

And so that's what the debate is all about. And I'd like your help. You can influence Members of Congress, and people listen to you. And so I hope you take folks aside and say, "Be realistic about our money. Let's don't balloon the size of the Federal Government." And let's also remember that by giving people their money back, it will help provide a second wind for our economy.

Many of you know better than me that our economy is slowing down, and we've got some issues with which we'll deal. Yesterday, the Vice President brought to me an interim report on energy—we've got a problem with energy in America. Our demand is increasing, but our supplies aren't. And it doesn't take much economics to figure out what will happen.

And we're going to do something about it. This is going to be a very practical administration. We will view problems, analyze them, and deal with them. We'll be as up-front as we can with the American people. We'll explain when we can get something done quickly, and we'll explain when we can't get something done quickly. And we're not going to shirk from the problems with which we're confronted. And one of the problems is an energy crisis.

Another problem is a slowing economy, and we're going to deal with it. We'll deal with it in a forthright way. And part of it is good fiscal policy, which means when we give people their money back, it should serve as a stimulus to economic growth.

So this is a plan that not only brings fiscal discipline to the budgeting process; it's a plan that sets priorities. But it's also a plan that remembers how America grows, and it grows through entrepreneurship and the creation of small businesses and providing capital in the private sector for the expansion of jobs and the purchase of equipment. And that's what the plan is.

And I'd like your help. I'd like your help to sell it on the Hill. Two things I hope that you notice when you go up there is that I believe the country is beginning—or the Capitol is beginning to develop a culture of respect.

I want the Members—I fully recognize not everybody is going to agree with me, or us, and I respect that. I do. I may not agree with

it, but I respect it. One of my jobs is to change the tone of Washington. Oh, occasionally, there's the voice out there that sounds a little disgruntled. But that's okay. That's part of a democracy. But our administration, or at least the people in my administration, will treat people with respect.

I respect those who don't agree with me on every single issue. I expect there not to be unanimity. And I believe by treating people respectfully, it is possible to do some positive things. This is a Congress that is beginning to get a sense of accomplishment. There is a culture of accomplishment in Washington. There's a bankruptcy bill that's working its way through the House and the Senate. There's an ergonomics—change in ergonomics regulations that I believe is positive, and I intend to sign today. There are some positive developments. Things are getting done.

And that's important. And that will be a little change from the way people have viewed Washington in the past. Washington seemed to be a place of bitterness and acrimony, and it doesn't have to be that way. It's important to change it not only to get good public policy done, but it's important to change the tone of Washington so that when people look at our Nation's Capital they understand that public service can be noble and positive. Just like these ladies up here understand.

And our job is bigger than just legislation. Our job is to set a good tone, a tone of respect, a tone of accomplishment for the Nation. And that's exactly what we're going to do. And I want to thank you all for being here to help us get it done.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:50 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady.

Remarks Prior to Discussions With Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of Israel and an Exchange With Reporters

March 20, 2001

President Bush. It's my honor to welcome the Prime Minister of our close friend and

ally to the Oval Office. Mr. Prime Minister, welcome.

We've just had a very frank and good discussion. Both of us reconfirmed our friendship, both talked about how best to keep the peace.

I assured the Prime Minister my administration will work hard to lay the foundation of peace in the Middle—work with our nations in the Middle East, give peace a chance. Secondly, I told him that our Nation will not try to force peace, that we will facilitate peace, and that we will work with those responsible for peace.

The Prime Minister and I had met before. I took a tour of the West Bank by helicopter, and he was the guide. It was a pretty interesting—it was a really interesting day for me. He's got a marvelous sense of history, and I learned a lot about our friend by touring the West Bank by chopper with you, Mr. Prime Minister.

You didn't think you were going to be the Prime Minister, and you probably darn sure didn't think I was going to be the President. But here we are, and we've got great responsibilities to work together, and I look forward to doing so.

Welcome, Mr. Prime Minister. Glad you're here.

Prime Minister Sharon. Thank you. I would like to thank you, President Bush, for inviting me to the White House. We've had a very constructive and frank discussion of strategic issues that are of the interest of the United States and Israel. And we discussed the peace process, what can be achieved, and how. We are, in Israel, we are all committed to peace. As one who saw in the past all the horrors of wars, I believe I understand the import of peace. And in Israel, all of us are committed.

But of course, the first thing and the most important one is to bring security to the citizens of Israel. That was the commitment that I took upon myself, Mr. President, and that is the first thing that we have to accomplish. Once we reach security, and it will be calm in the Middle East, I believe that we will start with our negotiations to reach a peace agreement.

