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Remarks at the Dakota Ethanol Plant in Wentworth, South Dakota

April 24, 2002

Thank you all. Please be seated. Ron, I want to thank you very much. I thought Washington was where it got a little windy. [*Laughter*] You've got to remember, I was raised in west Texas. I'm kind of used to the wind. It reminds me of home.

I want to thank you all for a warm welcome. Thank you for being so gracious. Ron, thank you very much for hosting us here. I appreciate the briefing I had and the chance to meet with some of your fellow citizens in South Dakota, a chance to talk about ag policy. And I want to thank all those for coming as well.

I appreciate so very much Secretary of Agriculture Ann Veneman traveling with me today. I'm proud of the job Ann is doing. She's a great leader for the Ag Department. She understands farmers, understands farming, and she's doing America a fine job.

I want to thank your Governor for coming. Janklow and I have been friends for a long time. I was a Governor of Texas, he was a Governor of South Dakota; and he kept telling me what to do all the time when I was around him. [*Laughter*] But I appreciate you being here, Governor. Thank you very much.

We share something in common; we both married above our heads. [*Laughter*] I'm sorry my wife isn't with me. I had the honor of saying hello to the first lady of South Dakota at the steps of Air Force One. I bring up Laura because I can't tell you how proud I am of her. She is—you know, when I married her, she was a public school librarian who really didn't like politics and didn't care for politicians, either, I might add. [*Laughter*] And she has been such a calm and steady influence for the country, and she's come a long way from a public school librarian to a great First Lady. I'm real proud of her.

I want to appreciate the Senate majority leader, Tom Daschle, for being here today. Tom, I'm honored you'd come. And Tom and I have spent some quality time together. I invite him to the Oval Office for breakfast—he doesn't eat much, I want you to know, which is good for my wallet. [*Laughter*] But I appreciate working with him. And I also appreciate Senator Tim Johnson being here as well. Thank you, Tim, for coming. As well, we're honored to have the only Congressman from the State of South Dakota, John Thune—thank you for being here, John.

I want to spend some time talking about agriculture and the importance of agriculture for our country, but before I do, I want to tell you about the war. I want you to know that we're fighting against killers, cold-blooded murderers, and they still want to hurt us. Bill Janklow and I were talking coming in about what he has done to help secure the homeland here in South Dakota. And for that, I am grateful, and you need to be. He takes it seriously. He is on top of the situation here in South Dakota.

And I believe that around the country we're making great progress toward making our homeland more secure. We've got to do a better job of understanding who's coming into our country and why they're coming in, and, if they're going out, when they're supposed to be going out. We've got a good amount of money in the budget, as Senator Daschle can tell you, to make sure that our first-responders are ready, should something happen. We've got a good initiative on bioterrorism that we're working on, to make sure the homeland is secure.

But the best way to secure the homeland is to chase these murderers down, one by one, and bring them to justice. And that's exactly what America is going to do. The reason I tell you that is it's important for you to know that this war to secure our homeland and to protect freedom is not going to end anytime soon. I don't have a calendar on my desk that says, by such and such a date we're going to quit. That's not how I think, much to the chagrin of the enemy. You see, I don't know what they were thinking when they attacked America. They must have thought we were so materialistic, so self-centered, so weak that all we were going to do was to file a lawsuit. They found out we don't file lawsuits when it comes to defending freedom; we send our United States military.

And I've submitted a budget to the United States Congress that sets our defense as the number one priority. It's a big increase, no question about it. But my attitude is we're in it for the long haul, and we must send

that signal not only to the enemy but to our coalition partners. And secondly, anytime we commit a U.S. citizen who wears our uniform to combat, or in harm's way, they must have the best equipment, the best training, the best pay possible. The price of freedom's high, but as far as I'm concerned, it's not too high, and we're going to pay it.

And there's no cave deep enough for them to hide. We're going to get them one by one, because this Nation is patient and we're plenty tough when it comes to defending our country.

But it's also important to know that we're a compassionate nation as well. I remind our citizens, particularly the young, that we don't seek revenge; we seek justice. And when we went into Afghanistan to uphold the doctrine that said, if you harbor a terrorist, you're just as guilty as the ones that came to kill America, and routed out the Taliban, we didn't go in there as conquerors; we went in as liberators. We freed people from the clutches of one of the most barbaric regimes ever. And now, thanks to the United States of America and our coalition partners, young girls go to school in Afghanistan.

