

House or at our Nation's Capitol. History shows that they were on cell phones, and they told their loved ones they loved them. Some of the last words they said were "love." They said a prayer. One guy said, "Let's roll." And they served something greater than themselves in life. They set an example for all of us here in America.

No, out of the evil done to America is going to come incredible good, because this is the most compassionate, decent, strong nation on the face of the Earth.

May God bless you all, and may God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:15 p.m. in the Pan American Center at New Mexico State University. In his remarks, he referred to Mary Skeen, wife of Representative Joe Skeen; Jay Gogue, president, New Mexico State University; and President Vladimir Putin of Russia. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks at a Dinner for Congressional Candidate Steve Pearce in Las Cruces

August 24, 2002

Thank you all very much. Thanks a lot. "Congressman," thank you. [Laughter] I'm proud to come and ask for the people of this good district in this important State to vote for Steve Pearce to be the next United States Congressman. He's a man of good judgment. When we were walking in, he said, "A lot of folks wish Laura were here." [Laughter] And I told him, well, he drew the short straw. [Laughter]

She is doing great, by the way. She was—actually, her grandmother and her mom grew up right down the road from here, right outside of El Paso. And she was born and raised in Midland, which is right across the boundary, as you know. When I married her, she was a public school librarian. She didn't particularly care about politics or politicians, for that matter. [Laughter] And here she is as the First Lady. And what a great job she has done. I'm real proud of her. And in a couple of hours, I'm going to see her in Crawford, Texas. [Laughter]

I appreciate so very much Cynthia Pearce. Both Steve and I married above ourselves. [Laughter] Cynthia is a great lady. I appreciate your willingness to go to Washington. It's important. It's impor-

tant for our country that good people choose to serve and that the people back good people. And we're backing a good man in Steve Pearce to be the next Congressman.

And he's going to be replacing a good man. I am proud of Joe Skeen. I am proud of his courage. I appreciate you, Joe. I want to thank Joe and Mary for their service, 22 years of service to this district. He has done a fine job, and we're going to miss him.

I also was pleased today, earlier today, to be in the presence of another great New Mexican citizen, and that is your senior Senator, Pete Domenici. Pete had to make up his mind whether he wanted to hear me speak twice or go fishing. [Laughter] He chose the right course. [Laughter] He's fishing. [Laughter]

I want to thank very much the Lieutenant Governor, Walter Bradley, for being here today. Walter, thank you for coming, and thank you for your service. Thank you, Walter.

I'm proud to be in the presence of the next Governor of the State of New Mexico, John Sanchez. I appreciate you, John. He's got the next first lady with him, Debra.

Thanks for coming, Debra. I appreciate you being here. John's going to win, and he's going to make a big difference for the people of New Mexico, a positive influence. It's a—John's got a great story. I love his spirit, and I love his attitude.

I also appreciate Rob Perry, the next attorney general of the State of New Mexico. I had the honor of just—who they call “just call me Sharon.” Where are you, Sharon? Thank you, Sharon. Good luck. Sharon is going to be the secretary of state of New Mexico.

I want to thank the party chairman for being here. John, thank you for coming. I want to thank all the grassroots activists who are here. You see, you can't win unless you get people who are willing to put up the signs—and it looked like they did a pretty darn good job, Steve, when I came in today—[laughter]—and do the mailings and go to the coffee shops all around the State of New Mexico and tell the people what a great slate we've got—look the people in the eye and tell them the values that these people bring to the office when they win. That's important. So not only do I want to thank you for coming tonight, but I want to thank you very much for what you're fixing to do, and that is to work hard. Anytime you find a good one, you've got to get out and help, and we need your help.

I also want to thank two friends of mine who have made a big difference in New Mexico, New Mexico politics, and the life of New Mexico politics, and that's Colin and Kay McMillan and Ken and Kathy Zangara. Thank you all for coming. I saw the Zangaras the other day over there in Crawford, and they said, “I'm going to see you in Las Cruces.” I said, “Okay.” And here they are. And they're working hard, and so are you all. And it's important. It's important. This election is an important election because we've got a lot to accomplish in Washington, DC. I need good, solid allies when it comes to making our Nation the very best it can be.

