

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.

Before I begin, I do want to thank my friend Alphonso Jackson. He's the Acting Secretary. That means that the Senate hasn't approved him yet. [Laughter] So I made sure he sat next to Senator Domenici on the airplane. [Laughter]

But I've known Alphonso for a long time. He was the head of the Dallas Housing Authority. He did a great job of making sure the Housing Authority worked well. Now he's in Washington with me to make sure that the HUD works well. We want money being spent to help people buy homes. That's what we want. We want more people owning their own home in America. And Alphonso, I want to thank you.

I want to thank John Kaltenbach, who helped arrange this event. I want to thank the members of the Home Builders Association of Central New Mexico. I want to thank all the entrepreneurs who are here. I want to thank the builders who are here.

I want to thank Senator Pete Domenici. He flew down with me. This guy is a fabulous United States Senator. He's really a good one. That's why, when I try to get things done, I make sure Pete Domenici knows what we're trying to do. He's accomplished. He also loves New Mexico a lot. He loves the people here.

And so does Heather Wilson—Heather Wilson, a great Congresswoman. She's really effective, got a decent soul. She's an accomplished, decent person, and I love working with her. They let old Steve Pearce in from eastern New Mexico. [Laughter] You might remember I was raised in Midland, Texas. As a matter of fact, that's where Laura is today. She's in Midland, right across the border from eastern New Mexico. She's visiting with her mother. But I've spent a lot of time in eastern New Mexico, so I know people like Steve Pearce, down-to-earth, honest, patriotic, willing to serve his country as the United States Congressman from that part of the world. Steve, thank you for coming with us today.

I want to thank Mayor Bill Standley from the city of Farmington for coming down to say hello. Thank you, mayor, for being here—thank the other local officials who are here. It's good to be in front of a crowd where people are wearing “gimme” hats or cowboy hats. [Laughter] That doesn't happen all the time in Washington. Let me just say, it doesn't happen nearly enough in Washington. [Laughter]

Today when I landed, I met a fellow named Irving Hall. Where are you, Irving? Right there. Stand up. Now you can sit down. [Laughter] Irving Hall works for our Government at the laboratories, the high tech—Sandia—I think you worked there, didn't you, Irving? Yes. He worked there, and came time to retire, and his boss said, “What are you going to do, Irving?” He said, “Why don't you make a difference?” I believe that's what your boss told—what you told me your boss said. See, he met me at the airplane. I'd never met Irving before. But the reason he did is because this fellow, upon retirement, decided he was going to do something to help somebody, that he was going to dedicate his years of retirement for making somebody's life better by building homes for Habitat For Humanity.

I love the spirit of voluntarism in America, the fact that people like Irving are willing to take time out of their life to make a difference in somebody else's life. A lot of times we talk about the strength of America being our military—it's part of our strength, and we intend to keep the military strong—or the size of our wallet, relative to other countries, and that's important. But the true strength of America is the heart and souls of the American people. That's the strength of our country, the fact that there are people willing to love a neighbor just like you'd like to be loved yourself.

And so, Irving, I want to thank you for setting such a good example for your community and your State and your Nation. I urge others to take time out of your life

to make a difference in a child who may be lonely, in helping somebody learn to read, by providing shelter for the homeless or food for the hungry, and in so doing, you will make America a hopeful place for all our citizens. Thank you, Irving.

I am very optimistic about the future of this country for a lot of reasons. One, I know the character of the American people. When you know the character of the American people, you can't help but be optimistic because we're a can-do group of folks. We refuse to let anything get in our way. And we're able to overcome challenges, and we have overcome a lot of challenges during the past 3 years.

Let me remind you of what we have overcome as a nation. We have overcome a recession. That means things are going backwards. A recession is a time when things are going backwards, where people are having trouble finding work, where there's not much hope in certain quarters of our country. We overcame that. And as we came out of a recession—and by the way, the stock market had begun to decline in March of 2000. The recession began in early '01. And when the stock market declined, that too affects people's attitudes. When you think about it, there's a lot of retired folks who look at their portfolios and see it going down. That's kind of a discouraging moment when that happens. You begin to wonder whether all the savings you put aside are going to be there when you really need them most.

