

Statement on House of Representatives Passage of Budget Legislation March 25, 2004

I commend the House for passing a responsible budget that advances our three highest priorities: defending America, winning the war on terror, and promoting growth and job creation, while cutting the deficit in half within 5 years. I am also pleased that this moves us closer to making

the tax relief for America's workers and families permanent.

I urge the House and Senate to reach agreement quickly and pass a budget based on my principles of funding what's necessary to protect America and keep our economy growing, while restraining spending elsewhere.

Remarks at a Bush-Cheney Reception in Boston, Massachusetts March 25, 2004

Thank you all. Thanks for the warm welcome. It's great to be back in Boston. Thank you. *[Laughter]* I spent some quality time here in the seventies—*[laughter]*—mostly in the library at Harvard, of course. *[Laughter]* Well, I spent some quality time here.

I really appreciate the traditions here in Massachusetts. Last weekend I had the honor of participating in one of the city's finest traditions. It was the annual Saint Patrick's Day breakfast in South Boston. I called in. The good senator took my call. Actually, he took Andy Card's call, a great Massachusetts citizen, and Andy handed me the phone. When I called in, I had the feeling they were going to ask me about a Massachusetts politician who had his eye on the White House, so I addressed the issue as directly as possible: I told Mitt the job was filled until 2008.

I'm proud of the job this good man is doing as Governor of this great State. Mitt Romney is a great Governor. And like me, he married very well. *[Laughter]* I'm proud Ann is here with us tonight. Ann, thank you for coming.

And I'm sorry Laura is not here. She is a fabulous First Lady. She is a great wife. She's visiting her mom in Midland,

Texas. Like me, we put our faith in families first, above all. And she is—*[applause]*.

I appreciate my friend Ambassador Dick Egan, for helping make this an incredibly successful fundraiser. The country called, and he responded as the Ambassador to Ireland. He did a fine job on behalf of the citizens of this country. Dick, thank you for your service.

And my old buddy, the former Governor of Massachusetts, Bill Weldis here tonight. I appreciate you coming, Governor. I want to thank all the State officials who are here and local officials who are here. I see the high sheriff and others here today. I want to thank my friend Joe O'Donnell for renting a tie for tonight. *[Laughter]* I appreciate so very much Mercer Reynolds, who is the national finance chairman for my campaign, for taking time out to make sure that we're able to get our message out all across our country.

I want to thank all the people who have worked so hard to really do a fantastic job, when you think about it. We've come to Boston, Massachusetts—some people would think that we wouldn't have much support here. But they're wrong. We've got a lot of support in this city.

I want to thank Darrell Crate, who is the chairman of the Massachusetts Republican Party, for being here. And I want to thank all the grassroots activists who are here. Nobody should take any State for granted in 2004.

The Vice President and I are counting on you. We want your help. We want you out there turning those voters out. Speaking about the Vice President, I made a really good pick when I asked Dick Cheney to be the Vice President of the United States. One time, giving a speech in front of Mother and Dad, I said, "Dick Cheney is the finest Vice President our country has ever had." Mother said, "Wait a minute." [Laughter] But he's doing a great job. [Laughter]

I've had the opportunity to observe the two United States Senators from this State. Your senior Senator, Ted Kennedy, is a very effective legislator. In Washington, he's known as the conservative Senator from Massachusetts. [Laughter] Your other Senator, my opponent, is an experienced Senator. He's built up quite a record. My opponent has been in Washington long enough to take both sides on just about every issue. [Laughter] He voted for the PATRIOT Act, for NAFTA, for the No Child Left Behind Act, and for the use of force in Iraq. Now he opposes the PATRIOT Act, NAFTA, the No Child Left Behind Act, and the liberation of Iraq. My opponent clearly feels very strongly about each of these issues. [Laughter]

In order to lead this country, you have to be consistent and clear. Someone asked Senator Kerry why he voted against the \$87 billion funding bill to help our troops in Iraq. Here's what he said: "I actually did vote for the 87 billion, before I voted against it"—[laughter]—end of quote. [Laughter] That sure clears things up, doesn't it? [Laughter]

His answers aren't always so clear, but the voters will have a clear choice in this campaign. It's a choice between keeping the tax relief that is moving this economy

forward or putting the burden of higher taxes back on the American people. It is a choice between an America that leads the world with strength and confidence or an America that is uncertain in the face of danger.