And that starts with having somebody understand that when you're talking about taxpayers' money, he realizes it's not the Government's money. When we're talking about taxpayers' money, it is the people's money. And you've always got to remember that in Washington, DC.

And that's important because we cut the taxes for the people. See, Steve and I understand this concept, that if somebody has more money, they're going to demand a good or a service. And if they demand a good or a service, somebody is going to provide that good or service. And when somebody does, it's more likely somebody is going to find work. And when you've got a slowdown in your economy—as a matter of fact, it was more than a slowdown when I came into office; it was a flat-out recession—it's best to understand that when people have more money, it provides wind in the sails of our economic vitality.

And one of the issues we have, though, in Washington is this—is that because of a quirk in the Senate rules, the tax relief we provided—not only tax relief for small businesses and hard-working people but tax relief on marriages and getting rid of the death tax, by the way, which is vital for families here in New Mexico—but that tax relief goes away after 10 years. And so, for the sake of economic vitality, so people can plan, for the sake of understanding whose money it is that we're talking about, I need somebody in Congress who will join me in making sure the tax cuts are permanent. And that is Steve Pearce.

I appreciate Steve's commonsense approach to issues. I'm not surprised. After all, there's a lot of commonsense people here in this part of the world, and he's from Hobbs. And I know a little something about Hobbs—it's right around the corner from Jal. [Laughter] People there have got common sense. They see a problem, and they try and solve it.

Let me give you one example of what I'm talking about, something I talked about when I was in Oregon the other day, and

that is, we've got a problem with our forests. We've got a problem with an important national treasure. You see, there has been an attitude that if you just leave things be, the forests will be more healthy. And we're learning—we're paying a price now for that kind of attitude. By letting things be, kindling piles up. And then lightning will strike, and all of a sudden we've got these massive fires that are destroying a national treasure.

Steve proposed legislation that would encourage thinning so that we would make the forests more healthy and more long lived. That's the kind of commonsense approach we need in Washington, DC. For the sake of our national heritage, for the sake of our forests, let's bring some common sense to conservation/environmental policy.

I appreciate a man who understands farming and ranching. And that's really important in Washington, DC. You see, one of the great advantages we have as a nation is that we provide more food to our people than we need. Imagine if it were the other way around. Imagine if we were going hat in hand around the world asking for food. It would put us in a different national security position. No, we need commonsense farm and ranch policy. We need to make sure that not only do we have less regulation but that we've got to sell our products. You see, there's nothing better for our cattlemen than to be selling that beef around the world. If you're worried about price, the best way to encourage high price—prices so people can make a living and stay on the farm or the ranch—is to not only feed ourselves but to feed the world. I intend to use agricultural policy as the cornerstone of good economic policy for the United States of America.

We need people up there who understand energy. We don't have an energy plan. I'm waiting for the Congress to finally get me an energy plan, one that is based upon common sense, one that says, of course, we can do a better job of using

technologies to conserve energy, and we've got to do things about renewable energy. In other words, we've got to do a better job of protecting the resources we have by being wiser about how we use them. But we've got to find more energy here at home. For the sake of job security and for the sake of national security, we need to become less dependent on foreign sources of power.

We need that kind of voice in Washington. We need somebody to bring some common sense up there. We need somebody who understands what I understand, that education has got to be a top priority of this Nation and of this State. Now look, I want you all to understand, I haven't forgot where I came from. I fully trust the local people to chart the path for excellence in the public school system. In essence, what we have done is, we're passing power out of Washington. One size doesn't fit all in Washington, DC. But it's important to have people up there who understand that we've got to set high expectations for our children, to challenge what I call the soft bigotry of low expectations.

We've got to face the fact that there are some districts around the country—and probably some here in New Mexico—where some assume that certain children can't learn, particularly those whose parents don't speak English as a first language, and therefore, the system just shuffles them through. That's unacceptable to me; that's unacceptable to Steve.

