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Remarks to Department of Labor Employees

October 4, 2001

Well, thank you all very much for that warm welcome. I'm glad to be in the midst of patriots, people who love their country and people willing to work hard to help our fellow Americans who may be in need.

First, I want to thank Elaine Chao for her leadership. I knew I picked a good one when I picked her to become the Secretary of Labor, and she's proven me right. And my old Governor buddy is doing a pretty good job, too. [*Laughter*] I appreciate the hard work of our Cabinet during this period. Like the country, we're united. We know we've got a job to do. The evildoers struck. But they may have hurt our buildings, and they are obviously affecting some family lives in such a profound and sad way, but they will not touch the soul of America. They cannot dim our spirit.

We've got a job to do, all of us. And I'm here to thank you in the Department of Labor for your hard work, your concern for your fellow Americans. All of us, from the President all the way throughout our Government, must be diligent and strong and unwavering in our determination and our dedication to win the war on terrorism.

I've got a job to do, and that's to explain to the American people the truth. And the truth is that we're now facing a new threat for freedom, that on September the 11th, war was declared on the United States, not by a religious group, not by one country versus another but by people motivated by evil. And I'm going to make it clear to the world what I've made clear to America, that this great country will not let evil stand.

The attack on our land roused a might nation. We're—never been united like we have been—as we are today. And we're examining a lot of things. We're examining, as moms and dads, what it means to be a parent. There are many Americans on bended knee from all different religions, praying to an almighty God. We're a nation united in our conviction that we must find those evildoers and bring them to justice. We seek not revenge in America, we seek justice.

Americans understand that this is a different type of campaign; it's a different type of struggle to defeat an enemy that's sometimes hard to see and sometimes hard to find. But what the enemy has found out is we're a determined people, and we're patient, and we will do what it takes to bring them to justice.

We built a vast coalition of nations from all around the world to join us, nations which understand that what happened in New York and Washington could happen to them, as well. They understand it's now time to unite to defeat evil. Each nation comes with a different set of capabilities and a different set of—a different willingness to help. America says, "We don't care how you help; just help. Either you're for us, or you're against us."

And the progress to date has been positive, really positive. We've got nations around the world willing to join us in cutting off the money of the evil ones. Our attitude is, if they can't fund evil deeds, they're not going to be able to affect freedom. And so we're talking to countries and banks and financial institutions and saying, "Either you're with us, or against us: Cut off their money."

We're applying diplomatic pressure from around the world. I promise you this: I will enforce the doctrine that says that if you house a terrorist, you're just as guilty as the terrorists themselves.

This is our calling. This is our Nation's time to lead the world, and we're going to do that. And we must do so in a bold and strong and determined fashion. We will not waver.

I fully understand, as I said to Congress, there will be times when people feel a sense of normalcy—and I hope that happens sooner rather than later—and that September 11th may be a distant memory to some, but not to me, and not to this Nation. Now is the time—now is the time to root out evil so that our children and grandchildren can live with freedom as the beacon all around the world.

The evildoers cost America a lot of lives. And for the two here in the Justice—I mean, in the Labor Department, I say, we will get justice, and we grieve with you—the two good folks who suffer as a result of September the 11th. I can't tell you how many

people are praying for you and praying for the victims all across America; people you can't even imagine, can't even—will never know, are on bended knee.

And they've also changed a lot of lives, these evil actions. It's clear, as a result of today's new unemployment claims, that the attack of September the 11th sent a shock wave throughout our economy. And we need to do something about it. And I'm going to lead the Congress in a way that provides the help and stimulus necessary for there to be economic growth.

It is not time to worry about partisan politics here in America. It is time for our Government to continue to work together, to say: We hear the cries of those who have been laid off; we worry about the shock waves throughout our economy; and instead of talking, we're going to do something about it.

And we've started. We have started. There are $40 billion of tax rebates that have been disbursed over the last months that should help our economy. The Congress came together and passed 15 billion in emergency help for airlines and $40 billion in supplemental spending that will help New York rebuild herself and will be a part of—a means for enhancing our economic growth.

But there's more to do. Now is not the time to be timid. It's the time to be wise. It's also the time to act. And that's why yesterday the Secretary of Treasury and I both said that we need to have more stimulus available. We need for there to be more tax cuts.

I want to remind my fellow Americans that starting next year, there will be 70 billion additional dollars of tax reductions and larger child credits coming, as a result of the tax package we passed and I signed. So there's stimulus available.

