

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Representative-Elect J. Randy Forbes

June 20, 2001

The President. It is my honor to welcome the newest Member of the United States Congress to the Oval Office. Randy Forbes ran a great race. He won a race a lot of folks didn't think he could win. And he did it because he talked about issues that mattered to the people of Virginia: tax relief, Social Security reform, strong national defense.

We all knew he was a good candidate. We didn't realize how good until the results came in last night. So it's an honor for the Vice President and me, the chairman of the party, Congressman Davis, to welcome you both to the Oval Office and congratulate you and look forward to working with you.

Representative Forbes. Well, thank you, Mr. President. And it's an exciting victory for us, and we couldn't have done it without the help from you, Mr. President, and the Vice President, and also the great chairman of our party and chairman of the congressional committee. They all just put so many resources together and made this victory possible.

The President. Congratulations.

Representative Forbes. Thank you.

The President. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:10 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. James S. Gilmore III of Virginia, chairman, Republican National Committee.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Easter Seals Representatives and an Exchange With Reporters

June 20, 2001

The President. It's an honor for me to welcome the representatives from the Easter Seals here, two courageous Americans who are compassionate to give back to their country, and it's an honor to have you all in the Oval Office.

Thanks for coming.

Situation in the Middle East

Q. Have you talked to Arafat yet?

The President. I talked to Chairman Arafat today.

Q. What can you tell us about that conversation?

The President. I told him—I talked to him about—I talked to Prime Minister Sharon, Mubarak, as well as Mr. Arafat. And I said we're making some progress and that they all must continue to work toward breaking the cycle of violence.

I do feel like it's the appropriate time for Colin Powell to go to the Mideast—and he's headed there next week—and that the parties must continue to work in an all-out effort to bring peace. And people can find excuses or rationale not to continue to work to break the cycle of violence. I urged them just to not think that way, to believe in the possible. And we're making enough progress for me to feel comfortable about asking the Secretary of State to go.

We have another mission from our Government to remain involved in the process. We look forward to the implementation of Mitchell. But it's hard—we cannot start Mitchell, the Mitchell plan, until the cycle of violence has been crushed and broken. And we believe we are making enough progress with that to send the Secretary of State.

Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:03 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority; Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of Israel; and President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt. The President also referred to the Report of the Sharm el-Sheikh Fact-Finding Committee. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks to the Business Roundtable

June 20, 2001

Thank you very much. Well, welcome to the White House. [Laughter] The Vice President and I are honored to be with you today. As I understand it, I'm to speak; the Vice President is to speak; Colin Powell is to speak; and Zoellick is to speak. And so I thank you all for your interest.

Since I'm not going to be here to introduce the Vice President, Dick Cheney is a fabulous partner. Many of you know him; he brings a lot of good judgment and a steady hand. And my administration is going to be successful because of the players in it, and he's going to be one of the key players. And I'm really honored that he's here and honored that he's the Vice President.

Zoellick is doing a pretty good job, too. [Laughter] I know because I got to see him in action in Europe. I had an interesting experience in Europe. First of all, it's a huge honor to represent America overseas. And it was an important trip because it gave me a chance to reinforce my administration's commitment to the European alliances—to NATO, to the expansion of NATO, to working with the European Union, and the expansion of the European Union.

There were some doubts in Europe as to whether or not ours would be a nation that would be internationalists with an American flavor, and they found out that we are. And I come home feeling upbeat about the relationships that I made and about the messages I was able to deliver.

And secondly, I had a very good visit with Mr. Putin. I wasn't sure what to make of the man. I always was withholding judgment until I had a chance to meet him. But I found him to be a forward-thinking person and someone with whom our Nation should and will work to bring security to that part of the world and to bring prosperity, hopefully through trade, to the Russian people.

One of the things he asked is that I assemble a delegation, headed by somebody close to me. So I picked Don Evans, who is not only my close friend but Secretary of Commerce, to travel to Russia with some entrepreneurs and some American business people. And we will do that this summer. I believe he's interested in having a good relationship, and I know I am. And that's a pretty good start.

But one of the things that—I got to see Bob Zoellick in action on was our discussions about trade with the Europeans. I was able to make a firm commitment to our European partners that we want trade. We want open markets. We want to do everything in our power to make trade easier, not harder. I also

reminded them that it's important for our economy to grow. If you want to trade with the United States, it's important to have a trading partner whose economy is vital and strong, where capital is flowing freely.

That's why I assured them that we were on the right track when it came to balancing our environmental needs and economic growth and assured them that we share the same goal of reducing CO₂, but we will do so in a way that doesn't damage our economy, that we believe that you can have economic vitality and good stewardship of our resources.

And we also—I reminded them that one of the things our Nation needed to do was to develop a sound energy plan. It comes as a surprise to some that ours is the first administration who's willing to develop an energy plan and not only willing to develop one but to defend it, an energy plan that Dick will describe in detail, that's based upon sound conservation, more supply, and the ability to get supply to consumers.

