had used chemical weapons before. It had used weapons not only against countries in its neighborhood but against its own citizens. This is a regime which gave cash rewards to families of suicide bombers. This is a regime that sheltered terrorist groups. This is a regime that hated America.

And so we saw a threat, and it was a real threat. And that's why I went to the United Nations. The administration looked at the intelligence, saw a threat, and remembered the facts and saw a threat. The Congress, members of both political parties, looked at the intelligence. They saw a threat. The members of the United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence and saw a threat and voted unanimously to send the message to Mr. Saddam Hussein, "Disarm, or face serious consequences." As usual, he ignored the demands of the free world. So I had a choice to make, either to trust the word of a madman or defend America. Given that choice, I will defend America every time.

Thanks to our troops and thanks to the troops of our friends, one of the most evil and brutal regimes in history no longer exists. Iraq is better off today; America is more secure today because Saddam Hussein sits in a prison cell.

To win this war, we will not only keep the pressure on the enemy; we will spread freedom and democracy throughout the Middle East. We will spread freedom and democracy as an alternative to bitterness and terror. We believe that when men and women are given the opportunities and choices of a free society, they will turn their energy to the pursuits of peace. That's what we believe. We fully understand freedom is not America's gift to the world; freedom is the Almighty God's gift to every man and woman in this world.

And our enemies understand the power of free societies. They understand that the spread of freedom will be a major defeat for their dark vision. And so freedom—those who long for freedom in Iraq and those who help the Iraqis to see freedom and those who long for freedom in Afghanistan and those who are helping the Afghans achieve freedom faced deadly and determined enemies. We're fighting those enemies with skill and courage.

You know, our American soldiers not only are showing great courage and bravery, but they're showing great respect for the cultures of those countries. That's because we have sent decent people into harm's way, good, honorable men and women who represent the best of America.

These are difficult tasks, I know, and they're hard tasks. And people wonder whether we'll succeed. I know that. But I'm here to tell you, these are essential tasks for our security and for peace of the world. You see, by fighting the terrorists in distance land—distant lands, you are making sure your fellow citizens do not face them here at home. By helping the rise of democracy in Iraq and throughout the world, you are giving people an alternative to bitterness and hatred, and that is essential to the peace of the world.

This week, President Karzai came to the White House and the U.S. Capitol and thanked the American people and thanked our soldiers and their families for helping to free his country and for being a friend. The President of Iraq came to America last week and expressed his gratitude as well. These are thankful people, because they know what you've done. They've seen firsthand the power of liberation. See, they have seen our mission. We don't come to conquer. We come to liberate, and we will stand with them until their freedom is secure.

We're moving forward with a five-point plan for Iraqi self-government. We're handing over authority to a sovereign Iraqi government. We're encouraging more international support for the Iraqi transition. We're helping the Iraqis take responsibility for their own security. We're continuing to rebuild Iraq's infrastructure, and we are moving toward free elections. A turning point will come in less than 2 weeks. On June the 30th, full sovereignty will be transferred to the interim government. The Coalition Provisional Authority will cease to exist. An American Embassy will open in the capital of a free Iraq.

Iraq's new leaders are rising to their responsibilities. That's what you're seeing. They're assuming responsibility. Our coalition and the United Nations are working to prepare the way for national elections. The United Nations Security Council has voted unanimously to endorse the Iraqi interim government and their plans for political transition. The Iraqi people are making steady progress toward a free society in a partnership with the United States of America and many other nations. And we will not let thugs and killers stand in the way of democracy in Iraq.

It is essential that Iraq gain the means of self-defense. So we're now leading an international effort to train new Iraqi security forces. You see, there are now 200,000 Iraqis on duty or in training in various branches of the Iraqi security operations. And we need work. We need more—there's more work to do. They need to work better. I know that, and one way to do so is to build Iraqi chains of command, because Iraqi citizens, naturally, want to take orders from Iraqi officers. So we're helping to prepare a new generation of Iraqi military commanders who will take the lead in defending their country.

And we're beginning to see results of people stepping up to defend themselves. Iraqi police and Civil Defense Corps have captured several wanted terrorists, including Umar Baziyani. He was a key lieutenant of this killer named Zarqawi who's ordering the suiciders inside of Iraq. By the way, he was the fellow who was in Baghdad

at times prior to our arrival. He was operating out of Iraq. He was an Al Qaida associate. See, he was there before we came. He's there after we came. And we'll find him, and he will be brought to justice, for the sake of peace and security.

The commander of Task Force Olympia—you might have heard of him—Brigadier General Carter Ham said recently about a response by Iraqi forces in Mosul that the Iraqi forces stood strong. I suspect General Ham is someone who likes to tell the truth. In Najaf, Iraqi police are back on the streets. The citizens are glad to see them there. See, they want what we want. They want their families to grow up in a peaceful society. In Al Kharma, soldiers of the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps were awarded medals for valor after battling insurgents and rescuing a wounded marine. "I feel very, very bad the marine was shot because they're like my brothers," said one of the decorated Iraqi soldiers, "but I'm ready to go out again. I'm always ready," he said.

You see, these brave Iraqis are setting an example for their fellow citizens. They're staying in the fight. They're taking the battle to the terrorists and the foreign fighters and the Saddam holdouts. They're securing a future of liberty and opportunity for their children and their grandchildren. And when the history of modern Iraq is written, the people of Iraq will know their freedom was finally secured by the courage and the sacrifice of Iraqi patriots.

The future of a free Iraq is now coming into view. As the interim government assumes sovereignty and Iraqi security forces defend their country, our coalition will play a supporting role. And this is an essential part of our strategy for success. Terrorists who attack a self-governing Iraq are showing who they really are. They're not fighting foreign forces. They're fighting the Iraqi people. They're the enemies of democracy and hope. They are the enemies of a peaceful future for Iraq.

As President al-Yawr of Iraq said last week, "These people who are doing these things are the armies of the darkness." That's what the President said, of Iraq. These are the enemies of the Iraqi nation. They are trying to take Iraq back to the dark ages that we used to live in, until last year. The President and I share the same resolve. Iraq will never return to the dark ages of tyranny. Iraq will be a free nation.

At the same time that we're helping the Iraqis bring the terrorists to justice, we're helping the Iraqi people to rebuild the basic infrastructure of their country. This is tough work. It's hard work. It's hard work to go from a society terrorized by a tyrant to a free society, but we have done this kind of work before.

I want you to listen to how the New York Times described conditions in Germany in November 1946. This was 18 months after the fall of Berlin. "Germany is a land in an acute stage of economic, political, and moral crisis. The basic elements of recovery and peace are lacking. European capitals are frightened by the prospect of a German collapse. In every military headquarters, one meets alarmed officials doing their best to deal with the consequences of the occupation policy they admit has failed."

Fortunately, the pessimists did not have their day. Fortunately, our predecessors had great faith in the power of free societies to change society. Fortunately, our predecessors stood firm in the face of cynicism and doubt. Because, you see, we helped the German people rise above hunger and hopelessness. We helped them resist the designs of the Soviet Union. We overcame many obstacles because we knew that the hope for a secure America was a peaceful and democratic Europe.

We face the same challenges today. It's just in a different part of the world. There are those who doubt. There are those who are pessimistic. Fourteen months have passed since the fall of Baghdad—14

months. And today, in spite of the insurgency, in spite of the attempts of the terrorists, Iraq's economy is moving forward and democracy is taking hold. Most Iraqi cities and many towns now have local councils chosen by their communities, which are handling problems such as trash collection and traffic, sanitation, and education. More than 170 newspapers have begun publishing. Dozens of political parties have formed. At one Iraqi university, a team is translating the great works of democracy into Arabic.

Life is getting better for the Iraqi people, who have suffered for decades. Our coalition has rehabilitated thousands of schools. We're training thousands of secondary school teachers in modern teaching methods. Electric power is being restored, despite continued attacks, and is no longer distributed based on loyalty to Saddam Hussein. Iraqi oil revenues have now reached more than $11 billion since liberation. And as Prime Minister Allawi pointed out last week, those revenues are not being used to build gaudy palaces for Saddam Hussein; they're being used to serve the Iraqi people.

With each step forward on the path to self-government and self-reliance, the terrorists will grow more desperate and more violent. They see Iraqis taking their country back. They see freedom taking root, and these killers know they have no future in a free Iraq. They want us to abandon our mission. That's what they want. They want us to break our word. And so they're attacking us, and they're attacking free Iraqis. They don't understand our country. They don't understand our resolve. When America says we'll do something, we are going to do it and finish the job.

We're not intimidated, and neither is the new Iraqi Prime Minister. He went to the scene of yesterday's bombing in Baghdad. He stood amongst the rubble. He said, "This was a cowardly attack." He said, "We're going to face these escalations. The Iraqi people are going to prevail, and the government of Iraq is determined to go ahead in confronting the enemies, whether they are here in Iraq or anywhere else in the world." That's what the Prime Minister of Iraq said. He and I share the same determination.

You see, these terrorists will fail. They will fail because the Iraqi people will not accept a return to tyranny. They will fail because the resolve of America and our allies will not be shaken. And they will fail because of the courageous men and women like you who are standing in their way.

All who serve in the United States military can take great pride in the work you've accomplished. Your fellow citizens know your work is not easy. The days are hot. The mission is hard work. Many of you face long deployments, sometimes longer than you expected. You've missed your families, and believe me, they miss you. You've said farewell to brave friends who did not return. We pray for their families. We pray that the good Lord will comfort them in their grief. Our Nation will never forget their sacrifice and their service.

All of you are sacrificing for the cause of this country, and America has needed that sacrifice. By standing for the cause of freedom, you're making our world more peaceful. By fighting terrorists abroad, you're making the American people more secure at home. And by acting in the best traditions of duty and honor, you're making our country and your Commander in Chief very proud.

May God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:10 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Gen. James M. Collins, USA, deputy commanding general, I Corps and Fort Lewis; President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan; President Ghazi al-Ujayl al-Yawr and Prime Minister Ayad Allawi of the Iraqi interim government; and senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi and his lieutenant Umar Baziyani, who was captured in Baghdad, Iraq, on May 30.

Remarks in Seattle, Washington, on the Death of Paul Johnson
June 18, 2004

I want to express my deepest condolences to the family of Paul Johnson. We send our prayers and sympathies to them during this very troubling time.

The murder of Paul shows the evil nature of the enemy we face. These are barbaric people. There's no justification whatsoever for his murder, and yet they killed him in cold blood. And it should remind us that we must pursue these people and bring them to justice before they hurt other Americans. See, they're trying to intimidate America. They're trying to shake our will. They're trying to get us to retreat from the world. America will not retreat. America will not be intimidated by these kinds of extremist thugs.

May God bless Paul Johnson. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:54 p.m. at Boeing Field/King County International Airport prior to his departure for Reno, NV. In his remarks, he referred to Paul Johnson, a U.S. citizen employed in Saudi Arabia who was killed by members of the Al Qaida terrorist organization earlier in the day. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks in Reno, Nevada
June 18, 2004

The President. Thank you all very much. Thank you all. Go ahead and be seated. Please be seated, unless, of course, you don't have a seat. [*Laughter*] It's great to be here in Nevada. Thanks for coming. Thank you all for coming. You didn't think I'd get it right, did you? [*Laughter*] I appreciate your warm welcome.

I appreciate the kind words of Senator John McCain. Both candidates in this race are honored to be the friend of John McCain. Only one of us gets his vote, and I am proud that it is me. John McCain has lived a life of true service to this country. He is a man of honor. He is a man of integrity. He's a man of personal courage and political courage, and I thank him for his friendship and his support.

It's good to be here in Reno. It's a town known for its good people and its good times. I always like being in a place where the cowboy hats outnumber the ties.

Vice President Cheney and I were proud to carry Nevada last time, and we're going to carry it this time. And I'm here to thank you for your help. I'm here to thank you for what you have done, what you will do to turn out that vote. Thanks for coming.

I am sorry that First Lady Laura Bush isn't here. You drew the short straw. [*Laughter*] She is a fabulous woman. She is a great First Lady. If there's any reason to put me back in there for 4 more years, it's to make sure Laura is the First Lady for 4 more years.

I'm also proud to be running with Dick Cheney. He's the finest Vice President our country has ever had. Mother heard me say that one time, and said, "Now wait a minute, buster." [*Laughter*]

I appreciate your Governor, Kenny Guinn. He's a fine, honest, honorable, great Governor of this State. And like me, he married well—[*laughter*]—when he married Dema.

Today John McCain and I had the honor of traveling from Fort Lewis, Washington, with a great United States Senator from

Nevada, and that is Senator John Ensign. And old Jim Gibbons stumped on the plane too. He's doing a fabulous job for this part of the country. I'm proud to call him friend. It's great to be with his wife, Dawn.

You know, Senator Ensign and Congressman Gibbons and I worked on a project that's very important for your part of the world. It's a project that concerns the health of Lake Tahoe. For years you've been hearing that the Federal Government would help maintain this national treasure. For years you've been hearing excuses about why it hadn't happened. Well, I'm here to tell you it's happened. I signed a bill, working with this good Senator and this good Congressman, to make $300 million available for the restoration of that lake so that generations of our fellow countrymen can enjoy its beauty.

I appreciate the Lieutenant Governor being here, Lorraine Hunt. Thanks for coming. I want to thank your very fine attorney general, my close friend Brian Sandoval, for being here. State Treasurer Brian Krolicki is with us today. Thanks for coming, Brian. I mean, we're about—we've got them all here, the secretary of state, Dean Heller, is with us today. Mother? Yes, we've got Mom right here on the first row, Dean. [*Laughter*] She's watching you like a hawk—[*laughter*]—probably like my mother, still telling you what to do. [*Laughter*]

We've got the State comptroller, Kathy Augustine, is with us today. We've got Bob Cashell, the mayor of this great city, is with us today. Mr. Mayor, all I can tell you is just fill the potholes, and the people will love you. [*Laughter*]

We've got local officials. We've got State officials, and we've got grassroots activists. Thanks for coming. And if you want to figure out how to help, get on the Internet at georgewbush.com. If you want to volunteer, if you want to figure out how to help turn out the vote, get on your Internet and call it up. And we want—and we will help you help us, because, you see, we're counting on you. We're counting on you to turn out the vote. We're counting on you to talk to both Republicans and Democrats and independents.

And when you're talking to them, tell them this: The last 3½ years have brought serious challenges, and we have given serious answers. We came to office with a stock market in decline and an economy headed into recession. We delivered historic tax relief. And since last summer, America has had the fastest growing economy in the industrialized world.

We uncovered corporate crimes that cost people their jobs and their savings. So we acted. We passed strong corporate reforms. We brought wrongdoers to account, and we made it clear that we will not tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America.

We saw war and grief arrive on a quiet September morning. So we pursued the terrorist enemy across the world. We've captured or killed many of the key leaders of the Al Qaida network, and the rest will know there is no cave or hole deep enough to hide from American justice.

We confronted the dangers of state-sponsored terror and the spread of weapons of mass destruction. So we ended two of the most violent and dangerous regimes on Earth. We liberated over 50 million people. Once again, America is proud to stand against tyranny and to set nations free.

When Dick Cheney and I came to Washington, the military was underfunded and underappreciated. So we gave our Armed Forces the resources and respect they deserve. And today, no one can question the skill and the strength and the spirit of the United States military.

No, we've confronted problems head on. It is the President's job to confront problems, not to pass them on to future Presidents and future generations. That is how I have led our country, and that is how I will continue to lead our country for 4 more years.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. Great events will turn on this election. The man who sits in the Oval Office will set the course of the war on terror and the direction of our economy. The security and prosperity of America are at stake.

This is going to be a tough race. That is why I'm here to ask for your help. I'm running against an experienced United States Senator who has built up quite a record. My opponent has been in Washington long enough to take both sides on just about every issue. He voted for the PATRIOT Act, for NAFTA, for the No Child Left Behind Act, and for the use of force in Iraq. Now he opposes the PATRIOT Act and NAFTA and the No Child Left Behind Act and the liberation of Iraq. His position on these issues reminds me of a saying we have in Texas about the weather: If you don't like it, just wait a few minutes and it will change.

We had another example recently. Last December I had the honor of signing the Healthy Forests Act. I appreciate Senators McCain and Ensign and Congressman Gibbons' help on this vital piece of legislation, a vital piece of legislation by thinning the underbrush, that helps thin the underbrush, that allows thinning the underbrush, to restore these national treasures of ours. As we're talking—debating the bill in Washington, my opponent opposed the law, saying we were taking a chainsaw to public forests.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Well, now he's packing his bags, and he's getting ready to head out West, and he says he now likes parts of the law. [*Laughter*] Says he wants to stop—he wants there to be a strong logging industry. You know something? It's not only the wildfires that shift with the wind. [*Laughter*]

The voters will have an unmistakable choice this year. It is a choice between keeping the tax relief that is moving the economy forward or putting the burden of higher taxes back on the American people. It is a choice between an America that leads the world with strength and confidence or an America that is uncertain in the face of danger.

The other side has not offered much in the ways of strategies to win the war or policies to expand our economy. We're well into the campaign, and all we have heard is old bitterness and partisan anger. They will soon learn that anger is not an agenda for the future of America. I will take on the big issues with optimism and resolve and determination, and I will make it clear that we stand ready to lead this Nation for 4 more years.

A big issue for every family in America is the Federal tax burden. With the largest tax relief since Ronald Reagan was President, we have left more money in the hands that earned it. By spending and investing and helping create new jobs, the American people have used their money far better than the Federal Government would have.

Our economy is strong, and it is getting stronger. The economy is growing at its fastest 4-quarter rate in nearly 20 years. We added 248,000 jobs last month and nearly a million jobs in the last 100 days. The unemployment rate has fallen from 6.3 percent last summer to 5.6 percent last month. State unemployment rates have fallen in 46 out of the 50 States over the past year. Here in Nevada, you have added 3,800 new jobs last month. You've added 50,000 new jobs in the last year.

Homeownership rate in America is at an alltime high. Business investment is growing. The stock market is improving. Consumer confidence is increasing. Personal incomes are on the rise. The tax relief we passed is working.

There are people in Washington who are pessimistic about the future of our economy, and that includes my opponent. Lately, he's dusted off an old term called the Misery Index. The only problem is, when you actually apply the index he came up with, it tells you the economy was better

in the late 1970s than it was in the 1980s. [*Laughter*] I guess he is nostalgic for the days of malaise. [*Laughter*] But that's not where we're headed. America is on the path of progress and opportunity, and we're not going backwards.

And the challenge is to make sure this economy continues to grow and remain strong. My plan starts with keeping taxes low and maintaining spending discipline in Washington, DC. And the first way to make sure people understand the need for discipline is to remind them that Government does not spend its own money. Government spends your money, and we should be wise about how we spend it.

In order to make sure this economy continues to grow, we must protect our small-business owners from frivolous and junk lawsuits and needless regulation. To make sure the economy grows, we must control the cost of health care by giving people better access through association health plans and tax-free health savings accounts. And we need to pass medical liability reform at the Federal level. The Senate up there must choose between small business and trial lawyers. I have made my choice. I stand squarely on the side of the small-business owners.

In order to make sure our economy is competitive and continues to grow, we need sound energy legislation. We need to encourage conservation. We need to encourage alternative sources of energy. But we need to use the energy we have so we become less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

In order to make sure people can find work and our economy continues to grow, we need to knock down trade barriers and open up new markets for American products. Listen, we're good at things in America. We're good at growing things. We're good at raising things. We're great entrepreneurs. Rather than fall prey to the empty logic of economic isolationism, we ought to say to countries, "We treat you fairly. You treat us fairly." We can compete anyplace, any time, anywhere with a level playing field.

In order to make sure the economy grows, we must have certainty in the Tax Code. It's hard if you're a businessperson to be making decisions if you're wondering whether the Tax Code is going to remain the same or not. And see, parts of the tax relief we passed is going to expire.

Today I met with Joe and Tammy Barkowski and their three children. The reason I bring them up is I want people to fully understand what I talk about when it comes to tax relief and its importance to make sure that it is stable. The Barkowski family saved about $2,200 on their taxes last year. And they'll save about the same on their taxes this year because of the tax relief we passed. Oh, that doesn't sound like a lot to some in Washington. It's a lot to the Barkowskis. As a matter of fact, Joe and Tammy said they're going to use some of their money to remodel their kitchen, just as soon as she decides the color of the paint. [*Laughter*]

If Congress does not act, if Congress does not make sure that the tax relief we have passed stays in place, their tax bill is going to go up by $1,000 next year. I don't think it's right. I don't think that makes sense.

Here's what he had to say, "If they give us our own money, we can do a better job with it." And he's right. Higher taxes would undermine growth and destroy jobs. Just as our economy is getting better, we should not be taking money out of the pockets of our consumers and small-business owners. Congress needs to make the tax relief permanent and not raise taxes on the American people.

Our future also depends on America's leadership in the world. The momentum of freedom in our time is strong, but we still face serious dangers. Al Qaida is wounded but not broken. Terrorists are testing our will in Afghanistan and in Iraq.

Regimes in North Korea and Iran are challenging the peace. If America shows weakness and uncertainty in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This will not happen on my watch.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. Thank you all. This Nation is strong and confident in the cause of freedom. We know that freedom is not America's gift to the world; freedom is the Almighty God's gift to every man and woman who lives in this world.

And today, no friend or enemy doubts the word of the United States of America. America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Afghanistan. The Taliban chose defiance, and the Taliban are no longer in power. And there are thousands of Afghan citizens grateful for the sacrifice of U.S. soldiers on their soil. There are thousands of Afghan moms who are grateful to America because, for the first time, many young girls now get to go to school.

America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Iraq. The dictator chose defiance, and now the dictator sits in a prison cell.

September the 11th, 2001, taught a lesson I will never forget. America must confront threats before they fully materialize. In Iraq, my administration looked at the intelligence and looked at the history of Saddam Hussein, and we saw a threat. Members of the United States Congress from both political parties looked at the intelligence, and they saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence, and it saw a threat. As a matter of fact, the previous administration and Congress looked at the intelligence and made regime change in Iraq the policy of our country.

In 2002, the U.N. Security Council yet again demanded a full accounting of Saddam Hussein's weapons programs. The world spoke with common voice when it said, "Disclose. Get rid of your weapons, or face serious consequences." What I believe is that when you say something, you better mean it. As he had for over a decade, Saddam Hussein refused to comply. He ignored the demands of the free world. So I had a choice to make: Either take the word of a madman, or defend America. And given that choice, I will defend America every time.

We showed the dictator and the watching world that America means what it says. Because we acted, Iraq's weapons programs are ended forever. Because we acted, nations like Libya have gotten the message and renounced their own weapons programs. Because we acted, an example of democracy is rising at the very heart of the Middle East. Because we acted, the world is more free. Because we acted, America is more secure.

Tough times in Iraq right now—I know it, and you know it. But we're making progress. We're headed toward a free country. An interim government is in place. And in less than 2 weeks, the Iraqi people will have their sovereignty. In the days ahead, we'll see more bombings, more suiciders, more killings of the innocent, because the terrorists' greatest fear is an Iraqi government of, by, and for the people. They know there is no future for them in a free society. You see, they're trying to shake our will. They're killing to try to get us to leave, to break our word, to break our bond. They do not understand the United States of America. We will not be intimidated by thugs and assassins.

