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or walk or swim or bicycle for the good of their families, for the good of their own health, and for the good of the health of the Nation.

And thirdly, Dr. Carmona is going to speak regularly to the Nation about alcohol and drug abuse and the tremendous toll they take on our society. Substance abuse by students undermines academic achievement and dims the great hope of the American Dream. Alcohol is a prime cause for many of our society's ills, not the least of which is domestic violence. And the long-term health effects of alcohol and drug abuse are devastating. If we want to live healthier and longer, we're going to have to tackle the problems of alcohol and drug abuse. And Dr. Carmona's going to make that one of his priorities.

Doctor, I thank you so very much for your willingness to serve our country.

I have found two fine Americans who are willing to serve our Nation, and I'm grateful for their service. It is now my honor to welcome to the podium Dr. Zerhouni, the nominee to run our National Institute of Health.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:47 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of Health and Human Services Tommy G. Thompson; Nadia Zerhouni, wife of Elias Zerhouni, and their children, Will, Yasmin, and Adam; Diana Carmona, wife of Richard Carmona; and Idriss Jazairy, Algerian Ambassador to the United States.

Remarks and an Exchange With Reporters in Greenville, South Carolina
March 27, 2002

President's Visit

The President. I'm looking forward to getting down to Texas. But first, I'm really looking forward to campaigning here in South Carolina for Lindsey Graham. And I'm looking forward to making some announcements about homeland security, both in South Carolina and in Georgia. And then I'm going on from there to help my friend Saxby Chambliss. Then I'll be heading home tonight.

It's good to be back in South Carolina. I've got a lot of friends down here, and it's always good to stay in touch with your friends.

Campaign Finance Reform

Q. On campaign finance——

The President. Yes, I signed the bill this morning.

Q. But without much fanfare—a signal that you're really unhappy with it?

The President. No, I wouldn't have signed it if I was really unhappy with it. I think it improves the system. And it improves the system because it enables an individual to give more money. And I want to do—is have a system that encourages more individual participation as well as more disclosure.

I've always been concerned about a system where money is given to entities and stakeholders have no say. So I was concerned about shareholders of corporate America not having a say, as well as labor union members not having a say about how their money is being spent. This bill improves the system.

Q. Mr. President, the objection you raised in the last week of debate on the bill is that it didn't take effect immediately, the ban on soft money would not take effect until after the election. Do you find

it ironic that given that that was your opposition, today, right after signing the bill, you're out raising——

The President. I'm not going to lay down my arms. I'm going to participate in the rules of the system. The Senate races are very important for me. I want the Republicans to take control of the Senate, and I want Denny Hastert to be the Speaker of the House. And these are the rules. And that's why I'm going to campaign for like-minded people.

Situation in the Middle East

Q. Do you have any plans to talk to Prime Minister Sharon?

The President. I don't today. I'm sure the Secretary of State is in touch in the area, with the leaders of the area. But let me say this—and I think the important thing about the Middle East is that we're making very good progress on the Tenet accord. In other words, there's a chance we'll have an agreement on the security arrangements necessary to hopefully then get into Mitchell.

General Zinni is still in the area. Let me put it this way: I'm optimistic that progress is being made. And I've asked General Zinni to continue to work with both parties, regardless of whether or not they're headed to Beirut or not. The most important thing is getting into Tenet, getting into a security arrangement. And we're optimistic, and we'll see.

Q. ——Arafat's absence today?

The President. That the most important thing for my administration is to—is to work with both parties to make progress on a settlement in the area. And the first stage of any progress is going to be an agreement on what's been called the Tenet agreement, which is the security arrangements. And I believe we're making—I know we're making very good progress. Whether or not we're able to sign an accord soon or not remains to be seen. But progress has been made, and that is where the focus of this administration is, to get into Tenet.

Textile Industry

Q. Mr. President, are you going to do anything for the textile industry, like you did for the steel industry, in terms of tariffs?

The President. One of the things that I want the people of Greenville to know is, I've worked very closely with Jim DeMint, and we've laid out a strategy to help the textile industry. And Representative DeMint, Congressman DeMint, has been very forceful about this. We had a very good agreement with the Commerce Department. The Commerce Department is now following through.

Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia

Q. Mr. President, what was your reaction to Crown Prince Abdullah's speech in Beirut?

The President. You mean the one this morning? I haven't seen the text yet. I haven't seen the speech—let me get the speech. I may have a comment later on, once I get the text of the speech.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:10 a.m. at the city's main firehouse. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of Israel; and U.S. Special Envoy to the Middle East Gen. Anthony Zinni, USMC (Ret.). The President also referred to the Tenet plan, the Israeli-Palestinian cease-fire and security plan of June 13, 2001, negotiated by Director of Central Intelligence George J. Tenet; and the Mitchell report, the Report of the Sharm el-Sheikh Fact-Finding Committee, issued April 30, 2001. A reporter referred to Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority; and Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Statement on Signing the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002
March 27, 2002

Today I have signed into law H.R. 2356, the "Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002." I believe that this legislation, although far from perfect, will improve the current financing system for Federal campaigns.

The bill reforms our system of financing campaigns in several important ways. First, it will prevent unions and corporations from making unregulated, "soft" money contributions—a legislative step for which I repeatedly have called. Often, these groups take political action without the consent of their members or shareholders, so that the influence of these groups on elections does not necessarily comport with the actual views of the individuals who comprise these organizations. This prohibition will help to right that imbalance. Second, this law will raise the decades-old limits on giving imposed on individuals who wish to support the candidate of their choice, thereby advancing my stated principle that election reform should strengthen the role of individual citizens in the political process. Third, this legislation creates new disclosure requirements and compels speedier compliance with existing ones, which will promote the free and swift flow of information to the public regarding the activities of groups and individuals in the political process. I long have believed that complete and immediate disclosure of the source of campaign contributions is the best way to reform campaign finance.

These provisions of the bill will go a long way toward fixing some of the most pressing problems in campaign finance today. They will result in an election finance system that encourages greater individual participation, and provides the public more accurate and timely information, than does the present system. All of the American electorate will benefit from these measures to strengthen our democracy.

However, the bill does have flaws. Certain provisions present serious constitutional concerns. In particular, H.R. 2356 goes farther than I originally proposed by preventing all individuals, not just unions and corporations, from making donations to political parties in connection with Federal elections. I believe individual freedom to participate in elections should be expanded, not diminished; and when individual freedoms are restricted, questions arise under the First Amendment. I also have reservations about the constitutionality of the broad ban on issue advertising, which restrains the speech of a wide variety of groups on issues of public import in the months closest to an election. I expect that the courts will resolve these legitimate legal questions as appropriate under the law.

As a policy matter, I would have preferred a bill that included a provision to protect union members and shareholders from involuntary political activities undertaken by their leadership. Individuals have a right not to have their money spent in support of candidates or causes with which they disagree, and those rights should be better protected by law. I hope that in the future the Congress and I can work together to remedy this defect of the current financing structure.

This legislation is the culmination of more than 6 years of debate among a vast array of legislators, citizens, and groups. Accordingly, it does not represent the full ideals of any one point of view. But it does represent progress in this often-contentious area of public policy debate. Taken as a whole, this bill improves the current system of financing for Federal campaigns, and therefore I have signed it into law.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
March 27, 2002.