And as we started to come out of the recession, we got attacked by an enemy on September the 11th, 2001, and it affected us. We lost nearly 1 million jobs in the 3 months after September the 11th attack. It also affected the way we have to think in America. We used to think that oceans can protect us. We now realized that America can be a battleground, and therefore, we have to do everything in our power to protect America. We're doing everything at home we can. But I'm going to tell you, the best way to protect America

is to stay on the offense and get the terrorists before they get us. September the 11th affected us. It was one of the challenges that I talked about.

We also had some corporate scandals that affected the confidence of America. You know, it's important in a system like ours that people have confidence in balance sheets and numbers. If you're an investor or an employee or a shareholder, you've got to have—trust people. And yet there are some people who betrayed the trust. We had some corporate citizens who were not responsible. They didn't do their duty as responsible citizens.

We passed tough laws. The three Members here worked with us. We sent a clear message: We're not going to tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America. You cannot lie and cheat shareholders and employees without consequences in this country. But we overcame that. We're overcoming it.

And then I made a choice to defend the security of the country, which also affected our economy and affected the confidence of the people. September the 11th taught a lesson. It's an important lesson for America. We must deal with threats before they fully materialize. That's the lesson of September the 11th. You can't see what you think is a threat and hope it goes away. You used to could when the oceans protected us, but the lesson of September the 11th is, is when the President sees a threat, we must deal with it before it comes to fruition through death on our own soils, for example.

I looked at the intelligence and saw a threat in Iraq. The United States Congress looked at the same intelligence, and they saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence, and it saw a threat. In fall of 2002, I went back to the United Nations. I said, "Look, why don't we deal with this threat together? We all see a threat, so why don't we get Saddam Hussein to do what the world has been demanding to do for over a decade,

which is to reveal the weapons programs and get rid of him, for the sake of the security of the world. Your choice, Mr. Saddam.” He said, “No, I’m not interested.”

You see, given that choice whether to trust the word of a madman, a man who had used chemical weapons on his own people, or to defend our country, I will choose to defend America every time. [*Applause*] Thank you all.

The challenge we overcame was the fact that on your TV screens you saw the words “Marching to War.” I don’t know if you remember that or not. As we were trying to get Saddam to disarm peacefully through the United Nations and the collective will of the world, you see “March to War.” That’s hard if you’re a business person. It’s hard to risk capital or expand your business when the country is marching to war. It’s not a good thought. Or if you’re a consumer, maybe thinking about buying a house, if you look on your TV screens that say “March to War,” you’re not so sure you want to buy the house then, because you’re not sure what the consequences of marching to war will be.

Now we’re marching to peace. We’re marching to peace, and the world is better off. We’ve overcome that obstacle. And the reason I say we’ve overcome these four things is, I want to remind you of the facts.

First, our economy is growing. It’s strong, and it’s getting stronger. Secondly, inflation is low, and interest rates are low. Manufacturing activity is up. The unemployment rate today is lower than the average rate in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. New Mexico’s unemployment rate is 5.7 percent, down from 6 percent a year ago. Things are improving. Things are getting better. Thanks to being the most productive workforce in America—and I might say thanks to good policies—this economy is strong, and it’s getting stronger.

I look forward to continuing to make the argument that the reason why things are improving, besides the fact that the character of this country is strong, is that we

let people keep more of their own money. That’s what tax relief is. When you got more of your own money in your pocket, pretty good chance you’re going to demand an additional good or a service. And when you demand an additional good or a service, somebody is going to provide it for you. And when somebody provides an additional good or a service, somebody is more likely to keep a job or to find a job. That’s the way the economy works.

And so the tax relief we passed came at the right time. The recession was a shallow recession, thanks to the tax relief. The tax relief helped families because we raised the child credit to \$1,000 per child. The tax relief helped marriages because we reduced the marriage penalty. What kind of Tax Code is it that penalizes marriage, by the way? We helped our seniors by reducing the taxes on dividends.

We also helped the small-business community a lot in our tax relief plan. I’ll tell you why. Most small businesses are sole proprietorships or Subchapter S corporations, which means they pay tax at the individual income-tax rate. So when you hear me talking about reducing all taxes, I want you to think about the benefit that does for the small-business community. Seventy percent of new jobs in America are created by small-business owners. And therefore, if you’re worried about job creation, it makes sense to stimulate the small-business sector of this country, and the tax relief did exactly that.

