

the message of God's mercy. By reading the Haggadah, which tells the story of the Exodus and explains the traditional Passover Seder, Jewish children learn about their proud heritage and the importance of faith, courage, endurance, and love.

Laura joins me in sending our best wishes for a Happy Passover.

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this message.

Remarks in a Discussion on Job Training and the National Economy in El Dorado, Arkansas

April 6, 2004

The President. Thank you very much. Please be seated. Thank you, Skinny. [Laughter] Gosh, thanks for the warm welcome. It's great to be here. Huckabee told me I'm the first sitting President ever to come to El Dorado, Arkansas, and I'm glad I came. I'm really glad I came. Governor, thank you and Janet for meeting me at the airport. It's great to see you again. Thank you all for being here.

I really want to thank Kathy and her staff for putting up with us. It turns out it's not easy to welcome a President. You've got to have a stage; you've got to have this; you've got to have that. The entourage is huge. We're really glad to be here, because this is going to be an economics lesson coupled with a discussion about how to make sure everybody is educated for the jobs for the 21st century. That's what we're here to talk about. I think you're going to find it interesting.

The best news is, I'm not doing all the talking. I've got some of your fellow citizens here on stage with me that will help make the points necessary, make the points that say, "Look, this is a hopeful time; we've just got to make sure we educate people for the jobs which will exist." That's what we're here to talk about.

A community college is a great place to have this discussion, because the community colleges are very well adapted to meeting the needs of local employers. They're flexible. They're able to say to an employer,

"What do you need? And we'll educate the people for the kind of workers you need." That's why we're here at this community college. Thanks for receiving me.

Lieutenant Governor Rockefeller is with us. Win, I'm glad you're here. Thank you for coming. Congressman John Boozman—he's up from north Arkansas, but he's down here in south Arkansas. Thank you for coming, John, glad you're here. And Cathy is with him too.

I appreciate the mayor, Bobby Beard. Where are you, Bobby? Yes, Bobby. Bobby, you would think you would get a better seat. [Laughter] I appreciate you. Just pick up the garbage. [Laughter] Thanks for coming. Thanks for the hospitality. I appreciate your troopers out there, State—the city police helping us come into town. Thanks a lot. I want to thank all the local officials here from El Dorado, here with us as well, and the county officials. I appreciate the fact that you've allowed Lane Jean, who is the mayor of Magnolia, to be here. Mr. Mayor, appreciate you coming over from Magnolia, Arkansas.

When I landed out there, I met a fellow named Joe McFadden. [Applause] Joe brought his family. [Laughter] Where are you, Joe? Oh, there's Joe, right here, yes. Same guy I met at the airport. [Laughter] Here's the reason I want to talk about Joe right quick. People say America is strong because of our military. And we have a strong military, and I'm going to keep the

military strong. Or people say we're strong because we're the most prosperous nation on the world, and that's positive. We want to keep it that way. We're strong, however, because of people like Joe. See, we're strong because of the hearts and souls of our citizens. That's really our strength.

The strongest part about this country is the fact that we have people who are willing to volunteer time to make the community in which they live a better place. See, Joe is involved with Main Street El Dorado. It's a way to make sure downtown El Dorado, Arkansas, has been revitalized, which is good for the community. He's also involved with the Boy Scouts. That's a wonderful program. It's a good way to pass on values from one generation to the next. Joe is a soldier in the army of compassion. That's what he is.

My call to our fellow citizens is, serve your country by loving a neighbor just like you'd like to be loved yourself. Help feed the hungry. Help find shelter for the homeless. Help a child learn to read. Find somebody who is lonely and surround them with love. See, Government can hand out money, it can dispense justice, but Government can't cause people to love. Love happens when you get inspired in your hearts. My call is to serve like Joe. I appreciate you, Joe. Thank you for setting such a good example.

First, I want to tell you, you're looking at an optimistic fellow, for a lot of reasons. I have seen what our country has come through, and we're strong, stronger than ever. The economy is growing. But let me remind you right quick what we have come through, which makes the statement "the economy is growing" even more profound.

We went through a recession. That's a hard time for a lot of people. That means the country is going backwards in the economy. In other words, we're not growing. And if you're somebody who is looking for work during a recession, it's hard to find a job. If you're a small business during a recession, your future is doubtful; it's

cloudy. Things don't look so good. We passed tax relief, which made this recession the shallowest—one of the shallowest in economic history. In other words, we started to grow.

