

Remarks Following a Roundtable Discussion on Retirement Savings and an Exchange With Reporters in Des Moines, Iowa
March 1, 2002

The President. I want to thank Bill and the employees here at Printers for sharing with me their thoughts on the advantages and the importance of 401(k) plans. The 401(k) plan allows a person to invest his or her own money in a savings account which will enhance their asset base in their retirement years.

We talked about how important it is to have an ownership society, where people own assets. We talked about the importance of 401(k) plans for small businesses in America. And Bill very wisely has set up a really constructive and interesting plan, one of which the owners—the whole concept is that this is the workers' money, that this is Diana's money or Judy's money, and they ought to be trusted in the management of that money.

And that's what this plan does here, it gives instant access to the web site. They can make investment decisions, obviously, within the guidelines of the law. Now, there are some reforms that are necessary for privately held businesses, such as allowing for more investment advice to the workers, without fear of being sued.

But they've got a very constructive plan here. I want to thank Bill and thank you all for sharing with me the vibrancy of your 401(k) plan. A little later on I'm going to talk again about some of the reforms we're proposing in Congress, as well as some of the expansions to the 401(k) that we enacted into law during the last—during the tax debate.

I'll be glad to answer a couple of questions. Steve [Steve Holland, Reuters].

War on Terrorism

Q. Mr. President, what did you make of Senator Daschle's comments yesterday with the war—Mullah Omar and Usama bin Laden are still out there?

The President. Well, I think most Americans understand that it's going to—it's going to take a while to achieve all our objectives, that by far the vast majority of Americans are patient. They know, when you're looking for one person who may be hiding in a cave, it may take a while. But what Usama bin Laden has got to understand, if we haven't already gotten him—I don't know where he is. But I think he now understands that this patient and determined Nation is going to hunt him down, that he can't hide long enough.

And the other point I'd like to make is, as I've said repeatedly—and most Americans understand this as well—that our war against terror is far greater than one person, that in order to defend freedom and protect our children and our children's children, that we must rout out terror wherever it tries to hide.

And that's why we are working with our coalition on an active basis to deny safe harbor, to disrupt financial plans. And the American people are beginning to see that we have been active beyond Afghanistan. We've obviously got activities interested—Philippines, activities in Georgia. And we're hunting him down. And I'm real proud of our military. We've been at this for about 6 months, and we've been very successful in a quick period of time.

Continuity of Government/Yemen

Q. Mr. President, is there a shadow Government in place since September 11th? And—

The President. A shadowy Government or a shadow Government? [*Laughter*]

Q. A shadow Government. And as part of the antiterror effort, are you considering granting some form of aid to Yemen?

The President. Let's see, there are two questions there. The first one is, we have—

we take the continuity-of-Government issue very seriously, because our Nation was under attack. And I still take the threats that we receive from Al Qaida killers and terrorists very seriously.

I have an obligation as the President, and my President has an obligation to the American people to provide—to put measures in place that, should somebody be successful in attacking Washington, DC, there's an ongoing Government. That's one reason why the Vice President was going to undisclosed locations. This is serious business, and we take it seriously.

As far as Yemen goes, Yemen is a country that—I've had a very good discussion with the President of Yemen. I made it clear to him, as well as other Presidents of nations, that you're either with us, or you're not with us, and that if you're with us, we expect results.

I don't know if you remember my speech to the United Nations, where I said, "Thanks for all the condolences and flowers; now is the time for action"—that if you're a part of our coalition, we expect you to work diligently and work hard to arrest Al Qaida killers. Al Qaida members are people who aid and abet Al Qaida. And the Yemen Government is responding.

I've oftentimes asked, what about—you know, what are the particulars you're doing, in a particular government? I'm not going to talk about ongoing operations. I will just tell you that wherever we find an Al Qaida presence, we work with the government to rout them out. In other words, this war against terror is far broader than Afghanistan, and we're making good progress.