One of the great successes of this period of time, a period of time that had a lot of challenges, is the fact that housing starts and homeownership are incredibly strong right now. Low interest rates help. It makes it easier, obviously, to afford a mortgage, but so did the tax policies. See, when people feel more confident they’re going to have money in their pocket, they’re more likely to go out and buy a home.

The home sales were the highest ever recently. That’s exciting news for the country, when you think about it—good for the

builders—[laughter]—but more importantly, it's good for the owners. We want people owning something in America. That's what we want. The great dream about America is, "I can own my own home," people say, or "I can own my own business," like many back here do, or "I can own and manage my own health care account or my own retirement account."

See, we want more people owning something because when somebody owns something, they have a vital stake in the future of the country. The more people who own their home, the better off America is, and we're making good progress. Our Nation's 68-percent homeownership rate is the highest ever. More people own homes now than ever before in the country's history, and that's exciting for the future of America.

There's a homeownership gap in America that exists for minorities, and we've got to do something about it. So Alphonso mentioned the goal—I set a good goal, which is adding 5.5 million new minority homeowners in America by the end of the decade. When we're talking about homeownership, we're talking about for everybody. That's what I'm talking about. The more people who own their home, the better off America will be.

Since then, since I laid out the goal, more than 1.5 million minority families have become homeowners. And for the first time ever, more than half of minority households own their own home. We're making progress closing the gap. But more importantly, people are understanding what it means to be a buyer and an owner. People understand what it means to say, "This is my house."

Lori Benavidez is with us. Lori, thank you for coming. She's a mom of two. She brought her own mother with her—that would your grandmother. [Laughter] Lori is—when I met her backstage—the kind of person that you want really owning a home because she's so thrilled with the idea. We helped her. I say we—people here in this part of the world did. We got

a program that helps people who rent through Voucher 8 programs to afford a downpayment. It helps them take some of those payments and set it aside for a downpayment so that she can afford to buy her own home. What she did is she got counseling services. I know there's some—we'll talk a little bit about that in a second.

Let me tell you what she said, though, about owning her first home. She said, "I never thought the day would happen when my girls and I would be sitting in our own home. It's a miracle," she said. Yes, Lori said, "You made it possible." I think she told me that. I said, "No, Lori, you made it possible. You're the reason why the miracle happened," because she decided she wanted to follow her dream. And the role of Government is to help people realize their dream, not stand in the way of dreams but to make it easier for people to realize their dream.

And there are practical ways to do that. One practical way is to help people with a downpayment. There are low-income citizens in our country who simply cannot afford a downpayment. They may be able to afford the mortgage over time, but they—one of the hurdles for homeownership is, "I can't—I don't want to put the money up. I just don't have that kind of cash to make the downpayment," people will say.

I'm sure some homebuilders and real estate agents know what I'm talking about. They say, "I think this is what I want to live out my dream, but I can't put up the money." So the Government has a chance to help, in my judgment. I want to thank very much the Congress working on the—providing money to help people with their downpayment on their home, the practical way to encourage more people to own a home, to give them a chance. There will be \$900,000 coming in May to help families in this State afford a downpayment.

A practical way—another practical way to help people, first-time homebuyers is to make zero downpayment loans possible for

those whose mortgages are insured by the Federal Housing Administration. In other words, you go to your FHA administration, get your loan insured, then you don't have to pay a downpayment. Right now they have to pay a 3-percent downpayment. It doesn't sound like a lot to some. It's a lot to people who are struggling to make ends meet and who yet still want to realize their dream.

Those are two practical ways to help people cross the hurdle—the initial hurdle of buying a home. By the way, if we can get the FHA plan in place, it will help 150,000 families buy homes in the first year alone. It's a practical way, again, of encouraging homeownership.

I don't know if you saw Lori. She had a tear in her eye when I introduced her because of the thrill of owning her own home. We want Lori all over the country to feel the same way, to have that great sense of enthusiasm and joy about saying, "This is my home. Welcome to my home."

The second way we can help is to make sure that Americans understand what it means to buy a home. You know, I don't know if you've looked at those forms, but there's a lot of fine print. [Laughter] And if you're nervous about fine print, like a lot of good citizens are, then that may become a stumbling block to buy a home. "I'm not going to sign anything that's got all that fine print," people might say.

And there's a practical way to help people, and that is through counseling services. You've got good counseling services right here in New Mexico. Home New Mexico is such a counseling service. Tierra del Sol, in Las Cruces, is a counseling service.