Just as we started to grow, the enemy hit us, and that hurt. It hurt in a lot of ways. It hurt our economy. We lost nearly a million jobs in the 3 months after the enemy attack. Just remember, during this attack we shut down the airlines. The stock markets closed down for a while. In other words, it hurt our economy. It also changed our outlook.

When I was coming up—in Midland, Texas, I want you to know—[*applause*]
—there you go—which is where Laura is today, helping her mom move, and she sends her love—but we thought oceans could protect us from harm's way. And therefore, if you think an ocean can protect you from harm's way and you see a threat somewhere else, you can decide to deal with it or not; you're pretty well assured that you would be safe here at home.

But they hit us, and it changed the way Government must think about threats—can't take them for granted anymore. I vowed that day that we would bring justice to the killers. We have been on the offense since that day. We'll stay on the offense until those who have done us harm are brought to justice.

It affected us. It was a challenge we had to overcome. First, we had to overcome a recession, then we had to overcome an attack on our country. And just as we started coming out of that period—and we came out, by the way, because America refused to be intimidated. See, one of the greatest things about this country is the spirit of the Americans. You just heard me talk about the compassion. We've also got great spirit in this country. We are a determined, strong people.

Just as we started coming out of that, it turned out that some of our citizens forgot what it meant to be responsible citizens. You know who I'm talking about,

those who didn't tell the truth to their shareholders and their employees. We passed tough laws. Democrats and Republicans came together in Washington, DC, and sent a very clear message: We're not going to tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America; we'll hold people to account for not telling the truth.

However, that affected us, and it shook our confidence, when you think about it. When you think people are lying about their numbers, it affects the confidence. We're regaining that confidence, because you're seeing what's happening to people who didn't tell the truth. One good way to clean up the boardrooms is to send some of those who betrayed the trust—bring them to justice, is the best way to put it.

And then, as I told you, the September the 11th changed our calculation. Let me put it to you this way: When we see a gathering threat, we must deal with it before it materializes, is the best way to put it. Threats are dealt in different ways, by the way. Not every threat is dealt with the way I decided to deal with the threat in Iraq.

We looked at the intelligence in Iraq and saw a threat. The United States Congress, people in both political parties, looked at the same intelligence and came to the same conclusion. They saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at that intelligence, and once again, it saw a threat. So you might remember, I went to New York and gave the speech in front of the U.N. Security Council and said, "For 12 or 11 years, you have said this man's a threat. Let's make your words mean something. If he's a threat, let's give him a chance to disarm one more time and get rid of his weapons programs." As you might recall, he chose defiance.

So I was in a dilemma. I had a choice to make: Do I trust the word of a madman, a tyrant, somebody who had used weapons of mass destruction on his own people and on countries within his neighborhood, or do I remember the lessons of September

the 11th and defend America? Given the choice between a madman and defending the country, I will defend America every time. [*Applause*] Thank you all.

Bob was telling me Bryan Machen is here. Where's Bryan? Somewhere. Bryan, thanks. You just got back from Iraq?

Bryan Machen. My dad did.

The President. Oh, okay. Hi, Dad. Thank you. Appreciate your service. Mr. Machen—Mr. Machen. Colonel Machen. What are you?

Command Sgt. Maj. James Machen, USAR. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Colonel now, as far as I'm concerned. Thank you for your service. Thank you for helping make America more secure.

We've got tough work there because, you see, there are terrorists there who would rather kill innocent people than allow for the advance of freedom. That's what you're seeing going on. These people hate freedom, and we love freedom. And that's where the clash occurs. See, we don't think freedom is America's gift to the world. We know that freedom is the Almighty's gift to every man and woman in this world. That's what we know.

And Machen will tell you there's a lot of brave people there that want to be free, but they've been tortured and terrorized and traumatized by a tyrant. And it's going to take a while for them to understand what freedom is all about. We will pass sovereignty on June 30th. We will stay the course in Iraq. We're not going to be intimidated by thugs or assassins. We're not going to cut and run from the people who long for freedom. Because, you know what? We understand a free Iraq is an historic opportunity to help change the world to be more peaceful. That's what we understand in this country.

I want to appreciate your service. For those of you who have got relatives in the Armed Forces, e-mail them and tell them the Commander in Chief is incredibly

proud of the sacrifice and service to our country.

