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we'd like to help and let that individual make a choice as to whether or not they want to find help in a secular program or in a faith-based program. Government can do that.

And we can do that without offending the process-oriented people who worry about church and state. We shouldn't breach the line of church and state, but we should welcome faith-based initiatives and faith-based programs that use a powerful, powerful way of changing people's lives. That's called the power of faith. You change somebody's heart, you change their lives. And Government shouldn't fear faith-based initiatives. As a matter of fact, we ought to welcome them.

And I want to thank those in the room who have been on the forefront of change, of helping us change Government attitude toward a policy that I'm absolutely convinced is going to positively affect the lives of thousands of people. One such initiative that we've asked for Congress to fund is a mentoring program for boys and girls whose mom or dad may be in prison.

And so these are some of the goals that we're working on here in Washington. I cannot do it alone. One, I've assembled a great team of people, of good people, like Rod and others. I was, today, with the Chancellor of Germany, and I was at the Oval Office, there in the little dining room. And sitting next to me were Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice, as we were effecting foreign policy that affects the world. And I've got a great team of people around me.

As you can tell, I welcome good, strong folks—I think that's the sign of a chief executive officer who knows what he's doing—and I empower them, and I work with them. But we can also do some other things. We can help work to change the culture of Washington and to kind of tone down, dial down the rhetoric and dial up success. I'm doing my very best to stop the name calling and the finger pointing, to say that good people can disagree in an agreeable way. It's so important that we have mutual respect in the Nation's Capital. The issues that I've talked about, I don't particularly—I don't think are necessarily Republican issues. I think they're good policy issues. I think these are issues that are best for everybody in the country. Otherwise, I wouldn't be promoting them. And I know we can do a better job. And I hope the country's beginning to get a sense that there is now a culture of respect in Washington, DC, and as importantly, a culture of accomplishment, that we're getting some things done.

And not everybody's going to agree with every detail, but we're getting things done. And that's important, because, after all, those of us who have assumed the high offices we hold must understand we have a responsibility to those offices. We have a responsibility to conduct ourselves in ways in which somebody will say, "I'd like to serve." Public service is a noble calling. Public service is important to this Nation.

But you don't have to be a President or a Congressman or a Secretary of a Cabinet to affect people's lives in a positive way. And that's a message I'm also trying to spread, that the true strength of this country really isn't in the halls of Government or in the White House; it's in the hearts and souls of people who live all across America, without Government, without a President saying to go do this—just walk across the street and say to somebody in need, "What can I do to help?"

And that's why I'm so optimistic about America and so optimistic about our future and so thankful that you are here to give me a chance to talk about our vision.

Thanks for coming, and God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Representative J.C. Watts, Jr.; Representative Sisisky's widow, Rhoda, and sons Mark, Terry, Richard, and Stuart; Ohio Secretary of State J. Kenneth Blackwell; Phyllis Hunter, consultant, Texas Reading Initiative; Anthony T. Evans, senior pastor, Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship, and president, The Urban Alternative; and Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder of Germany.

Statement on the Situation in the Middle East

March 29, 2001

I am deeply concerned about the escalating violence in the Middle East. It is claiming the lives of innocent civilians on both

sides. The tragic cycle of incitement, provocation, and violence has gone on far too long.

Both sides must take important steps to calm the situation now. The Palestinian Authority should speak out publicly and forcefully in the language of the Palestinian people to condemn violence and terrorism. It should arrest the perpetrators of terrorist acts, and it should resume security cooperation with Israel.

The Government of Israel for its part should exercise restraint in its military response. It should take steps to restore normalcy to the lives of the Palestinian people by easing closures and removing checkpoints. Last week Prime Minister Sharon assured me that his government wants to move in this direction, and I urge Israel to do so.

I will be meeting with Egypt's President Mubarak next Monday and Jordan's King Abdullah the week after to seek their help in defusing the tensions. Egypt and Jordan are two of our most important partners in the region and their role is crucial. I have asked Secretary Powell to call Chairman Arafat and contact other leaders to urge them to stand against violence. Our diplomats in the region are fully engaged in this effort.

Our goal is to encourage a series of reciprocal and parallel steps by both sides that will halt the escalation of violence, provide safety and security for civilians on both sides, and restore normalcy to the lives of everyone in the region. A lasting peace in the region will come only when the parties agree directly on its terms.

This week I vetoed an unbalanced U.N. resolution because it tried to force the adoption of a mechanism on which both parties did not agree. My approach will be to facilitate the parties' work in finding their own solution for peace. We seek to build a stable foundation for restoring confidence, rebuilding security cooperation, and resuming a political dialog between the parties.

NOTE: In the statement, the President referred to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of Israel; President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt; King Abdullah II of Jordan; and Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority.

Remarks at the Radio and Television Correspondents Association Dinner

March 29, 2001

Thank you all very much. Well, Lew, thank you very much. Laura and I are thrilled to be here. I appreciate the members of the press. I think you serve a very useful purpose, especially tonight.

As you know, we're studying safe levels for arsenic in drinking water. [*Laughter*] To base our decision on sound science, the scientists told us we needed to test the water glasses of about 3,000 people. [*Laughter*] Thank you for participating. [*Laughter*]

It's good to see so many Members of the Congress here, my fellow Texan Tom DeLay, here at the head table. Lew asked me a little earlier if Tom ever smiled. I said, "I don't know, I've only known him 9 years." [*Laughter*]

Senator Lieberman is here. We all know Joe is an Orthodox Jew, so he does no work from sundown Friday until sundown Saturday. This has so impressed me I, myself, am thinking of converting—[*laughter*]—So I don't have nothing to do from sundown Saturday to sundown Friday. [*Laughter*]

Most of you probably didn't know that I have a new book out. Some guy put together a collection of my wit and wisdom or, as he calls it, my accidental wit and wisdom. [*Laughter*] But I'm kind of proud that my words are already in book form. So like other authors, I thought I'd read from it tonight. [*Laughter*] It's like the thoughts of Chairman Mao, only with laughs and not in Chinese. [*Laughter*]

Here's one from the book—and I actually said this. [*Laughter*] "I know the human being and fish can coexist peacefully." [*Laughter*] Now, that makes you stop and think. [*Laughter*] Anyone can give you a coherent sentence, but something like this takes you into an entirely new dimension. [*Laughter*]

Here's another: "I understand small-business growth; I was one." [*Laughter*] You know, I love great literature. [*Laughter*]

I actually said this in New Hampshire: "I appreciate preservation. It's what you do when you run for President. You've got to