

Remarks in Cedar Rapids, Iowa
October 15, 2004

The President. It is great—thank you all. It is great to be back in Iowa. This isn't the first time we've been here. [Laughter] It's not going to be our last, either. I want to thank you for putting up the signs and doing the hard work. I want to thank you for what you're going to do over the next couple of weeks, and that is turn out the vote. There's no doubt in my mind, with your help, we will carry Iowa and win a great victory on the 2d of November.

And I just told the chairman—I call him the chairman. You call him Chuck. [Laughter] I said, "I got a job for him over the next 4 years." He said, "What's that?" I said, "Well, get those lawn mowers cranked up; there's a lot of grass on the South Lawn."

And tell your friends and neighbors, if they want a safer America, a stronger America, and a better America, to put me and Dick Cheney back in office.

The President. I'm pleased—

Audience member. [Inaudible]

The President. I'm pleased that Laura is traveling with me today. She is—we were in Las Vegas yesterday, and there was an important conference. The AARP was having a convention, and they said, "Send your best speaker over." So I went to the rally, and Laura went to the AARP. [Laughter] People have come to know her like I know her. She's warm. She's compassionate. She's a strong woman. She is a great First Lady.

I'm proud of my runningmate. Dick Cheney is doing a fine job. In the debate the other night, I admit he didn't have the waviest hair. [Laughter] I didn't pick him because of his hairdo. I picked him because of his experience, his judgment, and he's getting the job done for the American people.

I appreciate working with the chairman. He always talks about Iowa. Chuck Grassley is a good friend. He's a really good United

States Senator. And so is your Congressman, Jim Leach. I appreciate Jim. What a decent and honorable man Jim Leach is. And I'm proud that the chairman of the Budget Committee in the House of Representatives, Jim Nussle, is with us as well.

I want to thank the grassroots activists, all the people who are doing all the hard work. You never get thanked enough, and so here's my chance to thank you before election day. Keep putting up the signs. Keep making the phone calls. Turn out the vote, and we will win.

I enjoyed our debates. I enjoyed standing up there with my opponent, talking about our differences, and we have big differences. We have very different records and different plans for the future. My record is one of reforming education, of lowering taxes, of providing prescription drug coverage for seniors, for improving homeland protections, and for waging an aggressive war against the ideologues of hate. The Senator's record is 20 years of out-of-the-mainstream votes without many significant reforms or results to show for those 20 years. The records are important because our country faces many challenges, and the next President must recognize the need for reform and must be able to lead to achieve them.

On issue after issue, from jobs to health care to the need to strengthen Social Security, Senator Kerry's policies fail to recognize the changing realities of today's world and the need for fundamental reforms. In our final debate, when I talked about the vital link between education and jobs, the Senator didn't seem to get it. He said I switched away from jobs and started talking about education. No, good jobs start with good education. At a time when most new jobs require at least 2 years of college, I understand that one of the best ways to

keep jobs in America is to make sure our workforce is educated, the most highly skilled, the most creative, and the most innovative in the world. That's how we create jobs here in America.

When it comes to health care, once again, the other night, with a straight face—[laughter]—the Senator said his health care was not a Government plan.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. I could barely contain myself. Twenty-two million new people would enroll in a Government program under his plan, the largest expansion of Government health care ever. Eighty percent of the newly insured would be placed on a Government program like Medicaid. He claims his plan would help small businesses. Yet studies conducted by people who understand small businesses concluded that his plan is an overpriced albatross that would saddle small businesses with 225 new mandates.

I have a different view. We'll work to make sure health care is available and affordable. We'll help our small businesses. The decisions will be made by doctors and patients, not by officials in Washington, DC.

The Senator said about Social Security, if, later on, after a period of time, we find that Social Security is in trouble, then he'll call a meeting of experts. [Laughter] See, it seems that he likes meetings. [Laughter] Younger workers understandably worry whether Social Security will be there when they need it. We have plans for the future. We will solve problems before they—before it's too late. As I said in the debate the other night, our seniors have nothing to worry about when it comes to their Social Security check. You might remember the 2000 campaign, and those ads said, "If George W. gets in, you're not going to get your check." You got your checks. You will continue to get your check.

But for the sake of our children and our grandchildren, we must confront the Social Security problem now. Younger workers

must be able to take some of their own payroll taxes and set up a personal savings account that will earn better interest, an account they can call their own.

