

after we won that war, despite skepticism of some, he worked to help Japan become a democracy. And as a result of the belief that liberty can change societies, today, I sit down at the table, talking about the peace we all long for, with the head of Japan. Someday, when we succeed in Iraq, an American President will be sitting down with a duly elected leader of Iraq talking about the peace, and the world our children and grandchildren will grow up in will be better for it.

I believe people long to live in a free society. I believe women in the greater Middle East long to live in freedom. I believe that if given the chance, the people of that troubled part of the world will embrace the most honorable form of Government ever devised by man. I believe all these things because freedom is not America's gift to the world; freedom is the Almighty God's gift to each man and woman in this world.

This young century will be liberty's century. By promoting freedom at home and abroad, we will build a safer world and a more hopeful America. By reforming our systems of Government, we'll help more Americans realize their dreams. We'll spread ownership and opportunity to every corner of this country. We'll pass the enduring values of our country to a new generation. We will continue to make the world more peaceful and more free.

For all Americans, these years in our history will always stand apart. There are quiet times in the life of our Nation when little is expected of its leaders. This isn't one of those times. This is a time when we need firm resolve, clear vision, and a deep

faith in the values that makes this a great nation.

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. It's a day that I'll never forget. There were workers in hardhats yelling at me at the top of their lungs, "Whatever it takes." I remember trying to console people as best I could, and a guy grabbed me by the arm, and he said, "Do not let me down." Every day since that day, I wake up trying to figure out how better to protect our country. I will never relent in defending America, whatever it takes.

Four years ago, as I traveled your great State asking for the vote, I made a pledge that if you gave me a chance to serve, I would uphold the dignity and the honor of the office to which I had been elected. With your help, with your hard work, I will do so for 4 more years.

Thanks for coming. God bless. I appreciate you all. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:33 a.m. at Lehigh Parkway. In his remarks, he referred to Senator Zell Miller of Georgia, who made the keynote address at the 2004 Republican National Convention; Charles W. Dent, candidate for Congress in Pennsylvania's 15th Congressional District; senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi; David Kay, former CIA Special Advisor for Strategy Regarding Iraqi Weapons of Mass Destruction Programs; Prime Minister Ayad Allawi of the Iraqi Interim Government; and Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan.

## Remarks in Manchester, New Hampshire October 1, 2004

*The President.* Thanks for coming. I appreciate you all coming. Thanks. It's great

to be back in the great State of New Hampshire.

So guess what happened? We pulled up in our entourage, and I opened the door. I come bounding in the tent, and Mother's there checking up on me. They said—you know, sometimes they say I get a little too blunt, reminds me of the time a woman in Texas said, "Well, you got your daddy's eyes and your mother's mouth." [Laughter] I love you, Mom. Thanks for coming.

I'm keeping really good company up here on the stage. First, I'm proud to be standing with your great United States Senator, Judd Gregg. He's as solid as the granite in this State. I know you're going to send him back for 6 more years.

And I'm proud to be in New Hampshire with John McCain. What a fine American he is and a good friend. He told me a little something about New Hampshire politics—in case you forgot. [Laughter] I didn't. I picked up on the lessons and carried the State of New Hampshire in 2000, and with your help, we'll carry it again in 2004.

We had a great debate last night. It highlighted some fundamental differences between my opponent and me, differences I believe are crucial to our Nation's national security. First of all, there's a big difference when it comes to supporting our troops in harm's way. When America puts our troops in combat, I believe they deserve the best training, the best equipment, the full support of our Government. Last night my opponent said our troops deserve better. They certainly deserve better than they got from Senator Kerry when he voted to send them to war, then voting—voted against funding our troops in combat.

*Audience members.* Boo-o-o!

*The President.* You may remember his quote when they asked him about his vote. He said, "Well, I actually did vote for the \$87 billion, right before I voted against it." [Laughter] Not a lot of people in New Hampshire talk that way. Last night he said he had made a mistake in how he talked about that vote. I don't know if you remember that part of the debate or not.

I certainly do. But the mistake wasn't what Senator Kerry said. The mistake was what Senator Kerry did.

