

Remarks in a Discussion With Students and Faculty at Forsyth Technical  
Community College in Winston-Salem  
November 7, 2003

*The President.* Yes, Gary. First, I want to thank you very much for being a host. It's not easy to host the President and his entourage. [Laughter] But we have an interesting opportunity to have a discussion for the country. It's a discussion about the importance of education and jobs. It's a discussion about the importance of making sure the education system is flexible enough to help train people for jobs which exist today and will exist tomorrow. So I really want to thank you for hosting this. This is an important dialog.

The economy has obviously taken its toll on parts of North Carolina: The manufacturing sector has been hit; the textile industry has been hit; people have lost work. And yet in other sectors of the economy, here in North Carolina, are growing. And we've got to make sure we're able to match the skills and talent and drive of North Carolina citizens with the jobs of the future. And a great place to do that is at the community colleges here in North Carolina and all around the country. And that's really what we're here to herald.

So I want to thank you for giving me the chance to visit. I look forward to hearing our panelists. I want to thank you all for taking time out of your day to come and help educate the country about this fantastic program and effort you've got right here. So, Dr. Green, you're a good man for hosting us, and I appreciate it.

[*The discussion continued.*]

*The President.* That's what I was going to ask. It's very important for this type of education to be demand-driven.

*Lucas Shallua.* That is correct.

*The President.* I remember the old days in Texas. There would be job training programs; they really didn't care whether the jobs actually existed. All they want to do

is make sure you're trained. [Laughter] So you end up with, like, 1,500 hairdressers for 25 jobs.

And so my question to you is—first of all, let me make it clear. On the grant, what we're talking about is a \$754,000 grant to Forsyth Tech. The Congressman gets a lot of credit for arranging this because we were very aware that certain sectors of the country were losing jobs, see. The job mix is shifting. The economy, as it grows, sometimes there's a different shift in the type of jobs available. You hear a lot of talk about productivity increases; you mentioned productivity increases. A lot of the manufacturing sector is seeing job loss because the worker is more productive. In other words, an hour of a person's time yields more product, and unless demand outstrips productivity, it's a pressure on the job base.

But productivity increases, by the way, are going to mean higher paying jobs. It's important for our economy to have productivity increases, because in the long run, it makes a lot of sense. In the short run, it creates some dislocation for workers. We're going to hear from some in a minute. And the job grant program recognized that this part of the world had had some job losses and yet there were some wonderful workers and wonderful people who were anxious to be able to employ their skills in a field that was actually growing.

And so my question to you is, is that as you—and the doc here—as you have a curriculum change, explain to people how it is demand-driven, the curriculum change—in other words, a curriculum that's actually relevant to the job base here in the local communities.

[*The discussion continued.*]

*The President.* First of all, I thank you for the credit, but you get the credit, see. You're the person that made the decision that you want to do something with your life. I can't make that decision for you. That's your call to make, and you get the credit. And for that, I really—I appreciate that a lot.

Let me say something about one of the interesting innovations, and it's an important innovation, is these one-stop centers that the community college system is plugged into. A one-stop center is a place where a person such as Scott can go and say, "I've got this interest. What's available?" You called it up on the web, or you used the high-tech world to help bring information to your screen. And the one-stop centers are really kind of a innovative idea to allow for people to not only find what may be available. In other words, they have a look to judge demand for jobs themselves. They say, "Oh look, these people are looking for work here; this industry is looking for work here." But it also helps people find job training programs. It's very important for the community colleges to be plugged into these one-stop centers because they become the bridge to the job, become the—help create the skill set necessary for someone to access a job. And as well one-stop centers have got, like, resume help.

And so for those out there who are interested in doing what Scott and the others up here have done, I suggest you go to your regional one-stop centers. You'll find a lot of help. The job of the people there is to help you find—match your interests or your inclinations with jobs that actually exist.

I appreciate you bringing it up, Scott. You made the decision. You made the decision to go back to school, which isn't easy, particularly for an old guy like you, and—*[laughter]*.

*Scott Hiner.* Well, there is a lot of government help out there. You just have to go find it—

*The President.* Yes.