The last few years, the people have gotten to know me. They know my blunt way of speaking. I get that from Mom. [Laughter] They know I sometimes mangle the English language. I get that from Dad. [Laughter] Americans also know I tell you what I'm going to do and that I keep my word.

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

The President. Thank you all. When I came into office, the stock market had been in serious decline for 6 months, and the American economy was sliding into a recession. To help families, to get this economy growing again, I pledged to reduce taxes. I kept my word. Because we acted—and I include the Senator and Members of Congress here from Iowa, not all of them but most of them—because we acted, the recession was one of the shallowest in American history.

Over the last 3 years, our economy has grown at the rate—at the fastest rate of any major industrialized nation. The homeownership rate in America is at an all-time high. I remember campaigning in Iowa, and I made it clear to the farmers here that I understand a healthy economy requires a healthy farm economy. And today, farm and ranch income is up. In the past 13 months, we've added more than 1.9 million new jobs. The unemployment rate in America is 5.4 percent, lower than the average of the 1970s, the 1980s, and the 1990s. The unemployment rate in Iowa is down to 4.5 percent. This economy is moving forward, and we're not going back to the old days of tax and spend.

Listen, to make sure jobs stay here in America and people can find work, America must be the best place in the world to do business. That means less regulations on the job creators. That means we've got to do something about the frivolous lawsuits

that make it hard for people to expand their businesses.

To keep jobs here, Congress needs to pass my energy plan. The plan encourages conservation. It focuses on renewables like ethanol and biodiesel. It encourages new technologies. It encourages clean coal technology and increased domestic production. To create jobs here in America, we must be less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

To create jobs, to make sure people can find work, we've got to reject economic isolationism. We need to open up markets for Iowa farm products, for example. See, America can compete with anybody, anytime, anywhere, so long as the playing field is level. To create jobs, we've got to be wise about how we spend your money and keep your taxes low.

My opponent has his own history on the economy. In 20 years as a Senator from Massachusetts, he's built the record of a Senator from Massachusetts. He has voted to raise taxes 98 times.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. That's a vote for a tax increase about five times every year he has served in the Senate. That qualifies as a pattern. [*Laughter*] He can run from his record, but he cannot hide.

He looked in the camera, and he promised not to raise taxes on anyone who earns less than \$200,000 a year. The problem is, to keep that promise he would have to break almost all of his other ones. [*Laughter*] You see, he's promised about \$2.2 trillion in new Federal spending. That's trillion with a "T." And he says he's going to raise the top two brackets, which raises between 600 billion and 800 billion. There is a tax gap. That's the difference between what he could raise and what he's promised to spend. You can't have it both ways. To pay for all his big spending promises he's made, he's going to have to raise your taxes.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. But we're not going to let him; we're going to carry Iowa and win the Nation.

When I came into office, our public schools had been waiting decades for hopeful reform. Too many of our children were being shuffled through school without learning the basics. I pledged to restore accountability to our schools and end the soft bigotry of low expectations. And I kept my word. We passed the No Child Left Behind Act, and we're now seeing results. Our children are making sustained gains in reading and math. We are closing the achievement gap for minority students. We're making progress in America, and we will leave no child behind.

There is more work to be done. We'll fund early intervention programs in our high schools to help at-risk students. We'll place a new focus on math and science. Over time, we'll require a rigorous examination before graduation from high school. By raising performance in our high schools and by expanding Pell grants for low- and middle-income families, we will help more Americans start their career with a college diploma.

My opponent has a history on education issues—a history of almost doing nothing. The Senator has pledged to weaken the No Child Left Behind Act. He's proposed diluting the accountability standards and looking at measures like teacher attendance to judge whether students are learning. His proposals would undermine the high standards and accountability we worked hard to pass. We've moved beyond the old days of failure and mediocrity and low standards, and we're not going back.

When I came into office, we had a problem with Medicare. See, medicine was changing, but Medicare wasn't. For example, Medicare would pay tens of thousands of dollars for heart surgery but wouldn't pay a dime for the prescription drugs that could prevent the heart surgery from being needed in the first place. That didn't make any sense for our seniors. It didn't make

any sense for the taxpayers. I pledged to bring Republicans and Democrats together to strengthen and modernize Medicare for our seniors, and I kept my word.

