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Week Ending Friday, November 10, 2006

Remarks at an Iowa Victory 2006 Rally in Le Mars, Iowa

November 3, 2006

The President. Thanks you all very much. Thanks for coming. I've got something on my mind, but before I tell you, I want to bring Congressman Steve King up here. He asked for a little air time. [*Laughter*]

Representative Steve King. And the President yielded the balance of his time to—no, he didn't. [*Laughter*] But I do want to make sure we give the warmest of Le Mars and Plymouth County welcome to the President. We can't do that without having the Bull Dogs up here to do that.

The President. I was hoping—I was hoping to get a Bull Dog shirt.

I'm glad to be back in Sioux land; I'm glad to be Le Mars, Iowa. And I can't thank you enough for coming. I like being in country like this. It's good to look at, but more importantly, this part of the world is full of decent, hard-working people with common sense. And that's what you need in the statehouse here in Iowa, and that's what we need in the Capitol in Washington, DC—good, old, plain common sense, with a strong dose of values.

I'm proud to be here with your next Governor, Jim Nussle. I've seen him in action. When he says he's going to do something, he'll do it. The thing about Jim Nussle is, he doesn't need to take a poll or have a focus group to tell him what to believe. When he says he's going to work to have a first-class education, he means it. When he says he's going to work to have affordable health care, Jim Nussle means it. When he says he's going to reduce your taxes, you can take it to the bank.

I appreciate you coming out to support Nussle, and I appreciate your support for Steve King. Let me tell you something about Steve King. He is a self-made businessman. Listen, we've got plenty of lawyers in Washington, DC. [*Laughter*] It makes sense to have somebody who understands what it means to make a payroll. And in Congressman King, you've got somebody who knows what it means to make a payroll. He understands what you're going through. Send him back to the United States Congress.

And finally, I'm glad to share the same stage with the chairman. That would be chairman of the Finance Committee; that would be one of the most important people in Washington, DC; that would be a good friend of mine, and that's a good friend of yours, Chuck Grassley. I have campaigned in your State with Chuck Grassley, and there's nothing like it. You're riding down the road, and he says, "That's where old Smith lives." [*Laughter*] And about two miles later, he says, "That's my friend, Jones." I think he has shaken hands with every single person in this great State.

All three of these men love Iowa, and they love Iowans. You know how I know? They're always talking about you when I'm with them. And somebody else who loves Iowa in my family is my wife, Laura. She sends her best. She's been out on the campaign trail. She's working hard for our candidates, and she's working her way back to Crawford. See—don't tell her this—[*laughter*]—but tomorrow, I'm sliding back after one event because we're going to have a birthday party for her. I'm not going to tell you her age—[*laughter*]—but we were both born in the same year, and I turned 60 this year. I guarantee you she is just like the people you live next door to. She's raised in Midland, Texas. She is down-to-earth. She is a fabulous First Lady for this country, and I'm proud to call her wife.

I'm proud to be here, as well, with Jim's runningmate, Bob Vander Plaats, and his wife, Darla. Speaking about wives, we got the next first lady of Iowa with us, and that would be Karen Nussle. State Auditor Dave Vaudt is with us. I saw him the other day in Des Moines. I said, "How's your campaign

going?" He said, "Pretty good. I don't have an opponent." [*Laughter*] What is that like? [*Laughter*]

My friend Mary Ann Hanusa is with us; she is running for the secretary of state. I say she's my friend—she used to work in the Oval Office. She'll be a fine secretary of state. Put her in there. Give her a chance.

Candidate for secretary of agriculture Bill Northey is with us today. I appreciate you coming, Mr. Secretary. Mayor Virgil Van Beek is with us. Mr. Mayor, thanks for coming. My only advice—you didn't ask for any—[*laughter*]—and I recognize I'm at the Federal level, but my only advice is, fill the potholes. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank Le Mars High School Marching Band for being here today. I want to thank the school for letting us come and use this fantastic facility. I want to thank the teachers who are here in this crowd. I want to thank you for working in a noble profession.

And I want to thank all the grassroots activists. One reason I have come is to remind you that all of us have a duty to vote, and on November the 7th, you have a duty to show up at the polls. I'd like you to encourage your neighbors to go as well.