During the course of this campaign, they kept asking him to explain the vote. He said the famous quote. Then he went on and said he was proud of his vote. He said, "The whole thing was a complicated matter." And earlier this week he gave yet another explanation of his vote. He said, "Well, it was a protest vote." [Laughter] Exactly what he said, "protest vote."

*Audience members.* Boo-o-o!

*The President.* When we put American troops in harm's way, they certainly deserve better than to have a candidate for President use them as a protest.

Last night was very revealing. He continued his pattern of confusing contradictions. After voting for the war, after saying my decision to remove Saddam Hussein from power was the right decision, he now said it was all a mistake. But asked a logical question, "Does that mean our troops are dying for a mistake?" He said, "No." You can't have it both ways. You can't say it's a mistake and not a mistake. You can't be for getting rid of Saddam Hussein when things look good and against it when times are difficult. You can't claim terrorists are pouring across the border into Iraq yet, at the same time, try to claim that Iraq is somehow a diversion from the war on terror. The American President must speak clearly, and when he speaks, must mean what he says.

The crucial difference between my opponent and me is the most important question for voters in this election, and that is: Who can lead this war against terror to victory? And here my opponent has a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of this war against terror, and he has no plan to win in Iraq. The cornerstone of Senator Kerry's plan for Iraq is to convene a summit. That's what he said. Now, look, I've been to a lot of summits. [Laughter] Since I've been your President, I've been honored to be at summits throughout

the world. I've never been to a meeting that has deposed a tyrant or brought a terrorist to justice. The way to defeat the terrorists is to stay on the offense and bring them to justice.

My opponent last night claims he can work with our allies. Yet he said those who are standing with us are not a part of a genuine coalition.

*Audience members.* Boo-o-o!

*The President.* He earlier called them a "coalition of the coerced and bribed" and dismissed their sacrifices as "window dressings."

*Audience members.* Boo-o-o!

*The President.* See, you cannot lead by pushing away the allies who are already with us, who are sacrificing along with our soldiers. You can't expect any support for a cause you have called a "mistake," a "grand diversion," or "the wrong war at the wrong time." As I said last night, I've been meeting with these leaders around the world. Imagine walking into a room, and say, "Get your sons to sacrifice and your daughters to sacrifice for the wrong war at the wrong place at the wrong time." Imagine. [*Laughter*] The way to lead this coalition is not to be disdainful or dismissive. The way to lead this coalition to victory is to be clear about our thinking, grateful for their sacrifices, and resolute in our determination to achieve victory.

Let me say one other thing, one more thing I want to share with you about last night's debate. Perhaps it was the most disturbing aspect of the debate. Senator Kerry said that America has to pass some sort of "global test"—

*Audience members.* Boo-o-o!

*The President.* —before we can use our troops to defend ourselves. Think about that. He wants our national security decisions subject to the approval of a foreign government.

*Audience members.* Boo-o-o!

*The President.* Listen, I'll continue to work with our allies. I'll work with the international community, but I will never

submit America's national security to an international test. The President's job is not to take an international poll. The President's job is to defend the United States of America.

*Audience members.* U.S.A.! U.S.A.! U.S.A.!

*The President.* I've come for more reasons than just to talk about last night's debate and to see my mother. [*Laughter*] I have come back to New Hampshire to ask for your vote, and I am here to ask for your help. I ask you to register your friends and neighbors. I ask you, then, to head them to the polls come the voting time. And as you do so, remind them if they want a safer America, a stronger America, and a better America, to put me and Dick Cheney back in office.

I'm glad my mother is here, but I really wish Laura were here. What a great First Lady. You know, when I asked her to marry me, she said, "Fine, just so long as I never have to give a political speech." [*Laughter*] I said, "Okay, you'll never have to give one." [*Laughter*] Fortunately, she didn't hold me to that promise. In New York, at our convention, America got to see a compassionate, strong, fine First Lady in Laura Bush.

And I'm proud—I'm proud I'm running with Dick Cheney. He's a fine man. I concede, he doesn't have the waviest hair in the race. [*Laughter*] I didn't pick him because of his hair. I picked him because of his experience, his judgment, and because he can get the job done for the American people.