We're living in historic times. The world is changing for the better. A free Iraq in the heart of the Middle East will show others the hope of a free society, a society in which moms and dads are able to raise their children in peace. And a society in which their children can strive to realize their own dreams, not the dreams of a tyrant, will be a powerful change in a world desperate—desperate—for hope.

Terrorists are recruited because they hate and recruited because they're hopeless. Free societies inspire. Free societies are peaceful societies. We believe firmly that a free Iraq will help the world become more peaceful and America more secure.

These aren't easy tasks for America. We've done hard things before. I like to remind people that right after World War II, there was a lot of doubters and cynics and pessimists as to whether or not a free Germany could arise or a free Japan could arise. But just recently, I hosted the G–8 summit in Sea Island, and we were talking about a free Iraq. As I looked around the table, I saw the Chancellor of Germany, the Prime Minister of Japan talking about how to make the world more peaceful and secure. I was thankful that my predecessors didn't fall prey to pessimism and cynicism. I was thankful that my predecessors had faith in the desire for people from all walks of life to be free. Because right after World War II we didn't lose faith in the values of America, the United States President today is working with the leaders of former enemies as to how to make the world a more peaceful and free place.

No, this is hard work. But we've done this kind of work before, and someday an American President will be working with a duly elected leader from Iraq as to how to make sure America is more secure and our children have a chance to grow up in a more peaceful world.

On national security, Americans have a very clear choice. My opponent says he approves of bold action in the world, but only if other countries do not object. I'm for—I'm all for united action, and so are the more than 30 coalition partners we have in Iraq right now. But I will never turn over America's national security decisions to leaders of other countries.

Some are skeptical that the war on terror is really a war at all. They think it's a matter only of law enforcement and intelligence. I strongly disagree. Our Nation followed this approach after the World Trade Center was bombed in 1993. The matter was handled in the courts and thought by some to be settled, but the terrorists were still training in Afghanistan. They were still plotting in other nations. They were still drawing up more ambitious plans.

After the chaos and carnage of September the 11th, it is not enough to serve our enemies with legal papers. With those attacks, the terrorists and their supporters declared war on the United States of America, and war is what they got. And winning this war requires us to give our troops the best equipment, the best training, the best possible support. That is the commitment I have made. That is the commitment that Senator McCain and Ensign have made and a commitment Congressman Gibbons has made.

And that is why I proposed an $87 billion supplemental last fall. Most of that money was going to our troops. Someone recently asked my opponent why he voted against that bill. Here's what he said. He said, "I actually did vote for the $87 billion, before I voted against it." The American President must speak clearly and mean what he says.

Our men and women in the military are taking great risks on our behalf. At bases across the country and the world, I have had the privilege of meeting with those who defend our country and sacrifice for our security. I've seen their great decency and unselfish courage, and I assure you, ladies and gentlemen, the cause of freedom is in very good hands.

This Nation is prosperous and strong. Yet we need to remember that our greatest strength is the hearts and souls of our citizens. We're strong because of the values we try to live by, courage and compassion, reverence and integrity. We're strong because of the institutions that help give us direction and purpose, our families, our schools, our religious congregations. These values and institutions are fundamental to our lives, and they deserve the respect of our Government.

We stand for the fair treatment of faith-based groups, so they can receive Federal support for their works of compassion and healing. We stand for welfare reforms that require work and strengthen marriage, which have helped millions of Americans find independence and dignity. We stand for a culture of life in which every person counts and every person matters. We stand for institutions like marriage and family, which are the foundations of our society. We stand for judges who strictly and faithfully interpret the law.

And we stand for a culture of responsibility in America. This culture of our country is changing from one that has said, "If it feels good, do it," and, "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each of us understands we are responsible for the decisions we make in life. If you are fortunate enough to be a mother or a father, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart. If you're worried about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you're responsible for doing something about it. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you're responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And in a new responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourselves.

For all Americans, these years in our history will always stand apart. There are quiet times in the life of a nation when little is expected of its leaders. This isn't one of those times. You and I are living in a period when the stakes are high, challenges are difficult, a time when firm resolve is needed.

None of us will ever forget that week when one era ended and another began. On September the 14th, 2001, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers. I will never forget that day. There were workers in hardhats shouting, "Whatever it takes." Working the ropeline with tired firefighters and police and rescue workers, they said, "Don't let us down." As we all did that day, these men and women searching through the rubble took it personally. I took it personally. I have a responsibility that goes on. I will never relent in bringing justice to our enemies. I will defend our country, whatever it takes.

In these times, I have also been witness to the character of this Nation. Not so long ago, some had their doubts about the American character, our capacity to meet serious challenges, our willingness to serve a cause greater than self-interest. Americans have given their answer. I have seen the unselfish courage of our troops. I've seen the heroism of Americans in the face of danger. I've seen the spirit of service and compassion renewed in our country. We've all seen our Nation unite in common purpose when it mattered most.

We will need all these qualities for the work ahead. We have a war to win, and the world is counting on us to lead the cause of freedom and peace. We have a duty to spread opportunity to every part of America. This is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it, and we know that for our great land, the best days lie ahead.

May God bless you, and may God continue to bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:47 p.m. at the Reno-Sparks Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Kenny C. Guinn of Nevada and his wife, Dema; Dawn Gibbons, wife of Representative Jim Gibbons; Mayor Robert Cashell of Reno, NV; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder of Germany; and Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan.

Statement on the Death of Ray Charles
June 18, 2004

Ray Charles Robinson was a hero—the child who faced down adversity and worked hard to become one of the greatest examples of the American Dream. His songs have lifted us in times of sorrow and helped us celebrate in times of joy.

His music and his optimism touched the lives and hearts of millions and spanned generations, cultures, races, and backgrounds. People from all walks of life would come together and tap their feet as one when Ray Charles played.

Laura and I send our prayers and condolences to his family and friends.

Message on the Observance of Juneteenth, 2004
June 18, 2004

I send greetings to those celebrating Juneteenth.

On June 19, 1865, Major General Gordon Granger and his Union troops arrived in Galveston, Texas, bringing word of the Emancipation Proclamation which had been issued more than 2 years earlier. On hearing the news that "all persons held as slaves" in the rebellious States were "thenceforward, and forever free," former slaves celebrated their new freedom.

Today, African Americans in Texas and other parts of the country observe June 19, also known as Juneteenth, with cookouts, family gatherings, parades, and other community events. Juneteenth celebrates the truth that freedom is God's gift to every man and woman. This day also recognizes the progress America has made in ensuring that our Nation lives up to our founding principles of liberty, equality, and justice, and represents an occasion to reaffirm our commitment to these principles.

Laura joins me in sending our best wishes.

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this message.

The President's Radio Address
June 19, 2004

Good morning. This week, we received more good news showing that our economy is gaining momentum. The Department of Labor reported State-by-State job gains for the month of May. In every region of our Nation and across many growing industries, more Americans are finding work. The State of Arizona added 8,400 new jobs in May. New Jersey gained 9,500 new jobs. Pennsylvania added 10,700 new jobs. And North Carolina picked up 13,400 new jobs.

The unemployment rate has fallen in 46 out of the 50 States over the last year. And many of the new jobs are being created in industries that pay above average wages, such as construction and education and manufacturing.

Time and again, our economy has defied the gloomy predictions of pessimists. Because of the hard work of so many Americans and because of the good policies in Washington, DC, our economy is strong, and it is getting stronger. America has added more than 1.4 million new jobs since last August. Our economy has grown at the fastest pace in almost two decades, and the recession was one of the shortest and shallowest in modern American history.

Americans are earning more, and because of tax relief, they're keeping more of what they earn. Real after-tax incomes have increased by 11 percent since the start of 2001. Those are important gains for our entire economy because they go to the taxpayers and not to the Government. And we have seen that the taxpayers know best how to drive our economy forward. Moms and dads have used their child tax credit checks and other tax relief to boost demand throughout our economy. The homeownership rate is at an alltime high, and because of greater demand, businesses are making more purchases of equipment. Business investment is up more than 9 percent in the last year. And we know that when businesses invest, that makes it more likely someone will find a job.

Tax relief is working. But there's more to do to keep our economy growing. My pro-growth, pro-jobs economic agenda starts with making tax relief permanent so the families and businesses can plan for the future with confidence. The House has voted to make much of my tax relief permanent. And now the Senate needs to act, so that we do not raise taxes on the American people.

We must maintain our policy of open trade, because we know that on a level playing field, America's workers can compete with anyone in the world. We must make sure our children are learning and our workers are ready for their first day on the job. So I proposed reforms to improve our schools and worker training programs.

We must have a national energy plan that promotes conservation, exploration, and investment in infrastructure, which will reduce our dependence on foreign sources of energy. I proposed such a plan 3 years ago. Now it's time for the Congress to act.

Our Nation has a healthy, vibrant, and growing economy. Our Nation is ready to face the economic challenges that lie ahead. We have millions of confident entrepreneurs who work hard and take risks and create opportunities for others. We have a culture of innovation where people are encouraged to come up with new solutions to old problems. We have a great workforce. With these strengths, there is no limit to how much we can accomplish, and I am certain that our best days are yet to come.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 10:30 a.m. on June 18 in Bronson Hall at Fort Lewis, WA, for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on June 19. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 18 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks in a Discussion in Cincinnati, Ohio
June 21, 2004

The President. Okay, thanks. Sit down, please. We got to get to work. [*Laughter*] Neil, thanks for having me. I appreciate the opportunity to come to such a shining

example of compassion and love here in the heart of Cincinnati, Ohio.

I want to thank you all for coming as well. I particularly want to thank my friend Bob Taft, and Hope Taft, for coming today. Governor and Hope, thanks for coming. Like me, the Governor married above himself. [*Laughter*] And I know that Hope has done a lot of work here in the Cincinnati area of helping save lives and changing society, one soul at a time. And when you think about it, that's really what we're here to talk about, isn't it—how do we make sure America is as hopeful a place it can possibly be, one soul at a time, one conscience at a time?

I want to thank my friend Rob Portman, and Jane and Jed, for coming today. Thank you all for being here. I like to say this is part—what we're going to discuss today is part of what we call a compassion agenda. And there's no more compassionate Congressman than Rob Portman. He has not only been an excellent Congressman, but as well he's been very much involved in inspiring and supporting groups to interface with those who need help.

I appreciate Congressman Steve Chabot coming as well. Steve, it's good to see you, sir, appreciate you being here. And from Dayton, Ohio, Congressman Mike Turner—glad you could come, Michael. Glad you're here.

As well, we've got State Senate President Doug White. Senator, where are you? Yes, not a very good view, but—maybe it is the best angle. [*Laughter*] Thank you for coming. I know we've got other State and local officials here. I appreciate you taking time to come.

I met Charlene Calhoun—there she is. She was there right at the steps of Air Force One when we—when I disembarked. The reason I bring up Charlene is that she is a volunteer here, see.

Oftentimes, as we discuss our country, we think in terms of our strength being the military. And I happen to believe it's important to have a strong military to keep the peace. Or we talk about the strength of our country being the fact that we're a wealthy nation. I also happen to think that's a very important part of our country, and I was pleased to see that the unemployment rate here in Ohio dropped to 5.6 percent. People are going back to work. The economy is getting better.

The true strength of the country is the hearts and souls of our citizens. That's the true strength of America, see. Government can hand out money—and we're going to talk a little bit about the money we want to hand out—but Government cannot put hope in a person's heart or a sense of purpose in a person's life. That happens when a loving soul like Charlene puts her arm around somebody who hurts and says, "What can I do to help you? What can I do to make your life a better life? How can I, a citizen of America, interface with you to help you understand there is a bright hope and a better future?" No, the strength of this country is the hearts and souls of the soldiers in the army of compassion. Charlene, thank you for being a soldier.

I know I don't need to say this to people here, but if you're interested in serving your country, volunteer, become a mentor, feed the hungry, find shelter for the homeless. If you really want to be a super patriot, join the army of compassion.

And speaking about that, Neil is a general in the army of compassion. He's what I call a social entrepreneur. We got business entrepreneurs. We've also got social entrepreneurs, people who are trying to invigorate the social side of life. I mean, we're a land of plenty, but amidst our plenty, there are people who hurt. And we got to do something about it here in America. We got to be smart about how we save lives, because the vision of our country is that everybody has hope, not just some. This country belongs to everybody.

Today you're going to hear from some good folks who are trying to help and some folks who have received help because they

decided to do something about their own lives. I think you're going to find these stories to be incredibly interesting; at least I did.

Before we do so, I do want to talk about some initiatives. You know, there's been a lot of talk about welfare reform. In other words, we're moving people from welfare to lives of independence, and it's been a very successful policy. I mean, people want to be independent. They don't want to be dependent on Government, but it must be done in a compassionate way.

The welfare rolls have declined 60 percent since 1996. A better way to look at it is, more people are now living a life they choose to live because they got help. And the question is, how do we continue to provide that help, to help people live lives of independence?

One is to make sure the education system works well. I mean, I think one of the keys to make sure that people are able to realize their dream is to insist that every child gets educated, that we stop this business about—you know, there was kind of a mindset here in America that said, oh, let's just move them through. Guess who got moved through? Generally inner-city kids, kids whose parents don't speak English as a first language. They're the easiest ones to quit on, and our system did. We've changed that. I want to thank the Members of Congress here. I want to thank the Governor as well.

See, we're setting high standards now in America. We said, in return for Federal money, for the first time we're asking the question, can the kid read? It seems like a reasonable question, doesn't it, in return for taxpayers' money. At least, can they read at grade level in the third grade? We want that answer to be, absolutely, yes. And if not, we want to know why. We want the problems corrected early, before it's too late. We've got to stop shuffling kids through. We're now a results-oriented system.

And that's important for moms and dads to know. See, you need to know, if you're a mother or a father with a kid in school. You need to know whether or not the school is meeting expectations. I like to say we're challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations. If you've got low expectations, you're going to get lousy results. So step one to make sure that people are independent in America is to make sure people are educated in America.

Step two is to do some smart things with taxpayers' money. I think one of the smartest things we can do is encourage families and is to have a—is to spend money on grants to States to be matched by States or grants directly to faith-based or community-based programs that teach people what it means to be in a successful marriage.

Now, you say, "Why do you think that?" Well, strong families really mean that children are going to grow up—children have a better chance to succeed. Let's just be blunt about it. If a child grows up with a mom and a dad, they have a much better chance to succeed. We want everybody to succeed in America. If that's one of the keys to success, it seems like it makes sense to encourage strong families in America.

And so one of the things we're going to talk about today is how programs such as Talbert House works to encourage marriage and strengthen families. And as I mentioned, I've asked the Congress to spend about $300 million—$290 million—for grants on—to States and/or directly to programs, all which are set up to provide parenting classes and family classes. It seems to make sense to me.

Secondly, I know that many a good soul makes a mistake in their life and ends up in prison, and it seems to make sense to me to spend taxpayers' money to help these prisoners realize a better tomorrow when they get out of prison, give them a second chance. And I want that second chance to be done not only in kind of the traditional way, but also through faith-based and community-based programs. And I can't—

frankly can't think of a better reentry program for somebody to be there with open arms saying, "I love you, no matter what you may have done in the past. I want you to succeed, and here—and we're here to help."

And so I'm asking the Congress to spend some money on a prisoner reentry initiative as well as a mentoring program for children whose moms and dads may be in prison, see. I think we need to make sure those kids understand that they've got a bright future as well.

Finally, one of the big challenges we face here in America is the challenge of addiction, addiction to alcohol and drugs. I have asked the Congress to support a new initiative, which basically says to the addict, "We're going to give you a script. We're going to give you the money, and you get to choose where you find your help."

Sometimes, you can kick alcohol or drugs by going through the traditional clinical assessment. A lot of times, however, you need to change your heart. If you want to change your habits, you need to change your heart. Government is not very good about changing hearts, see. Government is law and justice. Government isn't love. But you can change your heart by interfacing with people who may have heard a call from above.

And we in Government ought not to worry about the process involved in these programs. We ought to just ask the question, "Are these programs working?" That's what we want to know. "Are we saving lives? Are we making a difference in our society by helping people?"

And the best place to—for me to make my point is to turn to a social entrepreneur in Neil—Neil Tilow. He doesn't look like an old guy, but he's been at this business since 1974. Must have started when he's in junior high. [*Laughter*] Now, what do you think?

Neil Tilow. Thank you, sir. [*Laughter*]

The President. Neil, tell us about the Talbert House, how it got started, what do you do here. There may be somebody listening who would want to contribute to this great program and/or volunteer their time here or start their own. But tell us what you do.

[*Mr. Tilow, president, Talbert House, Cincinnati, OH, made brief remarks. He concluded with a discussion on proposed legislation on prisoner reentry.*]

The President. Yes, one reason I'm here is to give a little boost to that bill. I want to explain what we're doing, but it's—I've got a little method behind it all, see. [*Laughter*] Sometimes Congress needs to get a boost. Portman doesn't need a boost, but—anyway, sorry to interrupt. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Tilow. I was told you might do that. [*Laughter*]

The President. We're lobbying him. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Tilow. Let me know how I can help, sir. [*Laughter*]

The President. You're helping. Keep talking, will you? [*Laughter*]

[*Mr. Tilow made further remarks.*]

The President. Let me comment on that, if you don't mind. [*Laughter*] He didn't mind. [*Laughter*] You see, if we can get Government to focus on results as opposed to process, you'll find there will be a lot of flexibility for you, and that's the attitude we got to take.

It's really a difference about who do you trust, if you really think about it. Do you trust a social entrepreneur on the ground, or do you trust a planner in a faraway capital? And I think you'll find that these initiatives I've talked about and the spirit that you've just defined is now kind of the attitude in Washington. And that's important. That really is important. If we say, "What matters is whether or not lives are being saved, you figure out how to do it," you'll find that the entrepreneurial spirit at the social level will be much more invigorated and much more alive. The energy level will be tremendous at the grassroots level. And that's really the job of Government, is to

set the strategy and the goals and get out of the way.

Now, if you don't perform, you'll find—I hope you'll find Government to be very inflexible, because we don't need to fund failure. What we need to do is fund success.

Anyway, sorry.

[*Mr. Tilow made further remarks.*]

The President. Good job. You ready?

Okay, we've got Teri Rust with us. She's a master clinical service provider. I think I got it right. More importantly, she is the supervisor of two programs.

Teri Rust. Yes, sir.

The President. Tell us what you do, and thanks for coming.

[*Ms. Rust, master clinical service provider, Talbert House, Lebanon, OH, made brief remarks.*]

The President. It must make you feel pretty good.

Ms. Rust. Oh, very good, yes, sir.

The President. Saving America, one soul at a time.

Speaking about good souls, we've got Tami Jordan with us. She is an inspirational person. Why don't you inspire? [*Laughter*] Tell us your story.

[*Tami Jordan, former Talbert House resident, Cincinnati, OH, made brief remarks.*]

The President. Thank you very much. I loved your story. There's nothing like having a story like this to be able to share with people. I'll never forget when I was the Governor of Texas, I went to a prison unit. I decided to turn over a wing of the prison to a faith-based program. Again, the attitude was whether or not the prisoners would come out and not go back in. I said the recidivism rate would—could it be lowered if we had a faith-based initiative in the prison unit?

And so I went to see it as the Governor, and out comes the prison choir. And one of my favorite hymns is "Amazing Grace." Of course, I've got a lot of my mother in me, so I immediately jumped in line with the prisoners singing "Amazing Grace," you know, like 10 white suits and me. [*Laughter*] They weren't exactly suits. They were, like, you know the kind of the suit I'm talking about—jumpers, yes. [*Laughter*] And anyway, we're swinging back and forth, and on the front page of The Houston Chronicle is Bush arm in arm with a guy in prison for 20 years.

Let me tell you something. I welcomed some people to the White House who had been involved in this program, and I looked a the man sitting next to me in the Roosevelt Room of the White House, and sure enough, it was the guy who I was arm in arm with, singing "Amazing Grace."

You can go from prison to be a boss. You can go from prison to the White House, just so long as you have somebody who's there, willing to take you by the hand and say, "I want to help you help yourself." And that's what we're here to talk about. You did a great job.

We now have a family with us, the Groves family. That would be Darla.

Darla Groves. Yes.

The President. Larry.

Larry Groves. Yes.

The President. Tell us about your story. Have you decided which of you are going to talk?

Mrs. Groves. We'll both talk.

Mr. Groves. We both are. [*Laughter*]

The President. Okay. Let her go. People are interested in why you're here.

[*Mr. and Mrs. Groves, former Temporary Assistance for Needy Families recipients, Cincinnati, OH, made brief remarks.*]

The President. There you go. That's a good job, well rehearsed. ACT is a collaboration of local entities, of which the Talbert House is one. So when you hear ACT, think in terms of the Talbert House, plus others, correct?

Mr. Tilow. It's a freestanding organization.

The President. Right, freestanding organization, all aimed—set up by the State of Ohio, right?

Mr. Tilow. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Encouraged by the State of Ohio. We're fixing to get to the State man here in a minute.

Mr. Tilow. It was encouraged by our county, Job and Family Services, by the State, and led by the founding agencies.

The President. Okay. Let me get back to you for a minute. So tell them what's going to happen July the 8th.

Mrs. Groves. July the 8th—well, it's been a long 2 years. My first year——

The President. It's hard to go back to school, right?

Mrs. Groves. It's very tough to go back to school, especially after being out 17 years.

[*Mrs. Groves made further remarks.*]

The President. And? You make a little more, right?

Mrs. Groves. What?

The President. You make a little more money——

Mrs. Groves. Yes, and the money——

The President. Now, catch this. I just want everybody to know, there is a happy ending.

Mrs. Groves. There is a very happy ending here, that the money I used to make, which was $20,000 some a year, I will be making close to $40,000 a year.

The President. Did you get help going to school?

Mrs. Groves. Through Cincinnati State, I was very fortunate to be able to use the Pell grant. I was very blessed with that. But through my LPN program, unfortunately, it didn't cover that. I did have to take loans out.

The President. Let me say that—this is a very interesting story. Our economy is changing, and there are some interesting jobs available. It requires some to go back to school, and there's help. There are Pell grants. There's displaced worker money. There's trade adjustment money. I mean, there's all kinds of money available to help. And what's interesting, and people will find this to be—what Darla just said—extra education makes you more productive. And if you're more productive, you're going to get paid more.

And so it was painful, I'm sure, to go back to school.

Mrs. Groves. Yes, it was very painful, very painful. [*Laughter*]

[*Mr. Groves made further remarks, concluding as follows.*]

Mr. Groves. But all of this here, I really have to say, I give a lot of credit to ACT because we was lost, Mr. President——

The President. And now you're found.

Mr. Groves. Yes, sir.

The President. That's good. Congratulations. You found yourself.

By the way, Government can't make people sit down with their kids and pray. They can't make people decide to go to—people have to make those decisions themselves. See, the role of Government is to stand there and say, "We're going help you. If you want help, there's help here."

And that's what we're describing. We're describing this network of providers that are there to help people help themselves. The job of the Federal Government is to fund the providers that are actually making a difference.

