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keep the peace in the future in various regions of the world. I shall construe these provisions consistent with my authority to deploy military personnel as necessary to fulfill my constitutional responsibilities.

I note with disappointment that included within this bill is a provision that will lessen the impact of the honoraria restriction on a very select group of individuals rather than the career work force as a whole. I have strongly supported a Governmentwide amendment, and I believe that passage of this limited exemption sends a message that Federal employees need not be accorded the respect and fair treatment they deserve. As a result, the credibility of all of the standards to which we ask employees to adhere is undermined.

I also note that section 330, under which the Secretary of Defense may "settle or defend" certain claims, should not be understood to detract from the Attorney General's plenary litigating authority. Accordingly, to the extent provided in current law, the Secretary of Defense will "settle or defend" claims in litigation through attorneys provided by the Department of Justice.

Section 4217 provides overbroad authority to the Government to collect data on technology and the industrial base from American businesses. Collecting such data through subpoena, administrative search warrants, and other investigative techniques authorized by this section will not contribute to America's economic strength and could intrude unacceptably into the lives of those who own and work in the Nation's businesses. Accordingly, I do not anticipate that the authority provided by section 4217 will be exercised.

As for title XVI, which prohibits exports of certain goods or technologies listed on the Department of Commerce Control List, I will interpret this provision as applying solely to items listed as requiring a validated license for export to Iran or Iraq. I find no indication of intent to override the congressionally endorsed regulatory provisions regarding exports from abroad of foreign-made products that incorporate certain minimal U.S.-origin content. As to the contract sanctity provision, I consider the reference date to be the date of enactment of this law. The Secretary of Commerce shall promptly issue such interpretive guidance and implementing regulations as may be required.

Finally, the bill contains a number of provisions for the disposition of Federal real property interests that would circumvent the provisions of, or regulations related to, the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949. Effective and efficient management of such real property matters generally is best accomplished in accordance with the Property Act.

GEORGE BUSH

The White House,
October 23, 1992.

Note: H.R. 5006, approved October 23, was assigned Public Law No. 102–484.

Question-and-Answer Session in Miami

October 23, 1992

Tom Wills. The President of the United States, George Bush, faces Florida voters in 11 days. Tonight he is here in Miami to answer their questions.

Ann Bishop. Good evening. With Tom Wills, I'm Ann Bishop. Tonight from across the State, President Bush will be answering the concerns on the issues on the minds of Floridians. We're going to get right to it, and our first question is from Jacksonville.

Consultation on the Economy

Q. Good evening, Mr. President. During the first debate you acknowledged that while the present economy is nowhere nearly as bad as your opponents would like for the American people to believe, there is room for improvement. My question is, if

you're reelected President, would you be willing to offer an invitation to Ross Perot or to Bill Clinton to discuss their economic plans?

The President. That's easy. I think the answer is yes. But if I'm elected, it will be to put in my economic plan, and I think I will be because I think we've got the best plan. But I meet with opposition leaders all the time as President of the United States, and certainly I'd be willing to discuss it with them.

Tax Increase

Q. Good evening, Mr. President. Excluding your tax increase decision, if you could rewrite the history of the last 4 years, what one decision would you change?

The President. I gave you the main one. My view is if you make a mistake, you admit it. It's a little unusual in politics, but I think it's the thing you do. I made a mistake going along with that major Democratic tax increase. I say a mistake. It had some good things in it, put the caps on the discretionary spending programs, but it raised taxes. It was my belief that that was something we ought to do that would help the economy. I don't think it did at all.

I can't think of anything that fits into that league as something that I would view as a mistake of that proportion. I'm sure I make plenty of them, but give me some time and I might get back to you with it. I'm not sure this is a good time to be pointing out all your weaknesses, either. [*Laughter*]

Cuba

Mr. Wills. Just before President Bush came to be here with us tonight he was in downtown Miami, and he signed into law the Cuban Democracy Act. Now, Mr. President, as you know, the Democrats have accused you of trying to make some political hay on this issue. Our first question, sir, tonight here in Miami, is concerning Cuban-American relations.

Q. Good evening, Mr. President. Welcome to south Florida. My question is: Within the next 4 years, Cuba will join the nations that have democracies. What will you do and what will your administration do to help the people of Cuba?

The President. Well, I hope you're right. And I think you're right, because I don't think Castro can continue to swim against the worldwide tide. The tide in this hemisphere is against him, but so is the worldwide tide. Everybody wants democracy, freedom, market economies. Of course, Castro's got none of that. I think the answer is then to move forward with investment support for him.

You see, it's going to be private. The thing that's going to make Cuba move forward fast is you have so many Cuban-Americans who have done well and want to invest and create businesses. It's not going to be a drain on the American taxpayer. It is going to be investment that solidifies their democracy.

I don't think we're going to need special programs. We've got programs in the Caribbean for those countries, Caribbean Basin Initiative. We've got a debt forgiveness program that has helped move Argentina and Brazil and other countries towards democracy. Many countries, 43 more countries have become democratic since I've been President, 43. Cuba will be the next one, I hope.

But it's not going to require a lot of Government aid. Everybody hates foreign aid. It's not going to require that. It's going to require investment. These are industrious people. We've seen what they can do here in this country. With freedom down there, they can do the same thing.