We had a great discussion, and what I'd like to do before I talk about asking your help on a key legislative matter when it comes to trade, is I'd like to thank you first for helping on tax relief. Our economy is sputtering. Many of you know that firsthand. And I believe that the best we can do in Government, at least in our part of Government, is to provide fiscal stimulus.

And the package that we have done is a good package. It's one that will not only put money in the hands of American consumers; it is one also that brings some certainty into the Tax Code. In other words, it's certain that tax relief is going to happen, and hopefully, that will stimulate confidence in the entrepreneurial sector.

Secondly, a lot of folks don't understand this, but there's a lot of small businesses that will benefit from the reduction of all rates, not just a few but all rates. Many of the small-business owners and the entrepreneurs in our respective States pay tax rates at the personal level, not the corporate level. They're sole proprietors; they're mom-and-pops that pay personal income taxes. And when you drop that top rate like we did, it's going to stimulate economic growth and the flow of capital throughout our economy, which is

going to be important to recovery. And so I want to thank you for the tax relief package. It was necessary. It was important. And it was timely.

And secondly, I want to thank you for your help on an education plan. It passed the House. The bill passed the Senate 91 to 8, and it's now headed to conference. And I hope that the leadership will move that bill to get it to my desk so that public school districts can plan for the reforms inherent in the package. It's important to get that bill signed as soon as possible so that these school districts that are beginning to wonder what Federal dollars mean in the coming school year will have time to plan. They don't need to play politics with the school bill. This bill rises above partisan politics. It's important to get it going.

The inherent reforms in the bill are these. One, we set high standards and high expectations. It's—the philosophy is fairly simple. It says, every child can learn. Secondly, we believe in local control of schools. We spend Federal money without a lot of strings. There's a lot more flexibility now at the local level.

It recognizes—this bill recognizes that one size does not fit all when it comes to educating children. The issues in Texas, in south Texas, are different from the issues in Vermont or Connecticut. And the issues in south Texas are different from the issues in north Texas. There needs to be flexibility when it comes to developing the tactics necessary to make sure every child learns.

But the cornerstone of reform in this bill says this: It says, if you receive Federal money, you must measure. This is a major overhaul of the education philosophy. It says, in return for Federal help, you, the school districts, and the States must develop strong accountability measures so that we know—we know—whether children are learning. It's a paradigm shift—to use a fancy word.

All of a sudden, we're beginning to ask the question, "Do you know what you're supposed to know?" At present or in the recent past, a question was asked, "How old are you? Well, if you're six, we'll just move you here, and if you're 10, you're supposed to be here, and if you're 14, you're here." It was a process-driven world that shuffled

many kids through our system without asking the question, "What do you know?" And without saying, "If you don't know what you're supposed to know, we'll make sure you do early, before it's too late." This is a great piece of legislation, and many of you helped work on it, and I want to thank you for that very much.

I gave a speech at Notre Dame, where I talked about the next step of welfare reform. I said that—I began with Lyndon Johnson's speech at the University of Texas in the midsixties, where he declared a War on Poverty. I then said that there was some unintended consequences of that War on Poverty. Many people became dependent upon Government. While it helped some and there are some fine programs that came out of it, many folks became dependent upon Government, and many in our society became dependent on Government to provide compassion. In other words, people looked and said, "Well, don't worry. The Federal Government will solve the woes of our citizenry. We don't have to do anything as citizens."

I then said that the reforms signed by President Clinton and passed by a Republican Senate and House on welfare reform address one-half of the equation. It reduced dependency upon Government. It's now time to address the compassionate side of effective welfare reform.

And one of the statistics I noted in my speech was how abysmal corporate giving is to religious organizations whose sole intent is to help people, people who have heard the call, "What can I do to help a neighbor in need?"—people who live by the golden rule. And yet there are many charters of corporate America that refuse—or not refuse, just can't give and don't want to give—to organizations whose intent it is to exist in neighborhood after neighborhood to solve people's lives by helping their souls. And one of my calls to corporate America is, please address the issue of funding faith-based and community-based groups, whose soul purpose it is to make somebody's life better.

One of the big initiatives I'm confident we're going to get through the Congress is one that says, we understand there are thousands of children who could easily be left behind in America, particularly those whose

parents may be in prison or a parent is in prison. And what I want to do—and we put money in the budget—is I want mentoring programs all across the country to address, specifically, the needs of these children. I want there to be some citizen who puts his arm around a child and says, “Somebody loves you here in America. Somebody cares for you. Somebody feels your hurt and your pain.” And you all can help those programs, and I urge you to do so.

Many of you give to great causes, but please don’t forget the faith-based organizations that exist for the sole purpose of loving a neighbor, just like you’d like to be loved yourself.

And I want to ask your help, too, on trade. I don’t think Americans—some Americans—really understand the benefit of trade, fully understand that trade helps people who want to find work, that open trade is vital to—for economic growth. It’s essential that we send the message out that trade is good for the working men and women of America.

I’ve seen it in my own State. Texas is a great beneficiary of NAFTA, and so is Mexico, which is the most fantastic news of all. We want our partners to succeed. If Mexico is our friend, which I believe she is, we want Mexico to be prosperous. We also want Mexico to be prosperous because we want our people to be able to find work at home.

