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Remarks to Families at a Target Store and an Exchange With Reporters in Kansas City, Missouri

August 21, 2001

The President. Good morning, everybody. I'm excited to be here at Target. A lot of these folks have—some of the folks have got their rebate check; some of them are getting them. But I suggest you talk to the Target people about what the rebate check has meant for their business. One of the main reasons why we insisted that people get money back was to provide a second wind for our economy. And the other reason why is because we recognize that these good folks spend their money just as wisely, if not more wisely, than the Government can.

I remember in the debate, people said, "Well, $600 doesn't mean much." Well, I suggest you ask people who got the $600 what it means. It seems to mean a lot to a lot of folks.

[*At this point, the President greeted audience members and then answered questions from reporters.*]

Federal Budget/Tax Relief

The President. Okay.

Q. Mr. President, would you like to see Social Security kind of taken out of the budget equation? You are going to have like a billion dollar surplus just from general revenues tomorrow. Do you think that's a fair way of figuring out the surplus?

The President. I think what I said in the speech was what I mean, that Social Security ought to be spent on Social Security, and OMB numbers show that that's the way it's going to be. That hasn't been the case; seven out of the last eight budgets have used Social Security for—they used Social Security funds for other matters. And we worked with Congress—see, here's the problem. A lot in Congress are upset that we passed money back to the people because they wanted to spend it on pet projects, on bigger appropriations. And what I am saying is, that battle's over with.

We cut the taxes; it was the right thing to do. It was the right thing to trust the people with the money. It was the right thing for our economy. And Congress now needs to understand that there are some new parameters. When you pass money back to the people, it means there is not that much money available for additional programs, and they need to be fiscally sound.

We've got a good budget. And the fundamental question is, will the appropriators stick to the budget, and I am confident they will if they listen to the people.

And one of the reasons why we came here is to highlight the fact that the tax relief plan is important to hardworking Americans. Some people said, you know, "Thanks for giving us the money." Well, it's their money to begin with. That's the point I keep making. It's not the Government's money; it's the people's money. And these good folks have got a reason to spend it. A lot of them are going to spend it on school supplies. But it's not only important for them; it's important for our economy.

Q. Sir, the ad team for Al Gore's last campaign put out an ad today for the Democratic National Committee accusing you of raiding the Medicare Trust Fund and asking you to take Harry Truman's plain-spokenness and tell the people the truth. Is that fair?

The President. Well, you know, there's a lot of people still want to politicize the budget. They like the old-time wars of zero-sum politics. There are a lot of big spenders, a lot of highly partisan people that really didn't like the tax cut to begin with. They want the Government to have the people's money. They believe in bigger Government.

And all I do is rest my case with the people. And the people wanted tax relief. The people want fiscal sanity in Washington. The people want all the money going into Medicare to be spent on Medicare, and that's what my budget does. And people also want a good defense for our country. And I hope, at the very minimum, the leadership in the Congress will give us the Defense appropriation number and the Education appropriation number early in the process, so that we don't rob defense or rob education by holding those appropriation bills late.

Q. Sir, where do you draw the line in terms of using your veto power this fall? Is it sticking to the budget resolution numbers? Or——

The President. The budget resolution number's a good place to begin. Because if we appropriate, of course, for the budget, we will not only be able to afford the tax relief, but we won't touch Social Security, and we will be able to fund the Nation's priorities, including education and defense.

As you know, you heard my speech yesterday—should have heard my speech or will pay to hear my speech—and whether or not you listen to it is another question—but we have—I have requested a good deal of money for defense, and it's needed.

Possibility of Government Shutdown

Q. Sir, you know, in the Clinton administration, they had some battles up there. They had to shut down the Government from overspending. They wanted more money.

The President. Yes. Right. A new sheriff in town.

Q. If it comes down to a showdown about closing down Government, are you prepared to——

The President. I am confident we won't have to shut down the—shut down the Government. There are things such as continuing resolutions. There's ways for us to make sure that the budget—I mean, the Government doesn't get shut down over a budget fight.

You're right, the last administration was anxious for the Government to spend more money. I want the Government to spend the right amount of money. And we have achieved a good balance. It's not only money to fund priorities such as education, defense, and health care, but it is money available for the taxpayers. It's their money to begin with.

And our economy needs—I love the discussion, you know, the tax cut means there's less money available to spend. Well, what the tax cut is, it means that we've been given an opportunity to revitalize our economy, so that the tax revenues that have been lost because of economic slowdown come back into the Treasury.