*Mr. Hiner.* —and like I said, I really appreciate it being out there.

*The President.* Well, I appreciate you saying that. We—as the economy changes, as technology changes, the slowest part of change is the workforce. And we've just got to understand that we've got to make sure our workers—who are the most productive in the world, the hardest working people in the world, the finest people in the world—have the skills necessary to move on with their lives, and I appreciate the example you've set.

*[The discussion continued.]*

*The President.* Yes. So if somebody is listening right now and they say "biotechnology field," how would you describe that? Give somebody a sense for what it means. I'm sure there's a lot of people frightened—"biotechnology" is a long word. It sounds—*[laughter]*. They may say, "Well, I don't know if I'm smart enough to be in biotechnology," or "It sounds too sophisticated, to be in biotechnology." It didn't frighten you. Why?

*Sandra Moser.* Because I was thinking pharmaceuticals and things like that, and they're going to teach me. You know, they're going to teach me what I need to know. They're not going to let me out of there until I know it. *[Laughter]*

*Gary Green.* That's right.

*The President.* And how is your education being paid?

*Ms. Moser.* Through the TAA.

*The President.* Yes, good. Good. TAA is a program like the Pell grant program. The good doctor here mentioned Pell grants. People ought to take a look at Pell grants. Many of the community college students in our country have their education funded by Pell grants. We've dramatically increased the funding of Pell grants. It's up to about \$12.7 billion now on an annual basis, which means people can be able to find a grant. These are grants, not loans, by the way.

That's why they're called Pell grants. Otherwise, you know, it's Pell loans. [Laughter]

But the budget is up quite dramatically over the last couple years, by 45 percent. The reason I say that is, it's important for people to know, as both our friends here have mentioned, that there is a way to make sure that you get your—your education is funded if you work hard, if you look hard. There's money available, and that's important for people to know.

Thank you. Good job.

[The discussion continued.]

*Jan Robertson.* When you go, like, into a doctor's office or something, you get to dictate what the doctor says and put it on the computer, and then you get to put it in the file for the patient, whatever, so they can understand them, because—have you ever seen them write? Do you understand—[laughter].

*The President.* Yes, I have. Some people say my writing is worse than the doctor's. [Laughter] But I won't take it personally.

*Ms. Robertson.* So they need a little help.

*The President.* Tell us why are you—what were you doing before you came here?

*Ms. Robertson.* I was in a textile plant, and it went overseas. And I wanted to get—to better myself, so I went to the medical field.

*The President.* You're a mother?

*Ms. Robertson.* Yes.

*The President.* How old is your child?

*Ms. Robertson.* Five.

*The President.* Single mom?

*Ms. Robertson.* Yes.

*The President.* You've got the toughest job in America.

*Ms. Robertson.* Yes.

*The President.* Yes, you do. That's good. And so have you started class here?

*Ms. Robertson.* Yes, this fall.

*The President.* You making all A's?

*Ms. Robertson.* Not quite, but I'm getting there. [Laughter]

*The President.* People are listening. [Laughter] And so you're studying medical transcription.

*Ms. Robertson.* Yes.

*The President.* And are you good on the computer?

*Ms. Robertson.* I'm getting better.

*The President.* That's good. So that's part of the curriculum.

*Ms. Robertson.* Yes.

*The President.* And so what has happened here is that they've come and they've helped this education institution develop a curriculum that is actually practical, so you believe that once you finish the curriculum you'll be able to walk right out and sign up for work.

*Ms. Robertson.* Yes, and also it helps you where you can do it at your own—at your home.

*The President.* Oh, good, so you can do your first job, the most important job, which is to be a mother—

*Ms. Robertson.* Yes.

*The President.* —and then be a student.

Thanks. Congratulations. How is your kid doing, learning to read?

*Ms. Robertson.* Oh, yes.

*The President.* That's the most important thing you can do right now, is teach your child. Get them to read more than they watch TV. Sorry to all the TV cameras out there. [Laughter]

[The discussion continued.]