We strengthened Medicare. Seniors are getting discounts on medicine through prescription drug cards. Rural hospitals and doctors are being treated fairly in the State of Iowa because of the Medicare law we passed. Beginning in 2006, all seniors will be able to get prescription drug coverage under Medicare.

Moving forward on health care, and there's much more to do. We need to make health care more available and affordable. We need a safety net for those with the greatest needs. I believe in community health centers, places where the poor and the indigent can get care. In a new term, we'll make sure every poor county in America has a community health center. We'll make sure our poor children are fully subscribed in our programs for low-income families.

We'll do more to make sure health care is affordable. Most uninsured work for small businesses. Small businesses are having trouble affording health care. To help our workers get the health care they need, we should allow small businesses to join together so they can buy insurance at the same discounts that big businesses are able to do. We will expand health savings accounts.

We will make sure that health care is available and affordable by doing something about the junk lawsuits that threaten our docs, running up the cost of medicine. By forcing doctors to practice defensive medicine, medical lawsuits cost the Government about \$28 billion a year. They cost our economy anywhere from 60 to 100 billion dollars a year. They're driving up insurance premiums, which drives good doctors out of practice. You cannot be pro-patient, pro-doctor, and pro-trial-lawyer at the same time. You have to choose. My opponent made his choice, and he put a personal injury lawyer on the ticket. I made my

choice. I'm standing with the doctors and patients. I am for medical liability reform—now.

I believe our country can be an ownership society. You know, there's a saying that says, no one ever washes a rental car. [Laughter] There's some wisdom in that statement. See, when you own something, you care about it. When you own something, you have a vital stake in the future of our country. So we encourage entrepreneurship. Every time a small business is starting, someone is achieving a part of the American Dream. We encourage home-ownership in America. I love the fact that more and more people are owning up—opening up the front door of their home, saying, "Welcome to my piece of property. Welcome to my home."

You know, on issue after issue, from Medicare without choices to schools with less accountability to higher taxes, my opponent takes the side of more centralized control and more Government.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. There's a word for that attitude. It's called liberalism. [Laughter] He dismisses that as a label, but he must have seen it differently when he said to a newspaper, "I am a liberal and proud of it." He's been rated by the National Journal as the most liberal Member of the United States Senate. That's hard to do. [Laughter] He's had some serious competition. [Laughter]

See, I have a different record and a very different philosophy. I don't believe in big Government, and I don't believe in indifferent Government. I'm a compassionate conservative. I believe in policies that empower people to improve their lives. I do not believe in policies that try to run people's lives. And so we're helping men and women find the skills and tools to prosper in a time of change. We're helping all Americans to have a future of dignity and independence. And that is how I will continue to lead our country for 4 more years.

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

The President. In this time of change, some things do not change, the values we try to live by, courage and compassion, reverence and integrity. In changing times, we must support the institutions that give our lives direction and purpose, our families, our schools, 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. We stand for the appointment of Federal judges who know the difference between personal opinion and the strict interpretation of the law.

Listen, my opponent's words on these issues are a little muddy, but his record is plenty clear. He says he supports the institution of marriage, but he voted against the Defense of Marriage Act. He voted against the ban on partial-birth abortion.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. He calls himself—at one time in the race called himself the candidate of conservative values.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. But he has described the Reagan years as a time of moral darkness.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. There is a mainstream in American politics, and my opponent sits on the far left bank. He can run, but he cannot hide.

This election will also determine how America responds to the continuing danger of terrorism. The most solemn duty of the American President is to protect the American people. If America shows uncertainty or weakness in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This will not happen on my watch.

Since that terrible morning of September the 11th, 2001, we've 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 defeating the—we're defending our homeland. We're strengthening the intelligence

services. We're modernizing and transforming our United States military so we can keep the All-Volunteer Army an all-volunteer army. We're staying on the offensive. We will strike the terrorists abroad so we do not have to face them here at home. We will spread liberty and freedom. And we will prevail.

Our strategy is succeeding. Think about the world as it was about 3½ years ago. Afghanistan was the home base of Al Qaida. Pakistan was a transit point for terrorist groups. Saudi Arabia was fertile ground for terrorist fundraising. Libya was secretly pursuing nuclear weapons. Iraq was a dangerous place and a gathering threat. And Al Qaida was largely unchallenged as it planned attacks.