The Economy

Q. Good evening, President Bush. In 1980, my home mortgage was 18.5 percent. We had a cold war, hostage problems, and global inflation, but my family and I had good jobs, savings with high interest, and excellent health insurance. Today I have inadequate health insurance, no savings. My children and their children are without jobs. My oldest daughter is losing her home with a 7.5-percent mortgage. My home in a mobile park is facing liquidation. There is a global recession and homelessness. Granted, with the cold war over my family could sleep better at night, but now my own party's opening speaker at our convention tells us we're facing a religious and cultural war. Can you tell me why I am any better

off today than I was 4 years ago?

The President. Well, you're better off in the sense of interest rates, clearly. We've got to go back to the days when the Democrats controlled both the White House and the Congress, which they've controlled for 38 years. Interest rates were 21 percent. Clearly, it's better to have them at where they are now. You can refinance homes. Inflation is lower. That's the cruelest tax of all if you were a saver. I'm not sure you were a saver.

I don't, I'm not sure I understand what you mean about a cultural war. I had the mayors from the leading cities come to see me. They were the board of directors of the National League of Cities. You know what they told me? They told me the major cause for urban decay was the decline in the American family. These were not right-wing nuts or leftwing nuts. Mayor Tom Bradley of Los Angeles was one of them; smalltown mayors that were Republicans from North Carolina; Plano, Texas, mayor. And this discussion of family is not something that I'm going to be driven away from. We've got to find ways to strengthen it. That's talking about driving drugs out of the community.

In some ways you're worse off, if you've got all those problems for your kids. But in many ways, you're better off, and I would cite some of the statistics that I've given you. I just hope that with this new job training program we've got, a program to get the burden of Government off of people like you, that we can do better.

But you're right, it's a global recession. I don't know how many people know this: Our economy is growing twice as fast as Japan's. People don't believe that. Germany had a negative growth. We have grown, albeit anemically, for five straight quarters. So when you're going through a tough economic time, you're bound to have hardships. I'm sorry you've got those, but I believe that job retraining, education, and stimulation of this economy for small business is the answer. I really do. Very good question.

POW–MIA's

Q. Good evening, President Bush. My name is Jill Hobbs. My father is Navy Commander Donald Richard Hobbs, and he has been missing in Vietnam since 1968. As you can imagine, this has been a very painful, heartbreaking, frustrating situation for my family for the last 24 years. Now with all the new information that's coming out of Vietnam, I would like to know what you plan to do to ensure that all of the live prisoners are returned, that all remains are repatriated, and that complete and truthful accounting of all our POW's and MIA's is given. I want to know what hope I have that I'll find out the truth about my father's fate.

The President. You have a lot more hope today than you did yesterday because this announcement that I made in the Rose Garden with General Vessey is a very significant breakthrough. Here's General Vessey, who is the former head of the Army, marvelous man, head of the Joint Chiefs, too. He went over there and came back with a lot of pictures, a lot of information that they had denied even existed before.

We think that today the announcement I made in the Rose Garden is a significant breakthrough, and I hope it leads to evidence that will be comforting to your family. But we just have to keep pressing on, and we're going to keep pressing on, trying to follow every single lead.

You're talking to somebody whose comrades died in combat. My roommate, this is ancient history, but my roommate was missing on the very first flight that I was in combat in the Pacific. So I hope it sensitizes me a little. I can't say I really know what you're going through.

But I think you ought to take some heart from this breakthrough today because I really believe that Vietnam now is going to—we're going to follow up to be sure they do this, but that they've turned over a new leaf. They're saying, no more obfuscation; we're going to put people in the archives. They've come out with 5,000 pictures. John McCain is a former prisoner, now a Senator; he came back with—they gave him, handed him pictures that he didn't know existed of his being pulled out of the water.

So I hope it leads to clues, and certainly we will follow up any leads on anybody that

might be alive. But we've got to get the remains back, too. It's a breakthrough, and I just hope it proves to be something that is comforting to your family.

Child Care

Q. Good evening, Mr. President. My question, sir, is, what does your administration plan on doing to help the middle class as far as child care? It's beginning to look as though the poor and the rich are the only ones that can afford to have children. If reelected, what does your administration plan to do to help the middle class?

The President. One of our accomplishments was passing a child care bill, adequately financed, that gives parents the choice. When I came into office there was a prohibition against all but mandated—almost all but mandated child care centers. In other words, the Congress would say, here's the kind of child care you have to have. I think it strengthens the family to do what we've done, get legislation through a not altogether friendly Congress at times, and get it through to give the parents the choice for child care.

It is funded, and I hope that it's of benefit to you. There are limits in terms of how much a person is making. I don't remember the exact cutoff price, and maybe you're a little beyond that. But I believe that we've taken a major step forward in child care, and I hope it will benefit your family. There are no new bills planned for it.

Mr. Wills. Mr. President, we have tried to bring together here in our four cities voters, citizens from all walks of life. And this next question comes to you, sir, from a man who is 17 years old.

Education

Q. Good evening, Mr. President. Mr. President, I am planning to go to college within the next year. But my family may not be able to afford my higher education. It is a problem that many students and their families face in this community. As President of the United States, what will you specifically do if you are reelected to provide my generation with the educational opportunities that we need to succeed in life?

The President. First place, we've already doubled the funding for what they call Pell grants; that's for university. And I hope you've applied for that. Maybe—I don't know, again, what your circumstances are. But we've doubled the funding on the Pell grants, which is the major way of going forward for college students. And again, as I say, I hope that really helps.

