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Statement on the Death of John J. Rhodes
August 25, 2003

John Rhodes was a statesman and a leader in the United States Congress. He was admired by Republicans and Democrats alike for his 30 years of tireless work for the people he represented and the country he loved. Laura joins me in sending our thoughts and prayers to his wife, Elizabeth, and the entire Rhodes family.

Remarks at a Bush-Cheney Luncheon in St. Paul, Minnesota
August 26, 2003

Thanks for the warm welcome. I appreciate such a huge response for our invitation to come for a little light meal. [*Laughter*] It's an honor to be back in the beautiful State of Minnesota and two such vibrant cities. The temperature differential is nice too, I might add. [*Laughter*]

I came up from Crawford today. What I really want to do is thank you for your support and your friendship and to let you know that today we're laying the groundwork for what is going to be a great national victory in November of 2004.

I appreciate the fact that you have contributed, but I want you to know I'm going to count on you to contribute more. I need you to tell your neighbors, and for those of you who go to coffee shops, you be telling them in the coffee shops that this President and this administration will continue to work for a positive and hopeful vision for every single American.

I'm loosening up, and I'm getting ready for the campaign. [*Laughter*] But there's going to be plenty of time for politics, because I've got a job to do. I'm focused on the people's business, and we have a lot on our agenda in Washington, DC. Until the political season starts for me, I will continue to work to earn the confidence of every American by keeping this Nation secure and strong and prosperous and free.

My big regret today is that the First Lady is not traveling with me. She's in Crawford with Barney. [*Laughter*] But I want you to know that it is a great comfort to live in the White House with Laura Bush. She is a great First Lady, a fabulous wife. I love her dearly, and she sends her best.

I want to thank Ben Whitney for his willingness to lead this campaign here in the State of Minnesota. I appreciate my friend Rudy Boschwitz for taking a leadership role for this event today and for the remaining events. I want to thank all the State cochairmen, starting with a fine man and a guy who is doing a good job as your Governor, Tim Pawlenty. Tim, thank you for coming today.

I'll never forget the rally that I attended here in 2002 for United States Senator Norm Coleman. I'm sorry Norm can't be here, but it's a joy to work with him in the United States Senate. He is doing a fine job on behalf of the citizens of Minnesota.

I thank Congressman Gil Gutknecht for coming today. I appreciate his hard work, and it's been a joy to work with him and others of the Minnesota delegation. I want to thank your State auditor for coming. I appreciate the leadership of the legislature for being here, the speaker of the house as well as the Minnesota minority leader in the State senate. I'm honored you all

have taken time out of your day to come to say hello.

I appreciate my friend Mercer Reynolds, who is the national fundraising chairman for Bush-Cheney. He's from Cincinnati, Ohio. He's a businessperson. He's taking time out of his life to work hard to see that we raise the monies necessary to wage a viable and strong campaign.

I want to thank Rob Eibensteiner, who is the chairman of the Republican Party of Minnesota. I want to thank former Governor Al Quie for coming. But most of all, I want to thank you all for your loyal and strong support.

You know, in the last 2½ years, this Nation has acted decisively to confront great challenges. I came to the office of President of the United States to solve problems instead of passing them on to future Presidents and future generations. I came to seize opportunities instead of letting them slip away. We are meeting the tests of our time.

Terrorists declared war on the United States of America, and war is what they got. We have captured or killed many key leaders of the Al Qaida network, and the rest of them know we're on their trail. In Afghanistan and Iraq, we gave ultimatums to terror regimes. Those regimes chose defiance, and those regimes are no more. Fifty million people in those two countries once lived under tyranny, and now they live in freedom.

Two-and-a-half years ago, our military was not receiving the resources it needed, and morale was beginning to suffer. We increased the defense budget to prepare for the threats of a new era. And today, no one in the world can question the skill and the strength and the spirit of the United States military.

Two-and-a-half years ago, we inherited an economy in recession. And then our country was attacked, and scandals broke out in corporate America, and we were headed to war, which all affected the people's confidence. But we acted. We passed tough new laws to hold corporate criminals to account. And I have twice led the United States Congress to pass historic tax relief to get our economy moving again.

Here's what I believe, and here's what I know, that when Americans have more take-home pay to spend, to save, or invest, the whole economy grows and people are more likely to find a job. I also understand whose money we spend in Washington, DC. It is not the Government's money; it is the people's money that we spend in our Nation's Capital.