You know, it's amazing what happens in Washington. Some of them have already begun to measure for new drapes. [*Laughter*] People are already deciding how this election is going to turn out, before the people of Iowa or anywhere else have shown up to vote. You know, I'm used to that. I remember 2004 campaign. The prognosticators said, "No way old George W. can carry Iowa." You proved them wrong. In 2004, a bunch of them in Washington were already picking out their offices in the West Wing. And then the people went to the polls, and the movers were not needed.

And the same thing is going to happen this year. The people are going to go to the polls; you're going to elect a Republican Governor; and we're going to have a Republican-controlled House and Senate, and the country will be better off for it.

We're going to win, because we understand the values and the priorities of the American people. We understand—we understand, you can't make decisions based upon political polls. You have to stand for something. You have to believe in something. We are working to raise——

Audience members. U.S.A.! U.S.A.! U.S.A.!

The President. We believe in raising standards for our public schools and measuring so we can make sure no child is left behind in America. We have worked hard to make sure our seniors have got affordable prescription drugs, and the days of poor seniors having to choose between drugs and food are over with.

We have got a record to run on. Jim Nussle has got a record to run on, and so does Steve King. We've got a record to run on when it comes to making sure we're less dependent on foreign oil. Oh, there's been a lot of talk about renewable fuels, but this administration and these public servants have delivered. We understand that when America's agricultural economy is strong, the whole economy is strong. And we are developing new technologies that will enable Iowa's farmers to produce the fuels necessary to run our automobiles.

When people around this country go in the polls to vote, particularly where there's a Senate race, they're voting for more than just a Senator. They're voting for what the judiciary will look like. When I campaigned here in Iowa, I said to the people here in this State, "If I'm fortunate enough to be your President, I will name people to the bench who will strictly interpret the law and not legislate from the bench." And that is exactly what I have done. And make no mistake about it, if the Democrats were to control the United States Senate, judges like Sam Alito and John Roberts would never have been confirmed to the Supreme Court. And I thank Senator Grassley for his stalwart support of the kind of judges you expect me to appoint.

There's a lot of issues in these campaigns. Jim Nussle talks about making sure this is a fine place to do business—he'll deliver. Jim Nussle talks about being fiscally wise with your money—he'll deliver.

There's a lot of issues—I want to talk about two issues that confront the good folks of Iowa and the folks around this country. The two big issues in this campaign are taxes and

who best to defend the United States from attack. Let me start with taxes. We believe you can spend your money better than the Federal Government can. The Democrats will raise your taxes, because they think they can spend your money better than you can.

Audience members. No-o-o!

The President. We believe that when you have more of your own money in your pocket to save, invest, or spend, the economy benefits. But you didn't send us to Washington just to be philosophers; you sent us to act. I was proud to sign the largest tax cuts since Ronald Reagan was the President of the United States. We cut taxes on everybody who pays income taxes. We doubled the child tax credit. We reduced the marriage penalty. We cut taxes on small businesses. We cut taxes on capital gains and dividends to encourage investment. And for the sake of our farmers and for the sake of our small-business owners, we put the death tax on the road to extinction.

And Grassley, Nussle, and King were strong supporters in making sure you had more money. You might remember the debate in Washington. Oh, the Democrats said the tax cuts would not create jobs, and the Democrats said the tax cuts would not increase wages, and the Democrats said that those tax cuts would cause the Federal deficit to explode. Well, the facts are in. Reality has now come to be. The tax cuts we passed have led to a strong and growing economy. And I want to share with you the news that came out this morning. The national unemployment rate is at 4.4 percent. We added 92,000 jobs in the month of October. Over the last 3 months, Americans added 470,000 jobs. People are working in this country, and the wages are going up. Real wages rose 2.4 percent over the past 12 months. That means an extra $1,300 for the typical family of four with two wage earners.

And let me talk about the deficit. Instead of exploding, we have cut the deficit in half, 3 years ahead of schedule. If the Democrats' economic predictions—let me say, if their election predictions are as good as their economic predictions, we're going to have a fine day on November the 7th.

The interesting thing about campaigns, if somebody is going to raise your taxes, they don't want you to know about it. Here are the words of the ranking Democrat in the House of Representatives. They asked her about tax cuts, and she said, "We love tax cuts." Given her record, she must be a secret admirer. [*Laughter*] The record they have to run on is that every single tax cut we passed was opposed by the Democrats. When we made it easier for families with children, they voted no. When we made it easier for small businesses, they voted no. When we said, "You shouldn't tax a fellow who owns a farm when he's living and then tax him after he dies," they voted no. Time and time again when they had the opportunity to show love for—their love for tax cuts, they said no. If that's their definition of love, I sure would hate to see what hate looks like.