Our main education program relates to getting kids ready for college. Frankly, we haven't done a good enough job for that. And many can't simply get into the college. So our program is called America 2000. It revolutionizes, literally revolutionizes education. It bypasses the old educational bureaucracy. It puts choice in the hands of parents for public, private, or religious schools.

Now, some say to me, "Hey, that's going to weaken the public schools." It hasn't worked that way with a woman named Polly Williams, a black woman up in Milwaukee. The mayor, a Democrat, in Milwaukee strongly supports it. And we believe that if you get the quality of elementary and K through 12 education, that more people will be able to qualify for existing scholarships.

Then I think the answer to your question is keep trying to do as much as we can in the scholarship field and the student loan field for kids like you that probably need some support to go through the college of your choice.

Health Care

Q. My 5-year-old had this question. One of the perks afforded you as President is what basically amounts to universal health care. Since you don't believe in universal health care for the American people, why is it that you utilize this benefit when you can clearly afford to pay your own medical bills? And why isn't this same program good enough for the American people?

The President. Well, you've got a bright 5-year-old with very good English, "utilizing my benefits." [*Laughter*] That kid's not going to have any trouble getting a scholarship.

I'll tell you, I'm Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces, and the Armed Forces provide this. This has traditionally been

provided to the President. I have no apologies for it. But the kid is wrong in one thing. I hate to say that about your kid; she's very bright if she's that interested. My plan provides insurance for all. For the poorest of the poor you get a voucher. For the next group, like this guy's family back here, you're going to get assistance. You're going to get tax credit.

What I don't want to do is go to a plan that nationalizes—in some areas they call it socialized medicine—but say nationalizes medicine where you lower the quality of health care. The answer is to provide insurance to all, do more in terms of preventative medicine. Under Dr. Lou Sullivan, our HHS Secretary, we've moved out very well on that.

We've got to do more to get the costs of all this down. One of the things where I differ with Governor Clinton is, I think we've got to do something about these malpractice suits and these awful lawsuits that are raising the costs to the tune of $25 to $50 billion.

But put it this way: If your 5-year-old thinks the only way that you're going to get universal health care coverage is to have mandated Government coverage, I disagree with her. I think it's better to use this whole brandnew system of pooling insurance to provide insurance to the poorest of the poor and right on up. So we just have a philosophical difference. No difference about wanting to get it done, though.

Abortion

Q. Good evening, Mr. President. Your firm stand against legalized abortion has been clearly stated in the past and during this campaign. I'd like to ask you this: If the Supreme Court reverses the *Roe* v. *Wade* decision during your next term in office, do you think that States that outlaw abortion should make it a capital crime——

The President. No.

Q. ——that is, equating abortion with murder? And if so, do you think that women that receive the abortions and the doctors that perform them should be subject to the death penalty and/or life imprisonment?

The President. No, no. The answer is no to all of the above. But I do oppose abortion.

You know, I think it's wrong to have 28 million abortions over the last few years. I don't believe you ought to have abortion for a—put it this way: If a 13-year-old kid can't even get her ears pierced without parental approval, don't you think we ought to have some restraints? Don't you think that that kid ought to have to get permission from the parents? I believe in adoption. I believe in life. I know my position isn't particularly popular with some, but this is something I feel in my heart; take your case to the American people.

But no, on the criminal penalties you're talking about.

Deficit Reduction

Q. Mr. President, good evening. How is your proposal on allowing people to designate income tax proceeds toward debt reduction and spending cuts supposed to work? And do you believe a citizen would be willing to spend his or her own money toward debt reduction?

The President. Debt reduction—I'll get to his—there's three things we need: We need a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution. A lot of the States have it. We need a line-item veto that says to the President, if Congress can't cut it, you can cut out the pork by drawing a line through whatever line you want in the veto, in the bill. Then they can override you if they want to.

On this proposal he's talking about, it's a new one that I have made. And what it says to the taxpayer is, when you go fill out your tax form, if you care as much about deficit reduction as other things, you can then kick off 10 percent, a little box on the tax return. That will all be added up. Say it comes to $40 billion, all the people that fill out the tax return, added to $40 billion. Then you have to use that money to reduce the debt.

And that's going to mean, then, that Congress is going to have to, working with the administration, reduce spending by that much. And that gets to be difficult. But it forces it; it forces the equation. And if they can't do it in negotiation, then you do what they call a sequester. The sequester goes

right across the board, not touching Social Security, but right across the board to get the spending down.

It's rather simple. And some of the liberal economists ridicule it. But I believe those three things together can make a significant difference on getting this deficit off the back of young people like you. When your kids come along, if we don't we're going to be in real problems for the future.

That isn't easy. I mean, I can't stand here and tell this audience or the audience in Orlando or Jacksonville or Tampa that it's going to be easy. I want to control the growth of the mandatory spending program, not cut them, control the growth to inflation and to allow for population. But that means they're not going to be able to grow as fast. They can grow, not be cut, but not grow as fast.

Those things together I think are the way we're going to get this deficit down. And that check-off ought to be tried. If it doesn't work, change the law.

Hurricane Andrew Recovery Efforts

Mr. Wills. Sir, as you know, the people here in south Florida for the past many weeks now have been trying to recover from the devastating effects of Hurricane Andrew. The next person you're going to hear from really tonight is in the category of a special guest.

Q. Mr. President, Alex Muxo, city manager of the city of Homestead.

Mr. Wills. And I should add, Mr. President, that Alex is a nonpartisan officeholder, neither Democrat nor Republican.