Lori told me she got counseling services. I don't know if there's any counselors here, but there are people all across the country who get help through HUD, that sit down with people like Lori and explain what it means to buy a home, own a home, and the responsibilities with owning a home. They explain the credit policies. They explain what it means to make a monthly

payment. They explain what the monthly payments will be. It's a way of compassionate people to help somebody who wants to realize their dream.

As well, under the Fair and Accurate Credit Transaction Act, people will have access to their credit report. And that's important. A lot of people have never seen their credit report before. Now you got access to it.

See, what happens is, people go start to try to buy a home and up pops the credit report, and they say, "Sorry, brother, your credit isn't any good. You can't buy a home." People need to be able to look at all the hurdles and impediments to buying a home as they go through the process. We don't want people to have their dreams crushed. We want people to realize dreams. And so I want to thank the counselors who are here for working with the Lori Benavidez of the world, to explain to them what it means to be a homeowner.

As well we've got to make sure affordable housing is available to more and more citizens. In other words, we've got to provide incentive for homebuilders to build low-income houses, and so I've proposed a single-family affordable housing tax credit. It's a good plan. It's a plan that will make more homes available in parts of America that—where a lot of homes haven't been built or rehabilitated. It's a good way to encourage people to build homes in *barrios* or inner cities. It's a good way to make sure affordable housing is more available to citizens from all walks of life.

I also have called upon real estate and mortgage—the mortgage finance industry to join in our efforts in closing the minority homeownership gap to help low-income people buy a home. And more than two dozen major companies and organizations have stepped up. Suburban Mortgage outfit here in New Mexico as well as the Bank of Albuquerque have committed to extending more loans to low-income families and to financing the construction of more affordable homes. And I want to thank these

corporate citizens for stepping up to the plate and helping the country become a better country by encouraging more people to own their own piece of property.

Homeownership is strong. We need to keep it that way. I want these builders back here employing people. I want people showing up for work. By the way, when it comes to work, we ought to have reasonable immigration policy. I bet you'd get a fair appraisal from some of the businessowners back here. They'll tell you that the immigration policy of this country isn't conducive for good economy; let me put it to you that way. I mean, you don't know if you're hiring somebody who's here legally or not legally.

See, we got a policy that has encouraged forged documents and smugglers. My attitude is if you—a builder back here can't find an American willing to do the job, they ought to have the ability to put somebody on the job who can do the job. My attitude is, is that we ought to have a temporary-worker's card for people who are willing to work.

This is not an amnesty program. I don't think it makes sense to have amnesty right now in the country. Amnesty would encourage further illegal immigration. And amnesty would say to those who have stood in line for a long period of time who want to be a legal citizen, "Standing in line legally wasn't worth it. We're going to let somebody cut in line."

What I'm talking about is a worker plan, a plan that understands people coming up from Mexico want to put food on their table for their sons and daughters and that people right here behind me are looking for somebody to put roof—lay roof or lay tile, and they can't find workers here. In order to make sure the economy runs well, in order to make sure we treat people humanely, we need a temporary-worker plan. It makes sense to do that. I look forward to working with Congress to get something reasonable out.

A couple of other things I've got on my mind I'd like to share with you about how to make sure America remains a good place to do business. You hear a lot of talk about jobs going overseas. Some are going overseas, and some from overseas are coming here. But the best way to make sure people can find work in America is to make sure the business environment, the entrepreneurial environment is strong and solid, that it's a good place to do business; let me put it to you that way. If you want people hiring people in America, we've got to make sure America's a good place to do business, a good place for our employers, and there's some things we need to do.

We need tort reform in America—too many lawsuits. Ask these employers what it's like when you're threatened by a lawsuit or you see your neighbor threatened by a lawsuit. There's too many lawsuits in the country; there just is. There's reasonable tort reform. Congress passed—the House passed some class-action reform and some asbestos reform and medical liability reform. It's stuck in the Senate. As people tell you, the trial lawyers are a strong lobby up there in Washington, DC. But I'm going to keep pushing for tort reform because it's right, and it's the way to make sure America stays a competitive place to do business.

Speaking about medical liability reform, another issue that plagues small-business owners and employers is the cost of health care. It's going up, and we need to address the cost of health care without letting the Federal Government run the program.