I'm looking forward to this campaign. I'm looking forward to traveling this great country to talk about what I want to do for our country. I'm looking forward to reminding people that in 3 years, we've achieved great things. The most important thing is that we have a positive vision, an optimistic vision, a hopeful vision for the years ahead. We have a positive vision for winning the war against terror and extending peace and freedom throughout the world, a positive vision for promoting opportunity and compassion here at home. I'm going to leave no doubt where we stand, and we're going to win on the 2d of November.

The last 3 years have brought serious challenges, and we have given serious answers. We came to office with a stock market in decline, an economy heading into recession. We delivered historic tax relief, and now our economy is the fastest growing of any major industrialized nation in the world. We had to confront corporate crime that cost people their jobs and their savings. We passed strong corporate reform and made it clear we will not tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America.

We saw war and grief arrive on a quiet September morning, so we pursued the terrorist enemy across the world. We've captured or killed many of the key leaders of the Al Qaida network, and the rest of them will learn there is no cave or hole deep enough to hide from American justice. We confronted the dangers of state-sponsored terror and the spread of weapons of mass destruction, so we ended two of the most violent and dangerous regimes on Earth. We freed over 50 million people, and once again, America is proud to lead the armies of liberation.

When Dick Cheney and I came to office, we found a military that was underfunded

and underappreciated, so we gave our military the resources and respect they deserve. And today, no one can question the skill, the strength, or the spirit of the United States military.

It is the President's job to confront problems, not to pass them on to future Presidents and future generations. A President needs to step up to make the hard decisions and to keep his commitments, and that is how I will continue to lead our Nation.

Great events will turn on this election. The man who sits in the Oval Office will set the course of the war on terror and the direction of our economy. The security and prosperity of America are at stake. The other side hasn't offered much in the ways of strategy to win the war or policies to expand our economy. So far, all we hear from that side is a lot of old bitterness and partisan anger. Anger is not an agenda for the future of this country. I will take on the big issues with optimism and resolve and determination. I will make it clear to the American people, I stand ready to lead this Nation for 4 more years.

The big issue for every American family is the Federal tax burden. With the largest tax relief since Ronald Reagan was President, we've left more money in the hands that earned it. By spending and investing and helping to create new jobs, the American people have used their money far better than the Federal Government could have.

I'm optimistic about the future of this country because I've seen Americans overcome economic challenge after economic challenge. I'm optimistic because of the good policies we've put in place but optimistic because of the hard work and productivity of the American people.

Economic growth in the second half of 2003 was the fastest in nearly 20 years. Manufacturing activity is increasing. Business investment is rising. Disposable income is rising. Inflation is low. Homeownership is at the highest rate ever. The

minority homeownership rate is at the—nearly at the highest level ever. Job creation is gaining strength. We've added over 350,000 new jobs over the last 6 months. The tax relief we passed is working.

My opponent has a different view of tax relief. When we passed an increase in the child credit to help families, he voted against it. When we reduced the marriage penalty, he voted against it. When we created a lower 10-percent rate for working families, he voted against it. When we reduced the tax rate on dividends that many seniors depend upon, he voted against it. When we gave small businesses tax incentives to expand and hire, he voted against it. When we passed a phase-out of the death tax, he voted against it. We're beginning to see a pattern. [*Laughter*]

My opponent is one of the main opponents of tax relief in the United States Congress. When tax increases are proposed, it's a lot easier to get a "yes" vote out of him. Over the years, he's voted over 350 times for higher taxes on the American people, including the biggest tax increase in American history. He supported a 50 cent a gallon tax increase on gasoline. He wanted you to pay the extra money at the pump, and he wouldn't even throw in a free car wash. [*Laughter*]

Now my opponent is proposing a lot of new Federal spending—a lot of Federal spending. But somehow he's going to have to pay for it. There's a gap between Senator Kerry's spending promises and Senator Kerry's promise to lower the deficit. It's called a tax gap. Given Senator Kerry's record for supporting tax increases, it's pretty clear how he's going to fill the tax gap. He's going to tax all of you. But fortunately, he will not have that chance.