We're returning more money for people to help them raise their families. We're reducing taxes on dividends and capital gains to encourage investment. We're giving small businesses incentives that are needed to hire new people. With all these actions, we're laying the foundation for greater prosperity and more jobs across our country so that every single person has a chance to realize the American Dream.

Two-and-a-half years ago, there was a lot of talk about education reform, but there wasn't much action. So I called for and the Congress passed the No Child Left Behind Act. With a solid bipartisan majority, we delivered the most dramatic education reforms in a generation. We're bringing high standards and strong accountability measures to every public school in America. See, we believe that every child can learn the basics of reading and math. We believe every school must teach the basics of reading and math. This administration is challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations. The days of excuse-making are over. In return for Federal money, we expect results in every single classroom so that not one child in America is left behind.

We reorganized the Government, the largest reorganization since the Defense Department was reorganized in the late forties and early fifties. And we did so to create the Department of Homeland Security to safeguard our borders and ports and to better protect the American people.

We passed a trade promotion authority to open up new markets for Minnesota's farmers and ranchers and entrepreneurs and manufacturers. We passed budget agreements that is helping to maintain much needed spending discipline in Washington, DC. On issue after issue, this administration has acted on principle, has kept its word, and has made progress for the American people.

The United States Congress has shared in these great achievements. I particularly enjoy working with Speaker of the House Hastert and Majority Leader Frist. I'm proud of Norm Coleman and the members of the congressional delegation that you've sent to Washington from the State of Minnesota. I will continue to work with these leaders to change the tone in Washington, DC, to get rid of the needless partisan bickering and to focus on the people's business and to concentrate on results.

And that's the nature of the men and women I've asked to join my administration, results-oriented people. I have put together a fantastic administration on behalf of the American people. There has been no greater Vice President of the United States than Richard B. Cheney. Mother may disagree. [*Laughter*]

In 2½ years, we have come far; we've done a lot; we've taken on a lot of problems. But our work is only beginning. We have great goals worthy of this great Nation. First, America is committed to expanding the realm of freedom and peace for our own security and for the benefit of the world. And second, in our own country, we must work for a society of prosperity and compassion so that every citizen has a chance to work and succeed and realize the great promise of our country. It is clear that the future of freedom and peace depend on the actions of America. This Nation is freedom's home and freedom's defender. We welcome this charge of history, and we're keeping it.

Our war on terror continues. The enemies of freedom are not idle, and neither are we. This country will not rest; we will not tire; and we will not stop until this danger to civilization is removed.

Yet, our national interest involves more than eliminating aggressive threats to our security. Our greatest security comes from the advance of human liberty, because free nations do not support terror. Free nations do not attack their neighbors. Free nations do not threaten the world with weapons of mass terror. Americans believe that freedom is the deepest need and hope of every human heart. And I believe that freedom is the right of every person and the future of every nation.

America also understands that unprecedented influence brings tremendous responsibilities. We have duties in the world. When we see disease and starvation and hopeless poverty, we will not turn away. On the continent of Africa, this great Nation is committed to bringing the healing power of medicine to millions of men and women and children now suffering with AIDS. Our great country is leading the world in this incredibly important work of human rescue.

We face challenges at home as well. We've got big challenges here at home, and no doubt, our actions will prove that we're equal to those challenges. First, I'm concerned about people not being able to find a job. I want our people working. And therefore, we'll continue to work to create the environment necessary to have a strong entrepreneurial spirit, to make sure capital flows, to make sure the workforce expands so that anybody in the State of Minnesota or elsewhere who wants to work and can't find a job will be able to do so.

We have a chance to keep our commitment to America's seniors by strengthening and modernizing Medicare. A few weeks ago, the Congress took historic action to improve the lives of our older Americans. For the first time since the creation of Medicare, the House and the Senate have passed reforms to increase the choices for

seniors and to provide coverage for prescription drugs.

The recess is almost over. It is now time for both Houses to come together to iron out their differences and to get a bill to my desk. The sooner they finish the job, the sooner America's seniors and those of us who will be seniors soon will have a modern Medicare plan. We owe it to our seniors.

For the sake of our health care system, we need to cut down on the frivolous lawsuits which increase the cost of medicine. People who have been harmed by a bad doctor deserve their day in court. Yet, the system should not reward lawyers who are fishing for rich settlements. Because frivolous lawsuits drive up the cost of health care, they affect the Federal budget.