Laura reminded me that one time on the TV screens in the summer of 2000, we saw “March to War.” It is hard to have economic vitality when you’re marching to war. That’s a negative thought. It’s about as negative a thought as you can think about. And so one of the hurdles we had to overcome besides recession, attack, corporate scandal, was the fact that I made the decision to defend us. We marched to war. It was a challenge we had to overcome. If you’re somebody that’s going to invest capital—in other words, if you’re somebody that’s trying to expand your business, you’re going to probably hesitate if we’re marching to war. If you’re somebody looking for work, it’s going to be harder to find work when the country is thinking about, “We’re going to war.”

We’re now marching to peace. That’s what we’re doing. We’ve overcome that hurdle. I say we’ve overcome these four things. I just want to remind you of the statistics. Economic growth in the second half of 2003 was very strong. Manufacturing activity is up. One of the statistics I love to quote is that homeownership rates are the highest in our Nation’s history. More people own their home in America. I’m particularly proud of the fact that more minority families own their home now, and that’s an important statistic. We want more people owning something in America. The more people who own something, the more they have a vital stake in the future of this country. We want there to be a vibrant ownership society all throughout our country.

Recently, we saw that we added 308,000 new jobs for the month of March—that’s a positive sign—plus 750,000 jobs since last August. This economy is strong, and it is getting stronger. And I intend to keep it that way through good policy.

Let me talk real quick about a couple of things we need to do to make sure that people can find work here at home. First,

we’ve got to make sure that we’re confident in trade policy. There’s economic isolationists that want to wall us off from the rest of the world. I don’t think that makes any sense. You’re about to hear from a man who sells product overseas. And if he’s selling product overseas, it means somebody is working. That’s what that means. And see, Presidents before me, of both parties said, “Let’s open up our markets for the good of the consumer.” See, the more choice you have in Arkansas, the more likely it is you’re going to get something you want at a better price.

And the problem is, other countries haven’t treated us the same. That’s the problem. And so my job is to say to other countries, “If we’re going to open up our product—our markets for your products, you open up yours for us,” because we’re the best at what we do. We’re great farmers. We’re great ranchers. We’re great timber people. We’re great entrepreneurs and manufacturers. Give us a level playing field, and we can compete with anybody, anytime, anywhere. That’s my attitude.

Secondly, we need good tort laws. You cannot run and expand your business; you can’t find work here if people are getting sued all the time. We’ve got too many junk lawsuits.

We’ve got to worry about the cost of medical care. If you’re somebody hiring somebody, if you’re a small-business owner, the cost of medical care makes it awfully difficult to put people on the payroll. And therefore, we need association health care plans that allow small businesses to pool their resources—pool risk just like big businesses get to do, so health care is more affordable for the small-business sector. We need to expand health savings accounts. It’s a new product. I’m telling you, it’s going to make a big difference at controlling costs. We need medical liability reform at the Federal level. See, docs are getting sued too often, and they’re leaving these small communities and rural communities in America, which means you don’t have

health care; you don't have access to a doc. Plus, those who are hanging around are having to practice what's called defensive medicine, which is running up the cost. The cost of health care is tough to expand the job base. If we want jobs to stay at home and if we want the job base to expand, we've got to do something about the cost of health care.

We need an energy plan in this country. I'm telling you, it's hard to expand our job base; it's hard to keep jobs here at home if you're worried about the reliability of electricity and if you're worried about finding natural gas at reasonable price.

I put out a plan to the United States Congress a while ago. I think "a while ago" means a couple of years ago, by the way. Sometimes progress is slow. It said let's make the electricity systems reliable. See, if you're a manufacturer and you're wondering whether or not you're going to have electricity the next day, if that worry is in your mind, it's hard to expand your business. Let's make sure we utilize coal in America. Clean coal technology is important. Let's make sure we explore for natural gas here within our territory. Let's encourage conservation. Let's be smart about technology. But for the sake of jobs and job expansion, we must become less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

I'm getting there, I promise you. I'm winding up. You're probably wondering if anybody else is going to say a word. [*Laughter*] Thankfully, Laura is not here. She'd be going—[*laughter*].

One of the reasons why we grew is because of tax relief. And a lot of that tax relief is set to expire this year. The child credit is going down, which means if you've got a child, you're fixing to pay more taxes. It's a bad time to be raising taxes.