And that's why I've insisted that if you receive Federal money, you've got to show us whether or not children are learning to read and write and add and subtract. You see, if you believe every child can learn, then you're not afraid to measure; you're not afraid to hold people to account; you're not afraid to ask that question: Can our children read, and can they write? And if they can, there's plenty of praise for our teachers. And for those of you who teach or are involved with public schools, I thank you from the bottom of my heart. But

we've got to use the accountability system to catch the problems early and to solve the problems early, before it is too late. This business about just quitting on kids has got to end. No child in America should be left behind.

And I appreciate Steve's service in the Armed Forces. And that's important knowledge to have in Washington, DC, because we're at war, and we're in a tough struggle. We're in a tough struggle against a determined enemy. They're nothing but a bunch of coldblooded killers, is how I define them. These are people who truly hate. They hate what we stand for, particularly because we love what we stand for. We love freedom. They hate us because we love freedom. We love the fact that people are able to worship the Almighty in a free society. They have hijacked a great religion to profess their hate. See, they don't like the idea of people being able to express themselves freely.

And so long as we hold those values dear, they will come after us. That's just the way—just the way they are. And so our biggest job—and I say “our”; it's a collective effort, but a lot of it starts in Washington, DC—is to secure the homeland. It's to do everything we can to make sure that the good people of this country don't suffer what happened on September the 11th.

And we're making some progress; we really are. There's a lot of hard-working folks, folks at the Federal level and at the State level and at the local level, who are working hour after hour to run down any hint, any lead, and disrupting any possible plans to hit America.

I've made a proposal there in Washington. I want to explain to you right quick about why I did so. I said, “We need to create a new Department of Homeland Security.” When I first said that, a couple of my buddies in Texas said, “I thought you ran on the platform that you weren't going to make Government bigger.” I said, “That's true; that's true, but I'd definitely like to make it better.” And when we have

a responsibility, it ought to be able to do its job. And my concern, having looked carefully at the situation, is that there's over 100 agencies in Washington, DC, that have something to do with the homeland security. They're scattered everywhere. It's awfully hard to create a culture and set priority when they're scattered about.

And so I said to the Congress, “Why don't you create a Department of Homeland Security, so that we can better enforce our borders?” Listen, we need to know who's coming in, what they're bringing in, and if they're staying, and if they're not—or if they're leaving, when they're supposed to be leaving. We need to do a better job of coordinating a first-responder strategy with our brave police and sheriffs departments and EMS teams and fire teams around the country. We need to do a better job of understanding the effects of weapons of mass destruction and being able to respond to those threats. We've got to have the capacity to gather intelligence, analyze intelligence, assess our vulnerabilities, and deal with them. And that's what this new Homeland Department is going to do.

I made good progress in the House. I want to thank Joe for his vote. It's got a little problem in the Senate because the Senate appears to be more worried about special interests in Washington, DC, as opposed to the interests of the American people. They want to micromanage the Department.

I'll give you an example. We've got, as you know as well as anybody else—we've got agencies on our border. They wear different uniforms. They've got different strategies sometimes. They've got a stovepipe-type organization. For the sake of our homeland security, I need the ability to be able to put the right people at the right time at the right place, in order to protect America. We've got to be able to have interoperability between our agencies, between Customs and the INS and the Border Patrol, for the sake of the security. I will not accept a bill from the Senate

which ties our hands and does not let us do the job you want us to do to protect our homeland.

But the best way to make sure we secure the homeland is to get the enemy and hunt them down, one by one. And that's what we're going to have to do. It's a different kind of strategy because it's a different kind of war. In the old days there was infantry and tanks and formations and fleets. That's not the kind of war we're facing right now. We're facing a war in which the commanders hide in a cave and send youngsters to their suicidal death. They blend in big cities; they hide. But we've got them on the run. We're flushing them out one by one, and we're making pretty good progress. We really are. We've hauled in over a couple thousand of them, and a like number wasn't as lucky. They met their fate.

But there's more of them out there. There's more of them out there, and we're learning who they are. And they're just not going to be able to hide from us because, one, we've got a great military, and two, we put a vast coalition together of people who understand what's at stake.