Medical liability reform is a national issue that requires a national solution. I have proposed a plan—[*applause*]—I proposed a good plan to reform medical liability. The House of Representatives passed a good bill. It is stuck in the Senate. It is time for the United States Senate to realize that no one has ever been healed by a frivolous lawsuit.

I have a responsibility as President to make sure the judicial system runs well. And I have met that duty. I have nominated superb men and women for the Federal courts, people who will interpret the law, not legislate from the bench. Some Members of the Senate are trying to keep my nominees off the bench by blocking up-or-down votes. Every judicial nominee deserves a fair hearing and an up-or-down vote on the Senate floor. It is time for Members of the Senate to stop playing politics with American justice.

The Congress needs to complete work on a comprehensive energy plan. I came to your great State to lay out my vision for a comprehensive energy plan. And now it's time for the Congress to act. And the recent breakdown of the deliverability of electricity on the east coast should send a clear signal to the United States Congress that we need a comprehensive energy plan, that we need to modernize our system, that we need mandatory reliability standards, and we need incentives to encourage investment. This country also must become less dependent on foreign sources of energy. For economic security and for national security, we must use our technology to explore in environmentally safe ways to increase the energy supply of the United States of America.

Our strong and prosperous Nation must also be a compassionate nation. I will continue to advance our agenda of compassionate conservatism by applying the best and most innovative ideas to helping our fellow citizens in need. There are still millions of men and women who want to end their dependence on the Government and become independent through hard work. We must work to build on the welfare reform successes of the immediate past to bring work into the lives of more of our citizens.

Congress should complete the "Citizen Service Act" so that more Americans will serve their communities and their country. And both Houses should reach agreement on my Faith-Based Initiative to support the armies of compassion, to support the Christians and Jewish people and Muslims, all who've heard the universal call to help a neighbor in need, to encourage the mentoring of children and caring for the homeless and offering hope to the addicted.

A compassionate society must also promote opportunity for all, including the independence and dignity that come from ownership. This administration will constantly strive to promote an ownership society in America. We want more citizens owning their own home. We want people to own and manage their own retirement accounts. We want people to have control over their own medical accounts. We want there to be more ownership of small businesses in America because we understand

when America—an American owns something, he or she has a vital stake in the future of our country.

In a compassionate society, people respect one another and they take responsibility for the decisions they make. We're changing the culture of America from one that has said, "If it feels good, do it," and "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each of us understands that we're responsible for the decisions we make in life.

If you are fortunate enough to be a mother or father, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart and all your soul. If you're concerned about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you're responsible for doing something about it. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you're responsible for telling the truth to your employees and your shareholders. And in a responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourself.

We can see the culture of responsibility and the culture of service growing around us, particularly since 9/11, 2001. You know, I started what's called the USA Freedom Corps to encourage Americans to extend a compassionate hand to a neighbor in need, and the response has been significant. Our charities and our faith-based organizations are vibrant and strong all across America. And policemen and firefighters and people who wear our Nation's uniform are reminding us what it means to sacrifice for something greater than yourself. Once again, the children of America believe in heroes, because they see them every day. In these challenging times, the world has seen the resolve and the courage of America, and I've been privileged to see the compassion and the character of the American people.

All the tests of the last 2½ years have come to the right nation. We're a strong country, and we use our strength to defend the peace. We're an optimistic country, confident in ourselves and in ideals bigger than ourselves. Abroad, we seek to lift whole nations by spreading freedom. At home, we seek to lift up lives by spreading opportunity to every corner of our country. This is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it. And we know that for our country and for our cause, the best days lie ahead.

Thank you for coming, and may God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:12 p.m. at the St. Paul RiverCentre. In his remarks, he referred to Ben Whitney and Rudy Boschwitz, Minnesota State finance cochairmen, Bush-Cheney '04, Inc.; Patricia Awada, Minnesota State auditor; Steve Sviggum, speaker, Minnesota State House of Representatives; and Dick Day, minority leader, Minnesota State Senate.

Remarks at the American Legion National Convention in St. Louis, Missouri

August 26, 2003

The President. Thank you all. Thanks for that warm welcome. It is great to be here in St. Louis, Missouri, at the 85th annual convention of the American Legion. I wonder if I'm the only member here today from Post 77 in Houston, Texas.

Audience member. No. [*Laughter*]

The President. Seems like they'd have given you a better seat. [*Laughter*]

It is always an honor to be with people who have served America and who love America. When the American Legion held