I want to sing the praises of your other United States Senator, John Sununu. You've got two really fine Senators in Judd and John, and I'm proud to work with them. They're kind of independent sometimes—[*laughter*]—just like the people of New Hampshire.

I appreciate your Governor, Craig Benson. I hope you put him back into office. Thanks for coming, Craig. I appreciate you

being here, Craig. I'm proud of Congressman Jeb Bradley's work in the United States Congress, a fine Member of the House of Representatives. I want to thank Ted Gatsas and his wife, Cassandra. I want to thank Brian Golden, who's a Democrat for Bush member from Massachusetts. I am honored you're here, Brian. Thank you for coming.

I want to thank all the other State and local officials. But most importantly, I want to thank the grassroots activists and those who are doing the hard work, getting ready to turn out the vote come November.

I appreciate the Oak Ridge Boys who are here with us today. I'm proud to call them friends. And I want to thank Kaleigh Cronin, the student from Manchester Central High, who performed the National Anthem. I want to thank Manchester Central High School Band for being here today. I'll try to keep my speech short so you can get home and do your homework. [Laughter]

Listen, I'm looking forward to this campaign. I like coming here to New Hampshire, and I'm coming back. I want to tell the people where I stand, what I believe, and where I'll lead this country for the next 4 years.

I believe every child can learn and every school must teach. That's what I believe. I went to Washington to challenge the soft bigotry of low expectations. I didn't like the practice of having such low expectations that we would shuffle some children through the schools, grade after grade, year after year, without teaching them the basics. I know we can do better in America. So we changed the law to measure early, so we can solve problems. We believe in local control of schools. We're closing the achievement gap in America, and we're not going to go back to the old days of failed policy.

I believe we have a moral responsibility to honor our seniors with good health care. See, I went to Washington to fix problems. I saw a problem in Medicare. For example,

Medicare would pay nearly \$100,000 for heart surgery but not one dime for the prescription drugs that might prevent the heart surgery from being needed in the first place. That wasn't fair to our seniors, and it wasn't fair to the taxpayers. We worked with Republicans and Democrats to modernize Medicare. Seniors will get prescription drug coverage in 2006, and we're not going back to the old days.

I believe in the energy and innovation and the spirit of America's workers, small-business owners, and farmers and ranchers. That's why we unleashed that energy with the largest tax relief in a generation.

I want you to remind your friends and neighbors what this economy has been through. The stock market was heading down before Dick Cheney and I showed up in Washington. Then we had a recession just as soon as we showed up. And then we had some corporate scandals, which affected our economy. We passed tough laws. We've made it abundantly clear we will not tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America. And then the attacks came, of September the 11th, and that affected our economy.

But because we acted, our economy is growing at rates as fast as any in nearly 20 years. The national unemployment rate is 5.4 percent, which is lower than the average of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. The unemployment rate in the State of New Hampshire is 3.7 percent.

I believe the most solemn duty of the American President is to protect the American people. If America shows uncertainty and weakness in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This will not happen on my watch.

*Audience members.* Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

*The President.* I am running for President with a clear and positive plan to build a safer America, a safer world, and a more hopeful America. I am running with a compassionate conservative philosophy that Government should help people improve

their lives, not try to run their lives. I believe this Nation wants steady, consistent, principled leadership and that is why, with your help, we'll carry New Hampshire again and win a great victory in November.

But I understand the world in which we're living is changing. It wasn't all that long ago that a person in the workplace would have one job and one career, one pension plan, one retirement system, and that person was usually a man. The workplace has changed. Think about it. People are changing jobs. People are changing careers. Women are working inside the house and outside the house in America today. And yet, the fundamental systems of our Government, the Tax Code, the pension plans, health coverage, and worker training, were designed for the world of yesterday, not tomorrow. I'm running to transform these systems so that all citizens are equipped, prepared, and truly free to be able to make your own choices and pursue your own dreams.

A hopeful country is one that has a growing economy. In order to keep jobs here in America, America must be the best place in the world to do business. If you want jobs here, this has got to be the best place in the world to risk capital. That means less regulations. That means legal reform to stop the frivolous lawsuits that are plaguing our employers.