*The President.* Well, I appreciate you bringing that up. We had a recent report out which—this is the beginning of good news for jobseekers—over the last 3 months, the economy, the entrepreneurs, the private sector, and others, have driven the job base up by 285,000 jobs, new jobs, which is good. So in other words, things are beginning to brighten up for people looking for work, which is positive. And therefore, we must make sure that people are trained for jobs that exist.

[The discussion continued.]

*The President.* And by the way, as these jobs get more sophisticated, in other words, the training level is higher, no question about it. But the pay is better. And that's what productivity increases do in a society. As our society, particularly North Carolina economy, shifts from textiles to biotechnology, the pay gets better. And all we've got to do is bridge from the textile sector to the biotechnology sector with smart education practices. And that's what we're here talking about.

It requires—a smart education system requires a community college which is flexible in their curriculum. If they're rigid, this good man here wouldn't be designing a curriculum. If they were rigid, they wouldn't be listening to the employers of the community say, "Listen, this is what we need. We need this kind of person or that kind of person."

And the reason I'm here is because this is a model for others to follow. In other parts of the country there's also workers being displaced. And yet, there's great hope and opportunity because there's wonderful job opportunity, so long as the training facilities are modern and active and not rigid.

And I want to thank you for understanding that, and I want to thank you for listening to people that are looking for workers. But they're not looking for just the average worker, they're looking for a trained worker. And so therefore, job training programs are essential. Government spends about \$15 billion a year on job training programs.

I've got to tell you, though, we need a little help from the Congress—Congressman—to make sure that there's some flexibility, not on how much money we spend but how we spend it. Because these job training programs—he listed about three of them already, and for every job training program there's kind of a Government prescription with it, which means that the more prescriptive programs are, the less flexible they are. And the less flexible job training money is, it makes it very difficult

to be able to meet the needs of the local community.

And therefore, I'm trying to work with Congress, Doc, to make sure that these monies coming out of Washington are able to have enough—have as few strings attached as possible, so that the States and the local community colleges can apply that money to meet the needs of the local employers. And then we'll be able to say for certain that the job training initiatives are meeting the needs.

Yes, but thanks for—thanks for being an entrepreneur.

[*The discussion continued.*]

*The President.* The job of the Government is to make sure that the entrepreneurial spirit of America is strong, to make sure that people feel comfortable in taking risk, that they're willing to start a small business and grow it to a big business. And one of the interesting aspects of making sure the entrepreneurial spirit is strong is tax policy. And there's been a lot of talk—you've heard, I'm sure, the talk about the tax relief. Hopefully, you've seen some of it in your pockets, like increasing that child credit for your 5-year-old. But what's interesting is that most small businesses are sole proprietorships or Subchapter S corporations. That's when they're startups. I'm sure you've seen that here in North Carolina. And as a result, when you—these are companies that pay tax at the individual income tax rate, so that when you cut taxes on the individual, you're also providing capital infusion into small businesses.

And one of the very important things for our Government to do is to also understand there needs to be certainty in the Tax Code. If you're a planner, an entrepreneur, in any field, you've got to know that the tax policy today is likely to be the tax policy tomorrow, because uncertainty creates—difficult to plan, and therefore, makes it difficult for people to hire.

And so one of the things I'm going to ask Congress to do is make sure all this

tax relief we pass is permanent. See, it goes away. She, unfortunately, is going to have to pay—receive less money in her child credit if they don't make the tax relief permanent. The small-business owner, if they don't make the tax relief permanent, will have to pay a inheritance tax or death tax on the business they've created, which I don't think is fair. I think you should only be taxed once, not twice. The marriage penalty relief is—it's going to go away. And it's important that there be certainty in order to make sure this economy continues to grow.

I want to thank you for bringing up the entrepreneurial spirit. That's the thing that makes America such a wonderful place, the kind of place where people, if you have a dream, are able to realize your dream. That applies not only to the business owner, the person coming to the Research Triangle, the person who thinks they've got a better idea than their neighbor and is willing to put a little something out there, time and capital, on the line. It also applies to our workers, people who have got their own dreams, their own set of dreams, the dream of making sure the child grows up in a wonderful little comfortable, peaceful household. And our job in the Government is to help people realize their dreams. That's really what it is. We can't make people dream, but we can help people once they start to dream.

