

you and your family.” For those of you that do that, thanks. It really is something unique about America—you don’t have to show me the party registration card. It’s really one of the fabulous parts of the job—people from all walks that really care enough about the Presidency that they will do that. I’m just going to keep giving it my best shot. I’m not going to try to figure

out which way the wind is blowing—all come down and visit me in Texas.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:15 p.m. in the lunchroom at the Harley-Davidson Pilgrim Road Powertrain Operations factory. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at Truman High School in Independence, Missouri August 21, 2001

Thank you all. Good morning. Thanks for that warm welcome. Mary Alice, thank you very much for your great introduction. And I want to thank the residents of the John Knox Senior Village for inviting me to come to Independence, Missouri. I’m glad I accepted.

It is exciting to be here. It’s good to get out of the seat of power, Crawford, Texas—[laughter]—and come to Missouri. Speaking about Missouri, I want—it’s important for all Presidents to remember what Harry Truman said. He said, “I try never to forget who I was and where I’ve come from and where I was going back to.” That’s one thing that Crawford, Texas, reminds me. [Laughter] It reminds me of where I came from and, after my service for this great country, where I’m going back to.

I want to thank you for giving me the chance to come and talk about a couple of subjects dear to my heart. I want to thank my friend the Senator from the State of Missouri, Kit Bond, for the invitation and for his great service to Missouri and the United States. I want to thank United States Congressman Sam Graves for being here. Thank you for coming, Sam. I want to thank the United States Congresswoman from this district, Karen McCarthy. Thank you, Karen, for being here. I appreciate your time. Also here is the former Con-

gressman from Missouri; Jim Talent is with us today, as well.

I wish my wife were with me. [Laughter] Like Harry Truman, I married well. [Laughter] She would love to be here at this school. I want to thank the school administrators, the principals. I want to thank the students who are fixing to start school tomorrow for giving us a chance to come to your beautiful campus.

To the students, let me say as plainly as I can: Your Government’s important. You’ve got to pay attention to your Government. I don’t care whether you’re Republican or Democrat; you need to be involved in democracy in America. You need to take your vote seriously.

And having been in public service for a while, I can tell you, it’s a noble profession. It’s an important way to serve your country and your community. And you can do so without being the President, by the way. You can be a Congressperson; you can serve in the statehouse; you can work hard to get people elected; or you can serve your community by loving a neighbor like you’d like to be loved yourself. And that’s one of the most important initiatives that we’re working on.

And that’s one of the most important initiatives we’re working on in Washington,

DC. It's called a Faith-Based and Community Initiative. It passed the House of Representatives, for which I'm grateful. We're now trying to get it out of the United States Senate. It's part of the unfinished business for this year.

Let me explain to you briefly what we're trying to do. We're trying to make sure that welfare is extended in a positive and compassionate way. We recognize in America there are some who hurt, some who have needs beyond the reach of Government, some who simply need love and compassion from a fellow American. There are children in our country who wonder whether or not the American Dream is meant for them, children whose mom or dad may be in prison. What this Nation needs is a Government that stands squarely on the side of the soldiers of the armies of compassion, those wonderful citizens who put their arm around a neighbor in need and say, "I love you, brother," or "I love you, sister. What can I do to help make your life better?" Government should not fear faith in America. We ought to welcome faith-based programs.

And we're making big progress on important issues, like health. For the last couple of legislative sessions in Washington, the Patients' Bill of Rights got stalled over in a partisan wrangling. I'm pleased to report that a bill passed out of the House of Representatives that I can live with. It's a bill that encourages, fosters, nourishes the relationship between patient and doctor.

But it's also a piece of legislation that will not encourage or enhance frivolous lawsuits that will drive people out of medical care. We want more people with health insurance, not less. We want fewer lawsuits threatening our providers, rather than more, and we want to make sure our patients have got direct access to important health care. There's a good Patients' Bill of Rights that, if Congress comes together, they can get on my desk, that I look forward to signing this fall, after Congress comes home.

We're also making progress in changing the tone in Washington. One of my promises is, I said I'd go up to Washington and try to focus more on the people and less on partisanship. We need to focus more on the lives of our citizens and remember who sent us up there in the first place.

During the course of the campaign, I told the American people, if you gave me the great honor of serving as your President, I would set priorities for our budget. And if we had money left over after the priorities, we would remember who sent it to Washington in the first place. The money up in Washington is not the Government's money; it's the people's money.

