

Time and again, our economy has defied the gloomy predictions of pessimists. Because of the hard work of so many Americans and because of the good policies in Washington, DC, our economy is strong, and it is getting stronger. America has added more than 1.4 million new jobs since last August. Our economy has grown at the fastest pace in almost two decades, and the recession was one of the shortest and shallowest in modern American history.

Americans are earning more, and because of tax relief, they're keeping more of what they earn. Real after-tax incomes have increased by 11 percent since the start of 2001. Those are important gains for our entire economy because they go to the taxpayers and not to the Government. And we have seen that the taxpayers know best how to drive our economy forward. Moms and dads have used their child tax credit checks and other tax relief to boost demand throughout our economy. The homeownership rate is at an alltime high, and because of greater demand, businesses are making more purchases of equipment. Business investment is up more than 9 percent in the last year. And we know that when businesses invest, that makes it more likely someone will find a job.

Tax relief is working. But there's more to do to keep our economy growing. My pro-growth, pro-jobs economic agenda starts with making tax relief permanent so the families and businesses can plan for the future with confidence. The House has voted to make much of my tax relief permanent. And now the Senate needs to act, so that we do not raise taxes on the American people.

We must maintain our policy of open trade, because we know that on a level playing field, America's workers can compete with anyone in the world. We must make sure our children are learning and our workers are ready for their first day on the job. So I proposed reforms to improve our schools and worker training programs.

We must have a national energy plan that promotes conservation, exploration, and investment in infrastructure, which will reduce our dependence on foreign sources of energy. I proposed such a plan 3 years ago. Now it's time for the Congress to act.

Our Nation has a healthy, vibrant, and growing economy. Our Nation is ready to face the economic challenges that lie ahead. We have millions of confident entrepreneurs who work hard and take risks and create opportunities for others. We have a culture of innovation where people are encouraged to come up with new solutions to old problems. We have a great workforce. With these strengths, there is no limit to how much we can accomplish, and I am certain that our best days are yet to come.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 10:30 a.m. on June 18 in Bronson Hall at Fort Lewis, WA, for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on June 19. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 18 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

## Remarks in a Discussion in Cincinnati, Ohio *June 21, 2004*

*The President.* Okay, thanks. Sit down, please. We got to get to work. [*Laughter*]

Neil, thanks for having me. I appreciate the opportunity to come to such a shining

example of compassion and love here in the heart of Cincinnati, Ohio.

I want to thank you all for coming as well. I particularly want to thank my friend Bob Taft, and Hope Taft, for coming today. Governor and Hope, thanks for coming. Like me, the Governor married above himself. [Laughter] And I know that Hope has done a lot of work here in the Cincinnati area of helping save lives and changing society, one soul at a time. And when you think about it, that's really what we're here to talk about, isn't it—how do we make sure America is as hopeful a place it can possibly be, one soul at a time, one conscience at a time?

I want to thank my friend Rob Portman, and Jane and Jed, for coming today. Thank you all for being here. I like to say this is part—what we're going to discuss today is part of what we call a compassion agenda. And there's no more compassionate Congressman than Rob Portman. He has not only been an excellent Congressman, but as well he's been very much involved in inspiring and supporting groups to interface with those who need help.

I appreciate Congressman Steve Chabot coming as well. Steve, it's good to see you, sir, appreciate you being here. And from Dayton, Ohio, Congressman Mike Turner—glad you could come, Michael. Glad you're here.

As well, we've got State Senate President Doug White. Senator, where are you? Yes, not a very good view, but—maybe it is the best angle. [Laughter] Thank you for coming. I know we've got other State and local officials here. I appreciate you taking time to come.

I met Charlene Calhoun—there she is. She was there right at the steps of Air Force One when we—when I disembarked. The reason I bring up Charlene is that she is a volunteer here, see.