But I look forward to working with Congress in the interim, between now and when those tax cuts kick in, to do more. I think we must do more. I know we must do more to make sure that our economy gets started. And I'm going to ask Congress to ask this question: Will what I vote for encourage economic growth? Not will it make me look better at home, or will it satisfy a narrow constituency, but will my vote stimulate economic vitality and growth? That's the question that Americans are asking when we vote on a tax reduction package. And that's the question I will be asking.

I strongly believe we need to make sure that consumer confidence stays high, by giving people more of their own money back. We need to counter the shock wave of the evildoer by having individual rate cuts accelerated and by thinking about tax rebates.

Secondly, in order to make sure our economy grows, within the 60 to 75 billion dollar package that we've—the parameters of which we outlined, we need to make sure we have investment incentives for U.S. businesses, both large and small.

Not only should we make sure that the individual consumer confidence remains high but that we've got to understand that by encouraging investment, it will encourage employment. And one of the things that Elaine mentioned is that you're a department that makes sure that people find work. We've got to have good policy coming out of Congress to make sure that as you work hard to help people find work, there's a stimulus package that does so.

People say, "Well, why did you say that the parameters ought to be 60 to 75 billion dollars?" Well, one, we think that's the right size to encourage growth without affecting the economy in the long term. And secondly, I think it makes sense to have parameters, so that Congress doesn't feel like it has to invent a series of new programs in order to stimulate economic growth. We know what we need to do. And I look forward to working with both Republicans and Democrats to get it done. It's the right thing for the American people.

And there is no question that not only should our Government act to encourage economic growth; our Government ought to act to take care of people whose lives were affected on September the 11th. We need to move, and I've got some ideas as to how we ought to move.

First, in the post-attack economy, some workers need more help for more time. So I propose extending the unemployment benefits by 13 weeks in States that have been

hardest hit by job losses related to the September 11th attack. This emergency extension will be paid entirely by Federal dollars and should remain in place for 18 months.

And secondly, I believe the best way to help people meet health care needs or job training needs or income support is to fund the National Emergency Grant System by an additional $3 billion. This will be Federal money that will go to States so they can distribute monies directly to people whose lives have been affected.

I urge the Congress, as they plan ways to deal with this tragedy, to look at the Government programs that already exist. We don't have time to try to invent new programs. What we ought to do is make those programs that exist work better, and here's two solutions to do so.

And finally, I want to remind Governors and folks in the States what Tommy told me earlier today. Tommy said there's $11 billion available to help States provide health insurance for low-income workers and their families through the S-CHIP program. It's an important opportunity for States to expand coverage to people whose lives have been severely affected by the September 11th attack.

This is a way we can help. This is a set of principles for Congress to work together to help the American people, stimulate growth, and at the same time take care of the workers whose lives have been impacted by the September 11th attack.

And that's what we must do, because, you see, the terrorists hope to change our way of life. On the one hand, they hoped that America would become timid and cower in the face of their barbaric acts. They were wrong. On the other hand, they would hope that we'd become paralyzed and unable to act at home in order to do what's right for the American people. They were wrong again.

Instead they have provided interesting opportunities for America. I told some world leaders, through our tears we see opportunity; that we're sad and angry, but we've got a clear vision of the world; that this is a remarkable moment in history which our Nation will seize. We'll act boldly at home to encourage economic growth. We'll take care of people who hurt. We will comfort those who lost lives. We'll be compassionate as to how we deal with Afghan citizens, for example, by making sure there's humanitarian aid.

And we'll be tough and resolute as we unite, to make sure freedom stands, to rout out evil, to say to our children and grandchildren, "We were bold enough to act, without tiring, so that you can live in a great land and in a peaceful world."

And there's no doubt in my mind—not one doubt in my mind—that we will fail; failure is not a part of our vocabulary. This great Nation will lead the world, and we will be successful.

Thank you for working for the Government. Thank you for caring about our fellow Americans. May God bless you all and your families, and may God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:40 p.m. in the Great Hall at the Frances Perkins Department of Labor Building. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of Health and Human Services Tommy G. Thompson; and Labor Department employees Eloise Clark and Paul Hylind, both of whom lost relatives in the September 11th attacks.

Statement on the Sibir Airlines Crash

October 4, 2001

I was deeply saddened to learn today of the crash of a Sibir Airlines passenger aircraft, flying from Tel Aviv to Novosibirsk. My heartfelt sympathies and those of the American people are with the people of Israel and Russia and the families of the many victims of this tragedy.

Remarks Following a Meeting With the Economic Policy Team

October 5, 2001

Good afternoon. I just concluded a meeting with my economic policy team. Secretary O'Neill has been up on the Hill talking to Members of Congress and brought back some encouraging news. And that is, the United States Congress is interested in working as quickly as possible to pass an economic stimulus package.