Now, we've heard from the local man, and we've heard from the Federal man. Now we're going hear from the State man, Joel Potts. See, the State plays a critical role in all this business. Much of the Federal money goes directly to States.

One of my jobs, by the way, is to make sure Governors understand the vitality of faith- and community-based programs and that they ought to be spending Federal money that we send to the State on programs which work. Whether or not they've got a cross on the wall or a Star of David on the wall, we should not worry about faith being a part of the delivery of social

service. As a matter of fact, quite the contrary, we ought to welcome that.

Anyway, you've got a job to do here, and if you would, share with us the Ohio vision. Thanks for coming. Potts works for the State. He's the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services. Welcome.

[*Joel Potts, senior policy analyst, Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services, Columbus, OH, made brief remarks.*]

The President. What Joel is talking about is Congress needs to get the welfare bill to my desk. It's a bill that will encourage work, and it will encourage compassionate programs at the same time. It's stuck. There's too much politics in Washington on this. The 1996 welfare law worked. And Members of Congress from both parties have got to understand it worked, and we need to build on it to save lives. That's what we're here to talk about.

And I hope you get a flavor of the attitude now coming out of Washington, DC, about how we can support the social entrepreneurs. That's really what I wanted you to hear. I wanted you to hear that in your own community here in Cincinnati you've got heroic figures, heroic people, saving lives on a daily basis, and these folks need to be supported. They need to be supported at the local level. They need to be supported at the State level, and they need to be supported at the Federal level.

And then you saw some great examples of people who made the—made a choice. They said, "I want to do better. I want to be a mom. I want to be a mom and a dad. I want to put food on the table, and I'm not afraid to ask for help." If anybody is listening out there who needs help, call the Talbert House or call the State and ask where you can get help, because there's plenty of people in this good State with big hearts who are willing to help.

I want to thank you all for coming. May God bless the State of Ohio, and may God continue to bless our great country. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:08 p.m. at the Hamilton County Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services Center. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Bob Taft of Ohio and his wife, Hope; and Jane Portman, wife of Representative Portman, and their son Jed.

Remarks Following Discussions With Prime Minister Peter Medgyessy of Hungary and an Exchange With Reporters
June 22, 2004

President Bush. Before I welcome the Prime Minister to the Oval Office, I will have a statement; he will have a statement; we'll answer two questions per side.

Q. Mr. President——

President Bush. Hold on a second, please. I'll have a statement; he will have a statement; and then we'll have two questions per side. I'll call upon an American reporter, and he'll call upon a Hungarian reporter.

Mr. Prime Minister, welcome.

We have just had another meaningful discussion about a lot of issues, starting with our bilateral relations. Relations between Hungary and the United States are strong, and I want to thank the Prime Minister for that and for your friendship.

I told the Prime Minister I appreciate a man who sticks by his word. When the Prime Minister gives you his word, he means it. He is a strong leader for Hungary. He is a strong ally for the United States. More importantly, he is a strong visionary for free and peaceful societies.

I appreciate very much, Mr. Prime Minister, the sacrifices of the Hungarian people when it comes to making the world more secure and peaceful. Your great country lost a brave soldier. I extend the deepest condolences to the family of that soldier from the United States of America. I appreciate his sacrifice, and I want his folks to know that we will complete our task and the world will be more peaceful and more free because Iraq will be free and peaceful. I want to thank you very much for understanding the hopes and aspirations of the Iraqi people.

I also appreciate our discussion about NATO. We're Allies in an important Alliance, and our jobs are to make sure that NATO fulfills its mission, which is a hopeful mission, to bring stability and peace throughout the world.

I want to thank you for your briefing of the recent EU meetings. As you know, I'm going to Ireland to visit with the leadership of the EU, and I want to thank you for giving me a good, strong briefing on the EU.

And finally, we had a really interesting discussion about the Hungarian economy. The Prime Minister has got a very good vision about making sure that the Hungarian workforce is educated for the jobs of the 21st century. We talked about how we can work together on high-tech transfers and educational transfers. I told the Prime Minister that the decisions he's making for his economy are very important in attracting U.S. capital, that Hungary is a place that is a stable country based upon rule of law and transparency and that we look forward to working together to make sure our trade is vibrant as well as travel between our countries is expedited.

We have talked about a visa policy that, admittedly, has created a problem in Hungary. The Prime Minister came and told me directly he expects me and my administration to do everything we can to expedite travel between Hungary and the United States—I appreciated your very strong statement on behalf of the Hungarian people—and I assured him that we will work as best we can to make sure the visa system works like we want it to work, because in America we welcome people from all parts of the world. We welcome your business leaders. We welcome your students. We welcome your artists. It's in our Nation's interest that we have a full interchange and exchange with the Hungarian people.

So I want to thank you for coming, Mr. Prime Minister. You're a good, strong leader and a good friend, and welcome.

Prime Minister Medgyessy. Thank you very much, Mr. President, for the opportunity that just within 2 years, this is the second opportunity to meet. American-Hungarian relations can enter a new stage now. The past 2 years could prove that we are reliable and predictable partners, and we can step beyond that now.

And as it's been mentioned by the President right now, we can make real progress in terms of technology cooperation, technology transfer, research and development, education. And the good development of economic relations is extremely important for Hungary.

Thank you very much, Mr. President, for bringing up the visa issue. I especially requested the President to look into this matter, how this can be expedited. American-Hungarian relations are entering a new dimension now, because we have become members of the European Union, which means—which represents a new equality.

I was truly delighted to see that in the European Council meeting, transatlantic relations were very important. And there is a true intention on the part of Europe to find the fastest possible solution for the Iraq issue, and I could feel in that issue that everybody is looking forward now.

Mr. President referred to the death of the Hungarian soldier which is, of course, very painful to all of us. Nevertheless, I could confirm to the President that Hungary's commitment to the presence in Iraq

is unchanged, and we want to promote stabilization. Our troops will not be removed before their term, and we are more than happy to participate in processes that can promote the transfer of stabilization, democratization—[*inaudible*].

I thank you very much, Mr. President, once again for the opportunity, because this can give another impetus, a new impetus to American-Hungarian relations.

President Bush. Thank you, sir. Thank you.

Scott [Scott Lindlaw, Associated Press].

Treatment of Prisoners

Q. Thanks, Mr. President. Secretary Rumsfeld expressed some concern last week that a perception might be taking hold that your administration had condoned or authorized torture of prisoners. Specifically, he worried that might give other countries an excuse to torture American civilians, American soldiers. I'm wondering if that's what prompted you to release these memos, these documents, and your deliberations? And also do you think we need an independent commission to look into this whole thing?

President Bush. Let me make very clear the position of my Government and our country. We do not condone torture. I have never ordered torture. I will never order torture. The values of this country are such that torture is not a part of our soul and our being.

The Prime Minister brought up the Abu Ghraib situation. I assured him that these soldiers do not represent what Americans think. And I also assured him that unlike a society run by a tyrant, the world will see a open, fair trial for those accused of breaking U.S. military law.

Hungary's Role in Iraq

Q. Mr. President, Prime Minister, what is the value of the contribution of the small countries to the—[*inaudible*]? Why is it important that they be there in the coalition?

President Bush. In Iraq? The—what's important for the Iraqis to know is that the world stands with them as a free society emerges. Hungary is a society which is a free society. It's a society which has rejected totalitarianism and has now welcomed democracy and rule of law and human rights and human dignity. And it's very important for the Iraqi people to be able to share those values with people beyond just the United States. I mean, Hungary is such a great example of what is possible in a free society. And plus, it helps to have troops fulfill certain missions as we help rebuild Iraq. It's more than just a symbol. These troops are providing a very important role as Iraq emerges from a society run and brutalized by a tyrant to a society in which people are able to realize their hopes and aspirations.

And it's happening. I told the Prime Minister I was very pleased with Prime Minister Allawi's strength and his vision and his strong statements, particularly in the face of these brutal terrorist attacks. He's not going to be intimidated by these killers, you see. He understands what a free society will mean. We're not going to be intimidated by the killers, either. Freedom is too precious and too valuable. And free societies will end up making the world a more peaceful place, which is my hope, and it's the Prime Minister's hope as well.

Steve [Steve Holland, Reuters].

South Korea's Role in Iraq

Q. Mr. President, in the wake of the beheading of the South Korean national, what are you doing to ensure South Korea sticks to its plan to send 3,000 troops to Iraq?

President Bush. I haven't had a chance to speak to President Roh yet, but I would hope that President Roh would understand that the free world cannot be intimidated by the brutal action of these barbaric people.

See, what they're trying to do is they're trying to shake our will and our confidence.

They're trying to get us to withdraw from the world so that they can impose their dark vision on people, and remember what their dark vision is like. Remember what it was like for a young girl to grow up with the Taliban in Afghanistan. This was a society where young girls weren't even allowed to go to school. It's a society where people were humiliated in public. This is a society where people couldn't worship freely. This was a dark and dismal society. And that's their vision of the world. In order to impose their vision, they want us to leave. They want us to cower in the face of their brutal killings.

And the United States will not be intimidated by these people because we believe strongly in freedom and liberty and human rights and human dignity, freedom to worship as you see fit, freedom to speak your mind. And I believe President Roh understands that.

Prime Minister Medgyessy. And we share the same values with the United States.

Hungarian Troops in Iraq/U.N. Security Council Resolution on Iraq

Q. Mr. Prime Minister, has it been brought up that perhaps the mandate of Hungarian troops would be prolonged after the 31st of December? Did you touch upon that issue?

Prime Minister Medgyessy. We were talking about how delighted we were about the Security Council resolution both in Europe and everywhere else, that we welcome the intention that gradually the conditions are created for the Iraqi people to take over control over the government. And in the fairness of that process, we shall decide whatever should happen with Hungarian soldiers there.

President Bush. Thank you, sir.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:54 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; Prime Minister Ayad Allawi of the Iraqi interim government; and President Roh Moo-hyun of South Korea. Prime Minister Medgyessy spoke in Hungarian, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks at a Reception for Black Music Month
June 22, 2004

Thanks for coming, and welcome to the White House. Laura and I really appreciate you coming to join us today to celebrate Black Music Month, and we're glad you're here.

Our Jazz Masters and students from the Jazz in the New Generation program will perform for us soon, and we thank them for being here as well. I think you're going to like it. [*Laughter*] It's actually one of the great advantages of being the President is you get some great musicians to play for you in your living room. [*Laughter*]

We want to thank Dana Gioia for coming here. He's the chairman of the National Endowment of Arts. He's doing a fine job. I appreciate you being here.

I see members of my Cabinet who are here. Secretary of Agriculture Ann Veneman is joining us. Thank you, Ann, for coming. And the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Alphonso Jackson and his wife, Marcia, I appreciate you both being here. I want to thank Congressman Chris Shays from the great State of Connecticut for joining us. Thank you, and

thank you for bringing Laura back safely last night. [*Laughter*]

I appreciate Bill Coleman, the former Secretary of Transportation under Gerald Ford, for joining us today. Mr. Secretary, thank you for coming.

I want to thank Dr. Billy Taylor, Jazz Master 1988, and the Billy Taylor Trio for being here today. Thank you all for coming. Honored you're here. I want to thank Jazz Master 2004, Chico Hamilton, for joining us today. Thank you for coming. James Moody, Jazz Master 1998, thank you for coming. Of course, Jazz in the New Generation students, who will be introduced shortly. I appreciate David Baker, Jazz Master 2000, for joining us as well. Proud you're being here.

During this month, we recognize the great contribution that black music has made to the culture of our Nation and to the world. This music could only have come from the unique experience of African Americans, yet it speaks to every human heart. Black music in America began with spiritual songs that bore witness to the cruelty of bondage and the strength of faith. From those roots, it grew into a variety of styles, jazz and gospel, rhythm and blues, and rock and roll. All these forms capture a part of the American spirit.

It's impossible to imagine American music without Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington, Mahalia Jackson and Billie Holiday, Lionel Hampton or B.B. King, Stevie Wonder and Aretha Franklin, and countless others. It's just impossible to imagine American music without them, isn't it?

Recently, we've lost two of our greatest African American musicians. Last month, the celebrated jazz drummer Elvin Jones passed away. He was the fiery pulse of John Coltrane's Quartet. Elvin Jones loved music so much that rather than spend his last days in the hospital, he brought an oxygen tank on stage with him, so he could keep amazing his audiences until the very end.

And just days ago we said goodbye to another American original, Ray Charles, who's often called "the father of soul music," but his music embraced every style and transcended every label. It takes a great talent to make a song forever your own, and no one hears "Georgia On My Mind" or "Hit the Road, Jack" without thinking of Ray Charles. When he was 15, his mother, Aretha, told him just before her death, "You might not be able to do things like a person who can see, but there are always two ways to do everything, and you've just got to find the other way." Well, Ray found—Ray Charles found the other way, a beautiful way, and it was our privilege to witness it.

Though an older generation leaves us, their legacy lives on in many talented young African American musicians of today: Gospel singers like Kirk Franklin and Yolanda Adams—I might add, both from Texas—[*laughter*]—bright jazz talents like Roy Hargrove, Mark Turner, Joshua Redman; pop artists like Alicia Keys. And of course, there's a Marsalis brother for just about every instrument. [*Laughter*] These performers and many others carry forward the tradition of black music in our country. We take great pride in this heritage. We're grateful to every musician who keeps that heritage so rich and so vital today.

And so I've signed a proclamation designating June 2004 as Black Music Month in the United States of America. It's a way we honor this important part of our heritage.

I'm going to turn things over now to the Chairman of the National Endowment of the Arts, Dana Gioia, who will tell us about the Jazz Masters program and introduce our performers. Before he comes up here, I want you to know that he jokes he's the only person ever to have gone to Stanford Business School to become a poet. [*Laughter*] He can explain that for himself. [*Laughter*] He's doing a great job as the NEA Chairman. Welcome, Dana Gioia.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:05 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. The Black Music Month proclamation of June 22 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Message to the Congress Reporting on Iceland's Lethal Research Whaling Program
June 22, 2004

To the Congress of the United States:

On June 16, 2004, Secretary of Commerce Donald Evans certified under section 8 of the Fisherman's Protective Act of 1967, as amended (the "Pelly Amendment") (22 U.S.C. 1978), that Iceland has conducted whaling activities that diminish the effectiveness of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) conservation program. This message constitutes my report to the Congress consistent with subsection (b) of the Pelly Amendment.

The certification of the Secretary of Commerce is the first against Iceland for its lethal research whaling program. In 2003, Iceland announced that it would begin a lethal research whaling program and planned to take 250 minke, fin, and sei whales for research purposes. The United States expressed strong opposition to Iceland's decision, in keeping with our longstanding policy against lethal research whaling. Iceland's proposal was criticized at the June 2003 IWC Annual Meeting by a majority of members of the IWC Scientific Committee, and the IWC passed a resolution that urged Iceland not to commence this program. In addition, the United States, along with 22 other nations, issued a joint protest asking Iceland to halt the program immediately. The United States believes the Icelandic research whaling program is of questionable scientific validity. Scientific data relevant to the management of whale stocks can be collected by non-lethal techniques. Since Iceland's 2003 announcement, Iceland reduced its proposed take to 38 minke whales and in implementing its lethal research program, killed 36 whales last year. For this year, Iceland has proposed taking 25 minke whales. The United States welcomes this decision to reduce the take and to limit it to minke whales, and we appreciate Iceland's constructive work with the United States at the IWC on a variety of whaling issues. These adjustments, however, do not change our assessment that Iceland's lethal research whaling program is of questionable scientific validity and diminishes the effectiveness of the IWC's conservation program.

In his letter of June 16, 2004, Secretary Evans expressed his concern for these actions, and I share these concerns. I also concur in his recommendation that the use of trade sanctions is not the course of action needed to resolve our current differences with Iceland over research whaling activities. Accordingly, I am not directing the Secretary of the Treasury to impose trade sanctions on Icelandic products for the whaling activities that led to certification by the Secretary of Commerce. However, to ensure that this issue continues to receive the highest level of attention, I am directing U.S. delegations attending future bilateral meetings with Iceland regarding whaling issues to raise our concerns and seek ways to halt these whaling actions. I am also directing the Secretaries of State and Commerce to keep this situation under close review and to continue to work with Iceland to encourage it to cease its lethal scientific research whaling activities. I believe these diplomatic efforts

hold the most promise of effecting change in Iceland's research whaling program, and do not believe that imposing import prohibitions would further our objectives.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
June 22, 2004.

Remarks in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
June 23, 2004

Thank you all. Thanks for coming. Please be seated. Thanks for coming. The person who introduces me in the White House better look out for his job. [*Laughter*] Your mother said, "Get out of the middle of the road when a truck is coming." My mother said, "Keep your speeches short." [*Laughter*]

Thanks for having me. It's great to be back in this compassionate city. I think it's called the City of Brotherly Love, and that's what we're here to talk about today, is brotherly love.

First I want to thank my friend Herb Lusk for inviting me back to the Greater Exodus Baptist Church. I've been here before, the Fourth of July, and I don't remember this building being here. At the time I said, "Herb is a social entrepreneur who can make things happen." We're in this beautiful building because he made things happen. He believes, as I do, in the power of faith to touch every heart and to change every life.

That's kind of the motto or the philosophy of the programs that emanate from this church. He is a—he takes his admonition to love a neighbor just like you'd like to be loved yourself seriously, and so do the people who attend this church.

I want to remind you that not only is there great spirituality here, but this is a church that trains people coming off welfare rolls to find work. Isn't that a wonderful—[*applause*]. This is a church which helps feed the hungry and finds shelter for the homeless, a church that helps families to stay together. This is a church that is giving generously of time and money. Herb Lusk is a general in the army of compassion.

This is a—and the other thing this church is doing is sending donations to fight AIDS around the world. I'm here to thank the church for doing that. I want to thank all the churches in the greater Philadelphia area for the Stand for Africa Campaign. This is a great example of how people of faith can become involved in saving lives. It's a fine example for every American, faith or no faith.

HIV/AIDS, you see, is a challenge. It's a direct challenge to the compassion of our country and to the welfare of not only our Nation but nations all across the globe. It's really one of the great challenges of our time. This disease leaves suffering and orphans and fear wherever it reaches.

Every man and woman and child who suffers from this addiction, from the streets of Philly to the villages of Africa, is a child of God who deserves our love and our help. And that's what I'm here to talk about today. We're provided—we're determined to provide that help. We're committed to help those at home and help those abroad. To whom much has been given, much is demanded.

I want to thank Tommy Thompson for being here. He's one of the ones I demand that he do his job to make sure that we do the best we can in America to help those who hurt. And Tommy is the—he's the head of the Department of Health and

Human Services. He's doing a fabulous job. I want to thank you for coming. His job is to work with the issue at home as well as abroad.

But to help him make sure the AIDS initiative, our international AIDS Initiative works well, I went into the private sector and found somebody who had run a complex organization before. You see, we're moving a lot of money—and I'm about to describe it to you here in a minute—but I want to make sure the money is actually spent wisely. See, we ought not to be measured on how much money we move; we ought to be measured on how many lives we save.

So, therefore, I needed somebody who is a manager, somebody who could organize, somebody who could find that which works and make sure it continues to work well, and that which doesn't work, replace it with something that does, somebody who is open-minded and focused on the results. And that is Ambassador Randy Tobias. I'm proud you're here, Randy. Thanks for coming.

And working with Tobias is my friend Dr. Joe O'Neill. He is the person—I like to call him the architect of the Global AIDS Initiative. Dr. Joe has been very much involved with HIV/AIDS for a long period of time. He's a pioneer in many ways, a deeply compassionate person and a man I'm proud to call friend. Thank you for coming, Joe. I'm glad you're here.

We've got a lot of other important people here. We've got Members of Congress, and since the Congress is in session, it's probably in my interest to introduce the Congressmen. [*Laughter*] Congressman Curt Weldon and Congressman Jim Greenwood are with us today, two really fine Members. Senator Specter flew on the airplane. He had to get back for some votes, but he sent his better half, and I emphasize "better half." [*Laughter*] I want to thank Mrs. Specter for coming today. City Councilman Jack Kelly as well—is here as well.

Members from the church are here. We've got bishops from different religions, and I am honored you are here. We've got people who have heard the call and who want to serve are here.

We've got a volunteer who is here, a person named Pat McDonough. I met her at the airport. There she is. Pat, thank you for coming. She is a volunteer at SILOAM. I'll be talking about SILOAM pretty soon. It's a spiritually based program designed to help save lives. You'll hear some stories about this locally based grassroots organization, which depends upon people such as Pat to show up and volunteer.

And so the reason I bring up Pat—first of all, what she does, she's a massage therapist for people affected by HIV/AIDS. She uses her hands to help reflect her heart and make people more comfortable in their pain. You know, when you've got somebody who loves somebody helping them through their pain, the effect is not only physical; it can be spiritual as well. And I want to thank Pat for volunteering.

My call to people in Philadelphia who want to love their neighbor is to find programs such as SILOAM or the programs in Herb's church and say, "I want to help." To me, it's patriotic to love a neighbor like you'd like to loved yourself.

I appreciate the example, Pat, that you have set. And I'm honored you are here, and thank you for coming.

Every day in our world, 8,000 lives are lost to the AIDS pandemic—8,000 people a day. We are fighting one of the great tragedies of human history. And it's important for our fellow citizens to understand that this is a great tragedy. See, when you see a great tragedy, people will respond. This isn't a minor tragedy. It's just not a blip in history. It is a great tragedy. That's how I view it. That's how others here view it as well.

Tens of millions of people are living with HIV virus. More than 2 million of them are children under the age of 15. It's really

difficult to think about that kind of injustice, isn't it, about despair coming so early to boys and girls who are so young. That's the problem we face. That's a problem we'll deal with. AIDS is an individual tragedy for all who suffer and a public health catastrophe that threatens the future of many nations.

In some African countries, the percentage of adults infected with HIV is as high as one-third. In our own country, nearly a million of our fellow Americans have the virus, and 40,000 more contract it each year.

Yet, there are reasons to be encouraged and hopeful and optimistic in the fight against AIDS. HIV is no longer a hopeless death sentence, and that's a positive development. New drugs and new treatments are dramatically extending and improving lives. The scientists and researchers who develop these drugs are some of the great humanitarian heroes of our time, and we thank them for their work, and we will fund their work.

Their work has made broader treatment, even in the poorest of countries, a realistic hope. And proven methods of prevention are showing the spread of this disease—are slowing the spread of this disease in some parts of the world. In other words, prevention—we're beginning to understand how to prevent the disease from spreading. HIV/AIDS can be beaten. We're committed to ending the plague. America is committed to continue to leading the world in ending the plague.

We're fully engaged in this global fight against AIDS. I mean fully engaged. Our Nation took the lead in founding the Global Fund. We remain the world's largest contributor to the fund. We're setting the example for others to follow. That's what a leader does. America leads so that others will follow.

To expand these efforts, a year and a half ago I announced the Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. That's the plan that Dr. O'Neill is the architect of. I called for $15 billion over 5 years to combat the spread of HIV in other countries and to provide treatment and care to 10 million people affected by HIV. Earlier this year, Congress provided 2.4 billion for my emergency plan. In other words, they're beginning to fund the plan, and I thank them for that. I want to thank the Members of Congress who are here.