The President. I'll tell you what I think about him in a minute. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Wills. He wants to tell you what he thinks about you.

The President. I know he does.

Q. Mr. President, first of all, on behalf of all the south Dade community, we really thank you from the bottom of our heart for your support in this last few months. As a matter of fact, tomorrow will be the 2-month anniversary of Hurricane Andrew, which we all know the devastation caused in our community.

Although your leadership was unwavering, you know the outcome of what happened with the Congress with Homestead Air Force Base. One of the biggest concerns that we have now is if the medical facility and the PX isn't built immediately, this community, south Dade, Dade County, Monroe, and West Palm Beach and Broward, have the chance of losing as much as 80,000 retirees because those facilities aren't there. What can you do to move that along so we can keep these people in our community?

The President. Well, let me answer Alex's question. But let me tell you about this guy because—and this is not a slow ball—he's an independent. He's strong out there. He does what he thinks is right. Here's a man who, when his own home was devastated, was out looking after people in the community, and that said an awful lot to me. I think it said a lot to the people of Florida and the people across the country. And I think it stimulated a lot of support not just from us, from the Federal Government, but it served as an inspiration to what I call the Points of Light, the people here where they got this program Rebuild. You see a guy like this—do it.

I hope we can push it. I hope we can get it moving. What Alex is talking about is, I made a decision that we were going to rebuild Homestead. I got hit by Congressmen and Senators from different parts of the country because in a shrinking defense budget they saw a chance to get this money to build the installations in their area or keep the bases in their area or transfer the facilities, you know, the intelligence facilities, antidrug facilities, somewhere else.

We got beat on it. We got some money, got a little, not near as much as we wanted. On this one, I think we just have to push on it and get it done. I don't think it's to be controversial. I mean, I think it's something we can get through. Our bureaucracy is what I think the problem is.

But we'll keep pushing. I mean, it's been an inspiration to the whole country. I will say this to the audience: Government can do a lot. When the Government's spending over its head, it can't do as much as it would like. But the private sector response on this is absolutely amazing. You go out there and you see people from North Carolina who were helped by you all when their

Hurricane Hugo came along, and now they've responded. I went to Louisiana. There was a bunch of people from North Carolina and South Carolina over there, so that American spirit of helping one another is still there. I think you all demonstrated it as vividly as anything out of this hurricane situation.

Correctional Facilities

Q. With your present tax policies, what will you do to assist major cities and counties with their overcrowded prison populations on a State and local level?

The President. We have put more money into State and local police than ever. Spending is up for Federal. But we can't do the whole police corrections facilities bit. That can't be done by the Federal Government. We have expanded the Federal prisons. The Federal prisoners—you know this, given your life to corrections—have spent 85 percent of their time in jail. A lot of the States have a much less rigorous program.

We have an assistance program to corrections institutions, but I just hate to stand here and try to promise you that we can increase it. What we have done is increase the funding considerably for Federal prisons, and we've increased it for local law enforcement support, but not as much in the prison field.

Now the answer, I guess, is to continue to try to help as much as we can and then press forward with programs that are going to reduce the incidence of crime.

I come back to a program we call "Weed and Seed," where you weed out the criminals. I don't know whether you've had any—working with it at all. But it's a good new approach, gets across partisan lines. It says weed out the criminals and then seed the communities with hope. Then that gets to our whole urban agenda, so people have jobs in these cities through enterprise zones and tenant management, homeownership, as opposed to the hopelessness and despair that results in the crimes that you, fortunately, are helping on.

Women's Health Care

Q. Women's health could be a prime area of research for the National Institutes of Health, especially in the areas of breast, ovarian, and cervical cancer. However, Dr. Healy, the Director of the NIH, has stated that focus on women's health was not necessary. How would you in your next term ensure that the NIH increased research and funding in women's health?

The President. Well, again, I don't want to be under false colors. Every question, almost, says how much more money can you spend from the Federal Government, every one. And I can understand it. There is a new program for breast cancer, and it's pretty well financed out of HHS. I'll have to look at the NIH funding. I don't remember Ms. Healy saying that, Dr. Healy. She's a very able head of NIH.

And I'm not trying to put you down at all, because, look, that is a tremendously important cause. The next question I'll get will probably be on AIDS. We're spending up from $4.2 billion to $4.9 billion. And people say, "Well, you got to do more." I'm standing here telling these guys how we're going to get the deficit down. You can't do it painlessly. You can't do it by slapping more taxes on an overtaxed population. So we're dealing with somewhat of a restricted budget in doing all these things.

But let me check on NIH. I'm not just putting you off, but I don't believe that NIH is opposed to any women's health care efforts. And our early prevention programs that Dr. Sullivan is sponsoring can help get the problem—you're a nurse, so you know much more about it than I do—but can help before you have to be putting the serious treatment to people.

Ross Perot

Q. My regards to you, President Bush. My question to you is, why is there such an integrity vacuum in today's government? The silent majority, like myself, can find more answers and solutions to the problems in America today in a book written by Ross Perot, "United We Stand," than by any of the present elected officials. And why haven't you initiated a special group of highly trained individuals to address these problems one by one until each Department has been corrected?

The President. That's a good question. But you see, I differ with Mr. Perot. I don't

want to touch Social Security. He has in his program doing something about reducing Social Security for some. I don't think we ought to do that. I think we ought to set Social Security aside. It's not just another guaranteed program. It is a rather sacrosanct program with a trust fund. And so I have a difference with him on that.