Higher taxes would undermine growth and destroy jobs just as this economy is getting stronger. To help grow the American economy and to create more jobs for American workers, I have a better idea. We should make all the tax cuts permanent.

And there's more to do. We must maintain spending discipline in the Nation's Capital. I've offered a plan to protect small-business owners and employees from frivolous lawsuits and needless regulation. We need tort reform in America. I've laid out a strategy to help control the cost of health care so people have better access to good health care through association health care plans and tax-free health savings accounts. We must have medical liability reform to protect our docs and to stop running up the cost of medicine on people.

In order to make sure we grow our economy, we need to reject economic isolationism and open up other countries' markets for U.S. goods and U.S. services.

I proposed—in order to make sure job growth is strong, we need to have an energy policy in America. We need to modernize the electricity system, and this country must become less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

Oh yes, there's a lot of talk about job creation. But my opponent is against every one of these job-creating measures. Empty talk about jobs and economic isolationism will not get anyone hired. The best way to make sure people can find work is to reelect a pro-growth, pro-entrepreneur President.

Our future also depends on America's leadership in the world. The momentum of freedom in our time is strong, but we still face serious dangers. Al Qaida is wounded but not broken. Terrorists are testing our will in Afghanistan and Iraq. Regimes in North Korea and Iran are challenging the peace. If America shows weakness and uncertainty in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This will not happen on my watch.

This Nation is strong and confident in the cause of freedom. And today, no friend or enemy doubts the word of the United States of America. America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Afghanistan. The Taliban chose defiance; the Taliban are no longer in power. Amer-

ica and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Iraq. The dictator chose defiance; now the dictator sits in a prison cell.

September the 11th, 2001, taught a lesson I will never forget. America must confront threats before they fully materialize. In Iraq, my administration looked at the intelligence information, and we saw a threat. Members of Congress looked at the intelligence information, and they saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence information, and it saw a threat. The previous administration and previous Congress looked at the intelligence and made regime change in Iraq the policy of our Nation. In 2002, the United Nations Security Council yet again demanded a full accounting of Saddam Hussein's weapons program. As he had for over a decade, Saddam Hussein refused to comply. So I had a choice to make, either to take the word of a madman or defend this country. Given that choice, I will defend America every time.

My opponent admits that Saddam Hussein was a threat. He just didn't support my decision to remove Saddam from power. Maybe he was hoping Saddam would lose the next Iraqi election. [*Laughter*] We showed the dictator and a watching world that America means what it says. Because our coalition acted, Saddam Hussein's torture chambers are closed. Because we acted, Iraq's weapons programs are ended forever. Because we acted, a source of money to suiciders in the Middle East has been ended. Because we acted, nations like Libya got the message and renounced their own weapons programs. Because we acted, an example of democracy is rising in the heart of the Middle East. Because we acted, the world is more free and America is more secure.

We still face thugs and terrorists in Iraq who would rather go on killing the innocent than accept the advance of liberty. And there's a reason. They know that a free Iraq will be major defeat for the cause of

terror. This collection of killers is trying to shake the will of America. They don't understand our country. America will never be intimidated by thugs and assassins.

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

On national security, Americans have the clearest possible choice. My opponent says he approves of bold action in the world but only if other countries do not object. I'm all for united action, and so are the 34 coalition partners in Iraq right now. Yet America must never outsource America's national security decision to the leaders of other countries.