I call upon Congress to make sure they fully fund the plan. The first portion, $350 million, began reaching people in need 6 weeks ago—only 6 weeks ago, I might add. That is the fast—that is faster than any major international anti-AIDS effort has ever been implemented. Because our help cannot get there fast enough, there is a pandemic on the continent. We need to move quickly.

We've identified 14 nations in Africa and the Caribbean in need of urgent help. The Global Fund and bilateral funding really means we're reaching all around the world. We're focused on 14 nations where the pandemic is most acute. "Let's go where the problems are the toughest," I said. "Let's bring America to where people suffer the most. We want to tackle the toughest problems in this country, not the easiest ones. We'll leave the easier ones for other people."

In these countries, the money is funding clinics, buying drugs, paying for treatments, supporting faith-based groups, training health care workers. The funds are making a difference already. In just a few months, the Reach Out clinic in Uganda, one of these little centers of heroism in the midst of disease in Uganda, more than doubled the number of patients it is treating with life-extending antiretroviral drugs. In other words, we're beginning to get it out. We're beginning to see results. Suddenly, there's new hope among those who seek help and those who give it.

See, when they get the antiretroviral drug, there's a Lazarus effect, and people all of a sudden say, "I have hope." And when others have hope—when someone

has hope, that spreads to other people. There's nothing better than a hopeful society in dealing with the pandemic. A hopeful society means you think you can win. A nonhopeful society says, "I surrender." America is not going to surrender to the pandemic.

One of the workers in the clinic describes it this way: "We are experiencing something very beautiful. Our clients will have a chance to continue to live." I want to thank you all for your work.

Jennifer Birungi is a widow who lives in Uganda's capital, Kampala. She has two children. She has HIV, and earlier this year she was diagnosed with meningitis. It's a terrible disease under any circumstance, but that one is especially devastating for people with HIV. The doctors will tell you the combination of HIV and meningitis is deadly. Without treatment, her life expectancy would have been 6 days. Because America acted, because the American people acted, she's getting treatment, and the extra years she now hopes for will mean everything to her children.

For too long, anti-AIDS programs offered too little treatment for those who had already contracted the disease. And so today, we're helping other nations to buy drugs—this is one of the focuses of Randy and Joe—so that we can extend lives. Because, you see, every life matters to the Author of Life, and so they matter to us.

Today I announced a second round of funding in the Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. More than $500 million will be soon on its way. Congress needs to release the money. These grants will provide more antiretroviral treatments and promote prevention efforts, care for children who lost their parents to AIDS. There's a lot of orphans around the continent of Africa. You've got 14- and 15-year-old kids raising their brothers and sisters. So part of the effort is to provide love and hope for these brave young kids who have been handed an incredibly tough burden, an awesome burden.

We want to help build and equip hospitals and clinics. In other words, we want the infrastructure to be there. Part of the money goes to make sure there's an infrastructure. I mean, we really don't care here in America if it takes a bicycle or a moped to get antiretrovirals out of these big cities, but that's what we're going to do. And part of the challenge we face is to help poor countries have the capacity to absorb the drugs and compassion of America. That's one of our challenges.

I want to thank the Congress, again, and the taxpayer for their generosity. This is a vital initiative. Let's make sure the resources keep coming on a timely basis.

Today I'm also announcing that we're adding Vietnam to the Emergency Plan. In other words, we have 14 countries; we're adding a 15th country. Now, after a long analysis by our staff, we believe that Vietnam deserves this special help. We're putting a history of bitterness behind us with Vietnam. The reason why the decision was made is because the nation has experienced a rapid rise in HIV infections—a rapid rise—especially among the young.

And Vietnam is cooperative and wants help. In other words, they recognize they have a problem, which, by the way, is an important part of battling the pandemic. People have got to say, "I've got a problem. Come and help us." It's hard in certain countries that people say, "We don't have a problem," you know, in denial. In the meantime, people are dying. Part of diplomacy, by the way, good diplomacy, says to leaders, "I think you need to listen to the truth, and the truth will set you free and help people survive."

And so therefore, we're sending up to the Congress the notification that Vietnam is now going to receive—be a part of the 15—now 15-nation focus, and want the Vietnamese to hear, "Together we'll fight the disease. You've got a friend in America."

We will continue to confront the disease abroad, and we will confront it here at home as well. I want our fellow citizens

to understand that we can work in Africa, and we can work in America at the same time. We've got plenty of capacity. These efforts are not mutually exclusive. They're complementary—they're complementary.

The number of women diagnosed with AIDS has risen in America. That is a fact. For African Americans between the ages of 25 and 44, the prime of life, AIDS is the second leading cause of death. We've got to deal with it here at home as well.

AIDS is finding more victims beyond our cities. AIDS victims now are in our suburbs and in the rural heartland. Neither individuals nor society nor government can afford to be complacent, and we will not relent against the battle of AIDS here in America. My latest budget commits more than $17 billion to prevent and treat AIDS in America and to find a cure. This is a 27-percent increase from the budgets of 2001.

It's one thing to spend money. It's another thing to spend it wisely. And so today I want to talk about a three-part strategy to make sure that we're effective here at home. First, we will provide better care and treatment to those suffering from HIV and AIDS—better treatment and care. We will act as quickly as possible to get lifesaving drugs to people with the greatest need.

In 10 States, hundreds of AIDS patients are waiting for access to life-extending treatments. In other words, there's long lines. Some of these people have been waiting for months. That seems like a problem that we can deal with, Tommy, and we're prepared to help deal with it. So we're going to provide $20 million, effective today, to extend lifesaving drugs, the purpose of which is to deliver lifesaving drugs to the men and women who are waiting. In other words, there shouldn't be lines here, and we're going to deal with the lines.

We will also get help to those who need it by making sure that the Federal programs are focused on saving lives. Our Nation's most important AIDS legislation, the Ryan White CARE Act, has done a lot of good, a lot of good over the years, by funding groups that provide care and services to AIDS patients. Yet the law was written more than a decade ago, when those with AIDS had little hope. So the law is concerned largely with caring for the sick and dying instead of helping AIDS patients to lead longer and healthier lives. In other words, there's a different focus now because things have changed, technology has changed, medicines are changing how people can live with AIDS.

When the Ryan White CARE Act is reauthorized next year, I propose to make it stronger and more effective by focusing resources on life-extending care, such as antiretroviral drugs and doctor visits and lab tests. This kind of care was just a dream 20 years ago. It is a reality today, and we will work with Congress to make sure that as many patients as possible are receiving the modern care they deserve.

We need to change the way that money under the Ryan White CARE Act is provided to caregivers and States and communities. Today, funding decisions are made according to a rigid geographical formula that takes too little account of the most urgent needs. In other words, you can't set priorities; that's what that means.

In some areas of the country—countries, there are more severe cases. There are particular problems among minority women. There are fewer resources to handle its caseload. In those cases, Tommy Thompson, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, should have the flexibility to cut through the redtape and get the money quickly to where it is needed. That's what we're going to propose to the Congress. Let us set priorities and make sure the resources fund those priorities. That makes sense, with taxpayers' money, as it seems like to me. We must hold accountable organizations that receive Federal help to fight AIDS by keeping track of their progress. People shouldn't fear that. They ought to say, "Are you doing the job? Are lives being saved? Are your lines too long? If they

are, why? Are you getting out the word? Are you doing what we asked?" You see, we're interested in the people's lives, not the bureaucratic process.

We must be sure that any organization that is effective in AIDS is eligible for Federal help, by the way—effective in fighting AIDS is eligible for help. And that includes faith-based groups. See, there are—the faith-based groups are making a huge difference on the continent of Africa. They need to be making a huge difference here at home as well.

For many AIDS patients, especially those who live in low-income areas or rural areas, a local church program or community health center is their only source for treatment and support. And to be frank about it, the church is the only place many people feel comfortable going to share their burdens. Sometimes, they don't feel so comfortable sharing their burdens in a church. And when that's the case, the church needs to make sure people do feel comfortable in sharing the burden. But nevertheless, the way I like to put it is, faith-based programs deserve the support of our Government when they're effective, not to be discriminated against. People shouldn't fear the fact that there's a cross on the wall and an AIDS program in that building. We ought to welcome that. We ought not to fear the Star of David on a wall and an AIDS program ensconced in the building. We ought to welcome it, because the motivation by the people of faith is a motivation to help heal the hurt.

The second part of a domestic strategy to fight AIDS is prevention. I think it's really important for us to focus on prevention. We can learn from the experiences of other countries when it comes to a good program to prevent the spread of AIDS, like the nation of Uganda. They've started what they call the A-B-C approach to prevention of this deadly disease. That stands for: Abstain; be faithful in marriage; and when appropriate, use condoms. That's what A-B-C stands for, and it's working. I like to call it a practical, balanced, and moral message. I say it's working because Uganda has cut its AIDS infection rate to 5 percent over 10 years. Prevention works.

I think our country needs a practical, effective, moral message. In addition to other kinds of prevention, we need to tell our children that abstinence is the only certain way to avoid contracting HIV. It works every time. Children have a way of living up or down to our expectations. If we want them to lead healthy and responsible lives, we must ask them to lead healthy and responsible lives.

This message, I know, is the primary duty of moms and dads. It's not the primary duty of the Government. I fully recognize that. However, Government can help. That's why I have proposed to double Federal funding for programs that help local groups spread the most effective way to prevent the spread of AIDS, which is to teach children to make the right choices in life.

Our national prevention efforts also depend on HIV testing as a routine part of health care. That makes sense to me; it should to you. I mean, how can you solve a problem until you diagnose the problem. Roughly a quarter of the people with HIV do not know they have it. That makes it hard to treat people, who don't know they have it. They aren't getting the treatment, of course, and they're unknowingly spreading the majority of new infections.

Testing now is easier than ever. My administration is encouraging health care providers to test for HIV routinely—to save lives, that's why we're doing that. Across America, June 27th is National HIV Testing Day. For the sake of their health and for the sake of the health of others, I urge all Americans at risk to get the test. You'll be—by getting the test, you'll be making a significant contribution to making sure that we arrest the spread of HIV/AIDS.

Another way to prevent the spread of AIDS is to fight drug addiction. This is one more aspect—in other words, the

spread of AIDS through sharing needles is one more aspect of the terrible grief and destruction that drug abuse causes across America. I proposed to Congress increased funding for substance abuse treatment by 150 million next year. The reason I did so is because we've got an issue in America that we've got to deal with straight up. And I want to make sure that all treatment providers can utilize this money.

Listen, sometimes programs work, you know, kind of the clinical approach works to help people kick drugs and alcohol, but a lot of times it requires a change of heart. If you change your heart, you can change your habits. If you change your heart, you change your life. And that's why it's important to make sure the faith community can access Federal money to heal the hurt that drug addiction causes.

All these measures are important and would allow more people with AIDS to live longer and better lives. Yet, we must and will beat this disease once and for all. So the third element of our strategy to fight AIDS in America and around the world is to intensify the search for a vaccine and for a cure.

Just 2 weeks ago, at the G–8 summit in Sea Island, Georgia, America joined with Japan and Germany and Great Britain and France and other allies to establish the Global HIV Vaccine Enterprise. What that means is we're going to make a major commitment by the world's best scientists to defeat HIV/AIDS.

By the way, we've got some great scientists here in our own country. At the NIH, we've got some great scientists who have dedicated a lifetime to finding the vaccine and a cure. It makes sense to have a collaborative effort with great scientists from all over the globe. This is a global problem, so we need to work together and share information.

As part of the effort, the United States will establish a new HIV Vaccine Research and Development Center. I asked the question, Tommy, whether Dr. Fauci approved of this. He's one of the leaders in the world of developing the cure. He said he's strongly in favor. I said, "If Fauci is for it, I'm for it. The guy knows what he's doing." He's dedicated a lifetime, as has other scientists here in America, to finding the cure.

Congress—as we find the cure, it's very important for Congress to allow for the acceleration of new vaccines by not allowing frivolous and junk lawsuits to stand in the way of progress. It's very important that those who are developing vaccines in the private sector not be harassed and/or stopped by these junk lawsuits. I mean, we've got an emergency that we must deal with, and therefore, the faster a vaccine can be developed and get to market, the more lives will be saved.

I think the road ahead is clear. I don't think there's any doubt of where we have to go. We're going to provide better care and treatment to ease the suffering of the sick. We will strengthen our prevention efforts. And through focused research, we will create a vaccine and find a cure. There's no doubt in my mind.

Around the world, AIDS remains a source of great suffering. It's important for our fellow countrymen to remember. And we have an obligation to work to relieve the suffering, and we will.

But there's great hope and courage, and that's what really should sustain our fellow citizens, to hear the stories of hope and courage. This morning, I met a very brave, smart, capable woman from Philadelphia. She learned 13 years ago that she was HIV-positive. Doctors gave her 2 years to live. She described to us what it was like to be a mom of two and have a doctor say, "You've got 2 years to live."

She felt lost and then was found at SILOAM Ministries, the director of which is here, Jim Sheehan. I'm proud you're here. Thanks for coming. He runs this program, which is what he would describe as a spiritually based program, a program to help elevate the spirit, to make sure people who are despondent and hopeless recognize

there is a strong spirit inside them and then nurture that spirit.

It is what sustained this brave soul who was told, "You've only got 2 years to live." In other words, she described what it was like to be in a spiritually based program and how uplifting it was. Today, she's working for her bachelor's degree.

What she shared with us is that she found there to be a dearth of counselors, those people—there weren't enough loving souls willing to help somebody else realize that they've got a hopeful future. So that's why she's going back to school. It's an amazing story, you see, somebody who was—say, "You'll die in 2 years," now is saving lives. And that's what—but let me put it in her words: "The doctor gave me 2 years to live, and now it's been 13. So I'm supposed to be here. I am supposed to be doing something with this."

And what she's doing with this, she's using her intellect and her love to help somebody else realize that they are supposed to be here. She's doing something beautiful, and she has shown that with hope, life can triumph. And that sustains us. That sustains us in doing our duty here in America and across the world, because we want hope to triumph for all.

I want to thank you for giving me a chance to come by and visit with you today. Thank you for your love and compassion. May God bless you all, and may God continue to bless our country. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:42 a.m. at People for People. In his remarks, he referred to Rev. Herbert Lusk II, pastor, Greater Exodus Baptist Church, and founder/president, People for People, Inc.; Randall L. Tobias, Coordinator of U.S. Government Activities To Combat HIV/AIDS Globally, Department of State; Joseph F. O'Neill, Deputy Coordinator and Chief Medical Officer, Office of the Global AIDS Coordinator, Department of State; Joan Specter, wife of Senator Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania; Anthony S. Fauci, Director, National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, National Institutes of Health; and James J. Sheehan, executive director, SILOAM Ministries.

Remarks on Presenting the Presidential Medal of Freedom
June 23, 2004

The President. Welcome to the White House. Laura and I are delighted to see all of you, especially the men and women we honor today and their families. We're glad you're here.

This afternoon I have the privilege of presenting our Nation's highest civil award. The Presidential Medal of Freedom recognizes achievement in public service, in science and education, entertainment, the arts, athletics, business, and other fields. As the citations will indicate, each of the men and women has led of life of accomplishment and distinction and holds special respect among the people of the United States.

One of this year's recipients is a world leader who is known, respected, and loved as perhaps no other figure of our time. Three weeks ago it was my honor to visit Vatican City and present the Medal of Freedom to Pope John Paul II. We're honored that His Holiness is represented here today by Archbishop Montalvo. We're also pleased that the Archbishop of Washington, Cardinal McCarrick, is with us.

For nearly 26 years as supreme pontiff of the Roman Catholic Church, he has been one of the great voices for good in

the world, guiding the souls of the faithful and sometimes guiding history itself. From his days as a young seminarian to this very hour, he's been a foe of tyranny, a minister of true authority, and a person of great wisdom and kindness and moral courage. The world is far different and far better because this son of Poland has occupied the chair of Saint Peter.

The Medal of Freedom was also presented last December to Robert L. Bartley, shortly before his death at age 66. I had the honor of informing Robert L. Bartley that he had won this great award by telephone. Bob Bartley was a man of great intellect and conviction. And with those qualities, for more than 30 years, he led the editorial staff of the Wall Street Journal. The goodness of his values, the clarity of his thinking, and the high quality of his writing earned him the Pulitzer Prize in 1980. His belief in free markets and his faith in the wisdom of democracy is still seen in the writings of the many journalists Bob Bartley encouraged. They and the Nation are grateful for his life's work, and we are honored to have Bob's wife, Edith, with us today.

The life of Dr. Vartan Gregorian began in Iran, in a town called Tabriz. As a boy, he loved books and was blessed with a wonderful grandmother who encouraged him and inspires him still. His great gift has been to share his love of learning with others, as president of Brown University, president of the New York Public Library, and now as president of the Carnegie Corporation. Along the way, Dr. Gregorian has won the loyal friendship of many students and colleagues, and he has received more than 50 honorary degrees. And today the Nation honors one of our most respected academic leaders.

Ambassador Ron Lauder and Leonard Lauder are here to receive the Medal of Freedom on behalf of their mother, who passed away in April. The posthumous award to Estee Lauder recognizes the great American success story that began with an immigrant family in Queens, New York. For this woman born in 1908, rising to the top of the business world was not easy. Estee Lauder built a global cosmetic company, she said, "not by dreaming or hoping for it but by working for it." Hers became one of the most famous American names in the world. And with this medal, America proudly remembers the great achievements of Estee Lauder.

Rita Moreno has also found success in New York, having found her way there from Puerto Rico. She first performed on stage as a young girl and was on Broadway by age 13. Rita is remembered by many for her Oscar-winning performance in West Side Story. But the years since have been filled with memorable performances by a lady of incredible talent and style, energy and beauty. To a collection that includes the Oscar, the Tony, the Emmy, and the Grammy, Rita Moreno may now add the Presidential Medal of Freedom, and we give this honor with affection and appreciation.

On a January night in 1888, a group of men, meeting not far from the White House, founded the National Geographic Society. In the years since, the society has flourished, thanks in large part to a family named Grosvenor. Gilbert Melville Grosvenor is the fifth generation of his family to hold the title, president of the society. As chairman of the society's board of trustees and earlier as president, he has maintained the excellent standards and reputation that we rightly associate with the National Geographic.

Gil has also furthered the Society's mission of protecting land and wildlife, teaching young people about geography, and instilling in readers a respect for other cultures and nations of the world. We honor him today for his good stewardship of a great American institution.

Walter Wriston is unable to attend this afternoon but is represented here by his daughter, Catherine, and his brother-in-law, Robert. More than 60 years ago, Walter

Wriston worked here in Washington at the Department of State, Mr. Secretary. After serving his country further as an Army officer in World War II, he set out to find work in New York.

Plenty of jobs were available in banking, but Walter said banking was at the top of his list of everything dull. [*Laughter*] In the decades that followed, while rising to the leadership of Citibank and Citicorp, Walter Wriston made the industry a lot more interesting, ushering in an era of unprecedented innovation and improved service. He saw the trends of the future, and he started a few of his own, first among them, electronic banking. We honor him today for his great foresight, his principled corporate leadership, and we thank him for all he has done to extend the opportunities of our free enterprise system.

Norm Podhoretz ranks among the most prominent American editors of the 20th century. And he's doing pretty well in the 21st. [*Laughter*] Never a man to tailor his opinions to please others, Mr. Podhoretz has always written and spoken with directness and honesty. Sometimes speaking the truth has carried a cost. Yet, over the years, he has only gained in stature among his fellow writers and thinkers. Today we pay tribute to this fierce intellectual man and his fine writing and his great love for our country.

The story is told that on election night, 1962, President John F. Kennedy heard that his home State had just elected a black man as attorney general. The President said, "That's the biggest news in the country." Bigger news would follow in the career of Edward William Brooke III.

Within 4 years, this decorated Army veteran would become the first African American ever elected by popular vote to the United States Senate. And when he came to the Senate, he was coming home. He was the youngest child of Helen and Edward Brooke, Jr. He was raised right here in Washington, and here he learned the values that led him to a lifetime of service.

Twenty-five years after leaving office, Senator Brooke is remembered for the high intellect and superb judgment he brought to the Senate. And across our Nation, the Senator is still admired as an historic figure, a man of honor, and one of America's most distinguished public servants.

Dr. Arnall Patz will always be known as the man who has given to uncounted men, women, and children the gift of sight. As a 32-year-old ophthalmologist, Dr. Patz was the first to understand that the practice of giving high levels of oxygen to premature infants was causing an epidemic of blindness in babies. For more than a half-century, his name has been the gold standard in the field of researching the causes and treatment of eye disease. One of the first awards Dr. Patz received was presented many years ago by Helen Keller. Today, with the Medal of Freedom, this great healer receives the thanks of our entire Nation.

Millions of Americans reserve a special respect for Gordon B. Hinckley, who still works every day as president of the Mormon Church, and who on this very day turns 94 years old. Mr. Hinckley is the grandson of Mormon pioneers and has given devoted service to his church since 1935. He's always shown the heart of a servant and the gifts of a leader. Through his discipline and faithfulness, he has proven a worthy successor to the many fine leaders before him. His church has given him its highest position of trust, and today this wise and patriotic man receives his country's highest civil honor.

Doris Day could not be with us this morning, but this beautiful lady is a special presence in American life. I called her yesterday and told her she would be missed. I told her to watch C–SPAN—[*laughter*]—just in case I said something nice about her. [*Laughter*] Even when Harry Truman lived in the White House, all of America

knew the name of the girl who sang "Sentimental Journey" over the radio.

In the years since, she has kept her fans and shown the breadth of her talent in television and the movies. She starred on screen with leading men from Jimmy Stewart to Ronald Reagan, from Rock Hudson to James Garner. It was a good day for America when Doris Marianne von Kappelhoff of Evanston, Ohio, decided to become an entertainer. It was a good day for our fellow creatures when she gave her good heart to the cause of animal welfare. Doris Day is one of the greats, and America will always love its sweetheart.

For all who love the game of golf and for those who love to see it played, there has never been a sight in the game quite like Arnold Palmer walking down the fairway toward the 18th green. The announcer Vin Scully once said, "In a sport that was high society, Arnold Palmer made it 'High Noon.' " [*Laughter*] For more than 50 years, over thousands of miles of fairway, and in 92 professional championships, Arnold has given his all, playing with style and a daring that changed the game of golf. He drew millions of fans, and every big crowd we see at a golf tournament today started with Arnie's Army. The father who had taught him to play golf at Latrobe Country Club would be very proud today of Arnold Daniel Palmer.

And now I ask the military aide to read the Medal of Freedom Citations.

[*At this point, Maj. Steven T. Fischer, USA, Army Aide to the President, read the citations, and the President presented the medals.*]

The President. Thank you again for coming. Congratulations. Laura and I now ask you to join us at a reception to honor these remarkable Americans and, of course, His Holy Father. God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:13 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Archbishop Gabriel Montalvo, Apostolic Nuncio to the United States of America; and Theodore E. Cardinal McCarrick, Archbishop of Washington.