Oftentimes, as we discuss our country, we think in terms of our strength being the military. And I happen to believe it's important to have a strong military to keep

the peace. Or we talk about the strength of our country being the fact that we're a wealthy nation. I also happen to think that's a very important part of our country, and I was pleased to see that the unemployment rate here in Ohio dropped to 5.6 percent. People are going back to work. The economy is getting better.

The true strength of the country is the hearts and souls of our citizens. That's the true strength of America, see. Government can hand out money—and we're going to talk a little bit about the money we want to hand out—but Government cannot put hope in a person's heart or a sense of purpose in a person's life. That happens when a loving soul like Charlene puts her arm around somebody who hurts and says, "What can I do to help you? What can I do to make your life a better life? How can I, a citizen of America, interface with you to help you understand there is a bright hope and a better future?" No, the strength of this country is the hearts and souls of the soldiers in the army of compassion. Charlene, thank you for being a soldier.

I know I don't need to say this to people here, but if you're interested in serving your country, volunteer, become a mentor, feed the hungry, find shelter for the homeless. If you really want to be a super patriot, join the army of compassion.

And speaking about that, Neil is a general in the army of compassion. He's what I call a social entrepreneur. We got business entrepreneurs. We've also got social entrepreneurs, people who are trying to invigorate the social side of life. I mean, we're a land of plenty, but amidst our plenty, there are people who hurt. And we got to do something about it here in America. We got to be smart about how we save lives, because the vision of our country is that everybody has hope, not just some. This country belongs to everybody.

Today you're going to hear from some good folks who are trying to help and some folks who have received help because they

decided to do something about their own lives. I think you're going to find these stories to be incredibly interesting; at least I did.

Before we do so, I do want to talk about some initiatives. You know, there's been a lot of talk about welfare reform. In other words, we're moving people from welfare to lives of independence, and it's been a very successful policy. I mean, people want to be independent. They don't want to be dependent on Government, but it must be done in a compassionate way.

The welfare rolls have declined 60 percent since 1996. A better way to look at it is, more people are now living a life they choose to live because they got help. And the question is, how do we continue to provide that help, to help people live lives of independence?

One is to make sure the education system works well. I mean, I think one of the keys to make sure that people are able to realize their dream is to insist that every child gets educated, that we stop this business about—you know, there was kind of a mindset here in America that said, oh, let's just move them through. Guess who got moved through? Generally inner-city kids, kids whose parents don't speak English as a first language. They're the easiest ones to quit on, and our system did. We've changed that. I want to thank the Members of Congress here. I want to thank the Governor as well.

See, we're setting high standards now in America. We said, in return for Federal money, for the first time we're asking the question, can the kid read? It seems like a reasonable question, doesn't it, in return for taxpayers' money. At least, can they read at grade level in the third grade? We want that answer to be, absolutely, yes. And if not, we want to know why. We want the problems corrected early, before it's too late. We've got to stop shuffling kids through. We're now a results-oriented system.

And that's important for moms and dads to know. See, you need to know, if you're a mother or a father with a kid in school. You need to know whether or not the school is meeting expectations. I like to say we're challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations. If you've got low expectations, you're going to get lousy results. So step one to make sure that people are independent in America is to make sure people are educated in America.

Step two is to do some smart things with taxpayers' money. I think one of the smartest things we can do is encourage families and is to have a—is to spend money on grants to States to be matched by States or grants directly to faith-based or community-based programs that teach people what it means to be in a successful marriage.

Now, you say, "Why do you think that?" Well, strong families really mean that children are going to grow up—children have a better chance to succeed. Let's just be blunt about it. If a child grows up with a mom and a dad, they have a much better chance to succeed. We want everybody to succeed in America. If that's one of the keys to success, it seems like it makes sense to encourage strong families in America.

And so one of the things we're going to talk about today is how programs such as Talbert House works to encourage marriage and strengthen families. And as I mentioned, I've asked the Congress to spend about \$300 million—\$290 million—for grants on—to States and/or directly to programs, all which are set up to provide parenting classes and family classes. It seems to make sense to me.