Effect of Tax Relief

Q. Mr. President, do you think that the purchasing of school supplies and things people would buy ordinarily will, in fact, jump-start the economy?

The President. No, I think it's a cumulative. If you try to look at one isolated incident, it's easy to belittle $600 in a person's pocket. But $600 of additional disposable income all across America—that amounts to billions of dollars—will provide a part of the equation for economic recovery. Of course, if somebody buys a pencil, somebody's had to make it. But it is not just school supplies. That maybe kind of diminishes the effect of billions of dollars getting into the economy in a very quick period of time.

I want to remind you all about a year ago, the discussion about tax relief was sometimes in political circles belittled as an impossibility. No one would have dreamed that we would not only have gotten tax relief but this amount of money injected into the economy as quickly as we did. And it's a part of the equation.

Dinner With Gov. Bill Graves of Kansas

Q. You broke bread with Governor Graves last night.

The President. I did.

Q. Why Governor Graves, and what did you talk about?

The President. Well, I was hoping I could maybe get him to buy my meal.

Q. He didn't?

The President. He didn't, no. Please record the fact that I paid, much to my chagrin.

We talked about just politics. He and Linda are friends of mine. He's done a great job as the Governor of Kansas, and he's one of my best friends that I've made in politics amongst the Governors. Just had a nice visit.

Q. Have a future with you some day ?

The President. You know, we didn't spend much time talking about that. He has not finished his term yet. Maybe, you know.

President's Tax Rebate

Q. Mr. President, what are you going to do with your tax rebate?

The President. Charity.

Q. Really? Which one?

The President. I don't know yet.

Q. You haven't gotten it?

The President. Not to my knowledge.

Q. Why charity?

The President. Why? Because it's something people ought to do. And I believe in supporting charities. As you know, every year when I put out my income tax returns, you see the fact that I do give to charities, give to my church. I haven't made up my mind yet.

Thank you all for your time.

President's Schedule

Q. Are you going to talk to us—you going to talk to us tomorrow? Play golf and maybe talk to us?

The President. Do what?

Q. You're going to have the budget review tomorrow. Do you think you might talk to us from the golf course or someplace?

The President. I won't be playing golf tomorrow. Probably—I may—just keep loose this week. I may have a discussion with you on some matters later on this week.

Q. Military matters, perhaps?

The President. I ain't telling.

Q. Buildings with five sides?

Q. No more hints?

The President. No, the last time we—I'm trying to get a picnic organized so you all can come out to the ranch. Is this the—are you the last shift?

Q. Yes.

The President. Okay, last shift. Up until when we go. We're leaving Thursday, now. We're going back Thursday morning, the 30th.

Q. Wow, even earlier?

Q. The 30th?

The President. We're going back on the 30th. Laura wants to get back a day early.

President's Vacation

Q. How's the bass fishing going?

The President. They've actually gotten up to about a pound. They're growing. The lake's evaporating because it's so hot.

Okay, see you there.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:36 a.m. at the Kansas City North Target store's snackbar. In his remarks, he referred to Linda Richey Graves, wife of Gov. Bill Graves. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Memorandum on a Military Drawdown for Tunisia

August 18, 2001

Presidential Determination No. 2001–24

Memorandum for the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense

Subject: Military Drawdown for Tunisia

Pursuant to the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and laws of the United States, including Title III (Foreign Military Financing) of the Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2001, as enacted in Public Law 106–429 (Title III), I hereby direct the drawdown of defense articles from the stocks of the Department of Defense, and military education and training of the aggregate value of $5 million for Tunisia, consistent with the authority provided under Title III, for the purposes of part II of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961.

The Secretary of State is authorized and directed to report this determination to the Congress and to publish it in the *Federal Register.*

George W. Bush

NOTE: This memorandum was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 22.

Statement on Senator Jesse Helms' Decision Not To Seek Reelection

August 22, 2001

The Senate is losing an institution with the decision of Jesse Helms to retire after three decades of distinguished public service. Senator Helms went to Washington but never became a part of Washington. He has always remained true to his conservative principles and to the people of North Carolina who elected him five times. Senator Helms is a true gentleman, known for treating his colleagues with the utmost respect and courtesy, regardless of party or policy differences.

As chairman and ranking Republican of the Foreign Relations Committee, Senator Helms has been a tireless defender of our