

You know, one of the things—I came to New Orleans and spoke about the Federal commitment, and I said, it’s been a devastating period, and the Federal Government is committed and will remain committed to helping. Thus far, the Federal Government’s committed \$120 billion—little more than that—of taxpayers’ money to help all along the coast. I think it’s money well spent. I think it’s important for our country that the Gulf Coast region and the great city of New Orleans recover as quickly as possible.

My impression is that—you know, that there’s a lot more hope now than there was even from a year ago. I mean, there’s just—people have a little different bounce in their step. But there are some significant problems. One is we got to make sure these levees meet the obligations and meet the standards.

Secondly, I am concerned about the health care system that was torn up and needs to be rebuilt in a way that encourages there to be good health care and in a way that recognizes the changing population of New Orleans.

Thirdly, I have been concerned about the stories on crime, just like the citizens have been worried about the stories on crime. And I appreciate the Federal attorney giving me an update, and I appreciate the mayor’s efforts to work hard to hold people to account for breaking the law. That’s what the average citizen expects; that’s what the taxpayers who are helping the people down here want to see.

All in all—and then, finally, public housing restoration—it’s a big issue in New Orleans. It’s—but it’s an issue where there is a plan, and we just need to follow through on the plan.

So there are some hurdles, but this city has come a long way and—to the point where I felt very comfortable hosting the international conference with the President of Mexico and the Prime Minister of Canada. And I will tell you that not only did the leaders feel welcomed in New Orleans and feel comfortable in New Orleans and feel relaxed in New Orleans, but so did the delegations they brought with them. New Orleans is a great city to host a meeting or host a convention. They know what they’re doing down here. The city is recovered, it’s on its feet, and it’s bouncing back. And it is an honor to be back here.

And I want to thank you all for sharing your thoughts with me. And thank you for being leaders and helping this part of the—vital part of the country recover.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:07 p.m. at Galatoire’s Restaurant. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Piyush “Bobby” Jindal of Louisiana; Mayor C. Ray Nagin of New Orleans, LA; Douglas V. O’Dell, Jr., Federal Coordinator, Office of Gulf Coast Rebuilding; Jim Letten, U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Louisiana; President Felipe de Jesus Calderon Hinojosa of Mexico; and Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada.

## Remarks on Arrival in Baton Rouge, Louisiana

*April 22, 2008*

*The President.* First of all, it’s good to be back in Baton Rouge, home of the LSU Tiger national championship football team. I had the honor of welcoming the team and Coach Les Miles to the White House,

and it was a great honor for me, and I enjoyed it. And I do want to congratulate the good folks of Louisiana for supporting a football team that brought great credit to the game.

I'm here with the Governor—the great Governor of Louisiana to lend my support to John Kennedy for the United States Senate. I thank Becky and Preston for joining us as well. John Kennedy will make a fine Senator for the people of Louisiana. He's a fiscal watchdog. He cares about the taxpayers' money. He's made a career out of making sure that whenever government spends money, it's spent wisely, and that's the kind of Senator Louisiana needs.

He'll support the troops. He'll support those who wear our Nation's uniform. And he'll see our troops are funded without the United States Senate telling our military how to conduct the war. So I appreciate your strong support for our military, John.

You know, one of the issues that the Senate will be faced [with]<sup>\*</sup> is whether or not to raise people's taxes. John Kennedy has pledged to keep taxes low. We want the people here in Louisiana to have more of their own money to spend. And we can meet our priorities at the Federal Government without getting into the pockets of the people of Louisiana.

And finally, John Kennedy understands that our most important task is to protect the American people from harm. And if Al Qaida is making a phone call into the

United States, he understands we need to know who they're talking to and why they're making the call.

So I look forward to having a man in the Senate who understands the priorities have got to be to protect the American people and understands that the same civil liberties given to our people shouldn't be extended to terrorists who want to do us harm.

So I wish you all the best, Senator-to-be. We got a good fundraiser for you. I'm honored that you would invite me here. And I look—ask the people of Louisiana to give this good man a fair hearing—more importantly, give him their vote, because he'll do a fine job as the United States Senator.

Thank you and congratulations.

*John N. Kennedy.* Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you so much.

*The President.* Good to see you. Let's load up and get going.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:19 p.m. at Baton Rouge Metropolitan Airport. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Piyush "Bobby" Jindal of Louisiana; and Becky, wife, and Preston, son, of senatorial candidate John N. Kennedy.

## Statement on Farm Legislation

*April 22, 2008*

I am disappointed that Congress has failed to put forward a good farm bill, leaving farmers and ranchers in a state of continued uncertainty as to how they will be affected by Federal policies.

The farm bill proposal currently being discussed by conferees would fail several important tests that I have set forth. With record farm income, now is not the time

for Congress to ask other sectors of the economy to pay higher taxes in order to increase the size of Government. The proposal would increase spending by at least \$16 billion, masked in part by budgetary gimmicks and funded in part by additional tax revenues. These tax revenue provisions are unacceptable, including tax compliance initiatives being considered by the House

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<sup>\*</sup> White House correction.