I submitted to the Congress a significant increase in our defense budget. I want to explain to you why I did. It's significant—it's the most significant since Ronald Reagan was the President. And I did so because I wanted to send two messages to our country and to everybody else, and that is, one, anytime we put one of our troops in harm's way, they must have the best equipment and the best pay and the best possible training. We owe it to our soldiers—[*applause*]*—*we owe it to our troops, and as importantly, we owe it to our troops' families. And secondly, the increase in the defense spending should send a clear message to friend and foe alike that the United States of America is a determined and patient nation, that we will do whatever it takes to defend our freedom. No matter how long it takes, we're going to do what it takes to bring peace to the

world. Oh, you hear some of them squawking about it up there, but I think most Americans understand what's at stake. They remember the horrors of September the 11th. They know that there is a determined enemy. They know that we are never going to abandon the values which we hold dear, and so long as we hold those values dear, they may try and come and get us.

I laid out some doctrine early in this conflict—two basic doctrine: one said that if you harbor a terrorist, you're just as guilty as the terrorist; if you feed them or clothe them or hide them, you're guilty. And the Taliban found out exactly what we meant. Now, I do want you to tell your children—and I say this every chance I get—that your great Nation, in upholding that doctrine, went into Afghanistan not to conquer anybody but to liberate people. And that's what we did. We got young girls, many young girls, going to school for the first time, thanks to the United States of America.

And we're still there. We're there to help promote democracy, a value which we hold dear. And we're there to hunt down Al Qaida. Anytime they bunch up or anytime we find them, we've got fantastic troops on the ground, hunting them down, one person at a time.

That doctrine pertains to other countries, of course, and the idea is, once you get them flushed out and get them on the run, there ought to be no place for them to light, no safe haven, no possible place to train. So you need to know your Government is doing everything we can to continue to remind other countries that we expect them to be with us or with the enemy.

Recently, a couple of months ago, the Philippines had a problem there with what they call the Abu Sayyaf* group. They had kidnaped two Americans, the Burnhams, from Kansas. They were Al Qaida-related, and the Philippine Government, thanks to

* White House correction.

our training, went and got the head of the Abu Sayyaf.* Slowly but surely, we're accomplishing our mission. And we will not stop until we finish.

There's a long way to go. We've got a lot of work to do, and sometimes you'll see the work on your TVs, and sometimes you won't. It creates a certain sense of anxiety amongst the speculators and the pundits, but that's okay. It's a new kind of war. We're steady; we're patient, and we're making progress, because we understand the stakes, and the stakes are high. The stakes are these: whether or not our children can grow up in a free and peaceful world. Those are the stakes, and that's why I talk about making sure that the world's worst leaders aren't able to develop and harbor the world's worst weapons.

Now listen, I've got a lot of tools at my disposal, and I'm a patient, patient man. But I understand freedom, and I understand history has put the spotlight on this country. And so long as I'm the President, this country isn't going to blink; we're going to lead. And I look forward to having Steve's support in this effort.

I want you to know that I believe—I firmly believe that by leading this coalition and by remaining strong and diligent and focused, that we can achieve peace. It's very important for you to tell the youngsters who are trying to figure out what all this means that the goal in this Nation is a peaceful world. That's what I hope. Sometimes it may not look like we're getting there, but that is where we're headed, and that's what I believe we can accomplish. Not only do I believe we can achieve peace here, but I believe we can achieve peace in other troubled areas. I firmly believe that if we remain strong on terror and promote values of human dignity and the values of freedom, that we can achieve peace in the Middle East or in South Asia.

The enemy must have not known who they were hitting. They thought that we were a selfish nation, you know, that we were so materialistic that all we would do

is file a lawsuit—[laughter]—that we weren't tough, that we didn't have character. That's what they must have thought. They're learning otherwise.