If the marriage penalty is going back up—see, one of the things we did in working with the Congress is reduce the effects of the marriage penalty. I don't quite get a tax system that discourages marriage by taxing it. It just doesn't make any sense.

We ought to be encouraging marriage in America, not discouraging that institution.

I insisted, on the tax relief, we cut the rates on everybody who pays taxes. Some of them howled up in Washington when I did that. See, my attitude is, Government ought not to play favorites in the tact of, "You don't pay taxes, but you do." My attitude was, everybody who pays taxes ought to get relief if we're going to have relief.

It also had this effect. You see, most small businesses in America are sole proprietorships or Subchapter S corporations. That means they pay tax at the individual income tax. If you're worried about jobs—see, when I hear people looking for work and they can't find jobs, I worry about it—then what you want to do is stimulate small-business growth, because 70 percent of the new jobs in America are created by small businesses. And when you cut the individual income-tax rates, you're affecting small businesses in a significant way. You get more money in the pockets of the small-business owners, which makes it more likely they're going to hire somebody.

So by cutting the individual income-tax rates, we sent a message, loud and clear, that small businesses matter in America. Small businesses are the primary job creators in this country. We want there to be a small-business sector which is really strong. Congress needs to make all the tax cuts we pass permanent in order to make sure this economic recovery lasts.

I told you we're creating new jobs. Let me tell you something really interesting about Arkansas, and this is going to get us to the discussion, I promise you. Jobs in computer and math-related fields are expected to rise by nearly 60 percent by the year 2010 in the State of Arkansas. Health care and technical jobs are expected to rise by nearly 40 percent. That's an interesting statistic I want people to focus on right quick. In other words, there's going to be jobs. The question is, are people going to be prepared to fill those jobs? That's really what we're here to talk about today.

There's jobs. It's just some people are used to working in different kind of fields. And there's ways to get retrained for the jobs. That's what we're going to talk about here in a second. Before we do, I want you to know I fully understand that we've got to get it right at early grades. The No Child Left Behind Act is a really good piece of law, for this reason: It finally asked the question whether or not our children are learning to read, write, and add and subtract early. That's what it's asking. It doesn't seem too much to ask, does it, for increased Federal spending? You know, it's an important question to ask, because if you don't ask, you don't find out. And we better find out now, before it's too late.

This business about shuffling kids through the system is going to end, as far as I'm concerned. You know who is easy to shuffle? Inner-city black kids, that's who is easy to shuffle. It's easy to quit on them. You walk into a classroom, see a bunch of the so-called hard to educate—"Let's just shuffle them through." That's not fair. It's easy to quit on families who don't speak English as a first language—"He's a little too hard to educate; the best thing we've got to do here is just move him through." That's not going to work. It's not American. You see, I believe every child can learn. I believe every child has got it in him to learn. We must raise the standards.

The reason you have an accountability system is to test what you're—whether what you're doing is working. The reason you have an accountability system is to solve problems early, before it's too late. Part of the No Child Left Behind Act says when we find a child who has fallen behind early, there's extra help, extra money, extra ability to make sure kids get caught up. That's a vital part of making sure that our children have the skills necessary to fill the jobs of the 21st century.

We need to do more. See, I think high schools need to be—need to have the bar raised. I think all high schools ought to participate in what's called the NAEP. The

NAEP is a national norming test. It's not a national test. It says there is—they take the Arkansas test and they compare them to other States to determine whether or not standards are being met. That's all it is. You need to know; your Governor needs to know; the citizens need to know how you stack up relative to other places, if you expect to educate children for the jobs of the 21st century. If you want Kathy not to have to reeducate people, you better get it right early. That's what I'm saying.

We recognize that some of the kids haven't had the advantage of accountability early, and so they've been shuffling through. So I put out an initiative called the Striving Readers Initiative, which is a competitive grant program that will help intervention with 8th and 9th and 10th grade kids now. In other words, we've got some kids—one of the things that's important for those of us in positions of responsibility, you've got to be just flat honest about things. We've got kids who can't read, see, and they're moving through. And we've got to stop it, and we've got to solve the problem. And so this initiative I've sent up to Congress provides \$100 million for competitive grants so that the school district here, if you need it, can access the money to have strong intervention programs.