Remarks at the Department of Commerce
June 24, 2004

Thanks for the warm welcome. And it's good to be here at the Commerce Department. Today I want to talk about how to make sure America is the best place to do business in the world. How do we make sure that we're always on the leading edge of change? And how do we utilize technology to improve the lives of our fellow citizens? That's what we're here to talk about.

Our economy is strong today. People are getting back to work. There's an excitement amongst the risktakers, and capital is moving. I'm confident it's going to get stronger as the days go on.

The fundamental question is, what do we need to do to make sure we're not only strong today and tomorrow but for the decades to come? That's the real challenge that those of us in Government face. One of the things that's important for us to always remember, that the proper role of Government is not to try to be the generator of wealth. The proper role of Government is to create the environment so that the entrepreneurial spirit is strong and vibrant and alive and well in America. That's the proper role for those of us who have been given the high honor of serving the American people.

If you have an environment in which the entrepreneurial spirit is strong, innovation will follow. I equate innovation with entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurs are innovative people. They have to compete in order to stay in business, and in order to stay in business, in order to stay ahead of the competition, you've got to innovate. But Government can help. We can encourage innovation in smart ways. We're going to talk about some specific measures in which we can encourage and help the innovators succeed.

One thing we've got to do as we think about how to make sure America stays on the cutting edge of technology is always remember, good tax policy helps innovation. See, if we want to be a nation of innovators, we don't want to over-tax industry and commerce and the entrepreneurial spirit. It's very important for Congress to understand this. It's important for Congress to make sure that the tax relief we passed stays in place and not raise taxes on the American people.

Secondly, if we're going to have an innovative society, we've got to have good legal policy. Frivolous and junk lawsuits make it awfully hard for people to feel comfortable risking capital. It's one thing to have good and fair justice, which we all support, but the legal system must be balanced and fair. We don't want to run capital away from the United States. We don't want to discourage the innovators and those who take risk because they're afraid of getting sued by a lawsuit.

We need tort reform. And Washington, DC, is a good place to start with tort reform. We need class-action reform, asbestos reform, and medical liability reform now.

But we've also got to be competent in our trade policy. In order to be a nation of innovation, we've got to be willing to keep our markets open and insist that others open their markets to us. It's that free flow of goods and services and ideas that will make sure America stays on the leading edge of technological change.

So here are some ways that we can work with Congress through good legislative policy to make sure the environment is such that people are willing to take risk. Fortunately, we've got some Members of Congress who understand exactly what I'm talking about. One would be Senator John Ensign from Wyoming. I appreciate you coming, Senator. And the other would be my friend from the great State of Texas, Lamar Smith. Congressman, it's good to see you. Thank you for coming. He's a rancher. [*Laughter*] He's got innovative cows. [*Laughter*]

I'm sorry the Secretary is not here. He is a—he knows what I'm talking about. He understands the proper relationship of Government and risktakers. I understand he's in China. Good. Glad he's working. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank Ted Kassinger for welcoming us here. I appreciate Ann Veneman, Secretary of Agriculture. She's here for a reason, which you'll hear about in a second. Plus, she wanted to hear the speech. [*Laughter*] Sam Bodman is the Deputy Secretary of Treasury, is here. You might remember him from the Commerce Department. He was the Deputy Secretary of Commerce. Sam, I'm sure they gave you a—welcomed you back here.

I announced some measures that will keep our economy on the leading edge of innovation. I want to share some of those with you. The reason I want to share them with you is I want people to understand we're serious about these proposals we have made. We expect and will continue to have good cooperation with the Congress on these measures.

First, long-term growth depends upon energy. You know, we need Congress to pass the energy plan I submitted. It's a plan that says loud and clear, for the sake of economic security and for the sake of national security, we must be less dependent on foreign sources of energy. And we can find energy at home in environmentally friendly ways. We can do a better job of

conservation. We can come up with alternative sources of energy. I constantly say to people, "Gosh, wouldn't it be wonderful to be the President and say, 'How good is the corn crop, Madam Secretary? Oh, it's really good. Well, that means we're going to have more ethanol to take the place of' "—[*applause*]—I mean, I'd like to grow our way out of dependence. Seems to make a lot of sense to be able to try to do that. And we're working toward that end.

As well I talked about a 1.2 billion, 5 dollar—5-year project on research into hydrogen fuel cell technology for cars and trucks. I want to thank the Members of Congress for working together on that. This is the kind of project where Government can spur innovation. It seems like a good use of taxpayers' money to encourage this kind of new innovation. Imagine what hydrogen fuel cell technology will mean for our dependence upon foreign sources of energy. Imagine how—what a positive effect such technology will have on our environment. This is a very important technology. And I look forward to working with the Congress to make sure it's well-funded and members of my administration to move the project forward.

We also talked about an interesting way to make sure health care costs are contained. In order to be a competitive environment, in order to be a place where people can do business here, in order to be a place where small businesses can flourish, we need to do a better job of controlling health care costs. There are some smart things we can do with association health plans, health savings accounts.

But one of the things we can do is use our technology in a better way to promote cost savings and quality of health care by the utilization of personal electronic medical records. It seems to make a lot of sense, doesn't it, that instead of having people walking around with—not necessarily proverbially walking around with—[*laughter*]—but imagine a patient who has been to a hospital a lot of times, and there's paperwork for every time the person goes. And if they were to have to carry their own files around, it would be kind of a cumbersome task, wouldn't it.

Think about the overhead if you multiplied the task of filling out paper to satisfy information requirements at a hospital. Think about the overhead nationwide because our health system doesn't use information technology properly, and think about how bad a doctor's handwriting—[*laughter*]—and there's no wonder sometimes there's medical errors.

And so therefore, I laid out a plan to ensure that most Americans have got electronic health records within the next 10 years so that our system is more cost effective, so we take out needless overhead costs and, at the same time, promote better quality medicine in America.

To achieve the goal of Tommy Thompson's outfit, the Health and Human Services has developed a language, a common language, so that health care providers can now speak more clearly across the Internet. We've developed new standards. We're funding demonstration projects. We're using programs such as Medicare and the veterans health—the veterans hospitals to promote a better use of information technology to make sure that health care is a—adopts the habits of the 21st century.

Today I want to talk about the need as well to make sure that leading technology is available all across the country. Sometimes the problem we face here in America is that technology is available in maybe just the big cities, and you get out to rural Wyoming or rural Texas, and people try to figure out what you're talking about when it comes to new technologies. What we're interested in is to make sure broadband technology is available in every corner of America by the year 2007—I mean, all over the Nation is what we're interested in.

Broadband, or what they call high-speed Internet, is critical in making our high-speed economy even more productive. That's what people have got to understand. You see, some people say, "What do you mean when you say 'broadband'?" Well, broadband is the capacity to move information a lot quicker and to move more information a lot quicker. As a matter of fact, broadband is 4 to 100 times faster than dial-up access. So in other words, if you—if you have your—if you're on a—just a dial-up phone for your computer, imagine information getting to you a hundred times quicker. That means more information can move quicker.

And that's important in order to make sure the economy and our citizens are more productive. Broadband saves costs throughout the economy. In other words, it makes the economy more efficient. Imagine how efficient businesses will be when they're that far away from their customer. That's what broadband technology will enable us to do.

Listen, we've been a very productive economy, a very productive society. What I'm telling you is we can be more productive for the good of our citizens. And the more productive a worker is, the more productive a person is, the higher standard of living they will achieve. It's essential for our citizens to know, when you hear the economists say, "We're productive," or, "This worker is more productive," that means better pay, and when you cut their taxes, it means better after-tax pay.

And we're seeing the spread of broadband throughout the country. Access has gone from 7 million subscriber lines in 2000 to 28 million last year. That's rapid growth. Yet, on a per capita basis, America ranks 10th amongst the industrialized world. That's not good enough. We don't like to be ranked 10th in anything. The goal is to be ranked first when it comes to per capita use of broadband technology. It's in our Nation's interest. It's good for our economy.

The spread of broadband will not only help industry; it'll help the quality of life of our citizens. We saw some really interesting projects. I want to thank those who came to show me some demonstration projects today. We saw a—I met a—where's the doc? Doc, there you are. Good. He's a heart doc—cardiologist, I think, is a more sophisticated way of putting it. [*Laughter*] Probably liked it when I talked about medical liability reform too. [*Laughter*] He works at Washington's Children's Hospital. And so he had a patient in—Maryland? Yes. And he was able to—they put a little scan on the little guy's heart, and he was able to assure the mom that this person who had a heart operation when he was a young child is doing well.

This healer was able to spread his compassion and talents and assure a mom across broadband technology. It's amazing, when you think about it. Imagine what's going to happen in Texas when in Alpine or somewhere down there, they're looking for a specialist, and a parent is panicked about whether or not their loved one is going to receive the care needed, and they don't have—they can't drive 600 miles to a local hospital. So they call up this guy via broadband technology, and he is able to analyze the child from afar with very sophisticated software and give the reassuring words to the parent, "Everything is okay." And whether it be cardiology or ear infection or any other aspect of medicine, we'll be able to make sure health care is available throughout the country by using this technology. The quality of life for our citizens is going to improve dramatically as we spread this technology all across America.

I saw what broadband technology can mean for education. I mean, if you've ever been a Governor of a State, you understand the vast potential of broadband technology. You understand how hard it is to make sure that physics, for example, is taught in every classroom in the State. It's difficult to do. It's, like, cost-prohibitive. But it's

not cost-prohibitive when you can wire your classrooms and have a physics professor from the University of Texas-San Antonio give a lecture in a real-time basis to kids out in rural Texas or anywhere else in America. It's a fantastic way to take information and spread it on a real-time basis.

We saw a project there today in northern Pennsylvania, a school in northern Pennsylvania, and it's exciting. Think of the vast potential this will mean for the public school systems of America. It means that some who go without certain subjects can now gain access to those subjects. It will mean we've got a more educated population when we get broadband technology spread throughout the entire country.

This effort, by the way—the reason Ann is here, Ann Veneman is here is because the effort was launched by the Department of Agriculture. That may be a hard one to explain at home. [*Laughter*] But the reason why is, is because her job is to give grant and loan programs for rural development. And it makes sense to—and she's cranked out $2.5 billion of loans and grants for rural development.

A lot of people in rural America like living there. [*Laughter*] The quality of life is really good. You can walk down your street and know who you're looking at, and generally, they'll say, "How are you doing? It's good to see you. I hope you're having a wonderful day. What can we do to help you?" And it makes sense to be able to take the potential of broadband to rural America. People are going to be able to find work there and be able to live in their—where they're raised or where they want to raise their kids in a rural setting.

I also saw what broadband technology can do for our borders. I know this is a particular concern for Lamar. He's—your district doesn't go all the way down to the border now, does it? Well, it has. He's had about five different configurations of his district. [*Laughter*] But we've got a big border in Texas, with Mexico, obviously—and we've got a big border with Canada—Arizona is affected. And this is a good chance to have broadband technology deliver information to those who are responsible for guarding borders, guarding plants and equipment. It's amazing with the software that has been developed these days that enable a camera to distinguish the difference between a squirrel and a bomb. And yet, I saw some software today that is very sophisticated and at the same time will enable people to better do their duty in securing that which needs to be secured.

Remember, we're still in a battle against ideological extremists who use terrorism as a tool to frighten, scare, kill people such as us who love freedom. And therefore, what I'm telling you is as broadband expands, it's going to enable us better to protect our homeland, which is a vital concern of any of us in our Government.

We're going to—so somebody says, "That's great. It sounds good. How are you going to achieve the goal? It's one thing to set a goal; how do you achieve it?" Here's some things we can do that make sense, to make sure that broadband is available to everyone by 2007 and that there is a choice shortly thereafter. It's one thing to make sure broadband is spread out in America, but we want consumers—in this country, we believe in giving consumers alternatives. If you have an alternative, you're likely to get a better price and a better quality. We like to respond to demand in a market-oriented economy, which is what we're going to do.

First, we've got to make sure that broadband access is affordable and, therefore, it should not be taxed. It's essential that we not tax—there has been a Federal ban on Internet access taxes. I want to thank the Members who worked there on that issue. I think that's why these two guys are here, by the way. [*Laughter*] And States now, because the ban has expired, States have started taxing broadband access. And that's going to make access less affordable. If the goal is to spread broadband, it

doesn't make any sense to tax it as we're spreading it.

And so therefore, I support—strongly support reestablishing the ban on Internet access taxes. The Congress needs to act on this. I know these two Members want to act. We look forward to working with you to make sure that the Internet access tax ban can be signed into law soon.

Taxes can stop the spread of broadband, and so can burdensome regulations. And sometimes Government has a way of imposing burdensome regulations. And we look forward to working with industry, investors, and entrepreneurs as to how to get rid of those burdensome regulations that defeat the goal of spreading broadband.

For example—well, one way to look at it is our regulations for the telephone were established years ago. And I don't think those regulations should apply to a 21st century technology. I thought the Federal Communications Commission did a smart thing in a recent decision by telling communications companies they don't have to give away use of their fiber-optic broadband lines. I thought that was a smart thing.

In this case, the FCC provided regulatory certainty and by doing so created incentives for communication companies to build out their fiber-optic broadband lines to more homes. It's a good decision. I think the decision will benefit American consumers as well.

Another issue we face is that broadband providers have trouble getting across Federal lands. And that's why I signed an order to reduce the regulatory redtape for laying fiber-optic cables and putting up transmission towers on Federal lands. You see, if you can't put up towers and lay cable, you can't get broadband to all corners of America by 2007. And so hopefully we've reduced that regulatory burden. If we haven't reduced the regulatory burden enough, we need to hear from those who are stymied. We want to meet the goal. There's a practical reason why we want to meet the goal: It'll improve the lives of our fellow citizens.

Thirdly, we want to help consumers find more ways to obtain affordable broadband access. I just told you that. I told it to you again. [*Laughter*]

Most people who have broadband access now obtain it through a cable wire or telephone wire. A small percentage obtain it through a satellite. But most of us who have got broadband go through the telephone or your cable.

We need to get broadband to more Americans, and so therefore, I want to talk about two other ways to get broadband to the consumer. We need to use our power lines better. They go everywhere. It seems to make sense, doesn't it, if what you're looking for is avenues into the home. Well, electricity goes into the home. And so one great opportunity is to spread broadband throughout America via our power lines.

And one of the problems we've got here is that there are some—there is—the Commerce Department has had to develop technical standards that will make sure that our broadband can go across power lines without unnecessary interference. So this is a technological problem. It's a technological issue. It turns out that sometimes the competition of broadband and electricity just doesn't go too good across one line. And so—if I could put it in simple vernacular—and so therefore, the Commerce Department is helping to sort through these issues so that broadband access will be available through—by our power companies.

And as I understand it—as a matter of fact, was shown a little thing you plug in your wall that will give you broadband access at 30 times, you told me? Sixty times—sixty times the current speed of a dial-up. And that's now available in Cincinnati and parts of Kentucky. There's a power company in that part of the world that has been innovative, has diversified the product to the home and now can provide

broadband across the electricity lines, which is a fantastic innovation.

And so our job in Government is to help facilitate the use of electricity lines by helping with the technological standards that will make this more possible. And I want to thank those in the Commerce Department who have worked hard to do this.

The other promising new broadband technology is wireless. The spectrum that allows for wireless technology is a limited resource. In other words, it's not endless spectrum. And we need to use it wisely. And a wise use of that spectrum is to help our economy grow and help with the quality of life of our people. And after all, that's why we're here. We're here because of the—we want to enhance the quality of life of the American people. We want them to live better lives. We want them to be healthier. We want them to be smarter. We want them to be able to find work easier. And so one of things we need to do is unlock the spectrum's value—economic value and entrepreneurial potential without, by the way, without crowding out important Government functions. And we can do both. That's what's important for our citizens to understand. And so we're helping to promote new wireless technologies without crowding out the Defense Department's capacity to defend America.

There are two kinds of wireless technology. One is called wi-fi. It works with a regular broadband connection. If you use that kind of connection, someone from their home or their office can set up a wireless network that covers the home or the office. For example, I was shown a wi-fi hookup today that enables somebody to put a little system in their home that when their child comes home, if it's set up properly, they will be able come in; it'll trigger a noise; the person will look on their phone and see a picture of their kid coming in the home. It's pretty imaginative, isn't it? It's a—it's just an illustration of what is possible—of what is possible with this new broadband technology.

And so the problem with this kind of technology is that we can actually interfere with Government uses like radar. We want to make sure our radars work well. [*Laughter*] And so we took the necessary steps to make sure these wireless broadband applications could work within the same spectrum as the Government functions without interference. It took some awfully smart people to figure that out. But you know something? Our Government employs awfully smart people. And for those of you who have been working on this project, I want to thank you very much. It took some innovation.

And people are beginning to take advantage of this—like, cities are. Spokane, Washington, yesterday established a wi-fi hot zone that allows users within a hundred-block area of the city to obtain wireless broadband access. Imagine if you're the head of a chamber of commerce of a city, and you say, "Gosh, our city is a great place to do business or to find work. We're setting up a wi-fi hot zone, which means our citizens are more likely to be more productive than the citizens from a neighboring community." It's a great opportunity.

Another kind of wireless broadband would be more wide-ranging. It would be based on mobile wireless. It wouldn't depend on a physical connection to an existing cable or telephone modem as wi-fi does.

This—to me, this is a very exciting opportunity for the country, if you think about it. The problem is, it requires a spectrum that is not now available. And so Congress needs to make the spectrum available. If we want to achieve the goal of broadband in every corner of the country by 2007, and shortly thereafter, people will have more options and more choice, we need to make more spectrum available.

There's a bill called the "Commercial Spectrum Enhancement Act." It is a bill where we can take spectrum that is currently allocated to the Government and

auction it off to the private sector without diminishing our responsibilities in Government. In other words, it will be an auction process. Taxpayers will not only benefit because broadband has been expanded, the taxpayers will benefit because we're not going to give the spectrum away. We'll let them pay.

And so these are some of the policies that will help us achieve the goal. What I'm telling you is, there's a role for us here in Washington to help the entrepreneurs and innovators of the country succeed and thereby help make the quality of the life of our fellow citizens the best it can possibly be.

I am here at the Commerce Department because a lot of the work to make sure the entrepreneurial spirit is strong is done here. And I'm here to thank those of you who work here for your hard work. I appreciate what you're doing. Keep doing it. We have a responsibility to fulfill our missions and our goals on behalf of the taxpayers of this country.

There is no question in my mind, with the right policy and right incentives, that we will be the leader. Instead of being the 10th per capita in broadband use, we'll be the first. You know, we're the fastest growing major industrialized nation in the world today, and that's great. We want to be the fastest growing major industrialized nation in the world tomorrow and the next decade and the next decade. And one of the best ways we can do so is to always stay on the leading edge of technological change, and here are some practical ways—by working with the Congress, working with our regulators, working with our Commerce Department—that we can do so.

Listen, thanks for your work. May God bless you all, and may God continue to bless our country.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:08 p.m. in the main lobby at the U.S. Department of Commerce. In his remarks, he referred to Theodore W. Kassinger, General Counsel, Department of Commerce, and nominee to be Deputy Secretary of Commerce; and Dr. Craig Sable, Children's National Medical Center.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Western Balkans
June 24, 2004

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent the enclosed notice, stating that the Western Balkans emergency is to continue in effect beyond June 26, 2004, to the *Federal Register* for publication. The most recent notice continuing this emergency was published in the *Federal Register* on June 24, 2003, 68 *Fed. Reg.* 37389.

The crisis constituted by the actions of persons engaged in, or assisting, sponsoring, or supporting, (i) extremist violence in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and elsewhere in the Western Balkans region, or (ii) acts obstructing implementation of the Dayton Accords in Bosnia or United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 of June 10, 1999, in Kosovo, that led to the declaration of a national emergency on

June 26, 2001, has not been resolved. Subsequent to the declaration of the national emergency, acts obstructing implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement of 2001 in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, have also become a concern. All of these actions are hostile to U.S. interests and pose a continuing unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States. For these reasons, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared with respect to the Western Balkans and maintain in force the comprehensive sanctions to respond to this threat.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
June 24, 2004.

NOTE: The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Interview With Radio and Television Ireland
June 24, 2004

Irish Public Opinion

Q. Mr. President, you're going to arrive in Ireland in about 24 hours' time, and no doubt you will be welcomed by our political leaders. Unfortunately, the majority of our public do not welcome your visit because they're angry over Iraq; they're angry over Abu Ghraib. Are you bothered by what Irish people think?

The President. Listen, I hope the Irish people understand the great values of our country. And if they think that a few soldiers represents the entirety of America, they don't really understand America then.

There have been great ties between Ireland and America, and we've got a lot of Irish Americans here that are very proud of their heritage and their country. But you know, they must not understand if they're angry over Abu Ghraib—if they say, "This is what America represents," they don't understand our country, because we don't represent that. We are a compassionate country. We're a strong country, and we'll defend ourselves, but we help people. And we've helped the Irish, and we'll continue to do so. We've got a good relationship with Ireland.

Iraq/Terrorism

Q. And they're angry over Iraq as well and particularly the continuing death toll there.

The President. Well, I can understand that. People don't like war. But what they should be angry about is the fact that there was a brutal dictator there that had destroyed lives and put them in mass graves and had torture rooms. Listen, I wish they could have seen the seven men that came to see me in the Oval Office. They had their right hands cut off by Saddam Hussein because the currency had devalued when he was the leader. And guess what happened? An American saw the fact that they had had their hands cut off and crosses or Xs carved in their forehead, and he flew them to America. And they came to my office with a new hand, grateful for the generosity of America and with Saddam Hussein's brutality in their mind.

Look, Saddam Hussein had used weapons of mass destruction against his own people, against the neighborhood. He was a brutal dictator who posed a threat—such a threat that the United Nations voted unanimously to say, "Mr. Saddam Hussein"——

Q. Indeed, Mr. President, but you didn't find the weapons of mass destruction.

The President. Let me finish. Let me finish. May I finish?

He said—the United Nations said, "Disarm, or face serious consequences." That's what the United Nations said. And guess what? He didn't disarm. He didn't disclose his arms. And therefore, he faced serious consequences. But we have found a capacity for him to make a weapon. See, he had the capacity to make weapons. He was dangerous, and no one can argue that the world is better off with Saddam—if Saddam Hussein were in power.

Q. But Mr. President, the world is a more dangerous place today. I don't know whether you can see that or not.

The President. Why do you say that?

Q. There are terrorist bombings every single day. It's now a daily event. It wasn't like that 2 years ago.

The President. What was it like September the 11th, 2001? It was a—there was a relative calm, we——

Q. But it's your response to Iraq that's considered——

The President. Let me finish. Let me finish, please. Please. You ask the questions, and I'll answer them, if you don't mind.

On September the 11th, 2001, we were attacked in an unprovoked fashion. Everybody thought the world was calm, and then there have been bombings since then—not because of my response to Iraq. There were bombings in Madrid. There were bombings in Istanbul. There were bombings in Bali. There were killings in Pakistan.