Let me explain to you how it works: If we don't make the tax cuts we passed permanent or extend them, your taxes go up. And that's why people here in Iowa and around the country must take the words of those who want to run the Congress very seriously. The person who thinks he will be the head of the Ways and Means Committee, the head Democrat, said he couldn't think of one tax cut that he would extend. If that were to happen, the child tax credit would go from $1,000 a child to $500 a child.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. So when you get home and have dinner this evening, count the number of children you have at your table—[*laughter*]—and multiple by 500. See, if they take control of the House, they're going to raise your taxes by not making the tax cuts we passed permanent. So if you've got three children, you can go one, two, three times 500, that's a $1,500 tax increase. If you happen to have four children—I bet somebody here has got four—[*laughter*]—there you go—you count them up, one, two, three—you got six? One, two, three, four, five, six. [*Laughter*] And you multiply those six children by $500 a head, you're paying $3,000 more in taxes. That may not seem like a lot to those folks in Washington, but it seems like a lot to us. And that's why it's important to send Steve King back to the United States Congress, to keep your taxes low.

This election is taking place in an historic time for our country. And when our children

and grandchildren look back on this period, one question will overwhelm all the rest: Did we do everything in our power to fight and win the war on terror? I wish I could report to you all that there was no war, but there is. I see it every day. Our most important job in Washington is to protect you. It's by far the fundamental responsibility we have. And we face a brutal enemy that wants to kill Americans again. Let me share some thoughts with you about the enemy. You can't negotiate with them. You can't try to talk sense into them. The best way to protect you is to find them where they are and bring them to justice so they won't hurt Americans again.

I know some ask, "Well, why would they possibly want to hurt America?" We're full of decent and compassionate people, which we are. And the reason why is these folks are ideologues. They're totalitarians. They believe in something, and what they believe in is the opposite of what we believe in. We believe in the freedom of people to worship as they so choose; they don't. We believe in public dissent; they don't. We believe that you can criticize your government; they don't believe that. They are the opposite of what we stand for. And yet, they have ambitions. They want to establish a governing organization, a caliphate. They want to impose their will. And that's why I have called this struggle the ideological struggle of the 21st century.

And so we're on the offense, and that's part of our strategy. The other part of our strategy is do everything we can to protect you here at home, and it's a challenge. It's a challenge because we have to be right 100 percent of the time to protect Americans, and they only have to be right one time.

And that is why I have worked with Congress to provide our professionals with the tools they need to protect you. And let me share some of my thinking. You know that there was a wall that prevented our intelligence services from sharing information with law enforcement. That doesn't make any sense. I know it doesn't make any sense. It certainly had no common sense to it. But nevertheless, that's what happened. This is a different kind of war, and when we find intelligence, in order to protect you, it has to be shared with the people on the frontline of law enforcement. And yet we couldn't do it. That's why I went to the Congress and asked Congress to pass the PATRIOT Act. The PATRIOT Act protects civil liberties. On the other hand, it tears down the barrier that prevents people from sharing information. It was a vital piece of legislation.

When it came time to be renewed, the Senate Democrats filibustered the bill. They tried to kill it. As a matter of fact, the minority leader of the Senate said—bragged, "We killed that bill." See, there's a different mindset in Washington, and when people are thinking about going to the polls, they've got to understand the differences of opinion.

I felt like if an Al Qaida or an Al Qaida affiliate was making a phone call into the United States, we need to know why. If our job is to protect you, and this is a different kind of war that requires good, sound intelligence, we ought to know why. And yet when that bill came up in front of the House of Representatives, by far the vast majority of Democrats voted against giving our professionals the tools. See, they must not think we're at war. Either that—they must think it's okay to respond after we're attacked. What we must do is to respond before we're attacked, to protect the American people.

We're picking up people on the battlefield. One day the—came in the Oval Office and said, "Mr. President, we have captured Khalid Sheikh Mohammed." Our intelligence folks believe he was the mastermind of the September the 11th attacks. I told the CIA that I think it's important for them, the professionals, to figure out what he knows. See, if he ordered the first attack, he might know something about another attack. And if our job is to protect you, we need to know what these radicals and extremists are thinking, what they're planning. And so I put the program in place. It came up for a vote—in both bodies, the vast majority of Democrats voted against giving the professionals the tools necessary to protect you.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. We need to put people in the Congress like Steve King. We need people all across the United States who are running for the Senate and the House of Representatives who understand we're at war

and will give us the tools necessary to protect you from attack.