You see, this is a nation which knows what I know, that out of the evil done to our country is going to come some good, not only a more peaceful world but a more compassionate country, a country in which everybody understands that the American Dream is meant for them—everybody. My belief is that one of—when one suffers, all of us suffers. I also know there's limitations on Government, that Government can hand out money. We do a pretty good job of it sometimes, but what Government cannot do is affect the human spirit. It can't put hope in people's hearts. It can't put a sense of purpose in people's lives. Government is not love. Love comes when our fellow Americans put their arms around the shoulder of somebody who hurts, and says, "I love you. I love you. What can I do to help you?"

People say, "I'd like to join the war on terror," or, "What can I do to make my country a better place?" And my answer is, love your neighbor just like you'd like to be loved yourself. Mentor a child. Have a Boy Scout troop or a Girl Scout troop. Be willing to teach people values. Make a difference in one person's life. Oh, I know that that doesn't seem huge. One person can't do everything, but one person can do something. One person can be that somebody who's making a difference in a child's life or a neighbor's life.

And that's happening in America; it really is. People are beginning to understand. They've taken a step back, and they've said, "What is this all about? What does it mean to be an American?" I believe Americans from all walks of life—every political party, even those that can't stand politics—understand that patriotism means serving something greater than just yourself.

The enemy hit us. They didn't know who they were hitting. They're paying a terrible price and will continue to do so. But the

dividend of the tragedy is going to be a stronger America. And by “stronger America,” I mean a more hopeful America, a decent America, an America where anybody, regardless of their background, comes. They will have the opportunities that we have had.

There’s addiction in our society. There’s hopelessness in our society. There’s fatherless in our society. But all those problems that may seem insurmountable can be solved one citizen at a time. And so my call to our country is, be that citizen making a difference in somebody’s life.

I first started running for politics in—well, the second time I ran for—the first time I didn’t do so good—[laughter]—in Midland. Came in second in a two-man race. [Laughter] We’ve got some friends from Lubbock here. They may remember that. [Laughter] The second time I ran, I said, “I hope to be a part of a cultural change in America. I hope that I can, in some small way, influence a shift in the culture from one that had said, ‘If it feels good, just go ahead and do it, and if you’ve got a problem, blame somebody else for your problems.’” See, my hope was that our society would evolve toward a period in which all of us are responsible for the decisions we make in life, that if you’re a mom or a dad, your most important job and your most important responsibility is to love your children with all your heart and all your soul, that if you’re a citizen of Las Cruces, New Mexico, or Hobbs, New Mexico, you have a responsibility to ensure that your school system is the best it can possibly be, to support your teachers, to work in your community in any way it takes to make a difference in somebody’s life.

I’m a big proponent of what I call the Faith-Based Initiative, because I understand that many times a changed heart will

lead to a changed life, and out of our churches or synagogues or mosques come the capacity to change a person’s heart, to make America a better and more decent place.

The period of responsibility is coming. I can see it all across our country. People have assumed that new patriotism. It’s not just rooting for a military. It is being an active citizen, a participant in making America a genuinely decent place. And perhaps the most poignant example of that came on Flight 93. Citizens were flying across the country, you may remember. They had heard that the airplane was going to be a weapon. They said to their loved ones, “I love you. I love you.” They said a prayer. One guy said, “Let’s roll.” They drove the plane in the ground to serve something greater than themselves in life.

No, out of the evil done to America is going to come incredible good, because this is the finest country, with the finest people, on the face of the Earth.

God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:15 p.m. in the San Andres Ballroom at the Las Cruces Hilton. In his remarks, he referred to Jenna Welch, mother of First Lady Laura Bush; Cynthia Pearce, wife of candidate Steve Pearce; Mary Skeen, wife of Representative Joe Skeen; New Mexico gubernatorial candidate John Sanchez, and his wife, Debra; Rob Perry, candidate for New Mexico State attorney general; Sharon Clahchischilliage, candidate for New Mexico secretary of state; John Dendahl, chairman, Republican Party of New Mexico; Ken Zangara, Bernalillo County chairman, Republican Party of New Mexico, and his wife, Kathy; and Colin McMillan, chairman, New Mexico’s Bush for President 2000 campaign, and his wife, Kay. Mr. Pearce was a candidate for New Mexico’s Second Congressional District.