And so we came together—with that philosophy in mind, we came together and passed the first tax relief in a generation. It's real; it is meaningful; it is important tax relief. It wasn't one of these old Washington-style tax relief programs, where the Congress or the President got to pick and choose who got tax relief and who didn't. This was fair tax relief. It said, "If you pay taxes, you get relief." It wasn't targeted tax relief; it was broad tax relief.

And the Congress wisely agreed to start sending money back this summer. Driving in to the high school here, I saw a sign that said, "Thanks for the \$600 rebate check." But what I meant—what I should have done was stop and said, "You don't need to thank me. It's your money to begin with."

Some of them in our Nation's Capital say, \$600 doesn't matter to a family. Well, what they ought to do is get out of the Capital—I presume they are—and come out and talk to the working people of America and find out what \$600 means. I was in the Harley-Davidson plant yesterday in Milwaukee. A lot of the workers came up and said, "Thanks for my \$600." One fellow said, "I built a deck. You need to come over and have a beer with me." [Laughter] I said, "I quit drinking." [Laughter] He said, "How about root beer?" [Laughter]

The other thing we did in the Tax Code, which I appreciate a lot—and this is good for farmers and ranchers in Missouri and Kansas, all across the country. It's good for people who worry about urban sprawl. It's good for entrepreneurs. It's good for those folks who had a dream to build their business, make it work, and pass it on to their children. We're getting rid of the death tax. That's an important reform for our code. The Tax Code will be more reasonable. It will encourage entrepreneurship. It will get people more of their own money, and it was needed. And I'll talk about that a little later on.

A second area where we're making great progress is in public education. There is a good, strong reform bill that passed our House of Representatives and a good strong reform bill that passed the United States Senate. And when we come back, after the so-called vacation—[laughter]—people need to get the education bill to my desk.

And let me talk to you about it right quick. First of all, lest you think I forgot where I came from, one of the key components in the education bill is to trust the local folks when it comes to running public education. I strongly believe in local control of our schools. I don't believe Washington has got all the answers on how to run the schools. I do believe we need to pass power out of Washington, to give school districts more flexibility, more authority. And both these bills do that, and that's an important component of the bill.

But secondly, these bills challenge what I call the soft bigotry of low expectations. It recognizes that too often in our public education system, we lower the bar for students. Some folks believe, I guess, some kids can't learn. That's the opposite of what I think. I think every child can learn. I think we ought to have the high expectations. We expect high standards, and we expect people to deliver on those standards. And therefore, one of the key components of reform is to say to school districts, States

all across our country, that if you receive Federal money, you must measure. You must devise an accountability system to let us know whether our children are learning to read and write and add and subtract.

I've heard all the arguments. As the Governor of Texas, I heard the arguments against accountability, and of course I've heard them as the President. On the one hand, you'll have people say, "That's too much Government." Folks, my attitude is, if we spend money, it is reasonable to ask, "What are the results?"—particularly when it comes to our children.

I want to know whether a little child in the third grade can read, and I want to know early rather than late, and so should you. Because if we don't find out whether a child can read, oftentimes what happens is, they just get shuffled through the system. That's not fair; that's not right. Phyllis Hunter, my friend in the Houston Independent School District, stood up one time and said, "Reading is the new civil right." How can you realize the American Dream if you can't read? And if you can't read, you can't learn. We've got to know. We've got to know whether or not the school systems and the curriculum are working, to make sure that no child in America gets left behind. It makes sense to ask the question, what are the results all across America? Your motto in Missouri is "Show Me." It's not "Pass them through"; it's "Show me whether or not the children can read."

And then you'll hear people say it's racist to test. Folks, it's racist not to test, because guess who gets shuffled through the system, oftentimes: children whose parents don't speak English as a first language, inner-city kids. It's so much easier to quit on somebody than to remediate. And so we've got reform at the heart of this bill, and the reform is, every child can learn. No child should be left behind, and we're going to find out whether or not children are learning or not. And when they are, we need to praise the teachers. And by

the way, for the teachers who are here, thanks for teaching. It's a noble profession.

That's one thing Laura's going to spend a lot of time on. She's not only going to spend a lot of time heralding reading programs at work or working on libraries—expanding libraries around America, but she's going to do her job—the best job she can at recruiting folks to become teachers—the young, those, for example, who have served in our military. We've got a troops-for-teachers program that will encourage those who have served in the military to get back in the classroom. We've got to do a better job of recruiting good Americans into the classrooms.

The education bill is a good bill. I look forward to signing it. It is a sign that we're making progress on getting things done.

Washington needs to be a results-oriented world. And one area where we need better results is with our military. When I campaigned for the Presidency, Dick Cheney—and by the way, he's doing great. He's a wonderful man and a great Vice President. I'm really glad he's decided to leave the private sector to come and join the administration. But we both said that we need to strengthen the military in order to keep the peace.