We've got a lot of work to do on the war front. We've got a lot of work to do on making sure that Afghanistan is a viable nation which can defend herself and is a good neighbor in an important part of the world.

And so you just need to know that I am proud of America; I'm proud of the fact that we're unified. This isn't a Republican war; this isn't a Democrat war; this is an American war. And our country is unified, and we are strong, and we are resolved. And that makes this President and I know it makes the Members of the Congress feel really good.

And we have work to do at home as well. The enemy, when they hit us, did affect our economy. And there's no question about that. And my attitude is, anybody who wants to work who can't find work—we've got a problem in the economy. And there was a lot of people who wanted to work who couldn't find work.

What I thought was necessary was to cut the taxes on the people who work. See, my attitude is if you get people more money, they increase demands for good and services. When they increase demand for goods and services, somebody produces the goods and services. And when somebody produces the good and services, somebody's going to have a job to produce the goods and services. For the good of the jobs in America, cutting taxes and passing an economic—and signing an economic stimulus bill was good. It was good for the country.

And part of the tax relief package was the repeal of the death tax. The death tax is particularly tough on South Dakota and Texas farmers or anybody who farms or ranches. It's a tax that keeps taxing somebody's assets over and over again. You know, it's this—you get taxed by the income tax; you die; you keep paying taxes even after you're dead. It's not a fair tax, and we got rid of it.

Except for, there's a quirk in the rules in the United States Senate that means that, after 10 years, it's conceivable that the death tax doesn't go away. The House made the repeal of the death tax permanent. I saw that Senator Daschle is going to bring that to a vote on the floor of the Senate, for which I am grateful. It is time to get rid of the death tax forever.

American agriculture is incredibly important for our economic vitality. I—when I was the Governor of Texas, I had the honor of being the Governor of the second largest farm State in the Union. I'm heading to Crawford after tonight. It's not a very big town; almost everybody there is in agriculture business.

Like you all, I like to—I used to like to go down and sit around the coffee shop. They don't let me go down to the coffee shop anymore. [*Laughter*] But I think I got a pretty good handle on the importance of agriculture for the future of this country, and one of the most important ways to make sure the agriculture economy is strong is to promote value-added processing.

I said when I was running for President, I supported ethanol, and I meant it. I support it now, because not only do I know it's important for the ag sector of our economy, it's an important part of making sure we become less reliant on foreign sources of energy. I appreciate Senator Daschle working on the RFS standard.

And I appreciate John Thune working on the bio-energy rebate program, to make sure

that we help increase, on the one hand, the demand for ethanol and, on the other hand, the supply of ethanol. It's good public policy for America. It's good for our air; it's good for our economy; and it's good for our national security.

Thank goodness we're self-sufficient in food. But we're not so self-sufficient in energy. And pretty soon they're going to get an energy bill to my desk, and I look forward to signing it. On the one hand, it's going to encourage more conservation. On the other hand, hopefully it will spur not only the development of renewables but more oil and gas at home, and the two are not mutually exclusive. The less reliant we are on foreign sources of crude oil, the better off we are in America.

I mentioned we're self-sufficient in food, and that's good. And we generally produce more than we need here at home. And if that's the case, it seems like we ought to figure out how to sell more of it overseas. The more markets that are open for U.S. farmers and ranchers, the better off our economy will be.

It is important that this Nation embrace free and fair trade. It is important that we understand that when we're good at something—and we're the best farmers and ranchers in the world—we ought to work to open up markets to sell our products all across the world.

And I will tell you the days are over with, with American ag being kind of shunted aside when it comes to international trade agreements. We need to keep American ag in the forefront of trade agreements. It ought to be the cornerstone of international trade policy. And that's been my record thus far as the President, and it will be my record so long as I am the President.

I understand that the Senate is getting to take up a trade bill, for which I'm grateful. I look forward to getting that bill to my desk. It's important to get it passed and to get it moving. And it's important to get a farm bill to my desk as well. We need good farm legislation. It's—the farm bill needs to get done quickly so that the farmers who are out there fixing to plant know what the rules of the game is. And we can do it. We need to put aside all the posturing, all the noise, and for the good of American agriculture, get a trade bill to my desk and get a farm bill to my desk.

