

security, equitable development, and protection for basic rights.

The two leaders agreed to make vigorous efforts to reach conclusion on the U.S.-Thai Free Trade Agreement (FTA) next year. They expressed satisfaction with the fourth round of talks held in Montana in July and looked forward to the 5th round next week in Hawaii. President Bush and Prime Minister Thaksin agreed that the FTA must be beneficial to the people of both countries and comprehensive in its mandate, and it must address issues of importance to both sides.

The two leaders welcomed the signing of an Air Transport Agreement between the two countries that would provide substantial benefits to travelers and businesses and further expand bilateral economic linkages.

As the coordinator for ASEAN dialogue with the United States, Thailand plays a key role in U.S. engagement in Southeast Asia. President Bush and Prime Minister Thaksin discussed regional and development issues and ways to enhance U.S.-Thai cooperation in regional forums, particularly the ASEAN Regional Forum and the ASEAN Post Ministerial Conferences, as well as the vital nexus of economic, trade, and security issues at APEC. President Bush noted that he was looking forward

to meeting jointly with ASEAN members of APEC at the Leaders' Meeting in Busan this November. The two leaders also expressed their support for the Aceh peace agreement underway in Indonesia and praised the serious efforts of both sides in achieving such a breakthrough.

Both leaders underscored the importance of combating infectious diseases and the urgency of addressing avian flu in particular. President Bush applauded Prime Minister Thaksin's leadership in responding to outbreaks in his country. The two leaders agreed on the critical importance of transparency, close monitoring, and cooperation across sectors and with international health organizations by all countries in the region. They pledged to intensify cooperation on global efforts to respond to this critical emerging issue.

President Bush and Prime Minister Thaksin agreed on the potential for even greater coordination on areas of mutual concern and overlapping interest and looked forward to meeting again in November at APEC.

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

Statement on the Recommendations of the National Commission on Election Reform

September 19, 2005

I greatly appreciate the excellent work of the bipartisan commission in identifying ways to strengthen the integrity of the voting process. It is critical to maintain Amer-

ica's trust in our election system, and I look forward to reviewing this report and working with Congress on the recommendations.

Remarks to the Governor's Commission on Recovery, Rebuilding, and
Renewal in Gulfport, Mississippi
September 20, 2005

Thank you all. Please be seated. Thanks. Well, thanks for having me—again. A couple of things, observations: Every time I come back here, I see progress. You know, sometimes when you're so close to the situation, it's hard to really see noticeable change. But this part of the country is changing. And it's—you're moving forward. I don't know if you know that or not, but flying in or driving in, there's something different than the first time I was here.

Now, what wasn't different is, this Mississippi spirit is strong. It was noticeable. There is a can-do attitude in the midst of all the trauma and pain. One thing I noticed on my first trip was, "We can do this." And now I'm seeing it being done. "We can do this" means a lot of things. It meant, like Jerry Darden, who's there—Jerry, stand up for a minute—Jerry Darden rescued 20 people out of the flood waters. He represents kind of the heroic action that took place when the storm hit. I met him out at the airport. He said, "I never thought I'd get to see a President." [*Laughter*] I said, "I never thought I'd get to meet a fellow who saved 20 lives."

And that can-do spirit is—these county commissioners—we call them county commissioners—county supervisors and mayors who are dealing with unbelievable trauma, and you know, they're right there on the frontline of trying to comfort people who hurt. And yet, amidst all that agony and pain, they're going through was this comforting spirit. The can-do spirit is, you know, seeing progress being made. And inside this tent there's a can-do spirit of taking a horrible situation and making this part of the world better. And so I'm impressed.

And I think that when Haley said, "Well, we've got to make sure that people take a look down here to invest," the first thing they're going to look at is not the tax code,

but the character of the people, which will give you a great advantage.

My pledge is—let me step back. I really appreciate this commission. I think it's really important for Mississippi folks to chart your path. And I know Gene Taylor feels that way, and I know the Senators feel that way. It's just—you really don't want the Federal Government telling you how to rebuild. What you want is the Federal Government to help you rebuild. You want a partner, not somebody who is going tell you what the strategy ought to be.

I also appreciate Haley saying that the State of Mississippi and this commission will take into account what the local folks think. Their input is going to be vital. I mean, you've got yourself some mayors and some supervisors who were elected by the people; you need to listen to them, because they're going to be listening to the people.

A couple of recovery items: One, I spent some time—quality time at the Chevron plant in Pascagoula, and I want to thank Roland for being here. By the way, you talk about a dedicated group of people who are working huge hours and long hours, not only to get that plant up and running but to help the community. It was an impressive display of compassion and hard work, and thanks for having me.

But I did hear from the mayors and the county supervisors, and there was a level of frustration, as there should have been. You know, you hear one thing about debris removal, and nothing is happening. Well, I got back, and I called them in, and I said, "Look, part of the recovery, we've got to help these folks have a sensible plan to start removing debris." We worked with Haley. The mayors tell me—I'm a little cautious about laying it out there—but the mayors tell me there is a plan now in place that is logical and that—where people will