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And I call upon the appropriators in Washington, DC, to let the country know the level of defense appropriations and the level of education appropriations early in the process, rather than late. These are national priorities, and they ought to be priorities of our appropriators in the Halls of Congress, as well.

And finally, we're making good progress—I want to thank Congressman Green for his work—on what I call a faith-based initiative. It's an initiative that recognizes there are still people who hurt in America. There are people who suffer. There are people who are trapped in addiction, in neighborhoods without hope. And yet, this Nation doesn't believe in leaving people behind. And so I proposed to the United States Congress that we capture the true strength of the country, and the strength of the country lies in the hearts and souls of our citizens. We are a compassionate nation because we are a compassionate people. And there are faith-based programs and community-based programs all across our country that ask the question, "What can I do to make my neighborhood a better place? What can I do to love a child who needs love? What can I do to help a citizen who needs help?"

And the Federal Government ought not to fear faith-based programs. We ought to welcome faith-based programs. We ought not to discriminate against those programs based upon a universal call to love a neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourselves.

We passed a good bill out of the House. I call upon the United States Senate to get the faith-based initiative moving, to make sure that no person in America is left out of the great American experience.

No, we're making good progress, I believe, in Washington, DC. It's because I'm listening to the people. I understand the strength of the country lies not in the halls of our Government but lies in the hearts and souls of our people all across America. And that's why it's such a huge honor to be your President. It's an honor to be a President of a nation that's been blessed by great values and blessed with wonderful people.

Laura and I love the challenge. We respect the process, but we also understand we have responsibilities. And the responsibilities inherent in our job are to call upon the best of every American, and that begins by making sure that we set the right example for young and old alike. It's a challenge I accept. It's a challenge I welcome. And it's a challenge that—I am bolstered because of the prayers and thoughts of people such as yourselves.

Thank you all for coming. May God bless you, and may God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:01 a.m. at Austin Straubel International Airport. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Scott McCallum of Wisconsin, and his wife, Laurie; Mike Sherman, head coach, and Bob Harlan, president and chief executive officer, Green Bay Packers; and the Most Reverend Robert J. Banks, Bishop of Green Bay.

Remarks at a Teamsters Barbecue in Detroit, Michigan

September 3, 2001

The President. Thank you, all. Larry Brennan said there hadn't been a President come to a Teamster rally in 50 years—only he's been long enough to know if that's 50 years. [*Laughter*] I appreciate it.

Listen, I want to thank you all very much. First of all, thank you for your hospitality, and thank you for being so nice to my wife. Yes, I brought my wife. You think I travel without her, you're crazy. [*Laughter*] Best decision I ever made was to ask Laura to marry me. There's a lot of folks wondering whether the best decision she ever made was to say yes. [*Laughter*]

But we are honored to be here on Labor Day to celebrate the American worker. And it's a good place to be, right here in Michigan, where people work hard, with the Teamsters, who made an historical record of setting the example of how to work hard.

I want to thank the working families who are here to greet us, and I want to thank the working families all across America, who make our Nation unique and different. I mean, we're different because our folks aren't afraid of hard work, and they know what it means to support family, and they know what it means to make their communities better.

So thanks for having us and giving us a chance to celebrate. I appreciate the officials

who are here, your Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, and the mayor of the great city of Detroit, all out here to say a few nice words to the President. It makes me feel good on Labor Day.

I also want to thank Bill Black for his hospitality and the leadership of this local for letting me come. Some folks might have thought they took a risk inviting a Republican here, but I stand before you—I stand before you as a proud American, first and foremost.

And I'll tell you, another proud American is traveling with me—we just came from the Green Bay, Wisconsin, area, and Doug McCarron is the president of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners. Where's Doug? There he is. He gave them a stemwinder this morning. But we were there to celebrate the carpenters of America, as well.

And I understand we don't necessarily agree on every single issue, but we agree to listen. And I agree about this, that you've got a good man running the Teamsters in Jimmy Hoffa. I don't know if that will help him or hurt him in his reelection campaign. [*Laughter*] But let me tell you something about him. Like Doug, if he's got an issue, he brings it forward in a straightforward way with the union workers—with the union workers in mind.

And we listen. We listen. Ours is an administration that answers the phone. We don't ask the question, "How did you vote?" We ask the question, "What's on your mind? Is it good for America?" And that's why we're working together on some key issues.