I don't think we need a 50-cent—in your hand there in that plan is a 50-cent-a-gallon gasoline tax. Now, a lot of people have to ride to work, and where you have big distances, that is overwhelming. Or if you're a cab driver, the poor guy's trying to make ends meet, or a truck driver, he doesn't need to pay 50 cents more per gallon.

So I don't want to spend a lot of time looking at things that I'm opposed to. Now, in terms of what Perot is suggesting in terms of really having to do something on the spending side, I think he's on to something there, but not in these specifics that I've given you. And so I'm not going to spend the taxpayers' money with having a whole new group of people coming in to study something that I'm certainly not—going to oppose, or that people will oppose if they elect me. I mean, I don't think a Social Security increase or a gasoline tax is the answer at this time.

So that's why I would—but don't let me try to put you down by saying there's no good ideas in there; there are. I think we've got enough study groups. What we need to do is get something done.

I've got one difference with him. You just can't open the hood, say fix it. I mean, you've got to work with the Congress. And I don't mean to put the blame—I'll accept blame. But when you're working with Congress, it ain't that easy, believe me. Look at Alex's problem. Here we had a problem that would have helped the community just to keep something that was there, rebuild it. You've got all these contrasting interests. I go up as President, say restore Homestead, and you can't dictate to them. They're tough. You've got to hit them over the head like that mule with a two-by-four.

But the good news, there's good news, they screwed up that two-bit bank up there and that post office so bad that there are going to be 100 new Members of Congress. And maybe we can get things moving much quicker the next term.

AIDS

Q. Good evening, Mr. President. I bring a question that comes from clients and other professionals in my agency. They'd like to know why over the last 4 years when the Names Project has been in Washington three times, you have not visited the Names Project, which now contains more than 26,000 panels for those who have died of AIDS?

The President. Well, that's a good question. I have felt a little bit unloved by the AIDS community. We have spent, as I say, far more money on research, far more, I think, money on compassionate programs. We've got the NIH with their great researchers out there geared up. What happens to me when I go out—and I shouldn't judge the whole community by the excesses, but they've got an outfit called ACT–UP. And they come to my home and throw condoms around and behave in a very bad fashion. They break up your political appearances.

I don't think that helps the cause any. And I don't want to be a lightning rod in a compassionate project like this quilt project by going out there. I can take it. Good God, I've seen worse characters than those. But they don't help the cause any. For me to go as a lightning rod out onto those grounds to be yelled at and screamed at and as a symbol, I don't think it helps the AIDS problem.

The AIDS problem requires compassion, requires understanding. Both Barbara and I have been to clinics and held AIDS babies and tried to demonstrate the concern we feel. But to be a lightning rod for the excesses, I don't think that is good for the President of the United States. And that's my very frank feeling on it.

Maybe we differ. Maybe you can make a case for ACT–UP. I can't. When they come to a guy's home, little home village, and stand there with outrageous behavior, I'm afraid I just have to say I don't agree with that. I don't agree with them going into a Catholic cathedral, when people are on their knees worshiping, and start throwing condoms around. I don't want to be the

symbol for that kind of behavior. I want to help that. I want to help with research. I want to see compassion. But I don't want to be the catalyst for excess. That's why I didn't do it.

Communism

Q. As a major foreign policy accomplishment, you have consistently maintained in this campaign that you deserve credit for the dissolution of communism. How can you prove that communism is virtually dead when more than one billion Chinese and, importantly, more than 10 million Cubans in our backyard are still committed to undemocratic governments?

The President. Well, I don't say communism is totally dead. I say imperial communism is, if not dead, stretched out on the slab there about to be buried, because you don't have the Soviet Union anymore. For years we had a cold war going on between the Soviet Union. That ended. That ended when I was President. And I think our policies had a lot to do with it.

Do you remember, do you remember about 12 years ago people were saying, "Nuclear freeze, the only way you're going to solve nuclear terror for the kids is to freeze, stop right where we are." If we'd have done that, there would have been no driving force to get the Soviet Union moving towards democracy and to get rid of their nuclear weapons. I stood out there in the East Room of the White House and made a deal with Yeltsin to get rid of every single SS–18. Those are the big, destabilizing, multiwarheaded nuclear missiles. That is a major accomplishment for all the kids.

But you're right. I gave a big speech here today on Cuba. The guy's trying to keep his snorkel out of the water. Castro, he's not reaching out trying to corrupt the Dominican Republic and these other people.

And China, we've got big differences with them. What's happening in China, though, is their economic side of the house is moving toward market forces. And that's going to lead them to political change. That's why I don't want to cut off relations with China.

I'm glad you asked it because if I left the impression that I think there's no more communism anywhere, I should clear that up. There is, but it's not what I call imperial communism that's trying to take over its neighbors. Thanks for giving me the opportunity. I didn't realize I'd been that unclear on it.

Space Programs

Q. I'm an aerospace worker. In obtaining funding for space station, it's been tough going through the Democrat-controlled Congress. My question is, specifically, how committed will your new administration be towards funding our space station and our future space programs at Kennedy Space Center?

The President. Rick, I'm committed, and my word is on the line on that. It's in every budget we've sent forward. We're going to continue to fight for it. One of the places I might be able to do better on is to convince people that the research that goes into the space station and the space station itself will benefit not just those interested in space but all mankind. Now, you guys know this. The fallout in medicine and other fields from our space effort already has been appreciable. Agriculture has benefited.