And we made great progress. The Congress has done great work. We passed pay raises. I had the honor of signing an additional pay raise in Kosovo when I went overseas, \$2 billion additional money to pay our troops more, house them better, better health care for the men and women who wear the uniform. Listen, high morale begins with treating the men and women who wear the uniform—treating them well and paying them better. And that's what we're doing.

We've also got a vision for a stronger military reflected in the budget. The budget I sent up for 2002, with amendments, was the largest increase in military spending since the time of Ronald Reagan. It's important not only to spend more, but we need to spend more wisely. And that's why

Secretary Rumsfeld is doing a total review of our military force today, as well as a strategic review of what our forces ought to look like tomorrow. We're going to spend money on research and development to make sure that not only can we keep the peace today but that our military is properly equipped, properly trained to make the world more peaceful in the out years.

And one area that is so important, and I know there's been a lot of discussion about it, is to make sure America's prepared to address the true threats of the 21st century. I met with President Putin, as you know, twice. I had the privilege to represent our Nation with our former adversary and to look him in the eye and say, "Mr. President, America is not your enemy. The cold war is over. We need to discard all the relics of the cold war, a treaty, for example, that has codified hatred and distrust, called the ABM Treaty."

I said, "Mr. President, the threats that face Russia and America and other freedom-loving nations are the threats of weapons of mass destruction in the hands of rogue nations or cyberterrorists. It's terrorist threats that face us, and we must develop necessary defenses to protect ourselves and protect freedom-loving people. We need to get rid of the ABM Treaty, so we can research and development—develop weapons systems that will meet the true threat facing America. The cold war is over. The hatred is gone. Let's come together, for the good of freedom-loving people, to protect us all." Let's protect Israel and our allies and America.

We're making good progress about bringing morale back to the military. We will be strong militarily, because this is a peaceful nation, a nation—rests upon freedom, democracy. It's such a wonderful land. We cannot retreat within our borders. We've got to be an active nation to promote the peace, and we will.

And finally, we're making good progress about reforming Medicare. Medicare is—

they usually call it, in the political lexicon, “Mediscare.” See, when you talk about Medicare, then somebody takes your words and tries to twist it and frighten people who rely upon Medicare. That’s an old tactic, an old political tactic. That doesn’t deter me, however, from talking about making sure the system works. Medicare is an incredibly important program. It’s a promise the Nation made to our seniors, and we’ve got to make sure it works.

And one of the things that Medicare doesn’t do, it doesn’t provide prescription drugs for our seniors. And that doesn’t make sense in a world—a health world that has changed dramatically since Medicare was first signed. Now, I’ve asked Congress to—both Republicans and Democrats to think about how to do the following things: Make sure prescription drugs is available for seniors; make sure seniors who like their current Medicare system can stay in it, the way it is; but make sure seniors have got a variety of options from which to choose.

I said, “Why don’t you all look at your own health care plan?” It’s not a bad place to start. If the Senators and Congressmen have got a variety of options from which to choose, if their own health care plan trusts them to design a program that meets their needs, why shouldn’t we do the same thing for our seniors? Why shouldn’t we say, “Let’s give seniors choices”?

And then, of course, there’s the Social Security issue, a longtime political issue as well. Now, it should be becoming clearer to people that if you’re on Social Security today or near retirement, the promises our Government made to you will absolutely be kept. Those days of demagoging the issue should be gone out of the political—out of politics.

But one of the things I learned and one of the things I know, as a result of my travels and studying Social Security, there’s a lot of young folks who recognize the truth. And that is, there are not going to be enough people paying into the system

to make sure that they have got a Social Security system available for them. There’s a lot of young workers who heard the message that I delivered. And I believe one of the reasons I’m standing here is because I had the courage to deliver this message. In order to make sure there’s a Social Security system around tomorrow, to make sure there’s one in the future, we must give younger workers the option to manage their own money in the private markets, if that’s what they choose to do.

You notice I said, “if that’s what they choose to do.” Government ought to trust American people to make decisions in their own life. They ought to trust the seniors to make the right choices when it comes to their health care, and they ought to trust younger workers with the choice on how to manage their own money. Remember the payroll tax—again, it’s not the Government’s money; it’s the workers’ money. And in order to have a Social Security System around tomorrow, we’ve got to have a better rate of return on the people’s money in order to offset the fact there are fewer people paying into the system.