We've got a Mathematics and Science Partnership Program. One of the problems we've got, you heard me describe the kinds of jobs that will be available in Arkansas by 2010—you better make sure your math programs and science programs work. See, a new skill set is necessary to fill the new jobs. And therefore, we put out a program, a Math and Science Partnership Program, which will help teachers with curriculum but also provide extra help for kids just to make sure they don't get shuffled through. I mean, literacy is more than just being able to read. There's math literacy as well that we want to effect.

We've got an adjunct teacher program. That's an important way to help recruit

professionals into the classroom to teach math. If you've got yourself a retired NASA employee in your neighborhood, it seems like to me you want to be able to have that person go into the classrooms and teach science or math. One of the things the superintendent may tell you here—I know I've heard it from other superintendents—is that we've got a shortage of math teachers and science teachers. This is a practical way, Governor, to get people into the classrooms, to make sure that kids have got the skills necessary to be employable in the 21st century.

Perhaps you've heard of the Carl D. Perkins Act, which is a vocational training program. We spend about a billion a year for vocational training, and that's good. The program was written in 1917. I don't know if they understood what was going to be taking place in the year 2004. I suspect they didn't. I suspect they would be shocked to hear us talk about the skill level necessary to fill the jobs of the 21st century. My attitude is, is that this vocational training program ought to go forth, but it ought to make sure that the kids learn to speak English and that there's algebra and there's a science and social science component.

In other words, when kids are coming out of the vocational training program, they're going to need to do more than just what's taught at the vocational training level. They're going to need to be able to think. And we can't let kids go through without raising the standards and raising the bar. So I'm going to ask Congress to reform the Perkins vocational program. That's not to cut back on the money; it's quite the contrary. It's to make sure the money we are spending prepares these youngsters for the jobs of the 21st century.

I've got some other ideas I want to share with you right quick, and then I promise you—[laughter]. One of the challenges is to continue to raise standards; it's to raise that bar. A great way to do so is to expand advanced placement programs all across

America. I've got a Federal program that does just that. It says we're going to train more teachers on how to teach AP.

Let me tell you one of the problems with advanced placement. You've got a kid going through AP, and they go home and say, "I need my money to take the test." And if you're low-income, that money means a lot to you. We need to help low-income students take the advanced placement test by paying for the entrance exam, is what we ought to do. I think that will help you attract people to the AP program. Advanced placement means you're taking college level type courses in high school. It means we're preparing people for the jobs of the 21st century.

We've got a State Scholars program here in Arkansas. We're going to hear—right there is the leading evangelist for the State Scholar program. We'll talk about it. It's a rigorous academic program. In other words, it's one thing to intervene and make sure kids don't get left behind. It's another thing to keep raising those standards. Raising the bar is what I want to do, is enhance the Pell grants. That says if you take the State Scholars program in Arkansas, you get more money for your Pell grant. It provides incentive. It says, for rigorous academics, we want to help you more with the Pell grant. It means you get to go to college, get help. But it says to a kid, "Take math and science, is what it takes." You're going to hear what it means in a minute.

The other thing I want to do is to make a—set up a Presidential Math and Science Scholars Fund, \$50 million of Federal money matched by \$50 million in the private sector—we'll be able to raise that—that says that when you go to college, we'll enhance your Pell grant if you continue to take math and science programs.

See, we want people to be prepared for the 21st century. That's what we want. We want to keep raising that bar. We want to make sure nobody gets left behind, but at the same time, we want to provide proper incentives, so people can have hope in

this country. That's what we're talking about. Listen, the jobs will be there. We're going to stay on the edge of technological change. We've just got to make sure people are prepared for the jobs.

You're about to hear two interesting stories about people who made some decisions in their life. The final thing I want to mention to you, in conjunction with these two stories, is that there's a lot of people that need help now that have been out of school for a while. And that's where the community colleges come in. Yesterday I gave a speech at a community college in North Carolina, before I went over and unleashed my fastball in St. Louis. [Laughter] And I talked about a direct grant program to help collaborative efforts between community colleges and job providers. See, that's the way you make sure people are trained for jobs which exist. I talked about reforming the Workforce Investment Act so it actually functions by getting more people trained for the jobs.

But the community college system is really an important part of our future, and that's why we're here. And so I want to first start off with Kathy. I want her to describe to you some of the programs that she's doing here. I think you'll find them interesting, the nursing program, for example.