We want to keep this economy growing and have jobs here in America, Congress needs to pass my energy plan. It's a plan that encourages conservation. It's a plan that spends money to make sure we do a better job with renewables like ethanol and biodiesel. It's a plan that uses technology to burn coal in clean ways. It's a plan that uses technology to explore for natural gas in environmentally friendly ways. It is a plan that recognizes this fact: To keep this economy growing, we must be less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

In order to keep jobs here in America, we must open up markets to U.S. products.

We've opened up our markets for goods from overseas for a reason. It's good for our consumers. Think about this. If you've got more products to choose from, you're likely to get that which you want at a better price. That's how the market works. So rather than falling prey to economic isolationism, I'm saying to countries like China and elsewhere, "You treat us the way we treat you." I say that because I know when the rules are fair, we can compete with anybody, anytime, anywhere in the world.

Finally, to make sure this economy continues to grow, we've got to be wise about how we spend your money in Washington, and we've got to keep your taxes low. Taxes are an issue in this campaign. I'm running against a fellow who lived right south from here. [Laughter] He's so far promised \$2.2 trillion in new spending. That's a lot, even for a Senator from Massachusetts. [Laughter] So they said, "How are you going to pay for it?" He said, "That's easy. We're going to tax the rich." You've heard that before, haven't you?

*Audience members.* Yes!

*The President.* About every campaign. The problem with that, there's some flawed logic. You can't raise enough money by taxing the rich to pay for \$2.2 trillion in new spending. There's what I would call a tax gap. Guess who gets to fill the tax gap?

*Audience member.* We do!

*The President.* Yes. I'll tell you something else about the rhetoric of taxing the rich. The rich hire lawyers and accountants for a reason, so they can avoid the bill and stick you with it. The good news is, we're not going to let him tax you. We're going to win in November.

Speaking about the Tax Code, it's a complicated mess. It's full of special interest loopholes. It's a million pages long. Americans spend 6 billion hours a year filling out their tax forms.\* In order to make sure this Tax Code is fair and simple, I'm going to call Republicans and Democrats together

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\* White House correction.

to do something about an antiquated Tax Code that needs to be changed.

Listen, we'll help our workers gain the skills of the 21st century. In a changing economy, sometimes there's a skills gap. Jobs are available, but workers don't have the skills necessary to fill the jobs. That's why I'm such a strong believer in the community college system. I believe—and I know that most new jobs in a changing economy are filled by people with at least 2 years of college, yet one in four of our students gets there. In our high schools, we'll fund early intervention programs to help at-risk students. We'll emphasize math and science. Over time, there ought to be a rigorous exam before graduation. By raising performance in our high schools and by expanding Pell grants for low- and middle-income families, more Americans will start their career with a college diploma.

Let me talk about health care. There is a wide, philosophical divide when it comes to health care. Let me see if I can summarize it this way. My opponent wants the Government to run the health care—

*Audience members.* Boo-o-o!

*The President.* —which would lead to high prices and rationing. I want you to make the decisions when it comes to health care. I have a practical, commonsense way of dealing with health care to make sure it's available and affordable. Let me give you some ideas.

First of all, most of the uninsured work for small businesses. Many small businesses are having trouble affording health care. We ought to change the law to allow small businesses to pool risk, so they can buy insurance at the same discounts big businesses can buy insurance for. We'll expand tax-free health savings accounts. We'll give small businesses tax credits to pay into health savings accounts for their employees. We'll help low-income, uninsured working Americans to afford health savings accounts. These are innovative ways to make sure people get good health care coverage with catastrophic coverage as well.

We will expand community health centers to every poor county in America so the poor and the indigent can get preventative and primary care in places other than emergency rooms of your hospitals. We'll make sure poor children are enrolled in our low-income children's programs. To make sure health care is available and affordable, we've got to do something about these junk lawsuits that are running good docs out of practice and running your costs of medicine up. In all we do reform health care, we'll make sure the decisions are made by doctors and patients, not by bureaucrats in Washington, DC.

In changing times, ownership helps bring stability to people's lives. The homeownership rate in America is at an alltime high during my administration. I love that statistic. Think about it. More and more people are opening up the door where they live and saying, "Welcome to my home. Welcome to my piece of property." Over the next 4 years, we'll expand homeownership to every corner of America.