So I am committed. I will keep fighting for it. We have a big fight with Congress because when money is tight, as it is, you've got to set priorities. But research and development is going to lead this country to a brandnew level of prosperity for young people. And you guys are on the cutting edge. So we're going to fight again in the next Congress for it.

Ms. Bishop. Mr. President, Diane Tass is with us, and she has a question not only important to the country but terribly important to this community.

Airline Industry

Q. I wanted to know, Mr. President, how do you plan to support some of these airlines that are being edged out by the big three or four, and especially for just the average traveler who, once we get down to three or four airlines, we're not going to be able to travel on vacations? Also I want to know how you feel about the USAir-British Airways alliance.

The President. Good questions. First I've got to start off with, we may have a philo-

sophical difference. I don't believe it's the Government's role to say how many airlines there are going to be, which ones are going to survive, which ones not. The market has to do that for the most part, unless you want to go to state-owned airlines. And I don't want to do that.

So we're just going to have to be as competitive as possible. The problem with my argument is, a little bit, is that there are some Government controls on airlines because the routes are set. But I still don't want to see Government saying who's going to get in, who can't get in, who's got to get out.

On the USAir deal, it's a tough one right now. It boils down to this, that British Air wants to take over USAir. USAir workers are picketing me out here in the field when I land, wherever I land, wherever there's any USAir. Standing next to them in the field are the American Airline pickets, all decent, wonderful Americans, all concerned about their jobs. American Airlines are saying, "Don't let British come in and take over USAir unless we get access to the European markets."

Now, here's what will seem like a hedge to you. This matter is now under adjudication with the Secretary of Transportation. And to prejudge what his decision is, I would be—I wouldn't be run out of office, but I'd have a lot of explaining to do in the legal community. And I'm not going to do it. But it is being heard. The interests are very difficult because you've got people whose jobs are going to be threatened one way or the other. It will come to me. I'm not ducking it; it will come to me. But I have to wait until we hear from the Department before I tell you what I think is going to happen on the British Air-USAir proposed merger.

On balance, on general statement, please discount airlines, I think we need more access to foreign markets in everything, whether it's agriculture or whether it's textiles or whatever it is. Exports have saved us in an extraordinarily difficult global recession, and exports are going to lift us up and lead us out of it. But they aren't if we don't hammer away and get more access to foreign markets.

Thank you.

Retraining Military Personnel

Q. Good evening, Mr. President.

The President. Hi.

Q. Good evening, Mr. President. I'm Sergeant Oliver, stationed at MacDill Air Force Base. What type of program or help will you offer those military members who are now being forced out of the military?

The President. Just signed a bill today, the Defense Authorization Act, which also included this Cuban Democracy Act, I might add, signed it in Miami. And that has a significant numbers of millions, up in the hundreds of millions, for retraining and relocation.

The sergeant puts his finger on something. Because we were successful, Desert Storm, around the world, we are cutting back on defense. I've cut back on it significantly. My opponent Governor Clinton and Ross Perot want to cut it $50 billion more. I'm not going to do that. I'm going to wait until I get a recommendation by Colin Powell and Dick Cheney, in whom I have total trust and whom the Nation trusts, because I think, even though there are problems in this world, I mean, a lot of the problems have been solved, there still are wolves out there. And we'd better be strong.

But back to your question. The new defense authorization bill authorizes significant funds for exactly what you're talking about. But let's not let them cut into the muscle of our defense.

Taxes

Q. It is my understanding that capital gains tax reduction is actually supported by Bill Clinton. Is he not letting the public know this because a reduction of capital gains would actually help the middle class as much, if not more, than it would help the so-called wealthy? And isn't it true that the only time we should be happy about taxes is when ours are going down and not when anybody else's are going up?

The President. Well, you're my kind of guy. That's what I think. [*Laughter*] But for years the Democrats have been beating up on me saying capital gains is a tax break for the rich. Let me tell you something. For months I've been asking the Congress to

pass an investment tax allowance, a tax credit for the first-time homebuyer, and a cut in capital gains, not to help some rich guy but to create new small businesses. Small businesses employ two-thirds of the people. Jobs in the private sector would have been enhanced. I'm going to keep on fighting for breaks for small business, and one of them is capital gains.

I cannot get that point across. And if Governor Clinton is for it, he's whispering in one place and then—the first bad thing I've said about the guy tonight. But look, you can't be on all sides of every issue. And if he's for it, stand up and get his Members of Congress, who allegedly are—who are opposed to it, to say, "I will support this man. I will get it through." I have big differences with him, and this may be one of them. But if he's for it, he's whispering it to the business guys but not saying anything to the rest of the people about it.

Young Voters

Q. Mr. Bush, Bill Clinton and Al Gore have reached out to young voters with their recent appearances on MTV. Why have you and Vice President Quayle rejected such opportunities to reach out to 18- to 24-year-old voters?

The President. Hey, we're trying to reach out to them with programs. I'm not too much of a mod MTV man. But I don't think what program you appear on—I can't play the saxophone, but I know a good deal about issues. And so you can't be everywhere. I think our programs have strong appeal for young people, whether it's education reform or whether it's on the health care so their families have a much better break on that, whether it's on college scholarships where our record is superb in terms of these Pell grants.

But look, there's something funny going on in American politics. I've been doing this kind of program since 1978 in forums that were called "Ask George Bush." And I like it. I feel comfortable.

