

## Remarks at a Bush-Cheney Reception in San Antonio, Texas October 30, 2003

*The President.* Thanks for the warm welcome. It is really good to be home, and it's good to be with so many friends. It seems like old home week here. [Laughter] I want to thank you all very much for your friendship and your strong support. I want to thank you for your prayers. I want to thank you for being my friend before I became the President—[laughter]—and my friend after I become the President—[laughter]—in 2009. No, no, we—[ap-  
plause].

This is a fantastic event tonight. It not only lifts my spirits to be with a lot of people with whom I've served in the past and a lot of friends, but we're laying the foundation for what is going to be a great national victory in 2004. I'm loosening up—[laughter]—and I'm getting ready. But politics will come in its own time, because I've got a job to do.

*Audience member.* And you're doing a great one.

*The President.* Well, thank you very much. [Laughter] I'm focused on the people's business. I'm doing what's right for this country. I will continue to work to make sure this country is strong and secure, prosperous, and free.

I have a regret, and that is that the First Lady is not with me tonight. She's in Tyler. We're going to meet up in Crawford. She is a fabulous wife, a fabulous mother, and a great First Lady for America.

I want to thank the Loefflers for their friendship and their hard work. It's a fantastically successful event. As I look around, I see folks who hold high office. The chief justice of the supreme court is here, Tom Phillips; the attorney general is here, Greg Abbott; the secretary of agriculture is here, Susan Combs; Albert Hawkins, the commissioner of health and human services; Diane Rath, the workforce commissioner. I see Wentworth is here, the State senator; State

Representative Jones and Edmund Kuempel and Ken Mercer. Thank you all for coming. It's great to see you again. I miss my buddies in the statehouse. I've got such fond memories of working with people here in the great State of Texas. It was a fantastic experience.

I also want to thank my friend Mercer Reynolds from Cincinnati, Ohio, who is the national finance chairman for Bush-Cheney. He's doing a great job of—

*Audience member.* Go Mercer!

*The President.* —laying the groundwork. Mercer brought his cousin. [Laughter] Most of all, I want to thank you all. Thanks a lot for coming.

In the last 2½ years, our Nation has acted decisively to confront great challenges. I came to this office 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. This administration is meeting the tests of our time.

Terrorists declared war on the United States of America, and war is what they got. We've captured or killed many of the key leaders of the Al Qaida network, and the rest of them know we're on their trail. In Afghanistan and in Iraq, we gave ultimatums to terror regimes. Those regimes chose defiance. Those regimes are no more. Fifty million people in those two countries once lived under tyranny, and today 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. So we increased the defense budgets to meet 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 then we had some scandals in corporate America, and war. All those affected the people's confidence, but I acted. We passed tough new laws in Washington, DC, to hold the corporate criminals to account.

And to get the economy going again, I have twice led the United States Congress to pass historic tax relief for the American people. 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. So we're returning more money to the 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 to hire new people. With all these actions, this administration has laid the foundation for greater prosperity and more jobs across America so that every single one of our citizens can 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 acted. 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 at the Federal level in a generation. In return for Federal money, we expect public schools to teach children how to read and write and add and subtract, because we believe every child can learn to read and write and add and subtract. This administration is challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations. The days of excuse-making are over. We expect results in every single classroom so that not one single child in America is left behind.

We reorganized our Government and created the Department of Homeland Security to better safeguard our borders and ports and to protect the American people. We passed trade promotion authority to open up new markets for Texas farmers and ranchers and entrepreneurs. We passed much needed budget agreements to bring spending discipline to Washington, DC. On

issue after issue, this administration has acted on principle, kept its word, and made progress for the American people.

The Congress gets credit for these achievements. I've got a great relationship with Speaker Denny Hastert and Majority Leader Bill Frist. We're working hard to focus on results and to get rid of the needless politics that dominates the Nation's Capital. We're doing the work for the people. And those are the kind of people I've asked to join this administration. I put together a fantastic, diverse group of people to serve the American people. We've had no finer Vice President than Dick Cheney. Mother may have a second opinion. [Laughter]

In 2½ years, we have done a lot. We have come far, but our work is only beginning. I've set great goals worthy of a 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 single citizen, every citizen, has a chance to work and to succeed and realize the great promise of our land.

It is clear that the future of freedom and peace depend on the actions of America. This Nation is freedom's home. We are freedom's defender. We welcome this charge of history, and we are keeping it.

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

We are confronting that danger in Iraq, where Saddam Hussein holdouts and foreign terrorists are desperately trying to throw Iraq into chaos by attacking coalition forces and international aid workers and innocent Iraqis. They know that the advance of freedom in Iraq would be a major defeat in the cause of terror. This collection of killers is trying to shake the will of America

and the civilized world, and this country will not be intimidated.

We are aggressively striking the terrorists in Iraq, defeating them there so we will not have to face them in our own country. We're calling other nations to help Iraq to build a free country, which will make the world more secure. We're standing with the Iraqi people as they assume more of their own defense and move toward self-government. These aren't easy tasks, but they're essential tasks. We will finish what we have begun, and we will win this essential victory in the war on terror.

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 I believe that freedom is the future of every nation.

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

We've got challenges here at home as well, and our actions will prove that we're equal to the challenges. We had some good news today on the economy. But let me tell you this, so long as anybody who wants to work can't find a job, means that I must continue to create the conditions for economic vitality and growth, to make sure the great entrepreneurial spirit of America is alive and well in every corner of this country.