Because we led, Afghanistan is free and is now an ally in the war on terror; Pakistan is capturing terrorist leaders; Saudi Arabia is making raids and arrests; Libya is dismantling its weapons programs; the army of a free Iraq is fighting for freedom; and more than three-quarters of Al Qaida's key members and associates have been brought to justice. We have led. Many have joined. And America and the world are safer.

And part of our strategy for a safe and peaceful world is to continue to spread freedom, and freedom is on the march. As we worked to secure ourselves in Afghanistan and Iraq, 50 million people have been freed from the clutches of brutal tyranny—50 million.

Think about what happened in Afghanistan. I want the youngsters here to realize what took place recently in history. It wasn't all that long ago that young girls couldn't go to school. Their mothers were pulled in the public square and whipped because they wouldn't toe the line to an ideology of hate. These people lived in darkness. Because we acted, people were freed. Thousands and thousands of people went to vote for a President. The first person to vote in the Afghan Presidential election was a 19-year-old woman. Freedom is powerful. Can you imagine a society

that's gone from darkness to light in 3 short years? Freedom is on the move.

There will be elections in Iraq. It hadn't been all that long ago that there was torture chambers and mass graves. Then the people will be having a chance to vote for President and Prime Minister of that country. Free societies in the Middle East will be hopeful societies which no longer feed resentments and breed violence for export. Free governments in the Middle East will fight the terrorists instead of harboring them. Freedom will help us keep the peace. Freedom will make America more secure.

So our mission is clear. We will help Afghanistan and Iraq train armies and police so their people can do the hard work of defending democracy. We will help them get on the path to stability and democracy as quickly as possible, and then our troops will come home with the honor they have earned.

It's a high honor to be the Commander in Chief of such a great military. We're a great military because it's full of great people. I'm proud of our military. I'm proud of our military families. And I want to thank the veterans who are here for having set such a great example for those who wear the uniform.

We will continue to make sure our troops have all the resources they need to complete their missions. That's why I went to the United States Congress in September of 2003 and asked for \$87 billion of supplemental funding to support our troops in both Iraq and Afghanistan. It was really an important piece of legislation. The bipartisan support was very strong. As a matter of fact, only 12 United States Senators voted against the \$87 billion, 2 of whom are my opponent and his runningmate.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Now, when you're out gathering the vote, when you're out convincing people to go to the polls and getting them to be for us, remind them of this fact. Only 4 United States Senators

voted to authorize the use of force and then voted against providing the funding necessary to support our troops in combat—only 4 of 100—2 of whom, 50 percent of whom, are my opponent and his runningmate.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. So they asked him why he made the vote. You might remember one of the most famous quotes in this campaign season. He said, "I actually did vote for the \$87 billion, right before I voted against it."

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Yes. He's given a lot of explanations for that vote since. One of the most interesting ones of all, he said, "Well, the whole thing is a complicated matter." There's nothing complicated about supporting our troops in combat.

In our debate, Senator Kerry proposed that we should pass a "global test" before we defend ourselves.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. The problem with that "global test" is that the Senator can't ever pass it. I say that because in 1990, the United Nations Security Council passed a resolution supporting action to remove Saddam Hussein from Kuwait. The international community was united. Countries throughout the world joined the coalition. Yet, even after the United Nations' approval, in the United States Senate, Senator Kerry voted against authorization for the use of force. He couldn't pass his own test.

In this campaign, you might remember he said that removing Saddam Hussein was a mistake. He actually said he would have done it differently. He would have had the U.N. pass another resolution. [Laughter] If Senator Kerry had his way, not only would Saddam Hussein still be in a palace in Baghdad, he'd be occupying Kuwait. This world of ours is safer with Saddam Hussein sitting in a prison cell.

We'll continue to build strong alliances. I talked with Tony Blair today, on Air Force One. He's a great ally. And we'll

build on those alliances, and we'll strengthen our coalitions. But I will never turn over America's national security decisions to leaders of other countries.

I believe in the transformational power of liberty. Perhaps I can explain it to you this way. Prime Minister Koizumi is a good friend of mine and Laura's. But it wasn't all that long ago that we were at war with the Japanese. My dad fought in World War II. I know dads and granddads of the people out here fought in World War II as well, against a sworn enemy. And it was a tough war. It was a brutal war, like all war.

