

Mar. 4 / Administration of George W. Bush, 2001

Statement on the Death of James Rhodes
March 4, 2001

America and Ohio lost a great man today, Governor Jim Rhodes. Laura and I share in this time of mourning with the people of Ohio. Jim was a dedicated, honorable public servant. His distinguished ca-

reer included representing Ohio and its people longer than any other Governor in the State's history. Our thoughts and prayers are with his daughters, Suzanne and Sharon, and his entire family.

Remarks at the Swearing-In Ceremony for Joe M. Allbaugh as Director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency
March 5, 2001

Thank you all very much. It's an honor to be here to swear in my friend.

I first want to say it's a treat to see Mr. and Mrs. Allbaugh, from the great State of Oklahoma; and his brother; most importantly, Diane and Taylor. Thank you all for being here. Of course, you wouldn't have missed it. *[Laughter]*

When I was a Governor, Joe and I used to travel a lot together, and a lot of times people would come up and say, "Is he your bodyguard?" *[Laughter]* He wasn't, but I always felt a little safer when he was around. And that's the kind of man he is, and that's the kind of man I wanted to run FEMA.

When the worst happens anywhere in America, I can assure you folks will be confident when Joe Allbaugh arrives on the scene. He's not just a commanding presence or his stylish haircut—*[laughter]*—it's his confidence, his character, and his calm when trouble comes.

This isn't mere speculation. Last Wednesday at 10:54 in the morning, an earthquake rocked the State of Washington, injuring hundreds of people and causing billion dollars of property damage. By 11:30 that night, Joe Allbaugh was on the scene ready to assist people in need. That's the kind of man he is.

I couldn't have made it to Washington without him. And I can't tell you how honored I am that he has come to Washington to serve his country.

We never know where FEMA will be needed next, but we do know what makes this Agency so effective: more than 2,000 dedicated employees all across America; 4,000 standby employees, ready if needed; an ethic of professionalism; and a willingness to work with State and local officials to help people in need.

As Governor, I worked with FEMA officials. Joe and I have great respect for the outgoing Director, James Lee Witt, and for the Acting Director, John Magaw. A lot of change is needed in Washington, but in this Agency the standards are already high. Every year, many thousands of Americans live through floods and hurricanes and fires. They know from personal experience that FEMA is an example of the Federal Government at its best. And I'll tell you from personal experience that FEMA has a new Director that speaks to America at its best.

When he acts, he'll have my full confidence. When he speaks, it will inspire confidence in others. This Agency is in strong and steady hands. Joe will be at the White House many times in the next few years. In the nature of his job, they won't

always be the happiest of times. But Joe will help Americans deal with the worst in the best, most compassionate way possible.

Thank you for accepting this responsibility.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:15 a.m. in the Columbia Room at the Holiday Inn Cap-

itol At The Smithsonian. In his remarks, he referred to Director Allbaugh's parents, Marvin and Peggy; his brother, Jay; and his wife, Diane, and daughter, Taylor. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Director Allbaugh.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Congressional Leaders and an Exchange With Reporters

March 5, 2001

Santana High School Shootings

The President. Before I talk about the business at hand here, I want to say how saddened we all are to know that two students lost their lives in southern California, others have been injured, in a disgraceful act of cowardice. When America teaches their children right from wrong and teaches values to respect life—and the values that respect life in our country, our country will be better off.

Our hearts go out and our prayers go out to the parents and the teachers and the children whose lives have been completely turned upside down right now.

Q. What can the President do to stop, if anything, to stop children from shooting children?

The President. All of us, all adults in society can teach children right from wrong, can explain there is a—that life is precious. All of us must be mindful of the fact that some people may decide to act out their aggressions or their pain and hurt on somebody else, and be diligent.

We don't know enough of the facts right now, Ron [Ron Fournier, Associated Press], as to what took place. But I do know that first things are first, and that is, our prayers go with the families who lost a child today.

Legislative Agenda

On another matter, I'm honored that Members of the House and the Senate came up to discuss a couple of issues: the budget, Medicare, Medicare funding, Medicare restructuring, and tax relief. We've had a good discussion.

I didn't mention many names of Members during my speech to the Congress nearly a week ago, but most of the names I mentioned are here. And the reason why I talked about Breaux, Frist, and Thomas—and I would have worked in you, Mr. Chairman, but—was because there had been a lot of work done on discussing Medicare modernization in the past. And I believe the framework for a bipartisan consensus about how to make sure the Medicare system fulfills its promise is at hand, and we've got a lot of work to do. But I assured these Members—two chairmen, as well as the Members I just named—that this administration is here to work with them to do what's right for our seniors.

I also appreciate the progress being made on the tax relief package. It will give me a chance to thank the chairman for moving the bill to the floor of the House. The sooner we can get that done, the more likely it is that we'll provide relief for people and provide a second wind for our