My point is that we’re beginning to address these difficult issues. Our charge in Washington, DC, at least the way I view it, is to not have endless partisan squabbling but to talk about the issues that are important for America, to be willing to address the tough issues, to make sure our country fulfills its promise, not only today but in the years to come.

Now, one of the interesting battles, and I hope it’s not a battle—let me just say, one of the interesting opportunities to show America that we can work together, to be the positive guy—*[laughter]*—is the budget. We’ll be talking about the budget. This is when we actually spend the money.

See, the first discussion we had was, we set the budget, the parameters, about the limits of spending. And now the Members of Congress are coming back, and they’re going to actually commit taxpayer’s money.

And it's going to be an interesting discussion. Now, tomorrow my Office of Management and Budget will issue what's called a mid-session budget review and will show in plain terms that we have fully funded and will be able to fully fund our Nation's priorities, that we've got enough money to preserve and protect Social Security, that we'll pay down over \$100 billion of public debt, that Medicare, all Medicare, every dime that comes into Medicare, will be spent on Medicare, and we can meet our priorities when it comes to our military and to education.

Our budget is in strong financial shape, despite an economic slowdown that began last year. The slowdown is serious, folks. Make no mistake about it. It's real. Since last summer, the economy has grown by a little over one percent. That's a slowdown. Inevitably, the slowing economy has resulted in slowing tax revenues, lower corporate profits, and in some cases, layoffs.

Yet despite the year-long trend, despite the fact that this has been on for a year, the Federal budget will have the second largest surplus in history, in part because this administration took immediate action to address the downturn. We took exactly the right action, at the right time, by pushing the largest tax cut in a generation. You will hear people say that tax relief is going to make it hard to meet the budget. But reality is, tax relief is important to make sure our economy grows. I believe there are some who resent tax relief because they wanted more of your money in Washington, DC. It's a fundamental, philosophical difference.

And the fundamental question is, who do you trust? I trust the people with their own money. I'd rather you spend your own money, than the Federal Government spend your money. I think you can do it more wisely than we can in Washington, DC.

No, this tax relief has laid the foundation for expanding economic growth. And now we must resist the temptation of a bigger

threat to growth, and that's excessive Federal spending. The biggest threat to our recovery is for the Congress to overspend. We have the funds to meet our obligations, so long as they resist the temptation to spend.

You know, every new way to spend money can be made to sound urgent, important, but we've agreed to budget limits. That's what a budget is. You set budgets at your house; the Congress set a budget that we all agreed upon. And I expect the Congress to live within the limits of the budget that we all agreed on. I am optimistic that we can avoid the—this business about shutting down things and not getting things done. I am optimistic, because we've made good progress so far, and both political parties deserve credit.

Congressman Young of the House and Senator Byrd of the Senate have done a good job on the appropriations process thus far. We passed two supplemental spending bills. One focused on agriculture; one focused on defense. These supplementals in the past were usually nice platforms for people to load up the spending with additional programs, things that might sound good but all of a sudden end up busting the budget. And both bodies of the Congress stuck to the limits that we agreed to. It's a good sign. It's a sign that fiscal responsibility is now an important part of the psyche in Washington, DC.

However, even though I'm optimistic, there are some temptations that will face the Congress when they come back. I'd like to share some of the with you. The first temptation, when it comes to budgeting, is what we call the temptation of the false emergency. Now, our budget system provides for special consideration for emergency, as it should. We've had natural disasters, and we need to have money set aside. That's an emergency, and we need to get money quickly into the communities when there's a natural disaster. An economic recession is an emergency. A declaration of war is an emergency. But far

too often in the past, the normal has been declared an emergency in order to increase the budget. Far too long in the past, well-meaning Members have declared that such-and-such pet project in their district is an emergency, and therefore we need to spend that money under the emergency provisions. That's going to end.

A second temptation is to complain that the budget has been cut when, in fact, it is increased. One of the amazing things about Washington accounting is that when a budget increase is less than expected or less than anticipated or less than someone hopes for, that's called a cut. [Laughter] So if budget X goes from point A to point B and it's a 6-percent growth and reasonable folks come together and say it ought to only grow at 4 percent, that's a cut. And we're not going to let the so-called Washington cuts cause the budget to get out of balance. We're going to blow the whistle.

Then there's what they call the last minute budget raid. That's when the bills are coming, winding down the process, and in order to get votes, Members start demanding this or that. There were 6,000 last minute additions to the budget last year, some of them small, some of them large, but all of them adding up to one thing, a budget that could be out of balance. And so as the watchdog of the Treasury, as the person who's got the opportunity to bring fiscal sanity to Washington, I'm going to be watching carefully for the last minute budget additions.