Some are skeptical that the war on terror is really a war at all. My opponent said, and I quote, "The war on terror is less of a military operation and far more of an intelligence gathering, law enforcement operation." I disagree—strongly disagree. Our Nation followed this approach after the World Trade Center was bombed in 1993. The matter was handled in the courts and thought by some to be settled. But the terrorists were still training in Afghanistan, plotting in other nations, and drawing up more ambitious plans. After the chaos and carnage of September the 11th, it is not enough to serve our enemies with legal papers. With those attacks, the terrorists and their supporters declared war on the United States of America, and war is what they got.

Our men and women in the military are taking great risks, and they're doing great work. At bases across our country and the world, I've had the privilege of meeting

with those who defend our country and sacrifice for our security. I've seen their great decency and their unselfish courage. I can assure you, ladies and gentlemen, the cause of freedom is in good hands.

This Nation is prosperous and strong, yet we need to remember that our greatest strength is in the hearts and souls of our citizens. We're strong because of the values we try to live by, courage and compassion, reverence and integrity. We're strong because of the institutions that help give us direction and purpose, our families, our schools, our religious congregations. These values and institutions are fundamental to our lives, and they deserve the respect of our Government.

We stand for a fair treatment of faith-based groups, charitable groups of all faiths, so they can receive Federal support for their works of compassion and healing. We will not stand for Government discrimination against people of faith.

We stand for welfare reforms that require work and strengthen marriage, which have helped millions of Americans find independence and dignity. We will not stand for any attempt to weaken those reforms and send people back into lives of dependence.

We stand for a culture of life in which every person counts and every person matters. We will not stand for the treatment of any life as a commodity to be experimented upon, to be exploited, or to be cloned.

We stand for the confirmation of judges who strictly and faithfully interpret the law. We will not stand for judges who undermine democracy by legislating from the bench and judges who try to remake the values of America by court order.

We stand for a culture of responsibility in America. We're changing the culture of our country 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

in life. If you're fortunate enough to be a mother or a father, 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 responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourself.

For all Americans, these years in our history will always stand apart. There are quiet times in the life of a nation when little is expected of its leaders. These aren't one of those times. You and I are living in a period when the stakes are high, the challenges are difficult, a time when resolve is needed.

None of us will ever forget that week when one era ended and another began. On September the 14th, 2001, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers. I'll never forget the day. A guy looked at me and said, "Don't let me down." A lot of the workers were shouting, "Whatever it takes. Whatever it takes, Mr. President." As we all did that day, these men and women searching through the rubble took it personally. I took it personally. I have a responsibility that goes on. I will never relent in bringing justice to our enemies. I will defend America, whatever it takes.

In these times, I've also been witness to the character of this Nation. Not so long ago, some had their doubts about the American character. They had doubts about our capacity to meet a serious challenge or to serve a cause greater than self-interest. Americans have given their answer. I've seen the unselfish courage of our troops. I've seen the heroism of Americans in the face of danger. I've seen the spirit of service and compassion renewed in our country. We've all seen our Nation unite in common purpose when it mattered most.

We'll need all these qualities for the work ahead. We have a war to win. And the world is counting on us to lead the cause of freedom and peace. We have a duty to spread opportunity to every part of America. This is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it. And we know that for our country, the best days lie ahead.

God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:10 p.m. at the Park Plaza Hotel and Towers. In his remarks, he referred to Massachusetts State Senator Jack Hart; Gov. Mitt Romney of Massachusetts and his wife, Ann; former U.S. Ambassador to Ireland Richard Egan; former Gov. William F. Weld of Massachusetts; and Joseph J. O'Donnell, fundraiser, and Mercer Reynolds, national finance chairman, Bush-Cheney '04, Inc.

Remarks in Albuquerque, New Mexico March 26, 2004

Thank you very much. Thank you all. You all be seated, please. Thanks for coming. [*Laughter*]

I am glad to be in New Mexico. The sun is bright, and the people are friendly. Thanks for having me. We're here to talk about homeownership. We're here to talk

about helping people realize their dreams. We're here to talk about making sure the business environment, particularly for small businesses, is strong and open so that people can realize their dream of owning their own business. We're here to talk about the great courage of America.