Some of the programs to get out there and kind of outdo Oprah or Phil Donahue, that's not my style. Maybe MTV would be a good one, and I'll think about it. But you can't do them all, and you shouldn't be judged by whether you go on one single network or one single program. That's my answer.

National Debt

Q. Good evening, President Bush. How do you envision American life and standard of living in 5 to 10 years if the national debt isn't controlled?

The President. Not good. But I think we can control it. You've got to start by controlling the growth of mandatory spending and not do it by raising people's taxes. And I think that will stimulate economic growth.

We're limping along. We've had five straight quarters of economic growth. The definition of recession is two straight quarters of negative growth. We haven't had negative growth for five quarters. That's over a year and a—maybe six now, because the end of September, I think we'll find we grew. So we've had very anemic growth, caught up in an economic global recession in some countries, slowdown in others. We're going to come out of that. The way we're going to come out of it, I believe, is by controlling the growth of our spending, by stimulating through the kinds of tax proposals I told him about, and getting this country growing. After the last recession, we grew at 5.4 percent. Now we're growing at 1.7 or 1.8 percent, maybe up into 2 now. And it's too anemic.

So you've got to have economic programs that are going to stimulate growth. And when that happens, then the standard of living, the standard of living goes up. Personal income is up in this country. Agricultural income has reached a high under our administration. Please don't wait to hear about that on the top of the CBS evening news or NBC or ABC—I've got to be careful here—because you don't get much good economic news out there. The unemployment claims went down yesterday, the biggest since, I think, 2 years, and I didn't even hear about it on the news.

I'm not saying everything's perfect. A lot of people are hurting. But don't despair about the future standard of living if we get in there and bring a lot of new Members of Congress and say, now let's do what the people want done. I don't think they want their taxes raised. I do think they want to

stimulate the economy.

Family Leave Bill

Q. Mr. President, time and time again you have used your veto power to go against the wishes of the American public. You did this by vetoing the family leave bill, something that I feel our country really needed. At a time when your campaign has pushed for family values, how could you veto the bill? And please don't tell me that it was so it wouldn't hurt small businesses. From what I understand——

The President. That's a good answer to it.

Q. ——those with less than 50 employees would have been exempt. Is that true?

The President. They would have been exempt, but we have a better idea. In the first place, I keep telling everybody here, and I'll tell them up there, the thing that's going to lead us out of this into recovery is small business. They do not need any more mandates from Washington.

My approach was a tax credit approach. And that includes—what are those eyes going up? You don't agree with it. [*Laughter*] I saw you rolling your eyes. But my approach says why not the lower than 50? Why not the mom-and-pop store? Why not others? And my program would have covered them all. You want to go with having the Government dictate all this, and to say that that veto makes me less on family? I'm sorry. I reject it. It's a philosophical difference. And let's get a little more support out of these who think the Government can do it all for some ways to strengthen the American family, as those mayors urged us to do.

I'm for family leave. I am not for needlessly burdening small businesses. So I am telling you what you don't want to hear. Sorry about that.

Enterprise Zones

Q. I'd like to ask you, considering the financial constraints facing cities yet the increasing need, would you support a plan to offer low or interest-free loans to local or State governments for infrastructure improvements?

The President. I'd rather do it through enterprise zones. I'd rather do it through tax breaks to bring jobs into the inner cities. That's my priority. And it's a program—when L.A. blew up, L.A., South Central, the Mayor, the Governor, and Peter Ueberroth all came back. I arranged for a meeting in the Cabinet Room with the Speaker and Gephardt, the leader of the Democrats in the House, and the Senate leaders. All three of those people from California said the way to help the cities is through enterprise zones, urban enterprise zones. So that's my preferred approach, rather than the one you suggest. I really think it will work. I believe it will work.

Aid to Russia and the Federal Budget

Q. My question is as follows: Do you believe that the United States must invest a significant amount of money in the Russian economy in order to help Mr. Yeltsin's newfound democracy, prevent a resurgence of the hardliners, and perhaps initiating a new cold war? And part two of the question is, how do you think this would influence in balancing the budget?

The President. The answer to your question is yes, I believe it. We have already passed on a bipartisan basis a thing called the FREEDOM Support Act. It's like an insurance policy. It says we spent trillions of dollars in the cold war, and now Boris Yeltsin, the guy that stood on the tank and brought democracy forward in Russia, needs support. The Russian people need it. And we've already done it. I don't think we need more of that regard.

But you raise a good point. Anything we do of that nature makes balancing the budget more difficult, any spending. All these programs we're being asked about tonight makes getting the deficit down hard. So what you have to do is put together a budget, as I do every year. Four straight years I've had budgets that get in balance, putting to the Congress over 5 years. You can't do it in one. Included in the last one is funding for the FREEDOM Support Act.

But the man's on to something. I mean, I happen to think that this is an insurance policy with Russia. I don't want to see them go back to totalitarianism. Let's hope that this approach keeps them from doing that. But it costs money. And we've got to recognize it every time. Whether it's a program here or a program there, the taxpayer is

bearing the burden.

Haiti

Q. Mr. President, your own immigration officials interviewed Haitian refugees and found 40 percent were not economic migrants but had credible fears of political persecution in Haiti. We correctly give asylum to Cuban refugees. Why since May have you ordered the Coast Guard to repatriate all of the Haitian boat people to a dictatorship we don't even recognize and which the State Department says executes and tortures its own people and which actually fingerprints the arrivals in Port-au-Prince and photographs them? And lastly, if you're really serious about restoring Haiti's ousted democratically elected government, why do you let oil and other essential supplies reach Haiti's dictators from Europe?

