

the 24 service men and women who are no longer in China and are now home.

This weekend also marks the close of Passover, when Jews recall their deliverance from oppression. We hope this Passover has been a time of reflection and renewal.

Renewal is the hope of every person and the promise of many religions. This season signifies the hope of renewal, a reawakening, a fresh vision of our lives and our possibilities. And in this season, we are reminded that on the path of renewal, we are not alone. We have one another, family members and friends, who know us and accept us as we are. And if we're very fortunate, we have people in our lives who see us not just as we are but also as we can be. That is the love of family.

And many of us trust a Creator who knows us and loves us and has a plan for our lives. We cannot know where that plan will lead us on Earth, but we are assured that it leads nearer to God. This is the comfort of faith.

In this season of renewal, we remember that failures in life are never final, that hope leads us closer to the truth, that in the end, even death itself will be defeated. And that is the shared belief of many faiths, and that is the promise of Easter morning.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 9 a.m. on April 12 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on April 14. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 13 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast.

## Remarks to the United States Chamber of Commerce

April 16, 2001

Thank you very much. Kelly, thank you very much for that kind introduction. It's an honor for me to be here. Tom, thank you for opening up this fantastic facility. I am thrilled to know that some of my former Governors are with members of the chambers in their respective States, and I want to say hello to them. I thank all those who are tuning in. It's kind of nice to be able to speak to so many folks in so many cities without having to fire up Air Force One. *[Laughter]*

I'm especially honored to be able to speak to the folks who really help our economy grow, the entrepreneurs, the business folks of America, the employers, the risk takers, the people who really work hard to realize the great American Dream.

As Kelly said, this is tax day. All across America, husbands and wives spent last weekend side-by-side at the kitchen table trying to finish their 1040s. You have to say this for the income tax, it tends to bring families together. *[Laughter]*

The Internal Revenue Service asks our families in America a lot of questions: How much did you earn? Did you move last year? How big is your mortgage payment? You know, the truth of the matter is, the IRS knows more about us than our neighbors do. In a lot of cases, they know more about us than our families do. But while the tax system knows a lot about our citizens, there's a lot our citizens may not know about our tax system.

In 2001 the Federal Government will take a bigger share of the U.S. economy in taxes than in any year since 1944. And I remind you, in 1944 we had 11.5 million people under arms. The Federal Government will take more as a percentage of the national economy this year than it did during World War II, except for one year, more than any year of the Vietnam war or the Korean conflict, more than it took to win World War I or prevail in the cold war. Our country is at peace, but our Government is charging wartime prices. Enough is enough. The American people deserve tax relief.

You often hear it said, we cannot afford tax relief. But even after adjusting for inflation, the U.S. Government will collect twice as much income tax revenue in 2001 as it did in 1981. Enough is enough, folks. It's time to give our folks some tax relief in America.

During the budget debates in Washington, some Members of Congress complained that they did not have enough money to spend, but in 2001 the income tax will yield 2 billion in revenues for each and every one of the 535 Members of Congress. I think they should be able to get by on that—*[laughter]*—even the Senators. *[Laughter]* No,

enough's enough. People in America deserve tax relief.

Thanks to the help of a lot of folks here and all around the country, tax relief is on the way. The American taxpayer won some important victories a couple of weeks ago. The House of Representatives voted in favor of a plan that I think is an important plan, 1.6 trillion in tax relief over the next 10 years. The Senate approved most of my tax plan but wants the Government to spend far more.

Some Members of the Senate are, unfortunately, proving the point I make all across the country: If you spend it, they will spend it. [Laughter] Federal discretionary spending rose by 8 percent in 2001. The Senate has just voted to increase the discretionary spending by another 8 percent in 2002. At that rate, Federal discretionary spending will double by 2010. Think about that. If we keep spending at the pace the Senate wants, in only 9 years' time Government operations will cost twice as much as they do today.

Now, Senators are in their home States this week listening to the taxpayers. I hope Americans will send a clear message: Excessive Federal spending threatens economic vitality. What we want is a stronger economy, not larger Federal Government.

There's a better way: Increase discretionary spending by a moderate and responsible 4 percent—by the way, at a rate larger than inflation—and then reduce taxes for everyone who pays taxes.

My plan does not puncture the Tax Code with loopholes. It doesn't give special treatment to special interests. My plan targets only one interest, the public interest. It directs help to individuals and families and small businesses. It is a plan for real people, and it will help produce real prosperity.

Let me tell you a little bit about what tax relief means for American families. My plan, when fully implemented, returns about \$1,600 to the typical family of four. Sixteen-hundred pays the typical mortgage for more than a month. Sixteen-hundred will buy the typical family nearly 3 months worth of groceries. Sixteen-hundred will fuel two cars for a year.

There are a lot of American mothers and dads who wake up in America today anxious

over bills they have to pay. Their worries don't get any easier when the Federal Government takes more of their income in taxes than they pay for food, shelter, and clothing. For families with children to raise and debts to pay, tax relief will lift burdens and ease worries.