We've got a lot of great people who are on the hunt. It is hard to plan and plot when you're on the run. And that's exactly what we're doing. We're pressing on the offense. Anytime, anyplace we think there's an enemy who will do harm to the American people, we're moving. And you just need to know that.

One of the lessons of September the 11th is this—and it's a lesson no President can ever forget—that when we see a threat, we must take that threat seriously, before it comes home to hurt us. See, it used to be that if a threat were overseas, we could say, "It's overseas." September the 11th changed that. It changed it once and for all in this new kind of war. I saw a threat in Saddam Hussein; Members of the United States Congress in both political parties saw a threat in Saddam Hussein; the United Nations saw the threat in Saddam Hussein. I made the right decision to get rid of Saddam Hussein, and the world is better off for it.

We're in a global war against these terrorists. And we must fight them where we find them, and right now Iraq is a central front in that war. Oh, I've heard them in Washington; you know, they say Iraq is a distraction from the war on terror. Well, we just have a difference of opinion. I believe Iraq is central to the war on terror. Our troops believe Iraq is central to the war on terror. And so does Usama bin Laden. Usama bin Laden has said that the fight in Iraq is the third world war. He went on to say—and I want you to listen to the enemy's words—he said that victory for the terrorists in Iraq will mean America's defeat and disgrace forever. That's what he said.

But they think differently in Washington, particularly the Democrats. I want you to hear the words of one of the leading Democrats in Washington about this war on terror—she said, "The President says that fighting there makes it less likely we will have to fight them here." I agree; I did say that because I believe that. She went on to say, "The opposite is true. Because we are fighting them there, it may become more likely that we will have to fight them here."

Let me say something to you loud and clear: Iraq is not the reason why the terrorists are at war with us. We were not in Iraq when the terrorists attacked the World Trade Center in 1993. We were not in Iraq when they attacked the Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. We were not in Iraq when they attacked the USS *Cole*. And we were not in Iraq on September the 11th, 2001, when they killed nearly 3,000 of our citizens. You do not create terrorists by fighting the terrorists. The best way to protect you is to stay on the offense and bring these folks to justice before they hurt the American people again.

Our goal in Iraq is victory. Our goal is to have a country which can govern itself, sustain itself, and defend itself, and be an ally in the war on terror. And it's a tough fight. I know it's a tough fight, and you know it's a tough fight. It's a tough fight because we face an enemy that kills innocent people in order to achieve their objectives. And they're good at propaganda. They understand that the carnage they create will end up on our TV screens, and they believe that the American people do not have the will to protect ourselves in the long run. That's what they believe.

But they don't understand this administration, and they don't understand the American people. We're not going to run from thugs and assassins. My message to our commanders on the ground is, you will have what it needs to succeed. You can adjust your tactics the way you see fit, in order to be able to defeat the enemy. As the enemy changes, we change. As the enemy adjusts, we adjust.

We've got something going for us in Iraq—two things—that the American people must understand. We've got a strategy for victory that's being implemented by the finest United States military ever on the face of the Earth. And around this country—I understand people don't agree with my decision on Iraq, but let me say this: Whether you do or not, you owe the troops the full support.

When I went to the Congress to ask for the full support for our troops, I could count on Jim Nussle, and I could count on Steve King, and I could count on Chuck Grassley. You don't have to worry about these three people understanding that we owe it to our

troops and their families to make sure they have everything they need to do the jobs I've asked them to do.

And there's something else that leads me to believe we'll win. I'm going to tell you something pointblank: If I didn't think we could win, I'd get our troops out. See, I can't look in the eyes of the loved ones who have got somebody in harm's way and not believe in my heart of hearts that the cause is noble and necessary and that we'll achieve victory.

The Iraqis want success. They're suffering unspeakable violence, yet they are firm in their resolve to be a country which can govern itself, sustain itself, and defend itself. You know, I was pleased when nearly 12 million people defied the car bombers and terrorists and voted, but I wasn't surprised. I'll tell you why I'm not surprised. I believe that one of the great gifts from an Almighty is a desire to be free—in everybody's soul. I believe in the universality of freedom. It didn't surprise me that people, when given a chance, would say, "We want to live in a free society."

So our strategy is to help this young democracy defeat the extremists by encouraging a political system that unifies the country, by helping their economy grow, and by training Iraqis so they take the fight. And I believe we'll succeed in having a government of and by and for the people in Iraq, unless we leave before the job is done.