Kathy, thanks for having me. Why don't you inform the good folks about this great asset they have in their community.

[At this point, Kathy Matlock, president, South Arkansas Community College, made brief remarks.]

The President. What you hear around our country a lot is that there are regional health centers that are looking for workers. That's what you're hearing. The economy changes. We're in a time of transition. That's what you hear. You hear "productivity increases." That means people need to be, in some cases, reeducated for the jobs which exist. A more productive worker makes more money.

One of my favorite stories I tell is, I met this lady in Mesa Community College in Phoenix, Arizona. She was a graphic design artist, and she went back to the community college. Now, that's not easy to do. You're about to meet a fellow who has done this, by the way. It's not easy for some to go back to community college. A lot of people say, "Gosh, I can't go back to school. I'm too old or not interested." She went back—she got helped by the Government; she went back. And in her entry-level job, in her new job—having taken a technical course at Mesa Community College, she got out—she made more in her first year than she did in her 15th year as a graphic artist. In other words, if you gain new skills and become more productive, you're going to make more money.

And so when you hear people talk about productivity, it means—really means new skill levels. And productivity is good for America. When you're a more productive country, your standard of living goes up; people make more money. And we've got to make sure people have got the skills to be more productive. And that's what we're talking about here. When you go to—when you work in the health care field, you're learning new skills that make you productive so you're employable for the jobs which actually exist.

Bob Hogan knows something about employing people. That's what he does. He's the CEO of AmerCable, right here. We're glad you're here. Tell us about your company, whatever you want to talk about.

Bob Hogan. Oh, you don't want to do that.

The President. Just don't talk about the Arkansas-Texas game. Other than that, whatever you want to talk about. [Laughter]

[Mr. Hogan made brief remarks.]

The President. Let me stop you right there. Hear what he said? This company, right here in El Dorado, Arkansas, that employs—

Mr. Hogan. About 220 people.

The President. Right. Thirty percent of their sales—I don't think you can say 30 percent of the workforce depends, but you can say a significant part of the workforce depends on his ability to sell overseas. If we're to become economic isolationists, he's not going to be able to sell overseas. See, that's the problem with trade wars and bad trade policy.

Sorry for interrupting.

Mr. Hogan. You can do that any time. [Laughter]

The President. Okay. My kind of guy. [Laughter]

[Mr. Hogan made further remarks.]

The President. Do you help them with tuition here?

Mr. Hogan. We have a tuition reimbursement program for our people.

The President. Yes.

Mr. Hogan. We sure do.

The President. See, here's the thing. If you're out there wondering whether or not you can find work and whether or not you have the skills necessary to find a job, there's help, sometimes through your employer, sometimes through the Pell grant program. There's ways to find work; it's just up to you. Government can't say to somebody, "Be motivated." [Laughter] That's not the proper—we can't say, "Love somebody." We can't say, "Be motivated." That's up to you. But we can say, "We want to help you if you are motivated."

And I want to appreciate you very much, Bob, for being a responsible CEO, somebody who understands that you've got to take care of your workers and you've got to make sure they're trained. I appreciate you coming. Thanks.

Okay. We're lucky enough that Juanita Vines has joined us. She's got a very interesting story. First, I want to congratulate her on being her valedictorian of her high school class. I'm not going to ask her how long ago it was.

Juanita Vines. It wasn't that long.

The President. No, it wasn't that long ago, I know, but it wasn't yesterday, either. Tell me about yourself.

[Ms. Vines, student, South Arkansas Community College, made brief remarks.]

The President. Yes, let me ask you something. There's a reason why you're doing that besides Mom probably telling you. I'm still listening to my mom too. [Laughter] Well, most of the time. [Laughter] Are you—do you make more money if you get a bachelor's? Is there a master? Is there an economic incentive? This is a leading question. [Laughter]

Ms. Vines. It's like this. The more letters you get behind your name, the more money you have. [Laughter]

The President. Actually, you might want to phrase it a little differently. The more skills you learn—

Ms. Vines. The more skills you learn—

The President. There you go.

Ms. Vines. —the more educated you become, the more money you can make.

The President. Here is a valedictorian in her class who has come to this community college who's on her way to greater things. And I want to thank you for your motivation. Really good job.

Ms. Vines. Thank you.