For small businesses, tax relief means more customers and improved cash flow, more money to hire more workers, more money to expand benefits, more money to invest in new technology. Tax relief will create new jobs. Tax relief will generate new wealth, and tax relief will open new opportunities.

If you read some of the news accounts of this budget debate, if you listen to what some of the Members of Congress say, you'd think that little of value can ever happen in America unless the Government makes it happen. You'd think that when we return money to the taxpayers, it evaporates into the air.

Let me tell you some of the things 1.6 trillion could mean to the private economy. It could buy 10 million new middle income homes. It could pay the tuitions of 26 million young people at a private college or university for 4 years each. It could purchase 76 million new automobiles. These are the kinds of things Americans do with their own money. And there are many others.

Just ask Tommy and Sharen Winfield, for example. They're watching via closed circuit here from Atlanta, Georgia. The Winfields have three children. Tommy has been working as an operating engineer at Children's Hospital of Atlanta for the past 3 years. They pay \$1,380 in Federal income taxes. Under my plan, they'd pay nothing.

I first met Tommy a few weeks ago, and we were having a roundtable discussion about tax relief. I asked him whether he thought the relief would make a difference to his family—you see, there are some who say, "Thirteen-eighty, that's nothing. That's not enough money for anybody." But let me tell you what Tommy said loud and clear, and I hope the Members of the United States Congress hear it. Tommy said, "Sir, if they don't believe you"—meaning, whether or not tax relief means anything—"then they should just ask me." Thirteen-eighty means a lot to Tommy. It means a lot to a lot of folks in

America: those who are struggling with higher energy bills because we hadn't had an energy policy; those who have got big credit card debts.

We've got the Blake family with us from Alexandria, Virginia, Kelly and Pam—one less son. [*Laughter*] They pay \$4,000 in Federal income tax. Under my plan, they will save \$1,700. That's real money for this hard-working couple. They and their two sons, I can assure you, will find good use for that tax relief. And whatever they do, I strongly believe they will spend it better and more productively than the Federal Government can.

This is an important debate for our country. It's a debate about how to make sure our economy continues to grow. But it's really a debate about, who do we trust? Who do—those of us who have been honored to serve our country at the Federal level—who do we trust with the people's money? Do we trust our Government, or do we trust the people? I believe, after we meet priorities—and we meet priorities by growing the discretionary budget by 4 percent—that we always have got to remember whose money it is we're talking about. It's not the Government's money; it's the people's money.

And we've always got to remember, the role of Government is not to create wealth. It's to create an environment in which the entrepreneur can flourish, in which the small business can grow to become a big business. That's the role of Government. And that's why it's vital at this point in American history that we return money back to the people. Instead of returning money, we ought not to take it in the first place, with real meaningful tax relief.

I've learned that the people can make a big difference in a lot of debates, particularly the tax relief debate. We're making some pretty good progress. I saw a good Democrat Senator out of Georgia the other day. Max Cleland said that he is interested in—when he comes back—interested in supporting the \$1.6 trillion plan. I think that's what he said. It certainly sounded like it to me. [*Laughter*] And that's a good sign. I appreciate the Senator going home and listening to the people.

You see, I think we've finally made the case that we can meet the obligations of the

Federal Government, that we don't have to grow at 8 percent in order to meet obligations. We've also made the case that sending money back to the people is important for our economy and important for the American Dream. And I want to thank your help for it.

I want to invite all Americans to take a look at the budget plan themselves. You can order the little book by calling 202-512-1800, and ask for the Citizen's Guide to the Federal Budget. Or you can download it for free at [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov).

It's important for you to follow your Government closely. It's important for you to not let the filter decide what's reality and what's not reality. It's important to get the facts. And it's always important to understand that tax relief will stimulate creativity and enterprise for individual Americans.

I firmly believe tax relief means a better life in a more prosperous America. So let the Members of Congress know when they come back that you're watching, that you care for what they do because it will affect your life in a positive way.

I can't thank you all enough for your support, and I can't thank you enough for letting me come by and make my case.

God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:25 p.m. in the Hall of Flags at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. In his remarks, he referred to Kelly N. Stanley, chairman, and Thomas J. Donohue, president and chief executive officer, U.S. Chamber of Commerce; Tommy and Sharon Winfield's children, Joy and Tiffany Winfield and Ager Hilson; and Kelly and Pam Blake's children, Jeremy and Jared.

### **Remarks Prior to Discussions With President Ricardo Lagos of Chile and an Exchange With Reporters**

*April 16, 2001*

#### **Chile-U.S. Free Trade Agreement**

**President Bush.** I'm very honored to welcome the President of Chile here to the Oval Office. Chile is a remarkable country. It's a country that is a strong democracy, that has shown people in this hemisphere the importance of rule of law. I look forward to renewing a friendship with the President.