And I want to implement a part of ownership into the retirement system as well. You might remember some of the rhetoric that took place in 2000 when I was running. They said, "If George W. gets elected, he's going to take away your Social Security check." I don't know if you remember that or not. Well, you still got the check; nothing happened. What I'm telling you is, is that when I talk about Social Security reform, if you're a senior citizen on Social Security, you don't have to worry about your check. That's that same old stale rhetoric that they're going to put out every year. You'll get your check. Baby boomers like me, we'll probably get our checks, because the Social Security trust is that solvent.

But we need to worry about our children and grandchildren when it comes to Social Security. I believe younger workers ought to be able to take some of their own money and set up a personal savings account to

make sure Social Security fulfills its promise, a personal savings account you call your own, a personal savings account the Government can never take away.

Listen, in this world of change, there are some things that won't change, the values we try to live by, courage and compassion, reverence and integrity. In changing times, we'll support the institutions that give our lives direction and purpose, our schools, our families, our religious congregations. We stand for a culture of life in which every person matters and every being counts. We stand for marriage and family, which are the foundations of our society. And we stand for the appointment of Federal judges who know the difference between personal opinion and the strict interpretation of the law.

This election will also determine how America responds to continuing danger of terrorism. Since 2001—September the 11th, 2001, we have fought the terrorists across the Earth, not for pride, not for power, but because the lives of our citizens are at stake. Our strategy is clear. We're defending the homeland. We'll transform our military. We'll keep the All-Volunteer Army an all-volunteer army.

*Audience member. [Inaudible]*

*The President.* Yes. We'll strengthen the intelligence services. We'll stay on the offensive. We'll defeat the terrorists around the Earth so we do not have to face them here at home. We'll continue to advance liberty in the broader Middle East and throughout the world, and we will prevail.

Our strategy is succeeding. Think about this: Four years ago, Afghanistan was the home base of Al Qaida; Pakistan was a transit point for terrorists; Saudi Arabia was fertile ground for terrorist fundraising; Libya was secretly pursuing nuclear weapons; Iraq was a gathering threat; and Al Qaida was largely unchallenged as it planned attacks.

Because we acted, Afghanistan is fighting terror; Pakistan is capturing terrorist leaders; Saudi Arabia is making raids and ar-

rests; Libya is dismantling its weapons programs; the army of a free Iraq is fighting terror; and three-quarters of Al Qaida's leadership have been brought to justice.

This progress involved careful diplomacy, clear moral purpose, and some tough decisions. The toughest came on Iraq. We knew Saddam Hussein's record of aggression and support for terror. We knew that. I want you to remember that he harbored Abu Nidal, the leader of a terrorist organization that carried out attacks in Europe and Asia. We knew he harbored Abu Abbas, who killed American Leon Klinghoffer because of his religion. Zarqawi was in and out of Baghdad. He ordered the killing of an American citizen from Baghdad. We knew Saddam Hussein's long history of pursuing and using weapons of mass destruction. We knew that he would hope the world would turn away and not pay attention to him. We also knew that we must think differently after September the 11th. This country must take threats seriously before they fully materialize. That is a lesson we must never forget.

So I went to the United States Congress. The Congress looked at the same intelligence I looked at, remembered the same history I remembered, and concluded Saddam Hussein was a threat, and voted to authorize the use of force. My opponent looked at the same intelligence I looked at. He concluded that Saddam Hussein was a serious threat. He voted yes when it came to the authorization of force. He may not want to admit it today.

Before the Commander in Chief commits troops into harm's way, he must try all options, before military options. And so I went to the United Nations in hopes that diplomacy would work, in hopes that somehow the free world would finally convince Saddam Hussein to listen to the demands. The United Nations Security Council debated the issue and voted 15 to nothing to say to Saddam Hussein, "Disclose, disarm, or face serious consequences." I believe that when an international body

speaks, it must mean what it says, in order to keep this world peaceful. Saddam Hussein ignored the demands yet again.