The President. Superintendent of schools, big Bob Watson is here. [Laughter] They ever call you "Big Bob"?

Bob Watson. Yes, sir. And Governor—excuse me, President. [Laughter]

The President. How quickly they forget. [Laughter]

Mr. Watson. You've been welcomed, and I think properly so, but I like to do things in a big way, so I'm going to shake hands with you so you truly will have had a big welcome.

The President. Just don't hug me. [Laughter] Thank you, sir. He's the superintendent of schools, in case you don't know it.

Mr. Watson. Go ahead.

The President. No, I was going to say, tell us what you're doing.

[*Mr. Watson, superintendent, El Dorado Public Schools, made brief remarks.*]

The President. Oh, that's great. Well, thanks. I appreciate it. You know that the Secretary of Education was a superintendent of schools too. I decided to put somebody in a position of responsibility that had actually done it. [*Laughter*] Thank you.

Mr. Watson. Thank you.

The President. Good job.

Okay, Tony Johnson is with us. Tony, this is a really interesting story. Have you ever been in the military, Tony?

Tony Johnson. Yes, sir, I have. I served 4 years in the Air Force and 4 years in the Army, achieving the rank of sergeant in both.

The President. I appreciate that. All right, let her rip. Tell us about it. [*Laughter*]

[*Mr. Johnson, student, South Arkansas Community College, made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

Mr. Johnson. When I was 17, I was told by a couple of teachers to give up on the idea of going to college.

The President. Let me stop right there. This guy—a 17-year-old kid, and somebody told him not to go to college. That is the soft bigotry of low expectations. It's precisely the opposite of what we're talking about here. Let her go.

[*Mr. Johnson made further remarks.*]

The President. There you go. This is a guy that shouldn't have gone to college. You're doing good. This is a guy who's not even supposed to be here, right? He was told he can't come here. He's now head of the honor society. He got a Pell grant. There's a lot of people wondering whether or not they can go back to school. A lot of people are saying, "Well, gosh, I'm just—my skills aren't what is needed, and they're not high enough to get a good job, but I don't want to go back to school. No-

body my age will be there." Here's a living example of a guy who has decided to improve himself.

What are you going to do with your degree, your honors degree, I might add?

Mr. Johnson. Well, that was a self-esteem booster right there in itself. It showed that I could actually do the work. I know that my income will double over what I was making before.

The President. Yes. It's a lot easier to be smart and use your skills that you learned in a community college and make a lot more money. More productive, that's what that means. But tell me, do you have any dreams? Because, guess what, somebody is probably listening now to this story that might actually make the salary triple, if we're lucky. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Johnson. Well, as soon as I finish my associate's, I plan on going to get my bachelor's. I hope to one day teach.

The President. Fantastic. Great story. That's good. I'll tell you one thing, when you teach, you're never going to look at anybody and say, "You can't go to college." You'll be the guy saying, "You can do anything you want." I appreciate you. Thanks, Tony. It's a great story.

Mr. Johnson. I would just like to say to educators and future educators that it only takes one phrase to make or break a kid, and I'm living proof.

The President. You know something, Tony, it didn't break you, brother. It didn't break you, it just delayed you.

Mr. Johnson. I attribute that to the Army.

The President. And that's what people have got to understand. There's a lot of second chances in this world to go back to school. If you're wondering whether or not you want to stay at the end of a shovel, hurting your back, or want to get some new skills to take advantage of the jobs that are being created right here in this community, take a look here at the community college. There's help.

That's what we're here to talk about. We want every citizen in this country to be able to get the skills necessary to fill the jobs of the 21st century. There are new jobs being created. We just want to make sure the people have got the skills necessary to fill those jobs. That's what we're talking about. In order to make sure jobs are here—stay at home—in order to make sure the country is on the leading edge of technological change, we have got to make sure people have the skills necessary to fill those jobs. And it doesn't matter whether you've been in the Army for 8— or Air Force for 4 and Army for 4, there's still a chance.

And one of the things—there are people in every community that are wildly optimistic about things. Sammie is wildly optimistic about what she does. She is a—go ahead and tell me what you do.

Sammie Briery. Well, for a living, I work for the best bank in Arkansas, HEARTLAND Community Bank. I believe some of my coworkers might be out there.

The President. Probably your boss, after that.

Ms. Briery. Absolutely he is.