And after World War II, Harry S. Truman, President of the United States, believed in the power of liberty to transform an enemy into an ally. That's what he believed. So after the war was over, we worked with the Japanese to build a democracy. There's a lot of people in this country who were skeptical about that action, skeptical about whether an enemy could ever become an ally, skeptical about whether Japan would become a democracy, skeptical about efforts to help them after they had hurt many of our citizens. But people believed. And as a result of that belief, today, I sit down with Prime Minister Koizumi, talking about how to keep the peace that we all want.

Someday, a duly elected leader of Iraq will sit down with an American President, talking about how to keep the peace in the Middle East, and our children and our grandchildren will be better off for it.

I believe that millions in the Middle East plead in silence for freedom. I believe that women in the Middle East want to grow up in a free society, and they want to raise their children in a free society. I believe that if given a chance, the people of 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.

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. This isn't one of those times. This is a time that requires firm resolve, clear vision, and a deep faith in the values that make us a great nation.

None of us will ever forget that week when one era ended and another began. September the 14th, 2001, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers. It is a day I will never forget. Workers in hardhats were there yelling at me at the top of their lungs, "Whatever it takes." I remember a fellow grabbed me by the arm, and he looked me in the eye, and he said, "Do not let me down." Ever since that day, I wake up every morning thinking about how to better protect our country. I will never relent in defending America, whatever it takes.

Four years ago, as I traveled your great State in the caucuses and then in the general election, I pledged that if you honored me with the high office of President, I would uphold the honor and the dignity. With your help, with your hard work, I will do so for 4 more years.

God bless. Thank you all for coming. Thank you all for being here. On to victory.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:55 p.m. at the U.S. Cellular Center. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom; and Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan.

Remarks in Oshkosh, Wisconsin
October 15, 2004

The President. Thank you all. Okay. It's great to be back in Oshkosh. My only regret is I don't have time to drive by Leon's. Laura and I are thrilled to be here. We're glad to be back in Wisconsin. The enthusiasm in this State is high. With your help, with your hard work, there is no doubt in my mind we will carry Wisconsin on November the 2d.

I want to—I am traveling with very good company today. So when I asked Laura to marry me, when I asked her to marry me, she said, "Okay, I will, just so long as I never have to give a speech." [Laughter] I said, "Okay, you got a deal." Fortunately, she didn't hold me to the deal. She's giving a lot of speeches. The American people have come to know Laura as a compassionate, warm, great First Lady.

Audience members. Laura! Laura! Laura!

The President. I know my opponent* has been in the neighborhood recently.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. He thought he was going over to Lambert Field. [Laughter] One of these days I'm going to make it to Lambeau Field and thank the Packers for being—setting such good examples for our kids.

I'm proud of Dick Cheney. Now, look, I admit it, 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 judgment, his experience, his ability to get the job done for the American people.

I want to thank your Congressman, Tom Petri. He's a fine man. I appreciate you coming, Congressman. I see the chairman over there, Jim Sensenbrenner. Thanks for coming, Chairman. Finely, we're proud to be here with Mark Green, Congressman Mark Green. I appreciate you guys coming.

* White House correction.

You need to vote for Tim Michels for the United States Senate. He wisely married Barbara. [Laughter] I know somebody else who made the right choice. [Laughter]

I really appreciate the Experimental Aircraft Association for allowing us to use this hangar. You're famous in Oshkosh, by gosh. [Laughter] One reason why is your airplanes. Another reason why is because of the good people who live here. I'm honored you all came out to say hello. Thanks for being here.

I want to thank Jack Voight, the State treasurer. I appreciate the speaker being here. I want to thank all the local officials.

I want to thank my friend Rick Graber. I want to thank the grassroots politics—politicians, the people who are putting up the signs and making the phone calls, the volunteers. I know many of you are working hard, and I thank you for that. It's takes a lot of hard work to get this many people out. But there's more hard work to be done. Laura and I will be campaigning alongside of you. Work hard. We will win in November.

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

The President. We're working—we're coming from the West. We were in Oregon this morning. Then we stopped off in Iowa, and fortunately, get to come to Wisconsin today. And one of the reasons we're coming west to east is, you might remember, we had a debate or two recently. I enjoyed those debates. Those debates give us a chance to express our opinions, and they show the stark differences between my opponent and me. See, we have different records, and we have different plans for the future.

My record is one of reforming education, lowering taxes, providing prescription drugs for our seniors, improving homeland protections, and waging aggressive war against