I want you to know that this great country is going to make the right decisions when it comes to peace, is going to make great decisions when it comes to how to bolster our economy and make sure we understand that a strong ag sector is good for America, good for everybody in America. But this country also is going to stand squarely in the face of evil, and here's how: We're going to love our neighbor like we'd like to be loved ourself and show the world that good overcomes evil every single time.

We can not only boast of a strong military and hopefully a vibrant economy all across the country, but we can do small acts of kindness that, in their aggregate, in their total, defines the true nature of America. You know, when you go to your Sunday school or your synagogue or mosque and vow to help somebody in need, you're really helping define the face of America. When you mentor a child who seems lost or hopeless, you're helping to define America. When you teach in a classroom, when you love your children and you tell your children you love them every day, that's part of making sure that America is as compassionate as can be.

No, the enemy hit us, but out of this evil is going to come some incredible good. Out of this evil is going to come a nation that will be stronger, more resolved, tougher, but also more loving.

I believe that the country is on the verge of changing the culture which for years has said, "If it feels good, just go ahead and do it," and, "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a day in which each of us understand we're responsible for the decisions we make in life, that we're responsible for something greater than ourselves.

That came home to me on Flight 93: When Americans were on an airplane, they got the word that they were—the enemy was going to use the airplane as a weapon. They got on cell phones and told their loved ones goodbye; they said a prayer; they drove the plane into the ground to save somebody else.

It's the America that I know, and it's the America that I love that was represented in

that act, and that happens every day. It happens every day here in South Dakota. It happens every day in States and communities across the country. That willingness to serve something greater than yourself is such a wonderful part of the American character.

And my call to you is, if you want to fight evil, do some good; love a neighbor just like you'd like to be loved yourself. It's happening all across America—because, folks, I happen to be the President of the greatest nation on the face of the Earth because of our people.

God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:32 p.m. in a storage warehouse at the plant. In his remarks, he referred to Ron Alverson, president, board of directors, Lake Area Corn Processors, the plant's ownership cooperative; and Gov. William J. Janklow of South Dakota and his wife, Mary Dean Janklow. The President also referred to RFS, the proposed Renewable Fuels Standard to specify a percentage of the Nation's fuel supply to come from renewable domestic fuels like ethanol and biodiesel.

Statement on House of Representatives Action on Corporate Responsibility Legislation

April 24, 2002

I commend the House for acting quickly to pass reforms that improve corporate responsibility and protect shareholders. The House bill includes the three core principles of my 10-point plan—providing better information to investors, making corporate officers more accountable, and developing a stronger, more independent audit system. With 80 million Americans participating as shareholders of companies, we must ensure high standards, tough disclosure requirements, and accurate information. The House bill is a responsible approach to addressing these important issues.

Message on the Observance of Armenian Remembrance Day

April 24, 2002

Today, we commemorate an appalling tragedy of the 20th century, the massacre of as many as 1.5 million Armenians through forced exile and murder at the end of the Ottoman Empire. These horrific killings left wounds that remain painful for people in Armenia, in Turkey, and around the world. I join the Armenian community in America and across the globe in mourning this horrendous loss of life.

Today is an occasion for the world to reflect upon and draw lessons from these terrible events. It is a day for recognizing that demonizing others lays the foundation for a dark cycle of hatred. Transcending this venomous pattern requires painful introspection about the past and wise determination to forge a new future based on truth and reconciliation. In this spirit, I look forward to Turkey restoring economic, political, and cultural links with Armenia.

The United States greatly values the contributions that Armenians make to our national life. With faith and courage, generations of Armenians have overcome great suffering and proudly preserved their centuries-old culture, traditions, and religion. The United States is also deeply grateful for Armenia's swift and decisive cooperation in the war against terrorism. Just as the United States reached out to the Armenian people to provide shelter and freedom early in the last century, so did Armenia extend a supportive hand to the American people in the immediate aftermath of September 11. Our two peoples stand together in this fight in support of values that define civilization itself.

I am also very proud of America's strong support for a free Armenian state, whose citizens enjoy the fruits of peace and increasing prosperity. In the months to come, America will continue to increase its security cooperation with Armenia and with Armenia's neighbors to combat terrorism and pursue a lasting and just settlement to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, which will strengthen peace and stability in the Caucasus. The United States will also continue its strong support for Armenia's efforts to develop democratic and free market institutions, and to deepen its integration into the Euro-Atlantic community.

On behalf of the American people, I send warm wishes and expressions of solidarity to the Armenian people on this solemn day of remembrance. Together, our nations look