And there are some practical ways to do that. One, I told you about medical liability reform that's got stuck in the Senate. But one of the reasons health care costs are going up is because of the frivolous and junk lawsuits that are threatening our docs and hospitals. And so therefore, docs and hospitals practice what's called defensive medicine in order to protect themselves in a court of law.

Listen, there's reasonable reform. But what's not reasonable is a system today when you've got trial lawyers who view the legal system as a lottery where they can hit the jackpot, where they can get a big salary. All that's going to do is make your health care costs too high.

We need association health plans for small businesses so they can pool risk. If you're a small builder here in Albuquerque, it's hard to go into the marketplace and find affordable insurance for your hands. But if you're able to team up with other builders, not only in New Mexico but around the country, and pool risks just like big corporations do, you're going to be able to find more affordable health care for your employees.

We also need to expand health savings accounts. This is a great idea, by the way, for small businesses and employees to be able to put money in tax-free, keep it in your plan tax-free, and take it out tax-free. You cover incidentals, and then you can have major medical to make sure you cover your big expenses. And believe me, this is a way for small businesses to be able to better afford health care.

You know what else we need to do? We need an energy plan. Pete Domenici is in the lead on having an energy plan in the United States Senate. It's stuck in the Senate right now, and Pete's going to get it unstuck. He's going to need some help. You might want to write some other people up in Washington, DC, who aren't with us here today. This bill needs to get moving. We need to be—we need to encourage conservation. We need to encourage alternative sources of energy. We need to modernize the electricity grid. But for the sake of keeping jobs here at home and for the sake of expanding the economy, we need to be less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

I'll tell you what else we need to do. Ask these builders what it's like to put up with Federal, State, and local regulations. I told Alphonso we've got to do something

about it at the Federal level, and he says we are. So we'll watch him. [Laughter] He's got a—you don't need to fill out the same form to meet the same requirement at all three levels of government. Regulations cost small businesses a lot of money. It means you have less money in your pocket to expand your business and hire people; that's what that means. If you want to keep jobs here in America, we'll need to be—we need less paperwork.

And by the way, I don't know, Alphonso may not agree with this, but I bet a lot of the paperwork that's filed up in the Federal Government is never read. [Laughter] And if that's the case, it's another reason to make sure we don't have too much paperwork.

The other thing we need to do here in this country is to make the tax cuts we passed permanent. The way it works up there is, they passed the tax cuts so people have more money in their pocket, and they're set to expire. The child credit is going to go down next year unless the Senate and the House make the tax cuts permanent. The marriage penalty's going to go up next year. The 10-percent bracket expansion is going to shrink. In other words, it's a tax increase. We're fixing to get taxed if the Congress doesn't act. These three Members are strong supporters of making those aspects of the tax cuts permanent. It makes sense not to be taking money out of people's pockets just as this economy is beginning to recover. We want to keep demand strong. We want people being able to have their own money.

I like to tell people, the people of the country spent their own money better than the Federal Government could have, and that's why the economy is getting stronger. So they need to make the tax cuts permanent. If you're a businessperson, you need to be able to plan. You don't want to think your taxes are going to be here today and gone tomorrow. You need certainty in the Tax Code. Ask any businessperson what it's like to run a business, and the more certain

the environment is in the future, the more likely it is they will be successful, and when they're successful, somebody will be able to find a job.

I also want to talk about trade. Presidents before me in both political parties made decisions to make sure America's markets were open for goods produced overseas. It made sense in many ways. It helped keep consumer prices down. It helps the consumer when there's competition.

My attitude is, if our markets are open, I want the other people's markets to be open. My attitude is, instead of walling each other off like the economic isolationists want us to do, let's be confident. Let's trust in our entrepreneurs. Let's understand our farmers and ranchers are the best at the world. Let's say, "If you trade with us in an open way, you've got to open up your market." That's the Bush policy, "You open up your market so we can compete."

Economic isolationism will lead to economic stagnation. We can't have that. If we want people working, we've got to be confident in our ability to compete. A lot of people make a living here in America because their products they make are sold overseas. We're good at things in this country. When you see that label "Made in the USA," you know you got yourself a quality product. I want "Made in the USA" sold all over the world.

What I'm telling you is in order to be—make sure people can find work and retain a job, we've got to make sure this economy grows. These are what we call progrowth policies. We say we understand that the vibrancy of the country is in the small-business sector. We're vibrant when we make sure the entrepreneurial spirit is strong.