People are coming to America because they want to feed their families. Family values does not stop at the Rio Bravo, and America has got to understand that. But America has also got to understand the hope of free trade, not only with Mexico and Canada but in our hemisphere. And that’s why we’re—that’s why the first meeting I had was the Summit of the Americas, to talk about the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas.

My belief is that when you have a secure neighborhood and a prosperous neighborhood, America is better off. And so the first summit I had with foreign leaders with—34 democratically elected leaders showed up in Quebec City, and the cornerstone of those discussions was open markets and free trade.

We’re going to have another global—another round of global trade talks that Ambassador Zoellick is leading from my administration. And we urge the European Union to

cooperate with us to begin those talks. But in order for me to be effective on trade, I need trade promotion authority. I need the ability to speak with a single voice for our country. I need to have the capacity as an administration to negotiate free trade agreements without the fear of them being undermined. Otherwise, our trading partners are going to be confused and concerned about an honest and open dialog.

And yet, the President doesn’t have trade promotion authority. And so I’m asking you to help; join us; get this bill passed through the Congress. And we should not let legitimate environmental labor concerns undermine the capacity for the President to make good free trade agreements.

I explained to the critics in Congress: There are some who are legitimately concerned about the environment and labor. But I remind them that if you believe in trade, you believe that prosperity will spread; if you believe in trading with a country, it will help that country grow economically. And a country that is more prosperous is one more likely to be able to take care of their environment, and one more prosperous is one more likely to take care of their workforce. And if you believe in improving the environment and helping the labor conditions in countries, don’t wall off those countries. Don’t create—don’t enhance poverty by refusing to allow there to be trade.

Now, there are some who want to put codicils on the trade protection authority for one reason: They don’t like free trade. They’re protectionists, and they’re isolationists. And we must reject that kind of thought here in America. Free trade is good for America. It’s good for our trading partners. It will help alleviate poverty. And as importantly, it will help democracy spread her wings. Because when you introduce the disciplines and freedoms of a free market and an open market, it’s amazing what happens in totalitarian countries. They taste freedom in the economy, and they begin to ask for freedom with religion and freedom with speech and freedom to express themselves in the ballot box.

Now, our Nation is better off as a free trading country, and I am here to ask for your help. It’s important. It’s a priority of my administration, and we’re going to dedicate the

time and energy and effort to see if we can't get a good bill through the United States Congress.

You might be able to tell, I'm kind of enthusiastic about my work. [Laughter] You would be, too, if you got to see what I see. See, I get to see an America from a different perspective. I get to see an America that is—loves her Government; sometimes they like the President. [Laughter] But they care about the country. This is a fantastic land. It is a land of decent and caring and honorable citizens who really want the best for their families and for their neighbors and for their country.

It is a huge honor to be the President of this great land. We've got some great causes ahead of us: peace and prosperity. But there is the mission also of lifting this country's spirit. And I'm dedicated to doing that. I want to call upon the best of America and American citizens. And I'm enthusiastic about that calling, because I truly believe it will leave this land a better place.

Thank you all for being here, and God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:17 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Vladimir Putin of Russia.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting a Report on Cyprus

June 20, 2001

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. Chairman:)

In accordance with Public Law 95-384 (22 U.S.C. 2373(c)), I submit to you this report on progress toward a negotiated settlement of the Cyprus question covering the period April 1 through May 31, 2001. The previous submission covered events during the period February 1 through March 31, 2001.

The United Nations continued in its efforts to sustain the proximity talks that started in December 1999. The United States remains committed to the United Nations effort to find a just and lasting settlement to the Cyprus problem.

Sincerely,

George W. Bush

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., chairman, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 21.

Remarks at Oak Mountain State Park in Birmingham, Alabama

June 21, 2001

Thank you all very much. Please, be seated. Senator, thank you very much. It's an honor to be traveling back to Alabama today with Jeff Sessions. I'm going to spend a little time this evening touting his cause. But I will tell you, he's been a loyal friend, a strong supporter of Alabama, and a great United States Senator.

It's an honor to be with members of the Alabama congressional delegation here. We've got six of them that flew down today. These men are honest, decent, hard-working people—had five Republicans, one Democrat, all who worked together for doing what's right for Alabama. And I appreciate so very much these fine gentlemen for traveling with me today, and I'm proud to call you friends.

It's an honor to be here with the Lieutenant Governor and the attorney general of the State of Alabama. I want to thank Don Cooley and Jimmy Shivers for giving me a brief tour of this important part of the world. I want to thank the YMCA and the counselors at the YMCA and the young men and women who are teaching children right from wrong, teaching children that in life, somebody does care for them. No better spot to be learning compassion and love than in the outdoors, and it's an honor to be here.

It's good to see my friend Ray Scott. Make sure you behave yourself, Ray. [Laughter] I've been knowing him a long time, and I appreciate the members of the bass clubs from around Alabama for being here to work with the kids, to teach them how to fish, and to teach them to appreciate the wonders of nature.

I'm impressed by the fact that 600,000 people come to this park every year. It means it's just not a park for the few; it's a park for the many. And people come here for all