Secondly, I know that many a good soul makes a mistake in their life and ends up in prison, and it seems to make sense to me to spend taxpayers' money to help these prisoners realize a better tomorrow when they get out of prison, give them a second chance. And I want that second chance to be done not only in kind of the traditional way, but also through faith-based and community-based programs. And I can't—

frankly can't think of a better reentry program for somebody to be there with open arms saying, "I love you, no matter what you may have done in the past. I want you to succeed, and here—and we're here to help."

And so I'm asking the Congress to spend some money on a prisoner reentry initiative as well as a mentoring program for children whose moms and dads may be in prison, see. I think we need to make sure those kids understand that they've got a bright future as well.

Finally, one of the big challenges we face here in America is the challenge of addiction, addiction to alcohol and drugs. I have asked the Congress to support a new initiative, which basically says to the addict, "We're going to give you a script. We're going to give you the money, and you get to choose where you find your help."

Sometimes, you can kick alcohol or drugs by going through the traditional clinical assessment. A lot of times, however, you need to change your heart. If you want to change your habits, you need to change your heart. Government is not very good about changing hearts, see. Government is law and justice. Government isn't love. But you can change your heart by interfacing with people who may have heard a call from above.

And we in Government ought not to worry about the process involved in these programs. We ought to just ask the question, "Are these programs working?" That's what we want to know. "Are we saving lives? Are we making a difference in our society by helping people?"

And the best place to—for me to make my point is to turn to a social entrepreneur in Neil—Neil Tilow. He doesn't look like an old guy, but he's been at this business since 1974. Must have started when he's in junior high. [Laughter] Now, what do you think?

*Neil Tilow.* Thank you, sir. [Laughter]

*The President.* Neil, tell us about the Talbert House, how it got started, what do you do here. There may be somebody

listening who would want to contribute to this great program and/or volunteer their time here or start their own. But tell us what you do.

[*Mr. Tilow, president, Talbert House, Cincinnati, OH, made brief remarks. He concluded with a discussion on proposed legislation on prisoner reentry.*]

*The President.* Yes, one reason I'm here is to give a little boost to that bill. I want to explain what we're doing, but it's—I've got a little method behind it all, see. [Laughter] Sometimes Congress needs to get a boost. Portman doesn't need a boost, but—anyway, sorry to interrupt. [Laughter]

*Mr. Tilow.* I was told you might do that. [Laughter]

*The President.* We're lobbying him. [Laughter]

*Mr. Tilow.* Let me know how I can help, sir. [Laughter]

*The President.* You're helping. Keep talking, will you? [Laughter]

[*Mr. Tilow made further remarks.*]

*The President.* Let me comment on that, if you don't mind. [Laughter] He didn't mind. [Laughter] You see, if we can get Government to focus on results as opposed to process, you'll find there will be a lot of flexibility for you, and that's the attitude we got to take.

It's really a difference about who do you trust, if you really think about it. Do you trust a social entrepreneur on the ground, or do you trust a planner in a faraway capital? And I think you'll find that these initiatives I've talked about and the spirit that you've just defined is now kind of the attitude in Washington. And that's important. That really is important. If we say, "What matters is whether or not lives are being saved, you figure out how to do it," you'll find that the entrepreneurial spirit at the social level will be much more invigorated and much more alive. The energy level will be tremendous at the grassroots level. And that's really the job of Government, is to

set the strategy and the goals and get out of the way.

Now, if you don't perform, you'll find—I hope you'll find Government to be very inflexible, because we don't need to fund failure. What we need to do is fund success.

Anyway, sorry.

[Mr. Tilow made further remarks.]

*The President.* Good job. You ready?

Okay, we've got Teri Rust with us. She's a master clinical service provider. I think I got it right. More importantly, she is the supervisor of two programs.

*Teri Rust.* Yes, sir.

*The President.* Tell us what you do, and thanks for coming.

[Ms. Rust, master clinical service provider, Talbert House, Lebanon, OH, made brief remarks.]