Q. Indeed, Mr. President, and I think Irish people understand that. But I think there is a feeling that the world has become a more dangerous place because you have taken the focus off Al Qaida and diverted into Iraq. Do you not see that the world is a more dangerous place? I saw four of your soldiers lying dead on the television the other day, a picture of four soldiers just lying there without their flight jackets.

The President. Listen, nobody cares more about the death than I do——

Q. Is there a point or place——

The President. Let me finish, please. Please. Let me finish, and then you can follow up, if you don't mind.

Nobody cares more about the deaths than I do. I care about it a lot. But I do believe the world is a safer place and becoming a safer place. I know that a free Iraq is going to be a necessary part of changing the world. Listen, people join terrorist organizations because there's no hope and there's no chance to raise their families in a peaceful world, where there is not freedom. And so the idea is to promote freedom and at the same time protect our security. And I do believe the world is becoming a better place, absolutely.

President's Faith

Q. Mr. President, you are a man who has a great faith in God. I've heard you say many times that you strive to serve somebody greater than yourself.

The President. Right.

Q. Do you believe that the hand of God is guiding you in this war on terror?

The President. Listen, I think that God—that my relationship with God is a very personal relationship. And I turn to the Good Lord for strength. And I turn to the Good Lord for guidance. I turn to the Good Lord for forgiveness. But the God I know is not one that—the God I know is one that promotes peace and freedom. But I get great sustenance from my personal relationship. That doesn't make me think I'm a better person than you are, by the way, because one of the great admonitions in the Good Book is, don't try to take a speck out of your eye if I've got a log in my own.

President's Upcoming Meeting With Prime Minister Ahern of Ireland

Q. You're going to meet Bertie Ahern when you arrive in Shannon Airport tomorrow. I guess he went out on a limb for

you, presumably because of the great friendship between our two countries. Can you look him in the eye when you get there and say it will be worth it—it will work out?

The President. Absolutely. I wouldn't be doing this, I wouldn't have made the decisions I did if I didn't think the world would be better. Of course. I'm not going to put people in harm's way, our young, if I didn't think the world would be better. And——

Q. Why is it that others——

The President. Let me finish.

And so, yes, I can turn to my friend Bertie Ahern and say, "Thank you. Thanks for helping, and I appreciate it very much." And there will be other challenges, by the way.

Public Opinion/U.S. Compassion

Q. Why is it that others don't understand what you're about?

The President. I don't know. History will judge what I'm about. But I'm the kind of person, I don't really try to chase popular polls or popularity polls. My job is to do my job and make the decisions that I think are important for our country and for the world. And I argue strongly that the world is better off because of the decisions I have made, along with others. America is not in this alone. One of our greatest allies of—in the world is your neighbor Great Britain. Tony Blair has been a strong advocate for not only battling terrorists but promoting freedom, for which I am grateful.

Let me say one other thing about America that your viewers must know—is that not only are we working hard to promote security and peace, we're also working to eradicate famine and disease. There is no more generous country on the face of the Earth than the United States of America when it comes to fighting HIV/AIDS. As a matter of fact, it was my initiative——

Q. Indeed, that's understood——

The President. ——my initiative that asked Congress to spend $15 billion over 5 years to battle this pandemic. And we're following through on it. And no other country in the world feeds more of the hungry than the United States. We're a compassionate nation.

France and Iraq

Q. Mr. President, I know your time is tight. Can I move you on to Europe? Are you satisfied that you are getting enough help in Iraq from European countries? You have come together. You are more friendly now—but they're not really stepping up to the plate with help, are they?

The President. Well, I think, first of all, most of Europe supported the decision in Iraq. And really, what you're talking about is France, isn't it? And they didn't agree with my decision. They did vote for the U.N. Security Council resolution that said, "Disclose; disarm; or face serious consequences." We just had a difference of opinion about when you say something, do you mean it.

But nevertheless, there's no doubt in my mind President Chirac would like to see a free and democratic and whole Iraq emerge—and same in Afghanistan. They've been very helpful in Afghanistan. They're willing to forgive debt in Iraq, but most European countries are very supportive and are participating in the reconstruction of Iraq.

Transfer of Sovereignty in Iraq

Q. And how do you see the handover going? The next few weeks are going to be crucial. Can democracy really flourish with the violence that's going on? A hundred Iraqis dead today, Mr. President.

The President. I don't like death either. I mean, you keep emphasizing the death, and I don't blame you. But all that goes to show is the nature of the enemy. These people are willing to kill innocent people. They're willing to slaughter innocent people to stop the advance of freedom. And so the free world has to make a choice: Do

we cower in the face of terror, or do we lead in the face of terror?

And I'm going to lead in the face of terror. We will not let these terrorists dash the hopes and ambitions of the people of Iraq. There's some kind of attitude that says, "Oh, gosh, the terrorists attacked. Let's let the Iraqis suffer more." We're not going to let them suffer more. We're going to work with them, and I'm most proud of this fellow, Prime Minister Allawi. He's strong, and he's tough. He says to me, "Mr. President, don't leave our country. Help us secure our country so we can be free."

Situation in the Middle East

Q. Indeed, Mr. President, just to get back to that. Can I just turn to the Middle East——

The President. Sure.

Q. ——and you will be discussing at the EU summit and the idea of bringing democracy to the broader Middle East.

The President. Right.

Q. Is that something that really should start, though, with the solving of the Israeli-Palestinian crisis?

The President. Well, I think, first of all, you've got a democracy in Turkey. And you've got a democracy emerging in Afghanistan. You've got a democracy in Pakistan. In other words——

Q. But shouldn't that be on the top of the list——

The President. Please. Please. Please, for a minute, okay. It'll be better if you let me finish my answers, and then you can follow up, if you don't mind.

What I'm telling you is democracy can emerge at the same time that a democracy can emerge in the Palestinian state. I'm the first American President to have called for the establishment of a Palestinian state, the first one to do so, because I believe it is in the Palestinian people's interest; I believe it's in Israel's interest. And yes, we're working. But we can do more than, you know, one thing at a time. And we are working on the roadmap with the Quartet to advance the process down the road. Like Iraq, the Palestinian and the Israeli issue is going to require good security measures. And——

Q. And a bit more evenhandedness from America?

The President. ——and we're working on security measures. And America—I'm the first President to ever have called for a Palestinian state. That's, to me, sounds like a reasonable, balanced approach. But I will not allow terrorists to determine the fate—as best I can—determine the fate of people who want to be free.

Q. Mr. President, thank you very much for talking to us.

The President. You're welcome.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 4:08 p.m. in the Library at the White House for later broadcast, and the transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 25. In his remarks, the President referred to former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; Marvin Zindler, member, board of directors, Agris-Zindler Children's Fund; Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom; President Jacques Chirac of France; and Prime Minister Ayad Allawi of the Iraqi interim government. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Statement on Resolution of Issues Affecting the Missouri River Basin
June 25, 2004

My administration is committed to working to preserve for America's farming families their way of life in the Missouri River basin, to provide more predictability to the many users of the river, and to protect threatened and endangered species that depend on the river for habitat.

The Army Corps of Engineers and Department of the Interior have succeeded in achieving a balance among interests on the river and resolving a key element of a 15-year-old conflict. Today the agencies are announcing the restoration of the habitat of an endangered species, which is an important milestone in ensuring that the river can remain an affordable avenue of commerce while meeting the habitat needs of the river's many species.

In addition, I am pleased that earlier this week the Federal court approved my administration's operating plan for the river, resolving years of litigation in multiple courts. The citizens who call the Missouri River home can now better plan for their future as they enjoy the many benefits and abundant wildlife that this extraordinary natural resource provides.

Letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives Transmitting Fiscal Year 2005 Budget Amendments
June 25, 2004

Dear Mr. Speaker:

I ask the Congress to consider the enclosed FY 2005 budget amendments for the Departments of Commerce, Health and Human Services, Justice, State, and Transportation; as well as the General Services Administration, the Election Assistance Commission, and the Federal Communications Commission. In total, these amendments would not increase the discretionary budget authority proposed in my FY 2005 Budget.

The details of these proposals are set forth in the enclosed letter from the Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

Sincerely,

GEORGE W. BUSH

The President's Radio Address
June 26, 2004

Good morning. This week I'm traveling to the U.S.-EU summit in Ireland, homeland to so many Irish Americans and one of the fastest growing and modern economies in the European Union. I will also be attending the NATO summit in Turkey, a proud nation that successfully blends a European identity with secular democracy and Islamic traditions.

I will discuss with our European Allies our common struggle to defeat the forces of global terror, our common interest in the spread of prosperity, and our common

efforts to help the people of Iraq secure for themselves a future of freedom.

Next Wednesday, full sovereignty in Iraq will be in the hands of the free Iraqi people. As that day approaches, the enemies of freedom in Iraq are growing ever more desperate. Last Tuesday, a young man from South Korea, Kim Sun-il, was viciously murdered by terrorists. That coldblooded act demonstrated once again the evil nature of the enemy. Their barbaric violence is designed to destabilize Iraq's new government, intimidate the Iraqi people, and shake the will of our coalition. Yet, our will is firm. South Korean President Roh has reaffirmed his determination to send more troops to help rebuild Iraq. Iraq's leaders, in a daily display of courage, refuse to be deterred from their dream of democracy, stability, and prosperity for the Iraqi people.

The international community has a responsibility to promote the rise of a free Iraq, and it is meeting that responsibility. Today the nations of the European Union pledged their support for the new government of Iraq. Next week, at the NATO summit, we will discuss Iraqi Prime Minister Allawi's request for NATO help in training Iraq's security forces. NATO has the capability to help the Iraqi people defeat the terrorist threat facing their country. As Iraq moves toward the transfer of sovereignty next week, NATO, the European Union, and the United States are united in our determination to help the people of that nation.

The world's free nations also have a responsibility to advance the blessings of liberty that have lifted our own nations. Earlier this month, the nations of the G–8 pledged their energies and resources to working in partnership with the peoples of the broader Middle East to advance human dignity, freedom, democracy, the rule of law, and economic opportunity. The United States, the European Union, and NATO are looking beyond the borders of Europe to support the momentum of freedom in the broader Middle East.

At these summits, we will seek to strengthen the security of our homelands from the threat of terror. We have taken steps to freeze and block terrorists' finances, make transportation safer, and improve information sharing. We will discuss ways to further improve transportation safety and border security. Travel between our nations is the lifeblood of our friendship, our economies, and our alliances, and that travel must be safe.

One important way to make the world safer is to make the world better. The United States and Europe share a fundamental interest in the health of the global economy. Our trade and investment relationship is the largest in the world. It creates millions of jobs on both sides of the Atlantic. Open trade has the power to lift nations out of poverty, so we will reaffirm our commitment to free and fair trade and the removal of obstacles to global economic growth.

We believe that freedom has the power to defeat poverty and hopelessness and ignorance. We believe the advance of freedom makes the world safer for all nations. And we believe that when free nations work together, freedom will always prevail.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:45 a.m. on June 25 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on June 26. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 25 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. In his address, the President referred to President Roh Moo-hyun of South Korea; and Prime Minister Ayad Allawi of the Iraqi interim government. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

The President's News Conference With European Union Leaders in Shannon, Ireland
June 26, 2004

Prime Minister Ahern. Ladies and gentlemen, I'd like to begin this press conference of the EU-U.S. summit here in Dromoland by welcoming President Bush to Ireland for this important summit and thank him for coming to us and for the participation with President Romano Prodi and under the Irish Presidency.

Our meeting has not only been extremely productive, I think it's, for us, also been historic, because it's the first summit between the enlarged EU of 25 and the United States. And it's also the first since we succeeded in concluding the negotiations in the European constitution last weekend.

From the outset, the transatlantic relationship has been a core focus of our Presidency, and it is my steadfast belief that a close transatlantic partnership is essential for prosperity and for growth on both sides of the Atlantic as well as for the broader international community. And I'm pleased that this summit has reaffirmed the strength, the depth, and the significance of our relationship in the spirit of partnership.

The economic relationship between the European Union, United States has been a central focus of our discussions today. It's a relationship that generates 12 million jobs on both sides of the Atlantic. We agreed at joint declaration on strengthening our economic partnership, which includes a commitment to work for successful outcome of the World Trade Organization negotiations. And we also launched a comprehensive review to maximize investment and reduce barriers to trade across the Atlantic. And the review will be concluded in time for the next summit this time next year.

We also focused on common challenges facing the European Union and the United States, including the pressing need to promote peace in the Middle East, on how we can best work together to support the people of Iraq as they start the process of building a sovereign, secure, and democratic country. We discussed and have issued joint declarations on Iraq as well as on counterterrorism, on nonproliferation, the fight against HIV and AIDS, Sudan, and partnership with the Mediterranean and the Middle East.

So the European Union and United States share, ladies and gentlemen, a common set of values based on the unshakeable commitment to democracy, to human rights, and the rule of law. And it's these shared values which make us enduring partners, a partnership that has been fundamental to the stability and prosperity of both Europe and America over the last 50 years.

And this summit has added significantly to our close relationship, and I thank the President, and I thank President Prodi for the good work that we've done today.

Mr. President.

President Bush. Thank you, Mr. Prime Minister. Thanks for your hospitality. Thanks for doing such a great job at the EU President Prodi as well, thanks for your welcome.

Taoiseach, we—Laura and I thank you for your hospitality. And we appreciate the people of this great country for welcoming us as well.

I want to thank the people who work at this beautiful resort for their warmth and their great service. It's a wonderful place. Not only is it beautiful, but the people who work here are really fine people.

I congratulate the nations of Europe on the enlargement of your Union at 25 members. With this historic achievement you

are erasing the last traces of the Iron Curtain and creating a new beginning for the continent.

Tomorrow I will travel to Turkey for the NATO summit—actually, today I will travel to Turkey. [*Laughter*] Tomorrow is the NATO summit. Turkey is a proud nation that successfully blends a European identity with the Islamic traditions. As Turkey meets the EU standards for membership, the European Union should begin talks that will lead to full membership for the Republic of Turkey.

Europe and America are linked by the ties of family, friendship, and common struggle and common values. We're also bound to each by common responsibilities. Because we met our responsibilities in the last century, we realized the vision of a continent that is whole, free, and at peace. As we meet our responsibilities in this new century, we will defeat the forces of terror and help to build a freer, safer, and more prosperous world.

The advance of freedom led to peace and prosperity in Europe, and it can do the same for the wider world. And so our Alliance is looking beyond the borders of Europe to support the momentum of freedom in the broader Middle East. The people of that region are eager for reform, and we are listening to their voices.

Earlier this month, the nations of the G–8, four of them members of this Union, pledged their energies and resources to working in partnership with the peoples of the broader Middle East to advance the universal values of human dignity, freedom, democracy, the rule of law, and economic opportunity.

A free and democratic Iraq is rising in the heart of the broader Middle East. We just concluded a constructive discussion on our common efforts to help the Iraqi people achieve the stability, prosperity, and democracy they seek. As Iraq moves toward the transfer of sovereignty next week, the EU and the United States are united in our determination to help the people of Iraq.

We also discussed the many actions our nations are taking to secure our homelands from the threat of terror. We took new steps to strengthen our efforts to freeze and block terrorist finances. And to make travel and transportation safer, we established new guidelines for sharing airline passenger records to improve the way we screen for terrorists while protecting the privacy of innocent travelers. We agreed to increase and improve the sharing of information and intelligence. We pledged to build on this progress by launching a new dialog on transportation and border security. Travel between our nations is the lifeblood of our friendship, our economies, and our Alliance, and our travel system must not only be safe but efficient.

Earlier today, we also signed an agreement that ensures compatibility between America's Global Positioning System and its future European counterpart, Galileo. This agreement will protect our common security, improve the delivery of emergency services, and further our economic cooperation. This was a hard agreement to make, but because we worked together, we now have an agreement. The two systems will be compatible and interoperable. And users from business to science to government in America and Europe will benefit.

The U.S. and EU share a fundamental interest in the health of the global economy. Our trade and investment relationship is the largest in the world, one that creates millions of jobs on both sides of the Atlantic. Yet we're always exploring ways to make it stronger, and we did so in these meetings. Lowering trade barriers increases the prosperity of all our nations. And so we're looking at new ways to open markets on both sides of the Atlantic. Free and fair trade has the power to lift nations out of poverty. So we reaffirmed our commitment to the Doha Development Agenda, which seeks to remove obstacles to global trade and growth in the developing world.

As I said, tomorrow I'm going to go to Turkey for the NATO summit. Today I'm going to Turkey—tomorrow is the summit. [*Laughter*] I look forward to working with our European Allies on many of the same issues we addressed here in Ireland. The unity of the Transatlantic Alliance in the face of new challenges and the advance of freedom in the world—that's what we're going to talk about.

NATO continues to transform itself to meet the new threats of the 21st century. The NATO mission in Afghanistan is helping the people of that country establish democracy after years of tyranny. And NATO has the capability—and I believe the responsibility—to help the Iraqi people defeat the terrorist threat that's facing their country. I look forward to discussing NATO's response to Prime Minister Allawi's request to help train Iraq's new security forces. Together, we can forge a new relationship between NATO and the Iraqi people.

Taoiseach, this has been a very useful summit. I appreciate your leadership. I appreciate President Prodi's leadership as well. I look forward to working with the nations of the European Union to increase our common prosperity, to strengthen our common security, and to advance our common interest in the spread of liberty.

Thank you.

Prime Minister Ahern. Mr. President. President Prodi.

President Prodi. Thank you, George, and thank you, Bertie, for the success of this summit. This is, for me, the last summit in which I have taken part as the President of the Commission. And over the past 5 years, Europe has gone through an enormous transformation. We have helped to deliver the euro, and now the single currency is the currency of more than 300 million people.

We have negotiated and completed the biggest expansion in the history of the European project by bringing in 10 new countries. And together, with the skillful Irish Presidency, we have negotiated and completed the biggest step ahead in our institution, adopting a new European Constitution. As a consequence, this Union has become an important and political actor in the global scene.

And now, in discussion with President Bush, we, Prime Minister Ahern and myself, have today spoken in the name of more than 450 million Europeans. This is the new reality in Europe and the new reality in European Union-United States relations.

Everyone here knows how close the ties between Europe and U.S. are. We know as well that these ties are not based only on our historic, cultural, political links but on our rock solid economic partnership as well. I remind you only one figure, $2 billion per day flow across the Atlantic—per day—in investment or trade. In this summit, our cooperation has broken new frontiers. The agreements on cooperation between our two global satellite navigation systems, Galileo and GPS, is a win-win situation. I am certain that the repercussion for the global market of civilian uses of satellite navigation systems are very positive. And this system will become operational in 2008 and will create 150,000 jobs in Europe alone.

Galileo is also good example of how European Union, strengthened by the euro, the constitution, and the reunification of the continent, can and will play its full part as an international actor. Together, European Union and U.S. can meet the global, regional challenge as well as threats to our security. But—and I want to emphasize this strongly—we must work together as true partners and friends can do.

Prime Minister Ahern. Thank you, President Prodi.

Mr. President, do you want the first question?

President Bush. I have to?

Prime Minister Ahern. Yes. [*Laughter*] We rotate them.

President Bush. I didn't ask for an answer. I just thought, "Do I have to?" [*Laughter*]

AP.

NATO and Iraq

Q. Mr. President, today's statement talks about shared commitments in Iraq and support for training Iraqi security forces. Does that mean that NATO is going to shoulder a larger military role in Iraq and that the bitter differences over the war are over?

President Bush. Let me start with the latter half of that question. I think the bitter differences of the war are over. I think people—some people didn't agree with the decision that I made and others made as well, but we all agree that a democratic Iraq, a peaceful Iraq, an Iraq which is—has its territorial integrity intact is in the benefit of the—is in all our benefit. And so there is a common interest and a common goal to work together to help the Iraqi people realize the benefits of a free society.

Prime Minister * Allawi has written a letter to NATO asking for training and equipment. And I hope NATO responds in a positive way, because the ultimate success inside of Iraq is going to depend upon the ability of the Iraqi citizens to defend themselves.

We'll be turning over full sovereignty on June the 30th. That means complete, full sovereignty. The Iraqi government will now make the decisions that are necessary to rebuild their country and to get to free elections. They have asked for our help, but they fully recognize what I've just described as necessary, that they have to have their forces, their police well-trained and well-prepared to meet the threat of the few who want to derail the ambitions of the many.

Q. Do you think NATO will take that step?

President Bush. Well, we'll find out tomorrow. That's why I'm traveling to Turkey today—[*laughter*]—to be——

Q. Mr. President——

President Bush. Which President?

Northern Ireland

Q. Number 43. [*Laughter*] Mr. President, your predecessor, Number 42, has, I understand, described Northern Ireland as the passion of his Presidency. Where does it sit on your list of priorities? And do you regard it as a model for the resolution of conflicts like the Middle East? Thank you.

President Bush. That's a great question. I do view it as a model for resolution of conflict, whether it be in the Middle East or elsewhere. And we view this issue as a very important issue in my administration and stand ready to help. There's a special envoy from our Government that is participating in the process. I have constantly asked the Prime Minister today whether or not the envoy is doing his job the way the Prime Minister thinks he ought to do the job, and the answer has been yes.

I'm fully aware that the Prime Minister of both Great Britain and Ireland are going to advance the process this early September. And we stand ready to help. I wish them all the best, because when this conflict is resolved, it will be an example for others that long-simmering disputes can be put behind them and free societies and peaceful societies can emerge for the interest of the peoples which have been involved in those disputes.

Steve [Steve Holland, Reuters]. Go ahead and yell it out. If I don't like the question I'll—[*laughter*]——

Abu Musab Al Zarqawi

Q. Thank you. Should America see the June 30th handover as the beginning of an exit strategy from Iraq? And how big a threat is Zarqawi to the new government?

President Bush. Yes, well, Zarqawi has been a threat to lot of people. He was

* White House correction.

such a threat that he was the person that ordered the killing of Mr. Foley, who worked for the USAID. He was an American citizen working for our Government, worked for Colin Powell. Zarqawi ordered him to be killed. He had been in and out of Baghdad, by the way. This is prior to the liberation of Iraq.

He is a problem because he's willing to kill people, innocent people, in order to shake our will and shake our confidence. In other words, he's willing to use death to stop the advance of freedom. He recruits suiciders, orders suiciders, and has them attack on a regular basis. Because he wants us to withdraw from Iraq, he wants Prime Minister Allawi to lose his will. He wants him to quit and surrender.

I spoke to the Prime Minister the other day. I believe he is a man of courage and backbone and a man who does believe in the aspirations of the Iraqi people. I believe he is one of the key ingredients to making sure that we move toward a free society.

In terms of exit strategies, listen, Steve, we will work to stand up an Iraqi security force and police force that is able to function, to work up a chain of command where the Iraqi police and security folks know that they're working for Iraqis, not for Americans. And we will stay as long as necessary, and then we will leave. We will complete the mission. And the faster the Iraqis take over their own security needs, the faster the mission will end.

Prime Minister Ahern. Charlie.

Iraq/Treatment of Prisoners

Q. Taoiseach, the President has said that the bitter differences over the war are over. This morning President McAleese paid a courtesy call on President Bush. She expressed a certain disquiet on behalf of the people of Ireland over some of the differences of what's happened in Iraq. Did you echo those sentiments? And if I could also put the same question to the President, how did he respond to what President McAleese had to say?