Last night my opponent said, "Well, we probably should have"—not probably—"We should have taken more time and passed another resolution," as if number 18 would have convinced him. We sent inspectors in—the U.N. did—they were systematically deceived. That's what history shows. My opponent said, "We should have left the inspectors in there." Why? I don't know. Maybe Saddam could have deceived them even more. The truth was diplomacy had failed. And so I now have a choice to make: Do I take the word of a madman and forget the lessons of September the 11th, or take action to defend this country? Given that choice, I will defend America every time.

We didn't find the stockpiles we thought would be there. We didn't find the stockpiles everybody thought would be there. But I want you to remember, Saddam still had the capability of making weapons of mass destruction. He could have passed that capability onto an enemy, and that is a risk we could not have afforded to have taken after September the 11th. Knowing what I know today, I would have made the same decision. And the world is safer with Saddam Hussein sitting in a prison cell.

Because we acted to defend our country, 50 million people now live in freedom in Afghanistan and Iraq. Remember what it was like in Afghanistan some 3 years ago. People were living under the brutal reign of the Taliban. These people are—when I talk about ideologues of hate, that's what I'm talking about, people just like them. They would not let young girls go to school. They'd whip their mothers in the public square if they disagreed with their ideology of hate. They executed women in sports stadiums. They were barbaric and backwards, and they were harboring Al Qaida.

Today, Afghanistan is an ally in the war on terror, and 10 million people, 41 percent of whom are women, have registered

to vote in the upcoming October Presidential election. Think about that for a minute. This country has gone from darkness to light because of freedom, and America and the world are better for it.

In Iraq, we have got a plan to win this war against the terrorists. First of all, we've got an ally in the war and a strong leader in Prime Minister Allawi. Secondly, there will be national elections in January of 2005. We're continuing our reconstruction efforts over the next months to help rebuild that country. We'll continue to work with our allies and friends. There will be a donors summit in Japan next month. There will be a regional conference of neighbors—of countries in the neighborhood to work with Iraq. We will continue to train the Iraqis so they will do the hard work of defending their country against those who want to stop the advance of freedom. That is our strategy. We'll implement it as quickly as possible. We'll get this country on the road to stability and democracy, and then our troops will come home with the honor they have earned.

I am proud of our United States military, and I want to thank the veterans who are here for having set such a great example.

I believe in the transformational power of liberty. The other night, I said, "I am realistic about what's taking place in Iraq. I understand how hard it is. I'm optimistic we will succeed." I'm optimistic we'll succeed, and one of the main reasons why is because I do believe in the transformational power of liberty.

I'll tell you what I mean by that. Perhaps the best way to explain that to you is using this example. One of the leaders I enjoy meeting with is Prime Minister Koizumi of Japan—interesting fellow. I told him in New York when I saw him, I said, "Do you mind if I tell the people in my country that we've got a good relationship?" He said, "Fine." I didn't tell him I was going to tell you that his favorite singer was Elvis—*[laughter]*—interesting man and a friend.

Think about this, though, that I sit down and talk to this leader of Japan some 60 years after our Nation was at war with them. Sixty years isn't very long in the march of history. It's long if you're 58 years old. [Laughter] But I want you to think about that for a minute. My dad, your dads, your granddads fought against the Japanese, and yet today, I now sit down at the table with the Prime Minister.

See, fortunately, Harry Truman and other citizens of the country believed in the transformational power of liberty, that liberty could transform an enemy into an ally. And because they overwhelmed the skeptics and the doubters, I now sit at the table with a leader of a former foe talking about the peace we all want. Someday, an American President will be sitting down with a duly elected leader of Iraq, talking about keeping the peace. And our children and our grandchildren will be better off for it.

I believe millions in the Middle East plead in silence for their liberty. I believe women in the Middle East want to be free to realize their dreams, and they can raise their children in hopeful societies. I believe that if given the chance, people in the Middle East will embrace the most honorable form of government ever devised by man, democracy. I believe all these things because freedom is not America's gift to the world; freedom is the Almighty God's gift to each man and woman in this world.

This young century will be liberty's century. By promoting freedom at home and abroad, we'll build a safer world and a more hopeful America. By reforming our systems of Government, we will help more Americans realize their dreams. We'll spread ownership and opportunity to every corner of this country. We'll pass the enduring values of our country to a new generation. We will continue to make the world more peaceful and more free.