We have a duty to keep our commitment to America's seniors by strengthening and

modernizing Medicare. Congress has taken historic action to improve the lives of older Americans. For the first time since the creation of Medicare, the House and Senate passed reforms to increase the choices for seniors and provide coverage for prescription drugs. The next step is for both Houses to reconcile their differences and get a bill to my desk soon. We owe it to America's seniors, and we owe a modern Medicare system to those of us who are going to be America's seniors.

For the sake of our health care system, we need to cut down on the frivolous lawsuits which increase the cost of medicine. I appreciate the reforms that Governor Perry and the legislature did here in Texas. We recognize that people who have been harmed by a bad doc deserve their day in court, yet the system should not reward lawyers who are simply fishing for a rich settlement. Because frivolous lawsuits drive up the cost of health care, they affect the Federal budget. Medical liability reform is a national issue which requires a national solution. We proposed good law to the House and Senate. The House of Representatives passed a good bill. The bill is stuck in the United States Senate. I'm proud to report, our two United States Senators, the Senators from Texas, are on the right side of the issue. Those who have held up this important piece of legislation in the United States Senate must recognize that not one single person has ever been healed by a frivolous lawsuit.

I have a responsibility as the 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 are trying to keep my nominees, people like Priscilla Owen, 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 some of the Members of the United

States Senate to stop playing politics with American justice.

The Congress needs to complete work on a comprehensive energy plan. Two years ago, I submitted a plan to the United States Congress, a plan that will promote energy efficiency and conservation, that will develop new technologies, but will encourage exploration in an environmentally friendly way in our own country. For the sake of economic security and for the sake of national security, the Congress must act so we become less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

Our strong and prosperous Nation must be a compassionate nation. I will continue to advance our agenda of compassionate conservatism, which means we will apply the best and most innovative ideas to the task of 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 build on the success of welfare reform to bring work and dignity into the lives of more of our fellow citizens.

Congress should complete the "Citizen Service Act" so more Americans can serve their community and their country. And both Houses should reach agreement on my Faith-Based Initiative to support the armies of compassion that are mentoring children, that are caring for the homeless, that are offering hope to the addicted. People from all faiths—Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu—have heard a universal call. We must welcome that call. In order to heal the broken heart, this country must not fear faith. We must welcome faith in the essential delivery of need for people who hurt.

A compassionate society must 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 people owning their own home. This Nation has a minority

homeownership gap. I presented a plan to the United States Congress to close that gap. America must act. The Congress must act. We want more people to own and manage their own health care accounts. We want more people to own and manage their own retirement accounts. We want more people owning their own small business. We understand in this administration that when a person owns something, he or she has a vital stake in the future of our country.

In a compassionate society, people respect one another and take responsibility for the decisions they make. The culture of America is changing 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 we are responsible for the decisions we make.

If you're fortunate enough to be a mom or a dad, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart. If you're worried 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 shareholders and your employees.

And in the new responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourself. The culture of service and responsibility is strong here in America. 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 great. Faith-based charities and charitable programs are strong and vibrant. And that's important, really important, to make sure the future of this country is alive and well for every citizen.

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. 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 are a strong country, and we use that 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 across our land. This is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it and know that for our country, the best days lie ahead.

God bless. Thank you all. Thank you all very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:48 p.m. at the Marriott Rivercenter. In his remarks, he referred to Tom and Nancy Loeffler, event cohosts; Thomas R. Phillips, chief justice, Texas Supreme Court; State Attorney General Greg Abbott, Agriculture Commissioner Susan Combs, and Health and Human Services Commissioner Albert Hawkins of Texas; Diane D. Rath, chair and commissioner, Texas Workforce Commission; State Senator Jeff Wentworth and State Representatives Elizabeth Ames Jones, Edmund Kuempel, and Ken Mercer of Texas; Gov. Rick Perry of Texas; and Priscilla Owen, nominee to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the Fifth Circuit.

## The President's Radio Address *November 1, 2003*

Good morning. This week, terrorists launched a series of attacks in Iraq. Their targets included police stations in Baghdad and Fallujah, the headquarters of the International Red Cross, and living quarters for the Coalition Provisional Authority in Baghdad. The majority of their victims were Iraqis working to rebuild and restore order to their country and citizens of other nations engaged in purely humanitarian missions.

Some of the killers behind these attacks are loyalists of the Saddam regime who seek to regain power and who resent Iraq's new freedoms. Others are foreigners who have traveled to Iraq to spread fear and chaos and prevent the emergence of a successful democracy in the heart of the Middle East. They may have different long-term goals, but they share a near-term strategy to intimidate Iraqis from building a free government and to cause America and our allies to flee our responsibilities. They know that a free Iraq will be free

of them and free of the fear in which the ideologies of terror thrive.

During the last few decades, the terrorists grew to believe that if they hit America hard, as in Lebanon and Somalia, America would retreat and back down. Five years ago, one of the terrorists said that an attack could make America run in less than 24 hours. They have learned the wrong lesson. The United States will complete our work in Iraq. Leaving Iraq prematurely would only embolden the terrorists and increase the danger to America. We are determined to stay, to fight, and to win.

The terrorists and the Ba'athists loyal to the old regime will fail because America and our allies have a strategy, and our strategy is working. First, we are taking this fight to the enemy, mounting raids, seizing weapons and funds, and bringing killers to justice. One example is Operation Ivy Focus, a series of aggressive raids by the Army's 4th Infantry Division that in a little over a month has yielded the capture of