Prime Minister Ahern. And the answer is, I did, Charlie, and not on the first occasion. When I had the opportunity of meeting the President on Saint Patrick's Day, as he kindly does every year for us, we raised these issues. We discussed these issues at the G–8 meeting. How prisoners have been dealt with in some of the—in one of the prisons, what has happened in some of the—from Afghanistan in Guantanamo, that's been an issue. The President has answered those. The President is concerned about his own troops and some of the issues that happened as much as I am or anybody else in this country, and we've discussed that issue.

And I think it is a great thing that—where we have such good relationships with the United States, where we have so much cooperation, where today we can clear eight declarations, but still we are all interested in progress, we're all interested in human rights and the dignity of the person—that we can raise these issues. That is a good thing, as far as I'm concerned. The President has given us comprehensive answers, which I think both the *Tanaiste* and Minister Cowen and myself were very glad to hear his perspective on this and want to admire it, because these things, unfortunately, happen. And of course, we wish they didn't, but they do. And what's important then is how they're dealt with, how things are improved for the future. And the questions were answered to—as far as we were concerned, to our satisfaction, and the progress for the future of what the President is doing is also impressive.

President Bush. Of course, the Prime Minister brought the issues of Iraq up, as did the President. And I told them both I was sick with what happened inside that prison, and so were the American citizens. The action of those troops did not reflect what we think, and it did harm. It did harm, because there are people in Ireland and elsewhere that said, "This isn't the America we know. This isn't the America that we believe exists." And both leaders,

of course, brought the issue up, and they should. And I assured them that we'll deal with this in a transparent way—which stands in stark contrast to how a tyrant would deal with it. Had these abuses—well, these abuses did take place in Iraq prior to our arrival. There were rape rooms, mass graves. I don't remember any international investigation of what took place in Iraq. You'll—we are investigating, and you'll be able to see exactly what takes place, and you'll be able to see the legal process that unfolds.

And in terms of the decision to go to war, I can understand why people were disquieted about that. Nobody likes war. But remember—let me take a step back and remind you about what happened: There was that resolution out of the United Nations called 1441. It was voted on unanimously, where the world said, "Disclose, disarm, or face serious consequences." That's what the world said. And Saddam Hussein deceived. He didn't allow the inspectors to do their job. And so we had an issue—either you say something and mean it, or you don't. I happen to believe when you say something, you better mean it. And so with other nations, we acted.

And now the task is to see to it that Iraq becomes a free country where people are able to realize their dreams. Free countries are peaceful countries. And the best way to defeat terror as a tool to promote a sick ideology is to promote freedom around the world. And that's one of the key initiatives that we discussed today, which is the initiative to promote democracy and stand with the reformers of the broader Middle East.

Hutch [Ron Hutcheson, Knight Ridder].

Irish Public Opinion

Q. Thank you. Mr. President, you don't appear to be a very popular fellow here in Europe. Do you have any explanation for your poor poll standings? And is that something that should concern Americans?

President Bush. Well, Hutch, I must confess that the first polls I worry about are those that are going to take place in early November of this year. I—listen, I care about the image of our country. We've got a country that—we've just got 2½ trillion dollars worth of trade or $2.2 trillion worth of trade with the EU. Obviously, something positive is happening.

I don't like it when the values of our country are misunderstood because of the actions of some people overseas. As far as my own personal standing goes, Hutch, my job is to do my job. I'm going to do it the way I think is necessary. I'm going to set a vision. I will lead, and we'll just let the chips fall where they may.

Prime Minister Ahern. Romano.

President Prodi. Somebody in the back—nobody in the back.

President Bush. You look like a nice fellow. I don't know why they don't call on you. [*Laughter*]

Successor to President Prodi

Q. Taoiseach, could I ask you to confirm that the Portugese Prime Minister Barrosa has emerged as the likely successor to Mr. Prodi, and if you'll be proposing his name next Tuesday night as you're meeting with the foreign ministers?

Prime Minister Ahern. When I go back to Dublin this evening, I have to talk to still about half of my colleagues, which I hope to do that between about 5 o'clock and 9 o'clock tonight. I also have to talk to Jose Manuel Barrosa, the present Prime Minister of Portugal. But we do hope, sincerely hope, that I would be in a position to both have the meeting and to make a recommendation and get a positive decision on Tuesday evening.

President Bush. Thanks, *Taoiseach*. We've got to go to Turkey.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 2:14 p.m. at Dromoland Castle. The President met with Prime Minister Bertie Ahern of Ireland, in his capacity as President

of the European Council, and President Romano Prodi of the European Commission. In his remarks, President Bush referred to Prime Minister Ayad Allawi of the Iraqi interim government; U.S. Special Envoy for Northern Ireland Mitchell B. Reiss; Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom; senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; and President Mary McAleese of Ireland. Prime Minister Ahern referred to Deputy Prime Minister Mary Harney and Minister of Foreign Affairs Brian Cowen of Ireland.

Statement on United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture

June 26, 2004

Today, on United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, the United States reaffirms its commitment to the worldwide elimination of torture. The nonnegotiable demands of human dignity must be protected without reference to race, gender, creed, or nationality. Freedom from torture is an inalienable human right, and we are committed to building a world where human rights are respected and protected by the rule of law.

To help fulfill this commitment, the United States has joined 135 other nations in ratifying the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. America stands against and will not tolerate torture. We will investigate and prosecute all acts of torture and undertake to prevent other cruel and unusual punishment in all territory under our jurisdiction. American personnel are required to comply with all U.S. laws, including the United States Constitution, Federal statutes, including statutes prohibiting torture, and our treaty obligations with respect to the treatment of all detainees.

The United States also remains steadfastly committed to upholding the Geneva Conventions, which have been the bedrock of protection in armed conflict for more than 50 years. These conventions provide important protections designed to reduce human suffering in armed conflict. We expect other nations to treat our service members and civilians in accordance with the Geneva Conventions. Our Armed Forces are committed to complying with them and to holding accountable those in our military who do not.

The American people were horrified by the abuse of detainees at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq. These acts were wrong. They were inconsistent with our policies and our values as a Nation. I have directed a full accounting for the abuse of the Abu Ghraib detainees, and investigations are underway to review detention operations in Iraq and elsewhere.

It is often American men and women in uniform who fight for the freedom of others from tyrannical regimes that routinely use torture to oppress their citizens. From Nazi Germany to Bosnia and Afghanistan to Iraq, American service members have fought to remove brutal leaders who torture and massacre. It is the American people and their contributions that have helped to rebuild these traumatized nations to give former victims hope.

A little over a year ago, American service members and our coalition partners freed the Iraqi people from a dictatorship that routinely tortured and executed innocent citizens because of what they believed in or what ethnic or religious group they came from. In torture chambers, innocent Iraqis were brutalized and the bodies of the dead

left in mass graves. Throughout the past year, Americans have assisted the Iraqi people in establishing institutions to ensure accountability so that such acts do not occur again and to help victims recover.

Despite international efforts to protect human rights around the world, repressive regimes continue to victimize people through torture. The victims often feel forgotten, but we will not forget them. America supports accountability and treatment centers for torture victims. We contribute to the U.N. Fund for the Victims of Torture and support the work of nongovernmental organizations to end torture and assist the victims. We also provide protection, counseling, and where necessary and possible, relocation in the United States. We stand with the victims to seek their healing and recovery and urge all nations to join us in these efforts to restore the dignity of every person affected by torture.

These times of increasing terror challenge the world. Terror organizations challenge our comfort and our principles. The United States will continue to take seriously the need to question terrorists who have information that can save lives. But we will not compromise the rule of law or the values and principles that make us strong. Torture is wrong no matter where it occurs, and the United States will continue to lead the fight to eliminate it everywhere.

Remarks Prior to Discussions With Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey in Ankara, Turkey
June 27, 2004

Thank you, Mr. Prime Minister. You're right, this is my first trip to your beautiful country as President. It also happens to be my first trip to your beautiful country ever, and we're honored to be here. We appreciate the hospitality of the Turkish people.

We look forward to meaningful discussions on a variety of subjects, bilateral relations, how we can strengthen NATO. I would remind the people of this good country that I believe you ought to be given a date by the EU for your eventual acceptance into the EU. I also look forward to working with you on matters regarding the neighborhood, Iraq and elsewhere. I appreciate so very much the example your country has set on how to be a Muslim country and, at the same time, a country which embraces democracy and rule of law and freedom.

And so I'm so grateful for your invitation. Thank you very much for it, and I look forward to a fruitful discussion with you and with our NATO partners.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 9:40 a.m. at the Prime Minister's residence. Prior to the President's remarks, Prime Minister Erdogan spoke in Turkish, and no translation was provided. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks Following Discussions With Religious Leaders in Istanbul, Turkey
June 27, 2004

All right. It has been my honor to welcome these very important leaders of different faiths to this dialog. They represent the very best of Turkey, which is a country that is secular in politics and strong in its faith. And we've had a wonderful discussion. I'm so honored that these leaders would take time and share their thoughts with me. And I welcome them, and I thank them for being so faithful to the Almighty God.

Thank you for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:55 p.m. at the Hilton Istanbul. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks Following Discussions With Secretary General Jakob Gijsbert "Jaap" de Hoop Scheffer of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and an Exchange With Reporters in Istanbul
June 27, 2004

President Bush. This man is doing a great job, and we're proud to call him friend. He believes in freedom and peace. And I really appreciate what you've done, sir.

Secretary General de Hoop Scheffer. Thank you. It's a challenge, but NATO is worth it.

President Bush. It is worth it.

Secretary General de Hoop Scheffer. NATO is worth it, and the transatlantic relationship is worth it, more than just in words but all in deeds.

President Bush. Right. I was hoping to change the mission of NATO so it meets the threats of the 21st century, and we're going to work together to help make sure NATO is configured militarily to meet the threats of the 21st century as well. But you're the right man for the job, and we're honored you took it. I really appreciate working with you.

Secretary General de Hoop Scheffer. We're defending values, and values never come out. And I think they should be defended every single day and every single hour. We see examples of that everywhere around that NATO is—it's about values, has always been about values, and it's still about values. But Turkey has changed. We have terrorism everywhere. There's fights everywhere, be it here in this city, be it in New York, Uzbekistan, Mombasa, Yemen, you name it. This Alliance has to participate in fighting it first and winning it.

President Bush. Thank you.

Kidnaping of Turks

Q. Does the kidnaping of the Turks cast a pall over this meeting?

[*President Bush responded to the question by shaking his head to indicate no.*]

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:04 p.m. at the Hilton Istanbul. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

The President's News Conference With Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom in Istanbul
June 28, 2004

Transfer of Sovereignty in Iraq

President Bush. Good afternoon. Earlier today, 15 months after the liberation of Iraq, and 2 days ahead of schedule, the world witnessed the arrival of a free and sovereign Iraqi Government. Iraqi officials informed us that they are ready to assume power, and Prime Minister Allawi believes that making this transition now is best for his country. After decades of brutal rule by a terror regime, the Iraqi people have their country back.

This is a day of great hope for Iraqis and a day that terrorist enemies hoped never to see. The terrorists are doing all they can to stop the rise of a free Iraq. But their bombs and attacks have not prevented Iraqi sovereignty, and they will not prevent Iraqi democracy. Iraqi sovereignty is a tribute to the will of the Iraqi people and the courage of Iraqi leaders.

This day also marks a proud moral achievement for members of our coalition. We pledged to end a dangerous regime, to free the oppressed, and to restore sovereignty. We have kept our word.

Fifteen months ago, Saddam's regime was an enemy of America and the civilized world. Today Iraq's Government is an ally of both. Fifteen months ago, Iraq was a state sponsor of terrorism. Today Iraq's leaders, with our support, are systematically fighting terrorists across their country. Fifteen months ago, we faced the threat of a dictator with a history of using weapons of mass destruction. Today the dictator is a threat to no one, from the cell he now occupies. Fifteen months ago, the regime in Baghdad was the most aggressive in the Middle East and a constant source of fear and alarm for Iraq's neighbors. Today Iraq threatens no other country, and its democratic progress will be an example to the broader Middle East. Fifteen months ago, Iraq was ruled by a regime that brutalized and tortured its own people, murdered hundreds of thousands, and buried them in mass graves. Today Iraqis live under a Government that strives for justice, upholds the rule of law, and defends the dignity of every citizen.

Iraq today still has many challenges to overcome. We recognize that. But it is a world away from the tormented, exhausted, and isolated country we found last year. Now the transfer of sovereignty begins a new phase in Iraq's progress toward full democracy. Together with the Iraqi Government, we're moving forward on every element of our five-part plan for Iraqi self-government.

Iraq's interim government has gained broad international support and has been endorsed by the U.N. Security Council. The United States and our coalition partners are helping prepare Iraqis for the defense of their own country, and we appreciate NATO's decision to approve Prime Minister Allawi's request for assistance in training Iraqi security forces—in training the Iraqi security forces. We're helping Iraqis rebuild their country's infrastructure, and Iraq will move—continue moving toward free elections, with important assistance from the United Nations.

All this progress is being attacked by foreign terrorists and by thugs from the fallen regime. The terrorists know they face defeat unless they break the spirit and commitment of the civilized world. The civilized world will not be frightened or intimidated. And Iraq's new leaders have made their position clear: Prime Minister Allawi recently said that "The insurgents are trying to destroy our country, and we're not going to allow this."

The struggle is, first and foremost, an Iraqi struggle. The Prime Minister said of his people, "We're prepared to fight and, if necessary, die for these objectives." America, Great Britain, our coalition respect that spirit, and the Iraqi people will not stand alone.

The United States military and our coalition partners have made a clear, specific, and continuing mission in Iraq. As we train Iraqi security forces, we'll help those forces to find and destroy the killers. We'll protect infrastructure from the attacks. We'll provide security for the upcoming elections. Operating in a sovereign nation, our military will act in close consultation with the Iraqi Government. Yet coalition forces will remain under coalition command. Iraq's Prime Minister and President have told me that their goal is to eventually take full responsibility for the security of their country, and America wants Iraqi forces to take that role. Our military will stay as long as the stability of Iraq requires and only as long as their presence is needed and requested by the Iraqi Government.

Today, at the moment sovereignty was transferred, the mission of the Coalition Provisional Authority came to an end. Ambassador Jerry Bremer has been tireless and dedicated, and he returns home with the thanks of his country. Thousands of American civilians have labored for progress in Iraq under difficult and sometimes dangerous conditions. They also have our gratitude.

From the first hours of Operation Iraqi Freedom and to this very hour, in their battles against the terrorists, America's men and women in uniform have been unrelenting in the performance of their duty. They've had staunch allies, like Great Britain, at their side. We asked a lot of our military, and there's still much hard work ahead. We're grateful for the sacrifice of all who've served. We honor the memory of all who've died. The courage of our military has brought us to this hopeful day, and the continued service of our military assures the success of our cause.

In Iraq, we're serving the cause of liberty, and liberty is always worth fighting for. In Iraq, we're serving the cause of peace by promoting progress and hope in the Middle East as the alternative to stagnation and hatred and violence for export. In Iraq, we're serving the cause of our own security, striking the terrorists where we find them, instead of waiting for them to strike us at home.

For all these reasons, we accepted a difficult task in Iraq, and for all these reasons, we will finish that task.

Mr. Prime Minister.

Prime Minister Blair. Thank you, Mr. President.

Today is, obviously, an important staging post on the journey of the people of Iraq towards a new future, one in which democracy replaces dictatorship, in which freedom replaces repression, and of which all the people of Iraq can look forward to the possibility and the hope of an Iraq that genuinely guarantees a future for people from whatever part of Iraq they come.

I think it's just worth reflecting for a moment on what we now have before us, because today, of course, is extremely important. It's the transfer of real and full sovereignty to the people and the Government of Iraq. From now on, the coalition changes. We are there in support of the Iraqi Government and the Iraqi people.

And what you have very clearly, therefore, is on one side you have the Iraqi Government, the Iraqi people, the international community that has now spoken through the United Nations, who want a free, stable, pluralist, democratic Iraq. And on the other hand you have some of the former Saddam supporters; you have outside terrorists; you have fanatics and extremists of one sort or another who want to stop the possibility of that new Iraq happening.

And of course, it's going to carry on being difficult and dangerous. There was

the tragic loss of a British soldier today, and many American servicemen have died. Many Iraqi civilians have died. Many of those who are joining up to the new Iraqi security services have died, have given their lives. But they've all given their lives in the cause of trying to provide a different and better future for the people of Iraq.

And I think what is interesting about this situation is that for those people who are there in Iraq causing this death and destruction, they have a very, very clear and simple objective. And the objective is not just to destabilize Iraq, to produce chaos, to produce bloodshed, to try and prevent democracy. The strategy of these terrorists is to try and prevent Iraq becoming a symbol of hope not just for the Iraqi people but, actually, for that region and the wider world.

And that is why, in a very real sense, because Al Qaida and other terrorist groups are actually there in Iraq now, what is happening in Iraq, the battle in Iraq, the battle for Iraq and its future, if you like, is, in a genuine sense, the frontline of the battle against terrorism and the new security threat that we face.

And that security threat is what has dominated our discussion here at the NATO summit. And that security threat, which is about this new and poisonous and evil form of extremism linked to a perversion of the true faith of Islam and repressive, unstable states that proliferate in and deal in chemical, biological, nuclear weapons—that security threat is the threat of our times.

And the reason why it is so important that NATO fulfills its functions in respect of Afghanistan and Iraq is that in both those countries, the same struggle for democracy and freedom is going on. And you can see in Afghanistan—yes, of course, there are still tremendous difficulties—but 2½ million refugees have returned there; girls are now allowed to go to school—several million of them at school were banned from school under the Taliban; economic growth rates of 30 percent last year, 20 percent this year.

What is the struggle? The struggle in Afghanistan is the struggle between the majority of Afghans, 4 million of whom have already registered to vote, against Taliban elements, Al Qaida elements, people who want to drag the country backwards, who want to turn it back into a failed and repressive state.

And so that's why it's right for NATO to step up to the mark today and say, "We are going to extend the role of the security force." It's quite right for us to say, as the U.K., "We will make a contribution in putting the ARRC force forward in 2006 to allow NATO to continue with its responsibilities." It's why it's right for us to look at the measures we need urgently in order to give the protection for the Afghans as they approach their September election date.

And in respect to Iraq, exactly the same issues arise. As I say, there again—you have people trying to get towards freedom and democracy and people trying to stop them. And so our job's got to be, again as an international community, to give them help. And that's why it's important that NATO helps with the training of the Iraqi security forces.

And everybody knows that ultimately we can be there in support, but as the Iraqis themselves will tell you, they know that ultimately their task, their responsibility is to make their country safe. And they want us to help. So that's what we're going to do, help with the training and equipping of the Iraqi security forces.

Just one final point I want to make. I thought we had an interesting set of discussions this morning and at lunch today. But there was a very powerful speech that was made by the President of Latvia at our lunch today when we were discussing the question of what NATO should do to help Afghanistan and Iraq. And I think it's sometimes a very useful reminder for some of the newest democracies in our world

to tell us, from a standpoint of immense moral force, just what democracy means to people who have faced repression for so many years. And she made a very powerful intervention that reminded us and reminded me, certainly, again, of what it is we are here to do. We know the security threat we face. We know the ultimate answer to it is not just force of arms and security measures; it is ultimately the values of democracy and freedom and justice and the rule of law. And that's what we're trying to do.

And for NATO, after the end of the cold war, after all the changes that have happened, I think it has its role today. It is to support that process of transition and change, the world over, because ultimately our best guarantee of security lies in the values that are not values that are American or British or Western values but the values of humanity.

Thank you.

President Bush. We'll answer a couple of questions. Dick [Richard Keil, Bloomberg News], you got a question?

Q. I do, Mr. President.

President Bush. Why don't you ask it?

Possibility of Martial Law in Iraq

Q. Mr. President, Iraq's new Prime Minister has talked in recent days about the possibility of imposing martial law there as a way of restoring security. Is that something that you think a new, emerging Government should do, and particularly with the use of U.S. forces, who would have to be instrumental in doing it?

President Bush. You know, Prime Minister Allawi has fought tyranny. He's a guy that stood up to Saddam Hussein. He's a patriot, and every conversation I've had with him has been one the recognizes human liberty, human rights. I mean, he's a man who is willing to risk his life for a democratic future for Iraq.

Having said that, he may take tough security measures to deal with Zarqawi, but he may have to. Zarqawi is the guy who beheads people on TV. He's the person that orders suiciders to kill women and children. And so Prime Minister Allawi, as the head of a sovereign Government, may decide he's going to have to take some tough measures to deal with a brutal, cold-blooded killer. And our job is to help the Iraqis stand up forces that are able to deal with these thugs.

I mean, it's tough; there's no question about it. Look, they can't whip our militaries. They can't whip our militaries. What they can do is get on your TV screens and stand in front of your TV cameras and cut somebody's head off, in order to try to cause us to cringe and retreat. That's their strongest weapon. And we just—as Prime Minister Allawi has said publicly many times, he will not cower in the face of such brutal murder, and neither will we—neither will we.

Prime Minister Blair. I think you've got to distinguish very carefully between two separate things. The first is, undoubtedly, the new Iraqi Government will want to take tough security measures. They have to. They've got a situation where they've got these terrorists who are prepared to kill any number of innocent people. And remember, the innocent Iraqis who are dying in Iraq today are dying because of these terrorist acts.

On the other hand, I know perfectly well from the discussions I've had not just with the Prime Minister but with the other Iraqi ministers, their purpose is to take tough security measures but in order to guarantee freedom for people, not to take it away. So they're not going to be wanting to introduce martial law that takes away the basic freedoms of the people. On the contrary, they will be wanting to take tough security measures, and we will want to help train their forces able to guard and get after the people doing this killing. But it's not going to be about taking away people's freedoms. It's going to be about allowing those freedoms to happen.

Andy.

Iraqi Government Action Against Terror/ Germany and France

Q. Andrew Martin, BBC. Could I ask both leaders, following on from that, do we, in some sense, then give the new Iraqi administration carte blanche to go after these people? The Iraqi Defense Minister was talking this morning about hunting down and eliminating the insurgents. And if I could also just ask, do you now regard Germany and, in particular, France as shoulder to shoulder alongside you, after the difficult times you've had with them over the past 18 months?

Prime Minister Blair. On the first point, I don't think there's any question of the Iraqis—no Iraqi minister has said this to me, of wanting to hunt people down, in the sense of kill people without a proper trial and end up taking away people's basic liberties. They don't want that at all. But you've got to understand what they're faced with there. They're faced with a group of people who will kill any number of people and who will do the most terrible acts of barbarity. And why—in order to stop them getting a democratic and stable country.

As I keep saying to people, there are lots of things that we thought might happen as a result of the conflict in Iraq. I mean, we were confident of military victory. But there were lots of things that we thought might happen. We thought there might be a humanitarian crisis, and we made a lot of provisions for that. We thought that maybe—and we were told this by many people, many so-called experts who said, "Well, the Iraqis, they'll want a theological state. They won't want a proper democracy." These issues have actually either been dealt with or resolved themselves.