Let me tell you another thing about Jimmy Hoffa. He's running a good union. And in an above-board way, in an above-board way. And make no mistake about it, people are beginning to notice, particularly in Washington, DC. [*Laughter*]

Now, let me tell you, I'm a little concerned. I'm proud of our workers; I'm concerned about the fact that our economy is just bumping along. This is a Labor Day where we can't celebrate a booming economy. For the last 12 months—let me repeat—for the last 12 months the economy has been way too slow. And people are hurting. And people are suffering. And there are families who wonder about how they're going to feed their kids. And I understand that, and we've got help in Washington.

But the best thing we can do is ask the question, how do we make sure our economy grows? And I came up with this answer: Our economy can grow best when we give people their own money back, when we give the hard-working Americans their own money back in the form of rebates, so that you spend it. And that's what's going to help this economy rebound. The Federal Government must keep a lid on spending and remember that when the American consumer spends, it is the best way to kick-start a soft economy. The biggest threat to economic vitality and economic growth is if Congress overspends. And that's why I'm glad to have Peter Hoekstra on my side. He not only supported tax relief for the American families; he understands that Congress and Washington should not overspend.

Now, I came in, I saw a sign that said, "Thank you for the rebate, Mr. President," as if that's my money to give back. But the person holding the sign, I appreciate the thanks——

Audience member. It's my money.

The President. Yes. It's not the Government's money. It's the hard-working Teamsters' money. It's your money to begin with.

There's another issue that we're working on, and Jimmy Hoffa was on national TV yesterday talking about it. And that's energy. He understands good, sound energy policy means jobs for American workers. And if we run out of energy, if we become more beholden to foreign sources of energy, it's going to be hard on the working families in America. So he stood strong, as did Doug, with our administration as we developed the first energy plan in a long period of time for this Government.

Now, energy means we've got to conserve better, and we will. But it also means that when we can find exploration activities in our own country, it makes sense to do so. It not only means independence; it means jobs. And I appreciate the leadership that Jimmy Hoffa took on good, sound energy policy in America.

We're working hard on good education policy. One of the reasons I like to come to picnics like this is people bring their families.

They bring their families to say hello to the President. They bring their families because they want to celebrate their off days with their kids. That's what I like. And I understand a lot of folks in this audience understand the most important priority you have—and not necessarily driving a truck—but if you have a child, it's to love your child with all your heart and all your soul. The most important thing you can do—it doesn't matter what your job is, what your political party is. If you're a mom or a dad, your most important job is to love your child and let them know that on an everyday basis. In order to make sure America works the way we want it to, we've got to have an education policy that starts at home, with moms and dads setting a good example for their children, surrounding their children with love, giving their children confidence.

And then we've got to make sure we've got a public school system that works. And that's why we're proposing education reform that insists upon local control of schools but at the same time that says, we're going to measure to find out whether or not children are learning to read and write and add and subtract. And if they are, we're going to praise the teachers. But if we find schools that won't teach and won't change, we'll demand something different. There are no second-rate children in this country called America, and there are no second-rate dreams, as far as I'm concerned.

We're going to be focusing on the economy and education. And another issue I'm focusing on is security. And for those of you who serve the United States in the military, I want to thank you for your service. For those of you who have got relatives in the military, let me assure you I understand a strong military is needed to keep the peace.

And finally, we'll be talking about opportunity. Opportunity not only means good education; opportunity means not only letting people keep their own money so you can spend it, so you can make the decisions for your families. But opportunity means also understanding there are people in our society who hurt.

And therefore, in order to make sure people realize the American Dream is meant for them, that we must rally the great compassion of America. And oftentimes that's found in our churches and synagogues and mosques. And our Government must not fear institutions of faith that exist to love a neighbor just like you'd like to be loved yourself. We shouldn't resist faith-based programs. We ought to welcome them. We ought to encourage them. We ought to spread them out in neighborhoods so nobody feels left out in America.

I was walking in the audience here and somebody stuck out their hand and said, "Mr. President, I pray for you." I can't tell you how good that makes me feel. They didn't say, "Let me check your voter registration card." [*Laughter*] They said, "I'm praying for you."