*The President.* It must make you feel pretty good.

*Ms. Rust.* Oh, very good, yes, sir.

*The President.* Saving America, one soul at a time.

Speaking about good souls, we've got Tami Jordan with us. She is an inspirational person. Why don't you inspire? [Laughter] Tell us your story.

[Tami Jordan, former Talbert House resident, Cincinnati, OH, made brief remarks.]

*The President.* Thank you very much. I loved your story. There's nothing like having a story like this to be able to share with people. I'll never forget when I was the Governor of Texas, I went to a prison unit. I decided to turn over a wing of the prison to a faith-based program. Again, the attitude was whether or not the prisoners would come out and not go back in. I said the recidivism rate would—could it be lowered if we had a faith-based initiative in the prison unit?

And so I went to see it as the Governor, and out comes the prison choir. And one of my favorite hymns is "Amazing Grace."

Of course, I've got a lot of my mother in me, so I immediately jumped in line with the prisoners singing "Amazing Grace," you know, like 10 white suits and me. [Laughter] They weren't exactly suits. They were, like, you know the kind of the suit I'm talking about—jumpers, yes. [Laughter] And anyway, we're swinging back and forth, and on the front page of The Houston Chronicle is Bush arm in arm with a guy in prison for 20 years.

Let me tell you something. I welcomed some people to the White House who had been involved in this program, and I looked at the man sitting next to me in the Roosevelt Room of the White House, and sure enough, it was the guy who I was arm in arm with, singing "Amazing Grace."

You can go from prison to be a boss. You can go from prison to the White House, just so long as you have somebody who's there, willing to take you by the hand and say, "I want to help you help yourself." And that's what we're here to talk about. You did a great job.

We now have a family with us, the Groves family. That would be Darla.

*Darla Groves.* Yes.

*The President.* Larry.

*Larry Groves.* Yes.

*The President.* Tell us about your story. Have you decided which of you are going to talk?

*Mrs. Groves.* We'll both talk.

*Mr. Groves.* We both are. [Laughter]

*The President.* Okay. Let her go. People are interested in why you're here.

[Mr. and Mrs. Groves, former Temporary Assistance for Needy Families recipients, Cincinnati, OH, made brief remarks.]

*The President.* There you go. That's a good job, well rehearsed. ACT is a collaboration of local entities, of which the Talbert House is one. So when you hear ACT, think in terms of the Talbert House, plus others, correct?

*Mr. Tilow.* It's a freestanding organization.

*The President.* Right, freestanding organization, all aimed—set up by the State of Ohio, right?

*Mr. Tilow.* [Inaudible]

*The President.* Encouraged by the State of Ohio. We're fixing to get to the State man here in a minute.

*Mr. Tilow.* It was encouraged by our county, Job and Family Services, by the State, and led by the founding agencies.

*The President.* Okay. Let me get back to you for a minute. So tell them what's going to happen July the 8th.

*Mrs. Groves.* July the 8th—well, it's been a long 2 years. My first year—

*The President.* It's hard to go back to school, right?

*Mrs. Groves.* It's very tough to go back to school, especially after being out 17 years.

[*Mrs. Groves made further remarks.*]

*The President.* And? You make a little more, right?

*Mrs. Groves.* What?

*The President.* You make a little more money—

*Mrs. Groves.* Yes, and the money—

*The President.* Now, catch this. I just want everybody to know, there is a happy ending.

*Mrs. Groves.* There is a very happy ending here, that the money I used to make, which was \$20,000 some a year, I will be making close to \$40,000 a year.

*The President.* Did you get help going to school?

*Mrs. Groves.* Through Cincinnati State, I was very fortunate to be able to use the Pell grant. I was very blessed with that. But through my LPN program, unfortunately, it didn't cover that. I did have to take loans out.

*The President.* Let me say that—this is a very interesting story. Our economy is changing, and there are some interesting jobs available. It requires some to go back to school, and there's help. There are Pell grants. There's displaced worker money.