What we've got is a very simple problem to describe and a complicated problem to overcome. We have groups of terrorists and insurgents who will use suicide bombs, who do not care in the least about killing innocent people, who will do whatever it takes to stop the country functioning properly.

Now, in those circumstances, I don't blame at all the Iraqi ministers—any of us would be doing this, as politicians in the same situation—of wanting to get after those people and hunt them down. But they're not getting after them and hunting them down in defiance of basic freedoms but in order to help basic freedoms. And so I don't think we should set this new thing away that somehow the new Iraqi Government wants to—somehow wants to put aside democracy and freedom and all the rest of it. The reason they're trying to stop the terrorists is so that democracy and freedom can flourish in Iraq.

Secondly, in relation to France and Germany, look, I mean, there's no point in thinking—we haven't overcome the disagreement there was about whether the conflict was justified. I mean, there's no point in us standing here and saying, "All the previous disagreements have disappeared." They haven't. On the other hand, what is important is you've got a United Nations resolution that has blessed the new Government in Iraq, and you've got a situation in which we have accepted today that there is a good and sound NATO role, which is actually the only role we ever sought for NATO, of training and helping to train the Iraqis so that they can do their own security work, which is the request that they have made to us. And in that sense, I think the international community has come together, and I welcome it.

President Bush. Yes, my sense is, is that there's a hope that we succeed with all the nations sitting around the table. Everybody understands the stakes. And the stakes are high, particularly for those of us who recognize that the long-term defeat of terror will happen when freedom takes hold in the broader Middle East. It's a long-term solution.

And if you really think about what's happened since September the 11th, there's been some amazing progress. Pakistan has now joined the battle against Al Qaida. President Musharraf has made a concerted

decision to go after Al Qaida, which hides in remote regions of his country on the Afghanistan border. Libya has declared and produced its weapons programs that we're now destroying. You know, Turkey is solid. There's a solid democracy here in the broader Middle East which is a great example.

Afghanistan, which was a terrorist haven—this is where the terrorists plotted and trained to come and kill, not only in America but elsewhere—is now heading toward elections. Who ever thought Afghanistan was going to have elections? Three years ago you said, "Gosh, you think Afghanistan is going to have elections," I probably would have said, "No." And so is Iraq—Iraq is headed towards elections too. It's substantial change in a quick period of time. And I think everybody sitting around the table is hopeful that democracy will serve as an agent of change in this part of the world.

In terms of hunting them down, look, I think the Iraqis understand what we know, that the best way to defend yourself is to go on the offense and find the killers before they kill. I presume that's what he was saying; I haven't asked him his language. I have sometimes used that language myself. And I've used it because my most solemn duty is to defend my country, is to defend it from people that obviously are willing to kill innocent life just like that. And my position is, is the best way to defend yourself is to find the few, the few—and I believe that's what he's saying—that we're going to find those few before they continue to bomb whoever happens to be in their way. And we'll support him. We'll help him.

Let's see—Jim [Jim Angle, FOX News].

Opposition to Coalition Action in Iraq

Q. We were reminded by the anniversary of D-day that 60 years ago it took an massive invasion to end the occupation of France and other European nations. Now, in Iraq, the coalition has gladly and willingly returned sovereignty to the Iraqis. And I wonder, is there any sign that this has changed the views of your more skeptical NATO brethren, any evidence that the critics are now persuaded to the view that you both argued, that it was, in fact, a liberation? Or at this point, does it matter to each of you what the critics say?

President Bush. Yes, it matters to me what you say. I mean, it matters to me what—[*laughter*]—sorry. [*Laughter*] Just a little humor. [*Laughter*] Yes, it matters. It matters because it is important for nations that are blessed by freedom to come together to help nations that are struggling to be free, and that's why it matters. The more people participating in the process, the better off it is. The more reconstruction there is, the more people willing to help with the education of children, the more people willing to help rebuild hospitals, the more people willing to help to rebuild this destroyed infrastructure, infrastructure destroyed by the Taliban or by Saddam Hussein, the better off the world will be.

And so, yes, the more people who say this is worthwhile, the more likely it is 50 million people are going to realize the blessings that we have, and the world will be better off for it.

And the examples of free societies in their neighborhoods are going to make a huge difference in the lives of others. Listen, there are people inside of Iran who are watching what's happening, young, vibrant, professional people who want to be free, and they're wondering whether or not they'll have that opportunity. And I think a free Iraq and a free Afghanistan are going to set such a vibrant, bright example for others.

And so, yes, it matters. And I think people are beginning to see that we were, in fact, liberators and that we're not only going to liberate, we'll follow through, no matter how tough it gets on the ground.

Prime Minister Blair. I think, speaking as someone with a largely uncritical media—[*laughter*]—I think that, sure—I'm

not sure that we will have persuaded all our critics, no. But I think that—I think it's just worth emphasizing the degree to which our own strategy has evolved, post-September the 11th. Sometimes people talk about this issue to do with international terrorism today as if somehow it was because of what we have done in Afghanistan or Iraq that this terrorist threat exists. This terrorist threat was building up there for a long time. September the 11th did—and should have—changed our thinking. And the way our strategy has evolved is that I think we know now that it is important not simply to go in and get after the Taliban in Afghanistan but also to say, "No, we're going to do something else. We're also going to give that country democracy and freedom, because that is actually part of the battle against terrorism as well."

And that's why it's important to see this as a whole picture. The fact is, if Iraq becomes a stable and democratic country—and I'm not underestimating for a single instant the difficulties in doing that, incidentally—but if it does, that is a huge blow to the propaganda and to the effort of the extremists. That's, in fact, why sometimes I think they have a clearer idea of how important it is to stop us than sometimes the Western world has of why it's so important that we get there with Iraq and with the Iraqi people.

And so the Greater Middle East Initiative and the idea of spreading democracy there, resolving the Israeli-Palestinian issue on the basis of two states, both democratic states—because what we want for the Palestinians is not just their own state; we want a democratic state for them, where they have proper freedoms as well.

So I think that you can see this as part of an evolving strategy, where we realize we've got to be prepared to take tough security measures and tough action where necessary, but we know that that is not all that it's about. It's also about trying to show that there is a value system there that isn't related to any religion or one religion, one civilization. It's about these basic values of humanity that, wherever they're implemented and tried, you get greater security, because basically democracies—well, they have to fight sometimes when they have to defend themselves, but they don't have the same aggressive intent that these unstable or extreme or fanatical regimes do.

So part of what we're trying to do—and yes, it's tough at the moment, and of course, you get into a situation where people will fight us very hard. That's in the nature of any of these struggles that you undertake, but our honest belief is the world will be a safer place if we're able to make this work. And I don't know whether we've convinced people of this or not, but I do think—the one thing that interests me is occasionally when people who opposed our action in Iraq will say, "The really important thing now is to get those democratic elections." And I think that's fantastic, but let's be clear: We wouldn't be talking about democratic elections in Iraq if Saddam was still there.

Timing of Transfer of Sovereignty in Iraq

Q. A question for both of you. How do you counter the impression you've created today that you couldn't hand over the burden of Iraq quickly enough and the way that it was done is proof, is a symbol, if you like, of a shambles in Iraq?

Prime Minister Blair. It's a little bit tough there, Bill—I mean, you know—[*laughter*].

President Bush. Well, let me try it then. You know that last Friday we handed over the final ministry to the Iraqi interim government. In other words, we have been making a transfer of sovereignty all along. And the—actually, we've been contemplating this move for a while. But the final decision was by Prime Minister Allawi, and he thought it would strengthen his hand. And so that's why the handover took place today, as opposed to 48 hours later. And so, not only is there full sovereignty in the

hands of the Government, but all the ministries have been transferred, and they're up and running.

I supported the decision. I thought it was a smart thing to do, primarily because the Prime Minister was ready for it. And it's a sign of confidence. It's a sign that we're ready to go, and it's a proud moment—it really is—for the Iraqi people. And frankly, I feel comfortable in making the decision, because I feel comfortable about Prime Minister Allawi and President al-Yawr. These are strong people. They're gutsy. They're courageous. They're, as we say in Texas, standup guys. You know, they'll lead. They'll lead their people to a better day. And it's going to be very hard for them and very trying, but they just—they and the Iraqi people need to hear, loud and clear, they'll have our friendship and our support, no matter how tough it gets.

Prime Minister Blair. I think it's worth just pointing out as well—I agree, obviously, with what's just been said, but I think you've got somewhere in the region of, is it 10 or 11 ministries that are already effectively run by the Iraqis themselves. I mean, their health and education ministries are already run by Iraqis. But it's a sign of their confidence and their desire to get on with it. They want to do it. They know that in the end, they've got to do it. They want that responsibility.

And I think one of the exciting things about the last few weeks is that the Iraqi people, in a sense, through their Prime Minister and President, have indicated, "We want the responsibility." Now, we then stay and support, however, and we're not walking out of this at all. We stay and support them, and we'll stay for as long as it takes to make sure that that support is there for them, so that we help them to that freedom and democracy they want to see. And it's a—I think that, in a way, the relationship between us and the Iraqi Government has been—it's a healthier, better relationship now that there's this transfer of sovereignty there, and where they really want the responsibility of running their own country. But they know the practical fact is, for the moment, until their own security forces are built up properly, they need our support, and they have our support.

President Bush. Thank you all very much.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 4:55 p.m. at the Hilton Istanbul. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Ayad Allawi and President Ghazi al-Ujayl al-Yawr of the Iraqi interim government; L. Paul "Jerry" Bremer III, former Presidential Envoy to Iraq; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi; and President Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan. Prime Minister Blair referred to President Vaira Vike-Freiberga of Latvia. A reporter referred to Minister of Defense Hazim Qutran al-Khuzai al-Shalan of Iraq.

Remarks at Galatasaray University in Istanbul
June 29, 2004

Thank you all very much. Distinguished guests, the rector of this fine university, ladies and gentlemen: Laura and I are grateful for the warm and gracious hospitality we have received these past 3 days in the Republic of Turkey. I am honored to visit this beautiful country where two continents meet, a nation that upholds great tradition and faces the future with confidence. America is honored to call Turkey an Ally and a friend.

Many Americans trace their heritage to Turkey, and Turks have contributed greatly to our national life, including, most recently, a lot of baskets for the Detroit Pistons from Mehmet Okur. I know you're proud of this son of your country, and there's a lot of people in Detroit really grateful for his talents.

I'm grateful to my friend the Prime Minister for his leadership and his hospitality. I also want to thank my friend the President, President Sezer, for his hospitality. These men and your country have hosted members of NATO in an historic time in our Alliance. For most of its history, NATO existed to deter aggression from a powerful army at the heart of Europe. In this century, NATO looks outward to new threats that gather in secret and bring sudden violence to peaceful cities. We face terrorist networks that rejoice when parents bury their murdered children or rejoice when bound men plead for mercy. We face outlaw regimes that give aid and shelter to these killers and seek weapons of mass murder. We face the challenges of corruption and poverty and disease, which throw whole nations into chaos and despair. These are the conditions in which terrorism can survive.

Some on both sides of the Atlantic have questioned whether the NATO Alliance still has a great purpose. To find that purpose, they only need to open their eyes. The dangers are in plain sight. The only question is whether we will confront them or look away and pay a terrible cost.

Over the last few years, NATO has made its decision. Our Alliance is restructuring to oppose threat that arise beyond the borders of Europe. NATO is providing security in Afghanistan. NATO has agreed to help train the security forces of a sovereign Iraq, which is a great advantage and crucial success for the Iraqi people. And in Istanbul, we have dedicated ourselves to the advance of reform in the broader Middle East, because all people deserve a just government and because terror is not the tool of the free. Through decades of the cold war, our great Alliance of liberty never failed in its duties, and we are rising to our duties once again.

The Turkish people understand the terrorists, because you have seen their work, even in the last weeks. You've heard the sirens and witnessed the carnage and mourned the dead. After the murders of Muslims and Christians and Jews in Istanbul last November, a resident of this city said of the terrorists, "They don't have any religion. They are friends of evil." In one of the attacks, a Muslim woman lost her son Ahmet, her daughter-in-law Berta, and her unborn grandchild. This is what she said: "Today I am saying goodbye to my son. Tomorrow I'm saying farewell to my Berta. I don't know what the killers wanted from my kids. Were they jealous of their happiness?"

The Turkish people have grieved, but your nation is showing how terrorist violence will be overcome, with courage and with a firm resolve to defend your just and tolerant society. This land has always been important for its geography, here at the meeting place of Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. Now Turkey has assumed even greater historical importance because of your character as a nation. Turkey is a strong, secular democracy, a majority Muslim society, and a close ally of free nations. Your country, with 150 years of democratic and social reform, stands as a model to others and as Europe's bridge to the wider world. Your success is vital to a future of progress and peace in Europe and in the broader Middle East, and the Republic of Turkey can depend on the support and friendship of the United States of America.

For decades, my country has supported greater unity in Europe to secure liberty, to build prosperity, and to remove sources of conflict on this continent. Now the European Union is considering the admission of Turkey, and you are moving rapidly to meet the criteria for membership. Mustafa

Kemal Ataturk had a vision of Turkey as a strong nation among other European nations. That dream can be realized by this generation of Turks. America believes that as a European power, Turkey belongs in the European Union.

Your membership would also be a crucial advance in relations between the Muslim world and the West, because you are part of both. Including Turkey in the EU would prove that Europe is not the exclusive club of a single religion. It would expose the "clash of civilizations" as a passing myth of history. Fifteen years ago, an artificial line that divided Europe, drawn at Yalta, was erased. And now this continent has the opportunity to erase another artificial division by including Turkey in the future of Europe.

Turkey has found its place in the community of democracies by living out its own principles. Muslims are called to seek justice, fairness to all, care for the stranger, compassion for those in need. And you have learned that democracy is the surest way to build a society of justice. The best way to prevent corruption and abuse of power is to hold rulers accountable. The best way to ensure fairness to all is to establish the rule of law. The best way to honor human dignity is to protect human rights. Turkey has found what nations of every culture and every region have found: If justice is the goal, then democracy is the answer.

In some parts of the world, especially in the Middle East, there is a wariness toward democracy, often based on misunderstanding. Some people in Muslim cultures identify democracy with the worst of Western popular culture and want no part of it. And I assure them, when I speak about the blessings of liberty, coarse videos and crass commercialism are not what I have in mind. There is nothing incompatible between democratic values and high standards of decency. For the sake of their families and their culture, citizens of a free society have every right to strive peacefully for a moral society.

Democratic values also do not require citizens to abandon their faith. No democracy can allow religious people to impose their own view of perfection on others, because this invites cruelty and arrogance that are foreign to every faith. And all people in a democracy have the right to their own religious beliefs. But all democracies are made stronger when religious people teach and demonstrate upright conduct, family commitment, respect for the law, and compassion for the weak. Democratic societies should welcome, not fear, the participation of the faithful.

In addition, democracy does not involve automatic agreement with other democracies. Free governments have a reputation for independence, which Turkey has certainly earned, and that is the way that democracy works. We deal honestly with each other. We make our own decisions, and yet, in the end, the disagreements of the moment are far outweighed by the ideals we share.

Because representative governments reflect their people, every democracy has its own structure, traditions, and opinions. There are, however, certain commitments of free governments that do not change from place to place. The promise of democracy is fulfilled in freedom of speech, the rule of law, limits on the power of the state, economic freedom, respect for women, and religious tolerance. These are the values that honor the dignity of every life and set free the creative energies that lead to progress.

Achieving these commitments of democracy can require decades of effort and reform. In my own country, it took generations to throw off slavery, racial segregation, and other practices that violated our ideals. So we do not expect that other societies can be transformed in a day. But however long the journey, there is only one destination worth striving for, and that is a society of self-rule and freedom.

Democracy leads to justice within a nation, and the advance of democracy leads to greater security among nations. The reason is clear: Free peoples do not live in endless stagnation and seethe in resentment and lash out in envy, rage, and violence. Free peoples do not cling to every grievance of the past. They build and live for the future. This is the experience of countries in the NATO Alliance. Bitterness and hostility once divided France and Germany, Germany and Poland, Romania and Hungary. But as these nations grew in liberty, ancient disputes and hatreds have been left to history. And because the people of Europe now live in hope, Europe no longer produces armed ideologies that threaten the peace of the world. Freedom in Europe has brought peace to Europe, and now freedom can bring peace to the broader Middle East.

I believe that freedom is the future of the Middle East, because I believe that freedom is the future of all humanity. And the historic achievement of democracy in the broader Middle East will be a victory shared by all. Millions who now live in oppression and want will finally have a chance to provide for their families and lead hopeful lives. Nations in the region will have greater stability because governments will have greater legitimacy. And nations like Turkey and America will be safer, because a hopeful Middle East will no longer produce ideologies and movements that seek to kill our citizens. This transformation is one of the great and difficult tasks of history. And by our own patience and hard effort and with confidence in the peoples of the Middle East, we will finish the work that history has given us.

Democracy, by definition, must be chosen and defended by the people themselves. The future of freedom in the Islamic world will be determined by the citizens of Islamic nations, not by outsiders. And for citizens of the broader Middle East, the alternatives could not be more clear. One alternative is a political doctrine of tyranny, suicide, and murder that goes against the standards of justice found in Islam and every other great religion. The other alternative is a society of justice, where men and women live peacefully and build better lives for themselves and their children. This is the true cause of the people of the Middle East, and that cause can never be served by the murder of the innocent.

This struggle between political extremism and civilized values is unfolding in many places. We see the struggle in Iraq, where killers are attempting to undermine and intimidate a free government. We see the struggle in Iran, where tired, discredited autocrats are trying to hold back the democratic will of a rising generation. We see that struggle in Turkey, where the PKK has abandoned its cease-fire with the Turkish people and resumed violence. We see it in the Holy Land, where terrorist murderers are setting back the good cause of the Palestinian people, who deserve a reformed, peaceful, and democratic state of their own.

The terrorists are ruthless and resourceful. They will not prevail. Already more than half of the world's Muslims live under democratically constituted governments, from Indonesia to West Africa, from Europe to North America. And the ideal of democracy is also powerful and popular in the Middle East. Surveys in Arab nations reveal broad support for representative government and individual liberty. We are seeing reform in Kuwait and Qatar, Bahrain and Yemen, Jordan and Morocco. We're seeing men and women of conscience and courage step forward to advocate democracy and justice in the broader Middle East. As we found in the Soviet Union and behind the Iron Curtain, this kind of moral conviction was more powerful than vast armies and prison walls and the will of dictators. And this kind of moral conviction is also more powerful than the whips of the Taliban, the police state of Saddam Hussein, or the cruel designs of terrorists.

The way ahead is long and difficult, yet people of conscience go forward with hope. The rule of fear did not survive in Europe. The rule of free peoples will come to the Middle East.

Leaders throughout that region, including some friends of the United States, must recognize the direction of the events of the day. Any nation that compromises with violent extremists only emboldens them and invites future violence. Suppressing dissent only increases radicalism. The long-term stability of any government depends on being open to change and responsive to citizens. By learning these lessons, Turkey has become a great and stable democracy, and America shares your hope that other nations will take this path.

Western nations, including my own, want to be helpful in the democratic progress of the Middle East, yet we know there are suspicions rooted in centuries of conflict and colonialism. And in the last 60 years, many in the West have added to this distrust by excusing tyranny in the region, hoping to purchase stability at the price of liberty. But it did not serve the people of the Middle East to betray their hope of freedom. It has not made Western nations more secure to ignore the cycle of dictatorship and extremism. Instead we've seen the malice grow deeper and the violence spread, until both have appeared on the streets of our own cities. Some types of hatred will never be appeased. They must be opposed and discredited and defeated by a hopeful alternative, and that alternative is freedom.

Reformers in the broader Middle East are working to build freer and more prosperous societies, and America and Turkey, the G–8, the EU, and NATO have now agreed to support them. Many nations are helping the people of Afghanistan to secure a free government. And NATO now leads a military operation in Afghanistan, in the first action by the Alliance outside of Europe. In Iraq, a broad coalition, including the military forces of many NATO countries, is helping the people of that country to build a decent and democratic government after decades of corrupt oppression. And NATO is providing support to a Polish-led division.

The Government of Iraq has now taken a crucial step forward. In a nation that suffered for decades under tyranny, we have witnessed the transfer of sovereignty and the beginning of self-government. In just 15 months, the Iraqi people have left behind one of the worst regimes in the Middle East, and their country is becoming the world's newest democracy. The world has seen a great event in the history of Iraq, in the history of the Middle East, and in the history of liberty.

The rise of Iraqi democracy is bringing hope to reformers across the Middle East and sending a very different message to Tehran and Damascus. A free and sovereign Iraq is a decisive defeat for extremists and terrorists, because their hateful ideology will lose its appeal in a free and tolerant and successful country. The terrorists are doing everything they can to undermine Iraqi democracy, by attacking all who stand for order and justice and by committing terrible crimes to break the will of free nations. These terrorists have the ability to cause suffering and grief, but they do not have the power to alter the outcome in Iraq. The civilized world will keep its resolve. The leaders of Iraq are strong and determined, and the people of Iraq will live in freedom.

Iraq still faces hard challenges in the days and months ahead. Iraq's leaders are eager to assume responsibility for their own security, and that is our wish as well. So this week at our summit, NATO agreed to provide assistance in training Iraqi security forces. I am grateful to Turkey and other NATO Allies for helping our friends in Iraq to build a nation that governs itself and defends itself.

Our efforts to promote reform and democracy in the Middle East are moving

forward. At the NATO summit, we approved the Istanbul Cooperative Initiative, offering to work together with nations of the broader Middle East to fight terrorism, to control their borders, and to aid victims of disaster. We're thankful for the important role that Turkey is playing as a democratic partner in the Broader Middle East Initiative.

For all of our efforts to succeed, however, more is needed than plans and policies. We must strengthen the ties of trust and good will between ourselves and the peoples of the Middle East. And trust and good will come more easily when men and women clear their minds and their hearts of suspicion and prejudice and unreasoned fear. When some in my country speak in an ill-informed and insulting manner about the Muslim faith, their words are heard abroad and do great harm to our cause in the Middle East. When some in the Muslim world incite hatred and murder with conspiracy theories and propaganda, their words are also heard by a generation of young Muslims who need truth and hope, not lies and anger. All such talk, in America or in the Middle East, is dangerous and reckless and unworthy of any religious tradition. Whatever our culture differences may be, there should be respect and peace in the House of Abraham.

The Turkish writer Orhan Pamuk has said that the finest view of Istanbul is not from the shores of Europe or from the shores of Asia but from a bridge that unites them and lets you see both. His work has been a bridge between cultures, and so is the Republic of Turkey. The people of this land understand, as that great writer has observed, that "What is important is not a clash of parties, civilizations, cultures, East and West." What is important, he says, is to realize "that other people in other continents and civilizations" are "exactly like you."

Ladies and gentlemen, in their need for hope, in their desire for peace, in their right to freedom, the peoples of the Middle East are exactly like you and like me. Their birthright of freedom has denied—been denied for too long. We will do all in our power to help them find the blessings of liberty.

Thank you for your hospitality. May God bless Turkey. May God continue to bless the United States.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:13 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and President Ahmet Necdet Sezer of Turkey; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

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