This is an important issue facing the American voters. If you listen carefully for the Democrats' plan for success in Iraq, you're not going to hear anything. They don't have a plan for success. Iraq is the central front in the war to protect you. And yet, they don't have a plan for victory. You can hear all kinds of voices. You hear them say, "Pull out now." Then you hear other candidates say, "We're going to have a fixed date for withdrawal, regardless of whether or not we've succeeded." You've had a Member of the House of Representatives from the Democrat side saying his recommendation is to move our troops to an island 5,000 miles away. You've had 19 House Democrats say, "We're going to cut off the funds for our troops."

One of Chuck Grassley's colleagues, a Democrat Senator, explained her party's position this way: "We haven't coalesced around a single plan," she said, "but we're in general agreement on basic principles." She's right. The basic principle is, get out before the job is done. I'm not saying these people are unpatriotic; I'm saying they're wrong.

On this vital issue, the Democrats have taken a calculated gamble. They believe that the only way they can win this election is to criticize and not offer a plan. One Democrat said recently of the strategy, "This election is about them," talking about us. So far, they've refused to tell us how they intend to win in Iraq and how they intend to secure this country. But there are 4 days left in the election. There's still time. [*Laughter*]

If you happen to bump into a Democratic candidate, you might want to ask this simple question: What's your plan? If they say they want to protect the homeland but opposed the PATRIOT Act, ask them: What's your plan? If they say they want to uncover terrorist plots but opposed listening in on terrorist conversations, just ask them: What's your plan? If they say they want to stop new attacks on our country but oppose letting the CIA detain and question the terrorists who might know where those plots are, ask them: What is your plan? If they say they want to win in the war on terror but call for America to pull out from what Al Qaida says is the central front on the war on terror, ask them: What is your plan? See, they don't have a plan. They have no plan.

Harsh criticism is not a plan for victory. Second-guessing is not a strategy. If we were to leave Iraq before the job is done, the enemy would be emboldened. This is a different kind of war. Unlike other wars—you could leave the battlefield before the job was done, and nothing would happen here at home. In this war, if we were to leave before the job was done, the enemy will follow us here. If we were to leave before the job is done, it would strengthen the hands of the radicals and extremists. If we were to leave before the job was done, it would dash the hopes of millions in the Middle East who want to simply live in peace. And if we were to leave before the job was done, it would dishonor the sacrifice of the men and women who have worn our uniform. The consequences of not fulfilling our strategy for victory would be felt for generations.

See, the enemy has made it clear that they believe they can drive us out of the Middle East so they can establish a safe haven from which to launch further attacks, just like the safe haven they had in Afghanistan. The enemy has made it clear that they would like to topple moderate governments to begin to impose their totalitarian ideology. The enemy has made it clear that they would like to use energy resources to be able to blackmail the West.

Imagine a Middle East where the radicals and extremists were able to use oil to say to America, "We're going to run your price of oil up unless you abandon your allies such as Israel," or, "We're going to run your price of oil up unless you just totally withdraw and let us be." And you couple all that with a country which doesn't like us having a nuclear weapon, and 30 years from now, people are going to look back and say, "What happened to them in 2006? How come they couldn't see the impending danger? What clouded their vision?"

My vision is clear. I see the danger. That is why we will support our troops. That is why we will fight in Iraq. And that is why we will win in Iraq.

I would like to share one story with you, and then we'll all go outside and get some oxygen. [*Laughter*] Pretty soon. Recently, I went with the then-sitting Prime Minister of Japan to Elvis's place. [*Laughter*] I did so for a couple reasons: One, I had never been in Elvis's place, thought it would be fun to go. [*Laughter*] And Laura was kind of nudging me. [*Laughter*] Secondly, Prime Minister Koizumi wanted to go to Elvis's place because he liked Elvis. Thirdly, I want to tell a story, and it's a story about the power of liberty.

The Japanese attacked us in the early forties. People like George H.W. Bush, people like your relatives said, "I want to join the military to defeat the sworn enemy," and a lot of people did—just like people are doing today, by the way. A lot of people—a lot of—[*applause*]. And it was a bloody conflict, and thousands and thousands of people lost their lives. And yet, I'm on Air Force One, flying down to Memphis, Tennessee, talking to the Prime Minister of the former enemy about peace. I'm talking to him about how we can work together to convince the leader in North Korea to give up his nuclear weapons ambitions. I talked to him about the fact that Iraq has—I mean, Japan has 1,000 troops in Iraq. See, he understands what I know. In an ideological struggle against totalitarians, you can defeat them with liberty. And therefore, when we find young democracies, it's in our interest and the interest of our children to help those young democracies survive.