We shared issues of common interest, and I think it was a very good conversation, a

very frank one, and I think that we can look forward—can look ahead, how to achieve our common goals in the Middle East, together with deep cooperation and coordination.

And I would like you for your friendship to Israel. We have friends here, and you have friends there in Israel, which is a democratic country, a stable democracy which appreciate the values of democratic life. I'm sure that we can do many things together. And I would like to thank you for the cooperation of your government, of your own, for our future interests in the Middle East.

President Bush. Thank you, sir.

Jerusalem

Q. Mr. President, the Prime Minister last night expressed his faith in Jerusalem as Israel's eternal, undivided capital, under Israel sovereignty. Mindful of your campaign statements, how do you feel about this statement? Is that something that has U.S. support?

President Bush. Well, the status of Israel, I mean, the status of Jerusalem will be ultimately determined by the interested parties. During the campaign, I said we'll begin the process of moving our Embassy to Jerusalem.

National Economy

Q. Mr. President, yesterday you said that you were very confident about the U.S. economy. Today you said that it's slowing down. Which is it? Are you trying to have it both ways?

President Bush. I was talking about the long-term health of our economy is going to be very strong. And that's in Israel's interest, that our economy be strong. We've got some problems, some short-term problems, and if Congress were to act quickly on my tax stimulus package, it would make our recovery quicker.

Q. Is there any reason to believe that it will help in the short term?

President Bush. Oh, I think it will, and I think good fiscal policy and good monetary policy, good trade policy will help our economy. And we need an energy policy, too. But I hope the Congress acts quickly on a stimulus package that will improve our economy. People have got to know that I have got great faith in the American economy.

Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat

Q. Mr. President, do you accept the idea not to invite Yasser Arafat, or are you going to invite him and meet with him here?

President Bush. Well, one of the things that the Prime Minister and I talked about is our engagement in the Middle East. I will do everything we can to help calm nerves, to encourage there to be dialog in a peaceful way. I haven't made up my plans on who I'm going to meet with yet. I do have some plans in place. I'm looking forward to meeting the King of Jordan, for example.

But one of the things that I will do is use whatever persuasive powers I have to create an environment in which peace can flourish. I've got great confidence in the Prime Minister, and so do the Israeli people. He got 66 percent of the vote. He did a little better at the polls than I did. [*Laughter*] You know what I mean, Mr. Prime Minister.

Future Middle East Negotiations

Q. Prime Minister Sharon, did you manage to convince the President Bush that you will not negotiate underfire? Do you think that this message is clear, and do you think that President Bush agrees with you about this issue?

Prime Minister Sharon. I didn't have to talk to President Bush about that. I think what I understand the policy of this great democracy, the United States, is that one should not surrender to terror and pressure and violence. And therefore, I don't have to work too hard on this thing. I even didn't try.

But I understand, and I believe that they do, and I appreciate that respect that—to that approach that one should never surrender to terror and that the free world should struggle against terror, local, regional, and international terror. And I'm sure that the United States leads such a struggle, and we are a partner in the struggle. I think that is in the interest of every democratic state, because in order to keep stability—and I'm a great supporter of the President's policy of keeping stability in the Middle East—the main danger to stability is terror. And that, I believe, will be—should be the common

goal of every democratic country in the free world.

Q. Do you think that Arafat is the danger for the stability in the Middle East, Mr. Sharon?

Prime Minister Sharon. I don't think that I have to add about Arafat. Everyone knows what are the steps of terror and who is behind the steps. I don't think I have to add anything about that. It's clear.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to King Abdullah II of Jordan. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks to Central Intelligence Agency Employees in Langley, Virginia

March 20, 2001

Thank you, all. I learned that move from my mother. [*Laughter*]

Thank you very much, George. I appreciate your kind introduction. I also want to thank you for agreeing to continue to serve as the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency. You've done really good work here. The people that work here appreciate it, and I appreciate it, as well.

I also wanted to visit early in my administration to tell you all how much I value your work. The CIA and all the members of our intelligence community make a vital contribution to our Nation's security. I know this firsthand; I'm your customer. [*Laughter*] I see your product every morning at 8 o'clock sharp, and it's always first-rate.

I appreciate the work that goes into the briefing. I realize that the information inside it contains—represents the work of thousands of dedicated and daring men and women, at home and abroad. It is truly an honor to be among you and to be in this building.

I've flown into an airport once called George Bush. [*Laughter*] But I've never been in a Center like this. [*Laughter*] Seeing that sign on the way in, as you can imagine, made me feel really proud. But I was also struck by the contrast between today's world