And I thank you all for the compliments on the Government. But the compliments really belong here. See, you're doing what needs to be done. And that's why I've got such wonderful optimism about our country. I'm very optimistic about the fact that we'll keep the peace. I'm very optimistic about the fact that people will find work, because there's a wonderful spirit here in America.

I met this guy right there. See him? Put your hand up. He's a volunteer firefighter. Well, not you, Burr. [Laughter] He's a volunteer firefighter. He came out to the airport to say hello. It's an interesting concept,

isn't it, volunteer firefighters, people volunteering to put their lives on the line in order to save lives.

I recently went out to California. I explained it to him when I was at the airport. A lot of people on the frontlines in the fire out there were volunteers. The reason I bring that up is, it should remind us that the strength of the country is not our military, is not our pocketbooks; it's the heart and soul of people. The entrepreneurial spirit is the strength of the country. The willingness for people to volunteer in a fire department is the strength of the country. And once you realize how strong this country is in spirit, you can't help but be optimistic about the future.

Thank you for having me here, Doc. Listen, I want to thank you all for sharing your stories. It's not easy to stand up in front of all these cameras. I know. [Laughter] Although the cameramen are fine people. But it's—you were able to help us make a point, that people who have lost work should have hope, that with a little initiative, a little ingenuity, a little drive, there's help for you. The economy's growing, new jobs are being created. And we—there's an opportunity, and I hope you seize it. I hope you seize it, because there's a wonderful, wonderful future ahead for people who may at this moment think their days are—the future is a little dark. And we've got three citizens right up here who are willing to see the—can see that bright light. So thanks for coming.

Thank you all for coming.

NOTE: The discussion began at 1:05 p.m. Participants in the discussion included: Gary M. Green, president, Lucas D. Shallua, biotechnology program coordinator, and Scott Hiner, Sandra Moser, and Jan Robertson, students, Forsyth Technical Community College; Richard Dean, president, Wake Forest University Health Sciences; and William Dean, president, Idealliance. In his remarks, the President also referred to Representative Richard Burr of North Carolina; and Brian

Koontz, fire chief, County Line Volunteer  
Fire Department.

## Statement on House of Representatives Action on the Defense Authorization Conference Report *November 7, 2003*

I commend the House for passing the Defense Authorization conference report and showing strong bipartisan support for America's national security, our troops, and their families. This bill includes my request for a third straight pay raise, more resources for equipment and training, and quality of life improvements so that our military continues to be the finest fighting force in the world.

The legislation also makes good progress toward transforming and modernizing our military so that it is best prepared to protect Americans.

Finally, I am pleased that the House has resolved the issue of concurrent receipt for military retirees in a fair and responsible manner.

## The President's Radio Address *November 8, 2003*

Good morning. This week, we heard some good news about the effects of tax relief on the American economy. The Department of Labor reported that our economy added 126,000 new jobs in October. And over the past 3 months, there were 286,000 new jobs. The unemployment rate fell to 6 percent. The 4-week average for jobless claims has declined in 6 of the past 7 weeks, and manufacturers reported that orders and shipments are both rising.

This news comes one week after we heard that economic output rose at a 7.2 percent annual rate in the third quarter, the fastest pace of growth in nearly 20 years. America's economy is getting stronger every day. American companies are investing. Americans are buying homes at a record pace, and homeownership is near record levels. Stock market values have risen, adding about \$2 trillion in wealth

for investors since the beginning of the year.

We can all be encouraged, but we cannot be satisfied. These are early signs of progress. Now we must turn this progress into broad and lasting gains for all Americans. Our improving economy is also a changing economy, and some workers need help preparing for new jobs and new industries.

In Winston-Salem, North Carolina, where I traveled this week, manufacturing jobs have been declining for decades. The textile industry and furniture makers and farmers are hurting. In Winston-Salem, I also saw a good program at a community college that is training unemployed workers for new jobs in industries which are growing, such as biotechnology. Local businesses, along with the Department of