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Chief is incredibly proud, proud of what they're doing.

*Participant.* They're right out there.

*The President.* Where?

*Participant.* This young man right here.

*The President.* Thank you for your service. I appreciate you, thanks.

*Participant.* He just came home.

*The President.* Yes. That's great. It's not—strength is not our military. It's not our wallet. It's the heart and soul of the American people. That's the strength. And the fact that this company is willing to say, you know, "Follow your heart and go help somebody who hurts," is an important part of keeping this country strong. It really is. The fact that people are willing to hear the universal call to love a neighbor like you'd like to be loved yourself is really an important part of this Nation. And it's a vital part of the Nation. So for those of you who are dreaming big dreams and working for them, like Jessica is, thanks for doing that—like our business owners—I appreciate that. It's important that you dream big dreams and work hard.

For those of you who are helping people realize their dreams, I thank you as well. It's just an incredibly vital part of a bright future for our country. There's nothing America can't achieve—nothing we can't achieve. You know why? Because this country is full of fabulous people. It's my honor to be with a lot of them here today.

Thank you for coming. God bless. Thank you for your time.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:20 p.m. at the Lansdowne Home Depot. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr., and Lt. Gov. Michael Steele of Maryland; James Montgomery, owner, James S. Montgomery & Sons; Gary Mangum, co-owner, and Alison Anderson, regional manager, Bell Nursery; John Ferraiuolo, store manager, and Jessica Adamson, paint associate, Lansdowne Home Depot; Brandy Foble, store manager, Ellicott City Home Depot; and Robert Nardelli, chairman, president, and chief executive officer, The Home Depot, Inc.

## Statement Announcing the Appointment of James A. Baker III as the President's Personal Envoy on the Issue of Iraqi Debt

*December 5, 2003*

Iraq is moving toward freedom, stability, and prosperity. In order to support this effort, I am pleased to announce today that in response to a request from the Iraqi Governing Council for assistance, I have appointed James A. Baker III to be my personal envoy on the issue of Iraqi debt. Secretary Baker will report directly to me and will lead an effort to work with the world's Governments at the highest levels with international organizations and with the Iraqis in seeking the restructuring and reduction of Iraq's official debt. The future of the Iraqi people should not be mortgaged to the enormous burden of debt incurred to enrich Saddam Hussein's regime. This debt endangers Iraq's long-term prospects for political health and economic prosperity. The issue of Iraq debt must be resolved in a manner that is fair and that does not unjustly burden a struggling nation at its moment of hope and promise. James Baker's vast economic, political, and diplomatic experience as a former Secretary of State and Secretary of the Treasury will help to forge an international consensus for an equitable and effective resolution of this issue.