The President. All right, that's enough of that. No self-promotion. [*Laughter*]

[*Ms. Briery, Arkansas Scholars program coordinator, Camden Area Chamber of Commerce, Camden, AR, made brief remarks.*]

The President. You're doing good, Sam.

Ms. Briery. I told you you'd have to cut me off.

The President. I haven't cut you off yet. You and my mother go to the same hair-dye person. [*Laughter*]

Ms. Briery. President Bush, I'm a natural blonde.

The President. Oh, yes.

Ms. Briery. I'm just a natural blonde.

The President. I couldn't help myself, sorry. [*Laughter*] Do you want to say something? Good job.

[*The discussion continued.*]

The President. Thank you very much. Listen, I hope you've enjoyed this as much as I have. I found it to be interesting. It's just an uplifting experience, isn't it, to come and hear people who are taking responsibility for the education in the community in which you live, and the business guy who wants to help people, the students who are motivated. It is exciting. And I want to thank you all for doing this. You did a great job. And the stories are compelling.

You want to say something? Yes, okay. Here I am in my peroration. That's kind of the emotional part before the conclusion. [*Laughter*] Anyway, go ahead.

Mr. Watson. I just wanted to add that with everybody here, that education is the great equalizer in life. And I came from parents with no education and put five kids through college and four through post-graduate school, and it's the great equalizer. And it's the best thing a parent can give to children, is the gift of learning. And it just changes everybody's life around. And that math and science foundation that you have, we're ready to sign up, and we'll be matching something.

The President. Thank you.

Mr. Watson. I'm sure we have a lot out here that will as well.

The President. Thank you very much. You know, I want to follow what Bob said. He said a great gift from a parent is two things: one, a good education, and unconditional love—unconditional love.

God bless you all for letting us come by. Thanks. It's great to be El Dorado, Arkansas.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:05 a.m. at South Arkansas Community College. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Mike Huckabee of Arkansas and his wife, Janet; Lt. Gov. Win Rockefeller of Arkansas; Cathy Boozman, wife of Representative John Boozman; and Mayor Bobby Beard of El Dorado, AR.

Statement on the Fighting in the Darfur Region of Sudan *April 7, 2004*

New fighting in the Darfur region of Sudan has opened a new chapter of tragedy in Sudan's troubled history. The Sudanese Government must immediately stop local militias from committing atrocities against the local population and must provide unrestricted access to humanitarian aid agencies. I condemn these atrocities, which are displacing hundreds of thousands of civilians, and I have expressed my views directly to President Bashir of Sudan.

For more than 2½ years, the United States has been working closely with the Government of Sudan and the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) to bring peace to Sudan. This civil war is one of the worst humanitarian tragedies of our time, responsible for the deaths of two million people over two decades. Achieving peace and reaching a just and comprehen-

sive agreement must be an urgent priority for both sides.

The United States will move toward normal relations with the Government of Sudan only when there is a just and comprehensive peace agreement between the Government and the SPLM. All parties must also ensure that there is unrestricted access for humanitarian relief throughout Sudan, including Darfur, and the Government of Sudan must cooperate fully in the war against terrorism.

I continue to hope for peace for the people of Sudan and for normalization of relations between Sudan and the United States. However, the Government of Sudan must not remain complicit in the brutalization of Darfur. I renew my call to Khartoum to bring the peace process with the SPLM to a just conclusion and to bring peace and justice to Darfur.

Statement on the 10th Anniversary of the 1994 Rwanda Genocide *April 7, 2004*

Ten years ago today, the world witnessed the beginning of one of the most horrific episodes of the 20th century, the 1994 Rwanda genocide. A 100-day campaign waged by Hutu extremists tore Rwanda apart and resulted in the murder of at least 800,000 Tutsi men, women, and children, as well as many moderate Hutus. This genocide also included systematic rape and sexual violence against countless Tutsi women and the orphaning of thousands of children.

The United States supports the people of Rwanda as they commemorate this horrific chapter in history. We urge all states, particularly those in the region, to work

with Rwanda and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda to bring to justice those responsible for the genocide and to repatriate the thousands of displaced Rwandans. We also urge the international community to assist the survivors of that great crime as they continue to heal. The United States will continue to assist Rwanda in the unification of families, the providing of scholarships, the combating of HIV/AIDS, and the promotion of the rule of law.

The United States joins Rwanda and members of the global community in this day of reflection.