The President. Let me answer the last part first. We're not trying to starve the people of Haiti, and we're not trying to freeze them or cook them or do anything of that nature.

On the first part of your question, this information that 40 percent are considered political refugees, I'd like to see the documentation of that because our program says the law will apply. Political refugees have access to asylum.

What I don't want to do is to see these merchants of death, these guys that rent these leaky boats or build them, then sell passage to poor people, who offer them the hope of coming to America, and then have a rescue operation—some of them not rescued—at sea. We had a program to screen these people in Haiti. I must have different information than you, but I've got pretty good information as President of the United States that these people are not being persecuted when they go to file their claims for asylum. So we've got a factual difference there.

Q. In the Embassy, a case has come to our attention—it's not the first one—of a man who applied in June at the Embassy; 3 months later they invited him for an interview, but he'd been dead 9 days. Earlier a man's toenails had been ripped out. There are 11,000 people that your own asylum officers in Guantanamo, for 6 months before June, said had credible fears of persecution in Haiti, and they'd been allowed to come here and ask for asylum. But now you send everybody back.

The President. That's exactly my point. If they find cases like that, they're allowed to apply.

Q. But now you're sending them back with no asylum interviews whatsoever, right to the docks to get fingerprinted by the Haitian military.

The President. But I am told that when they go back there, there is not this persecution. You've raised it; let me take a look at it.

Aristide going back, we support that. I've got to be a little careful as President on what I say about him and how it works and what he's doing here. Our policy has been to support the OAS, the Organization of American States, to get this man back, not because of a great love for any individual but because of a commitment to democracy. I don't like to see democracy aborted by a coup. It isn't working too well because you don't have the public support that he once had. But we're going to stay with that for a while. But shutting down the oil is not that easy either. You ask the naval people about that.

Mr. Wills. Mr. President, I hate to stop this discussion——

The President. Kind of interesting debate, though.

Mr. Wills. ——but I've got to move on to Tampa-St. Petersburg for our next question, sir.

The Character Issue

Q. Good evening, Mr. President. I wanted to find out from you what is the goals of your administration for the next 5 years? And also, I am a person who served in the military, and my father served before me, and I want to find out your thoughts on the integrity of the person who will serve in the White House?

The President. The goals are restore economic prosperity to this country. That is the single overriding goal. As Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces, as custodian of the national security, I've got to guarantee against threats to the United States or threats to the free world, really, and I take

that responsibility very, very seriously.

In terms of the next person to serve there, I have had differences with Governor Clinton. And some say to me, "You're old-fashioned. I find it difficult to understand how the Commander in Chief reacts," taking the position that he did, that it's okay to organize demonstrations against your country when your country is at war in a foreign land. People say, "What's the difference in a foreign land?" I don't know. I make a distinction. If you want to protest, come to the White House and do it. That's the American way. Everybody else does. Why don't you come along and do that? But I have big differences.

But my differences with Governor Clinton in terms of the custodianship of the—or the being Commander in Chief is the problem that he has with kind of coming down on one position. On the war he said, "I agree with the minority, but I guess I would have voted for the majority." You can't do that in the Oval Office. You have to make a decision. And sometimes it's painful, and you'll make a mistake and you say, "Look, I fouled that up. I made a mistake."

But on the war, we did the right thing, and I thought his position was waffling around out there. So I can't pass judgment on how anybody else would behave. But I've tried to uphold the honor. Honor, duty and country: I believe in that. I believe in service to country. And I think I'm a better Commander in Chief because I fought for my country. I don't think it's a mandatory requirement, but I just think it's made me more sensitive when you have to commit somebody else's son or someone's daughter to combat, having been there.

Mr. Wills. Mr. President, we've run out of time. Thank you so much for being here with us tonight.

That was our last question. We know there are so many others. We'd like to get them all in, but we have used up all of our time. We hope that the Florida News Network, through their town meetings, has helped you make an informed choice on November 3d.

Ms. Bishop. I'm sure last month you saw Governor Clinton on our town meeting, and the Florida News Network has issued an invitation to Ross Perot. We are waiting for his response. We thank all of you for joining us on television. Thank you here in our studio and our other studios around the State.

And of course, thank you, Mr. President, for being with us.

The President. Thank you all very, very much.

Note: The question-and-answer session began at 8 p.m. at the WPLG–TV studios. News anchors Ann Bishop, WPLG–TV, and Tom Wills, WJXT–TV, Jacksonville, FL, served as moderators for the session. In his remarks, the President referred to Gen. John W. Vessey, USA, ret., Special Emissary to Hanoi for POW–MIA Affairs.

Statement on Signing the Depository Institutions Disaster Relief Act of 1992

October 23, 1992

Today I am signing into law H.R. 6050, the "Depository Institutions Disaster Relief Act of 1992." The Act provides the banking regulatory agencies with limited discretion to waive or modify certain regulatory requirements. These requirements needlessly restrict the flow of banking and credit services to areas devastated by Hurricanes Andrew and Iniki and the Los Angeles riots. This legislation will provide welcome relief to federally insured depository institutions and their customers in these shattered neighborhoods and help expedite recovery efforts.

Following a meeting with bankers in south Florida in early September, my Administration first proposed legislation to assure the full participation of banks, thrifts,