For Americans—for all Americans, these years in our history will always stand apart. There are quiet times in the life a nation when little is expected of its leaders. This isn't one of those times. This is a time when we need firm resolve, clear vision, and a deep faith in the values that makes this a great nation.

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. It's a day I'll never forget. The memories are vividly etched in my mind. There were workers in hardhats yelling at the top of their lungs, "Whatever it takes." I remember working the line, trying to comfort people coming out of that rubble, and a guy grabbed me by the arm, and he said, "Do not let me down." Ever since that day, that fateful day, I've woken up doing whatever I can to protect this country. I will never relent in defending you, whatever it takes.

Four years ago as I had the honor of traveling your State, I made this pledge, I said if you gave me the chance to serve, I would uphold the honor and the dignity of the office. With your hard work, with your help, I will do so for 4 more years.

May God bless you, and may God bless our great country. Thanks for coming. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:58 p.m. at the McIntyre Ski Area. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Craig Benson of New Hampshire; New Hampshire State Senator Theodore L. Gatsas and his wife, Cassandra; Massachusetts State Representative Brian Paul Golden; entertainers the Oak Ridge Boys; senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi; Prime Minister Ayad Allawi of the Iraqi Interim Government; and Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan.

Remarks to the National Association of Home Builders in Columbus, Ohio  
October 2, 2004

*The President.* Thank you all very much. Thank you all.

*Audience members.* Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

*The President.* Thanks a lot. Thanks for the warm welcome. I appreciate being with the homebuilders from all across our country. It's a good way to spend a Saturday morning. [Laughter] I'm proud to be back in the State capital of Ohio.

I don't know if you know this or not, but my great grandfather built a home right here in Columbus, on Roxbury Road. The homebuilder they hired did a good job. [Laughter] The house still stands. [Laughter] My grandfather was born in this city back in 1895, so I hope a month from now the Ohio voters will send a home boy back to Washington.

For millions of our citizens, the American Dream starts with owning a home. Homeownership gives people a sense of pride and independence and confidence for the future. When you work hard, like you've done, and there are good policies coming out of our Nation's Capital, we're creating a home—an ownership society in this country where more Americans than ever will be able to open up their door where they live and say, "Welcome to my house. Welcome to my piece of property."

I was in Florida this week. And I've been there quite often because of the hurricanes, and I want to thank you for the good work that the homebuilders are doing for the people of that State. Homebuilders have collected donations of cash and building materials for families that have lost so much. They've established an online disaster contractor network to help put homeowners in touch with licensed contractors and with Government officials who can help those people that have been hurt by these storms.

The Federal Government is also doing its part, along with State and local authorities. Florida has been through a terrible time. And so have many communities here in Ohio, that have suffered severe flooding caused by the hurricanes. We've issued disaster declarations for 20 counties in Ohio, making residents whose homes have been damaged or destroyed eligible for assistance. In Florida, Ohio, and other storm-damaged—ravaged States, we will not rest until life is back to normal, the damage repaired, and the homes are rebuilt.

Laura sends her best. When I asked her to marry me, she was a public school librarian in Texas. [Applause] There you are. Just wanted to see if any of the home State folks are here. [Laughter] I know Conine is here. [Laughter] She said, "Fine, I'll marry you, just so long as I never have to give a political speech." [Laughter] I said, "Okay." [Laughter] Fortunately, she didn't hold me to that promise. The American people are learning what I know: She's a compassionate, decent, strong First Lady for our country.

I want to thank Bobby Rayburn and Annette for their invitation and their leadership of this important group. I appreciate the board of directors who are here today. I want to thank the guests who are here today.

I'm traveling today with Senator Mike DeWine from the State of Ohio, who is a fine United States Senator. I appreciate you coming, Mike. Congressman Dave Hobson and Carolyn are with us today. Thank you for coming, Congressman. I appreciate you being here. Congressman Pat Tiberi is here. Thank you for coming, Pat. I'm proud you're here. He brought his mother, Rina, with him.

Yesterday I was in New Hampshire speaking, and Mother showed up. [Laughter] Just wanted to make sure she could