We talked about how to whom much is given, much is required, and that is why we will continue to help save lives on the continent of Africa by defeating the pandemic of HIV/AIDS. We talked about the need to feed the hungry. We talked about our responsibilities to do necessary work to keep peace.

Isn't that interesting that my dad fought the Japanese, and yet, his son was able to talk about keeping the peace. What happened was, was that Japan adopted a Japanese-style democracy. Liberty has got the capacity to change enemies into allies. And liberty has got the capacity to change regions of frustration and hopelessness to regions of hope. Someday, an American President will be sitting down with elected leaders from the Middle East talking about keeping the peace, and a generation of Americans will be better off for it.

I'm honored you came out and let me share some thoughts with you. My thought to you is, go from here and find Republicans, discerning Democrats—[*laughter*]—open-minded independents—[*laughter*]—and get them to the polls, and remind them about the stakes. You got a chance to have a fantastic Governor in Jim Nussle in the statehouse. The people in this State and around the country have an opportunity, in their votes, to decide how much money you have in your pocket. Make no mistake about it, one of the big issues in this campaign is whether or not your taxes are going to go up or whether they're going to go low. You know our choice. Our choice is, we're going to keep your taxes low.

And finally, the vote in 2006 will help determine whether or not this country will use everything in our power to protect the American people from attack and, at the same

time, lay the foundation of peace for generations to come.

I'm honored you're here. May God bless you, and may God continue to bless the United States.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:54 p.m. at Le Mars Community High School. In his remarks, he referred to former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan; and Chairman Kim Jhong Il of North Korea. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Executive Order 13414—Amendment to Executive Order 13402, Strengthening Federal Efforts To Protect Against Identity Theft

November 3, 2006

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, and in order to amend the date by which the Identity Theft Task Force shall submit to the President its coordinated strategic plan, it is hereby ordered that section 3(a) of Executive Order 13402 of May 10, 2006, is amended to read as follows: "review the activities of executive branch departments, agencies, and instrumentalities relating to the policy set forth in section 1, and building upon these prior activities, prepare and submit in writing to the President by February 9, 2007, or as soon as practicable thereafter as the Chairman and Co-Chairman shall determine, a coordinated strategic plan to further improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the Federal Government's activities in the areas of identity theft awareness, prevention, detection, and prosecution.".

George W. Bush

The White House,
November 3, 2006.

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., November 7, 2006]

NOTE: This Executive order was published in the *Federal Register* on November 8. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

The President's Radio Address

November 4, 2006

Good morning. I'm speaking to you today from the Mile High Coffee Shop in Englewood, Colorado. Mile High Coffee was founded by Brian Verbeck, who is the city's entrepreneur of the year. I'm here to have a cup of his famous coffee and have breakfast with a group of local entrepreneurs to discuss our strong and growing economy.

Yesterday we received more good news about our economy. The national unemployment rate has dropped to 4.4 percent. It's the lowest rate in more than 5 years. Over the past 3 months, America has added 470,000 new jobs, for a total of more than 6.8 million new jobs since August of 2003. Real wages rose 2.4 percent over the past year, which means an extra $1,327 for the typical family of four with two wage earners. Americans are finding jobs, and they're taking home more pay.

The main reason for our growing economy is that we cut taxes and left more money in the hands of families and workers and small-business owners. Entrepreneurs like the ones I'm having breakfast with this morning have put that money to good use. They expanded their businesses, and they're creating jobs in their communities.

One of the entrepreneurs with me today is Duke Hanson, the cofounder of a company called Crocs. Crocs produces a hugely popular line of lightweight shoes, and over the past 3 years, they've expanded dramatically. Three years ago, Crocs had just 11 employees. Today, Crocs provides jobs for hundreds of Americans, and his shoes are sold all over the world. Duke calls this "rocket-ship growth." Here's what he says: "We're bringing a lot of money in. We're employing people and providing a product that millions of people love."

Another entrepreneur with me today is Rich Lewis. Rich is the founder, president, and CEO of a technology company called RTL Networks. Rich's company sells and maintains computer network hardware and infrastructure. His business is growing as