National Energy Policy Development Group

Q. Sir, some of the legal actions seeking documents from the energy task force have been successful. It looks like some of the documents are going to be released. Are you concerned—

The President. That's fine with me.

Q. Are you concerned about some of the information that's out there?

The President. No.

Q. Will it raise doubts about your energy plan?

The President. Not at all, no. I'm not concerned at all. As a matter of fact, I hope the Energy Department gets the documents out there as quickly as they possibly can.

I am concerned, though, about a Congress trying to make privileged the private conversations the President or the Vice President has. In other words, I receive advice, and in order for people to give me sound advice, that information ought not to be public. Somebody is not going to walk into the Oval Office thinking that the conversation is going to be public and give me good, sound advice.

And therefore, when the GAO overstepped its bounds to try to get advice given to the Vice President and me, we resisted. But in terms of the honoring the FOIA request, the freedom of information request to our Departments, in which different groups are legally entitled to do, you bet.

And we received interesting advice from a lot of people on our energy plan. First of all, we're the first administration to put forth an energy plan. And this Nation needs an energy plan. The more dependent we are on foreign sources of crude oil, the less secure our Nation will be. And it's about time somebody stepped forth with an energy plan.

And we listened to energy companies, which seems to make sense. If you're developing an energy plan, one place to start is to listen to people who know something about the business. We also listened to environmental groups. We listened to people that were concerned about how to create more conservation.

And the end result was a plan that is now public, and every American has got the capacity to pick it up and read it and decide whether they think it makes sense or not. The House of Representatives evidently thought so, because they passed the

bill. And for the good of the country, the Senate needs to pass an energy bill that encourages conservation, exploration, and modernizes the capacity and the abilities of the country to move electricity from one part of the country to the next.

Last question.

Continuity of Government

Q. Sir, back to the issue of the shadow Government. The reports out today said that one reason why the shadow Government was authorized was that there was a threat of nuclear attack by Al Qaida. Is that something that is still a significant threat?

The President. We take every threat seriously. And until this country has routed out terrorists wherever they try to hide, we're not safe.

Now, we're doing everything we can to protect the American people, and the American people understand that. They know that our Federal law enforcement, State law enforcement, local law enforcement are working day and night to protect the American people. I'm proud of the efforts. I believe—I know we've made America a tougher place to attack than before. It is much harder for somebody to get on an airplane to attack again. We are taking—you know, we've got better intelligence-

gathering. We're doing everything in our power to protect the American people.

And I will tell you, there are people still in this world who want to harm America. And we're going to chase them down. And it's going to take a while. But I am a determined person, and as I told the American people, I'm not going to relent. I believe we've been called by history to lead the world. I believe this great, strong, compassionate country has been given a unique moment. And I'm not going to miss the moment, by leading the world to a more freedom-loving world. And the American people understand that, and they're solid behind this administration's efforts to defend freedom.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:25 a.m. in the production control room at The Printer, Inc. In his remarks, he referred to William C. Benskin, president, and Diane Grimes and Judy Ford, employees, The Printer, Inc.; and President Ali Abdallah Salih of Yemen. A reporter referred to Mullah Omar, former head of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan; and Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks to Employees of The Printer, Inc., in Des Moines *March 1, 2002*

Well, thanks for that warm welcome. It's nice to be back in Iowa. I spent some quality days here in Iowa. [*Laughter*] I used to tell people that Iowa was the friendliest State that I campaigned in, and I want to thank you for the hospitality, coming back as your President.

I appreciate the Governor being here. Governor, thanks for taking time. We had the honor of hosting the Governors—the

national Governors at the White House last Sunday night. I'd just gotten in from China, rented my tux, and had the Governors over. [*Laughter*] But it was good to see your Governor, and thanks for being here. I'm honored you're here.

And I also appreciate so many friends and members of the Iowa House who are here. I see my friend Mary Kramer. I see the speaker. I want to thank you both for