I want to talk about one other thing we've got to do to make sure this is a good place for people to realize their dreams and start a business and get well educated, is we've got to make sure this

country is on the leading end of broadband technology. You see, new ideas and new businesses and new ways to educate people in Farmington, New Mexico, are going to occur when we're able to get information flowing across cables and telephone lines in a fast way. That's what broadband technology is. It means we'll open the highways of knowledge—new highways of knowledge.

This country needs a national goal for broadband technology, for the spread of broadband technology. We ought to have a universal, affordable access for broadband technology by the year 2007, and then we ought to make sure as soon as possible thereafter, consumers have got plenty of choices when it comes to purchasing the broadband carrier. See, the more choices there are, the more the price will go down. And the more the price goes down, the more users there will be. And the more users there will be, the more likely it is America will stay on the competitive edge of world trade.

The more users there are, the more likely it is people will be able to have interesting new ways to receive doctors' advices in the home. The more affordable broadband technology is, the more innovative we can be with education. It's important that we stay on the cutting edge of technological change, and one way to do so is to have a bold plan for broadband.

Let me say one thing about broadband. We don't need to tax access to broadband. The Congress must not tax access to broadband technology if we want to spread it around.

The role of Government is to create an environment in which the entrepreneurial spirit is strong and in which people are able to realize their dreams. And that's what we're here talking about, when you think about it. We're talking about making sure America is the place where dreams can be realized and people can own something. People can own their own business. People can own their own home. People have a chance to say, "This is mine. This

is my property.” And we’re making good progress here, doing just that.

Remember where I started? I talked about the hurdles we’ve overcome. We really have. The country is a strong country. It’s overcome a lot, and there’s more hurdles to overcome in the future. I’m confident of that. But you know what else I’m confident of? We’ll overcome. This is such

a great country, full of decent and honorable people.

Thank you for coming. May God bless. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:45 a.m. at Expo New Mexico. In his remarks, he referred to John Kaltenbach, owner, John Kaltenbach Homes; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Remarks in a Discussion on Homeownership in Phoenix, Arizona March 26, 2004

The President. Thank you all. Thanks a lot. Thank you all very much. I appreciate Doug McCarron’s leadership in terms of making sure people have the skills necessary to work in the jobs of the 21st century. Actually, you look like you’re dressed the way a president should be—[*laughter*]*—*and I’m dressed like a carpenter—[*laughter*]*—*which isn’t all that bad a deal.

I want to thank you for having me here. I appreciate Mike McCarron for opening up this facility. Thank you, Mike, for inviting us. He invited us here so we can have a discussion on job training skills and homeownership.

Before we have the discussion, I do want to say a couple of things. First, I want to recognize some people in the audience. Two great United States Senators, John McCain and John Kyl, are with us. I don’t know if you know this, Doug, but John McCain was telling me on the way over from the airport that he was here when they opened this facility. He told me—he said, “You’re going to find a magnificent training facility.” He forgot to tell me how magnificent it is. This is quite a place—quite a place. I know you’re proud of it.

I appreciate Members of the Congress who are here, J.D. Hayworth, John Shadegg, Jeff Flake, Trent Franks. Thank you all for coming.

It’s such an impressive place, they even brought old Ron Lewis from Kentucky, who’s a Member of the House, with us. Ron, thank you for being here, glad you came. There he is.

Mr. Mayor, Phil Gordon, is with us. Thanks for coming, Mr. Mayor. I appreciate you being here.

I want to thank members of the Carpenters Union who have opened up this beautiful facility to us. Thank you for working hard. Thank you for being responsible citizens who love your family and love your country. Most of all, I’m honored to be in your presence. Thanks for building the stage. [*Laughter*]

Today when I landed, I met a lady named Barbara Lockwood. Barbara, where are you? There she is. Thanks for coming, Barbara. Barbara is a volunteer of Keep Phoenix Beautiful. The reason I bring that up is, communities are really strong when people are willing to volunteer, willing to take time out of their lives to improve the community in which you live. There’s all kinds of ways to do so. Keep Phoenix Beautiful is one such idea. Mentoring a child is an idea. Loving a neighbor like you’d like to be loved yourself is an idea on how to make sure your community is good. I know that many of your members work hard on the day job and volunteer to help