Seven out of the last eight budgets submitted by the Executive and passed by the Congress have raided the Social Security or used part of the Social Security to fund the budgets. One of the temptations is to use Social Security money for something other than Social Security. Now the good news is, is that both political parties and both parties of Congress have declared that we're not going to do that. But I'm going to watch carefully, to make sure that the old temptations of the past don't come back

to haunt us when it comes to budgeting your money in the year 2001.

And finally, there is a—not finally, next to finally. [Laughter] I was afraid some of you were going to fall out. [Laughter] There is a temptation not to listen to the budget in the first place. During the last session, the appropriations process created \$35 billion more dollars than the budget called for. A budget's a budget, folks. We spent a lot of time working on the budget. People came together. Both parties said, "Here's the budget." And I know the American taxpayers, and I know the President in this case, expects for Congress to live within the budget we passed. We don't want the budget to be a hollow noise. We want the budget to be real, and that's why I've been given the power of the veto, to make sure that the budget—make sure the appropriations are within the guidelines of the budget.

And finally—[laughter]—and finally, one of the temptations, and perhaps the greatest temptation of all, is what we call appropriations gamesmanship. And here's the way it works. We've got a budget of X amount, and you add up all the potential appropriations bills. The budget amount is X. And so they'll pass one bill of the 13, and they may add a little bit here. Then they'll pass another bill, all still within the budget. And they finally get to the last appropriations bills, and all of a sudden, if the budget amount becomes the appropriated amount, we busted the budget, because of all the previous bills have added a little here or there. And guess what generally is the last ones out? Defense—the defense bill. In other words, they'll put it on the President's desk and say, "You either get to bust the budget, Mr. President, or you have to choose between defense or perhaps education." That's gamesmanship. And that's not necessary, folks. That's not good to play with our national security or our national interests in educating every child.

And so what I expect and hope is that Congress will, at the very minimum, agree on the funding levels for defense and education early in the process, not late. This will be an interesting test of the priorities of the leaders of Congress. It will be an interesting test to see whether or not they agree with the administration that our true priorities begin with educating our children, and a true priority is the defense of our Nation. I'm confident we can work together, but it's going to require the people to help us watch the process. The people need to pay attention. And if you see the appropriations process dragging on and it looks like the old games of the past, we all need to blow the whistle. We all need to expect better out of Washington, DC.

And I believe we can do better. I know this: We're not going to raise the taxes on the people. I know this: that we're going to make sure additional spending doesn't cut into essential programs, like Social Security or Medicare. I know this: We won't short-change the military, because it's important to rebuild our military. And I know this: We're making progress in changing the tone in Washington, and the budget process is the way to show the American people that we can work together for what's right.

Harry Truman brought a lot of wisdom to Washington, in what he said. He said some things, and I think he called—he was a plain-spoken fellow. Nothing wrong with that. *[Laughter]* Nothing wrong with telling people exactly what you believe. Washington can use a lot of that. He said, "Washington is a very easy place to forget where you came from and why you got there in the first place." Pretty wise.

I think one of the reasons I got there in the first place is to show the American people that it's possible to work together. I think one of the reasons I got there in the first place is to do in office what I said I would do, to try to bring some faith back into the political process. I know one of the reasons I got there in the first place; one of the reasons I got there in the first

place was to watch the budget and to trust the American people.

But there's a large call, as well, and that's to work with the American folks to help change our culture from one that will be more respectful and more compassionate, from one that used to say, "If it feels good, do it, and if you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to one in which all of us are responsible for the decisions we make in life.

A responsible culture, a culture of personal responsibility means that if you're fortunate enough to be a mom or a dad, that you understand your responsibility is to love your children with all your heart and all of your soul. A culture of responsibility understands that if you live in a community and see a neighbor in need, that instead of relying upon Government, that you ought to walk across the street and help that neighbor in need. A culture of responsibility says that if you're a part of corporate America, you have a responsibility to the workers that work for you. A culture of responsibility says that if you're fortunate enough to hold high office, that you have a responsibility to set the highest of high standards and to live by those standards.

I am honored to be in such a position. I'm honored to be in a position to help work with decent Americans all across our country to usher in this period. And I know it can happen, because we're all inhabitants of the greatest land on the face of the Earth.

Thanks for coming today. May God bless, and may God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:58 a.m. in the gymnasium. In his remarks, he referred to Mary Alice Gensor, president, Democratic Club, John Knox Village retirement community; Phyllis Hunter, consultant, Texas Reading Initiative; and President Vladimir Putin of Russia.