And that speaks to the greatness of our country. I want you to know that—that ours is a nation of people on bended knee. Ours is a nation that's got great values. One of the values is hard work; another value is family; and another value is faith. We're a nation where you're free to choose.

But there are a lot of faithful people in America, and that's what gives me great hope for the future of this country. I know we can work our way out of the economic doldrums we have. But I also know that we can love our way out of the problems we find in our neighborhoods, in our communities.

And my job as your President is to set a tone that will encourage the very best from each citizen. My job as the President is to lift our sights and raise our spirits. And my job as the President of the United States is to set an example for which you'll be proud.

I accept the challenge. I'm honored to be here as your President. Thank you for your hospitality, and may God bless you all. May God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:36 p.m. on a lot across the street from the Teamsters Joint Council 43 headquarters building. In his remarks, he referred to Larry Brennan, president, and Bill Black, D.R.I.V.E. director, Joint Council 43, and James P. Hoffa, general president, International Brotherhood of Teamsters; Gov. John Engler and Lt. Gov. Dick Posthumus of Michigan; and Mayor Dennis W. Archer of Detroit.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Senate Minority Leader Trent Lott and an Exchange With Reporters

September 4, 2001

Legislative Agenda

The President. I'm honored to welcome my friend Senator Lott to the Oval Office. He is just back from an active month. I'm meeting with him, and I'm meeting with Senator Daschle a little later on today. I look forward to talking about our need to work together to accomplish some important goals—two goals I'd like to talk about with both Senators.

One is to make sure we get an education bill on my desk quickly. Many children are starting school today. Some have started prior to Labor Day. We need to get a bill. And Senator Lott worked with me very closely, and we got a good bill out of the Senate. I'm confident that the conferees can reconcile their differences and get a bill to my desk quickly.

And secondly, we're going to talk about the budget. There's been a lot of noise about the budget. I hope the budget—the appropriations process discards the old-style politics of trying to scare seniors. Our seniors have got to know that every Social Security promise will be fulfilled, and Social Security checks will arrive on time, and that there's not much difference in the overall numbers than what we proposed, what some others have proposed. I'm confident we can come together and get a good budget together, one that will reflect the priorities of the Nation, which will be education and defense.

There's been a lot of talk over August about the tax relief plan. Half the rebate checks have gone out. There are still more checks to go out, and I believe it's going to provide good stimulus for our economy, when the plan is fully implemented. And then, of course, come January, there will be an overall rate reduction, another rate reduction, which will be a part of the fiscal stimulus package that we all worked on.

Some are arguing that maybe we ought to roll back the taxes. I guess they're saying that. They're now against tax relief, and if you're against tax relief, it must mean you're for maybe rolling it back. I think that would be terrible for the economy. Most Americans understand that as well.

At any rate, I've had a good chance to recharge my batteries in Crawford. I'm glad to see my old friend. I look forward to working with him.

[*At this point, Senator Lott made brief remarks.*]

Capital Gains Tax

Q. Mr. President, speaking of stimulating the economy, do you agree with Republican lawmakers, including your guest here, that a capital gains tax cut would stimulate the economy, injecting revenue into a very tight budget?

The President. Well, I think—I agree with the assessment that a capital gains tax relief would pile up some revenues early in the process. As I mentioned, only half of our rebate checks have gone out, and the stimulus package that we all worked on prior to the recess is not fully in place yet.

What I'd like us to do is take a look-see to make sure that the stimulus package that we've now—are implementing works. And I'm openminded. I look forward to speaking to the Senator about it and to Speaker Hastert about it, as well.

Tax Cut Trigger

Q. Mr. President, you can't say for certain whether the tax cut will stimulate the economy the way you think it needs to. Even Alan Greenspan supported the idea of a trigger on the tax cut, if surpluses didn't materialize the way everybody thought they would. Why not consider that, given the fact that, in fact, the surpluses have vanished?

The President. We've got the second largest surplus in the Nation's history. And according to CBO, we'll have even a bigger surplus next year. We've got ample money to meet our Nation's needs. What we need is fiscal discipline in Washington, DC. We need to make sure we have—prioritize the spending and not overspend. No question tax relief was the right thing to do at this point in our Nation's history. And I repeat, I reckon some of them up here want to roll it back. But they're going to meet strong opposition, I know, from the White House and, I know, from Senator Lott, as well.