There's trade adjustment money. I mean, there's all kinds of money available to help. And what's interesting, and people will find this to be—what Darla just said—extra education makes you more productive. And if you're more productive, you're going to get paid more.

And so it was painful, I'm sure, to go back to school.

*Mrs. Groves.* Yes, it was very painful, very painful. [Laughter]

[*Mr. Groves made further remarks, concluding as follows.*]

*Mr. Groves.* But all of this here, I really have to say, I give a lot of credit to ACT because we was lost, Mr. President—

*The President.* And now you're found.

*Mr. Groves.* Yes, sir.

*The President.* That's good. Congratulations. You found yourself.

By the way, Government can't make people sit down with their kids and pray. They can't make people decide to go to—people have to make those decisions themselves. See, the role of Government is to stand there and say, "We're going help you. If you want help, there's help here."

And that's what we're describing. We're describing this network of providers that are there to help people help themselves. The job of the Federal Government is to fund the providers that are actually making a difference.

Now, we've heard from the local man, and we've heard from the Federal man. Now we're going hear from the State man, Joel Potts. See, the State plays a critical role in all this business. Much of the Federal money goes directly to States.

One of my jobs, by the way, is to make sure Governors understand the vitality of faith- and community-based programs and that they ought to be spending Federal money that we send to the State on programs which work. Whether or not they've got a cross on the wall or a Star of David on the wall, we should not worry about faith being a part of the delivery of social

service. As a matter of fact, quite the contrary, we ought to welcome that.

Anyway, you've got a job to do here, and if you would, share with us the Ohio vision. Thanks for coming. Potts works for the State. He's the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services. Welcome.

[*Joel Potts, senior policy analyst, Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services, Columbus, OH, made brief remarks.*]

*The President.* What Joel is talking about is Congress needs to get the welfare bill to my desk. It's a bill that will encourage work, and it will encourage compassionate programs at the same time. It's stuck. There's too much politics in Washington on this. The 1996 welfare law worked. And Members of Congress from both parties have got to understand it worked, and we need to build on it to save lives. That's what we're here to talk about.

And I hope you get a flavor of the attitude now coming out of Washington, DC, about how we can support the social entrepreneurs. That's really what I wanted you to hear. I wanted you to hear that in your own community here in Cincinnati you've

got heroic figures, heroic people, saving lives on a daily basis, and these folks need to be supported. They need to be supported at the local level. They need to be supported at the State level, and they need to be supported at the Federal level.

And then you saw some great examples of people who made the—made a choice. They said, "I want to do better. I want to be a mom. I want to be a mom and a dad. I want to put food on the table, and I'm not afraid to ask for help." If anybody is listening out there who needs help, call the Talbert House or call the State and ask where you can get help, because there's plenty of people in this good State with big hearts who are willing to help.

I want to thank you all for coming. May God bless the State of Ohio, and may God continue to bless our great country. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:08 p.m. at the Hamilton County Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services Center. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Bob Taft of Ohio and his wife, Hope; and Jane Portman, wife of Representative Portman, and their son Jed.

## Remarks Following Discussions With Prime Minister Peter Medgyessy of Hungary and an Exchange With Reporters June 22, 2004

*President Bush.* Before I welcome the Prime Minister to the Oval Office, I will have a statement; he will have a statement; we'll answer two questions per side.

Q. Mr. President—

*President Bush.* Hold on a second, please. I'll have a statement; he will have a statement; and then we'll have two questions per side. I'll call upon an American reporter, and he'll call upon a Hungarian reporter.

Mr. Prime Minister, welcome.

We have just had another meaningful discussion about a lot of issues, starting with our bilateral relations. Relations between Hungary and the United States are strong, and I want to thank the Prime Minister for that and for your friendship.

I told the Prime Minister I appreciate a man who sticks by his word. When the Prime Minister gives you his word, he means it. He is a strong leader for Hungary. He is a strong ally for the United States. More importantly, he is a strong visionary for free and peaceful societies.