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Budget. I concur with her comments and observations.

Sincerely,

George W. Bush

NOTE: This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on September 4. An original was not available for verification of the content of this letter.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Congressional Leaders and an Exchange With Reporters

September 4, 2002

The President. Thank you all for coming. It's been my honor to welcome the leadership of the United States Congress here, to welcome them back from the August recess. We talked about a variety of issues—talked about the defense appropriations bill and terrorism insurance and an energy bill, spent most of our time talking about a serious threat to the United States, a serious threat to the world, and that's Saddam Hussein.

One of the things I made very clear to the Members here is that doing nothing about that serious threat is not an option for the United States. I also made it very clear that we look forward to a open dialog with Congress and the American people about the threat and that not only will we consult with the United States Congress—"we" being the administration—but that my administration will fully participate in any hearings that the Congress wishes to have on this subject, on the subject about how to make America a more secure country, how to best protect the American families in our country. At the appropriate time, this administration will go to the Congress to seek approval for—necessary to deal with the threat.

At the same time, I will work with our friends in the world. I've invited Prime Minister Blair to come to Camp David on Saturday, and he'll—he's coming. I've looked forward to talking with him about our mutual concerns about how to make the world more secure and safe. I will see Jean Chretien on Monday, as we—we'll talk about how to make our borders work better, but at the same time, I'll talk to him about this subject. I'll be on the phone to leaders of the—China and Russia and France, and then I'll be giving the speech at the United Nations.

Saddam Hussein is a serious threat. He is a significant problem. And it's something that this country must deal with. And today the process starts about how to have an open dialog with the elected officials and, therefore, the American people about our future and how best to deal with it.

Let me answer a couple of questions. Steve Holland [Reuters], Fournier [Ron Fournier, Associated Press], and then Gregory [David Gregory, NBC News], and that's it.

U.N. Weapons Inspectors in Iraq

Q. Mr. President, what's your opinion on putting U.N. weapons inspectors back in Iraq? Will you ask the U.N. to do that? Is that a viable option?

The President. First of all, I'll be giving a speech on Tuesday—or the 12th—and you can come and listen to it. But let me say to you that the issue is not inspectors; the issue is disarmament. This is a man who said he would not arm up. This is a man who told the world that he would not harbor weapons of mass destruction. That's the primary issue, and I'll be discussing ways to make sure that that is the case.

Ron.

Q. So you will be—you will be discussing ways to make sure that he disarms? Are you talking about having inspectors back in?

The President. I will first remind the United Nations that for 11 long years, Saddam Hussein has sidestepped, crawfished, wheedled out of any agreement he had made not to harbor—not to develop weapons of mass destruction, agreements he's made to treat the people within his country with respect. And so I'm going to call upon the world to recognize that he is stiffing the world. And I will lay out, and I will talk about ways to make sure that he fulfills his obligations.

Consultation With Congress

Q. Let me just follow up on your opening statement. When you say you're going to seek congressional approval, does that mean, in effect, Congress will have veto authority over your plan to oust Saddam Hussein?

The President. I'm confident we will be able to—I'll be able to work with Congress to deal with this threat to the American people. And that's what I meant.

President Saddam Hussein of Iraq

Q. Mr. President, you talked about Saddam Hussein stiffing the world. In your mind, has the time come to issue the Iraqi leader an ultimatum similar to that that you issued to the Taliban?

The President. I am going to state clearly to the United Nations what I think. And I think that he has not fulfilled any of the obligations that he made to the world. And I believe it's important for the world to deal with this man. And I believe it's really important for the United States Congress to have an open dialog about how to deal with this threat.

We are in a new era. The first battle of the—the first war of the 21st century took place in Afghanistan. The United States is under threats. We are—we spent a lot of time, people around this table, good-hearted people who care deeply about America spent a lot of time thinking about how best to secure our homeland even further. And this is a debate the American people must hear, must understand. And the world must understand as well that its credibility is at stake.

Thank you all for coming.

Maxwell Gregory

Q. Are you suggesting an ultimatum is coming? Is a deadline coming, sir?

The President. That's a fine-looking child, fine-looking child. [*Laughter*] Little Gregory. Little Stretch. [*Laughter*]

Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:42 a.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom; and Prime Minister Jean Chretien of Canada.

Remarks on Implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001

September 4, 2002

The President. Thank you all. Thank you for coming. I want to thank you all for coming. I'm particularly grateful that some of the folks on the frontline of education reform are with us, not only here on the stage, but as I look out in the audience I see some familiar faces with people who are—refuse to accept the status quo when the status quo means mediocrity for our children.

So I want to welcome you here. I also want to assure you that one of the big challenges that I see for our country, besides keeping the peace and making the homeland secure, is to insist that every child be educated. Notice I said "every child." It starts with the mindset that every child can learn. And I don't need to tell that to the people in this room, but there is—some in our country believe in the—what I call the soft bigotry of low expectations. They don't believe in the bigotry, but because there's low expectations, there is a soft bigotry.

And that's unacceptable. What that means is, there's certain kids just get shuffled through the system. Certain kids, they just get quit on. And we know who they are. They're generally inner-city kids, kids whose parents may not speak English as a first language. It's so much easier to walk into a classroom full of the hard-to-educate and say, "See you later. We're just going to move you through." And those days have got to end, and the people up here on the stage and the people here in the White House understand—standing here, sitting here in the White House—understand those days are going to end, for the good of the country.

One of the challenges is to make sure America is secure, is safe, is strong. But another one of our challenges is to make sure America is a better place for all of us, and that starts with insisting that every child get educated.

This is a passion that is shared by Republicans and Democrats. I don't view this as a partisan issue, I view this as an American issue. And that's why I was pleased earlier in my administration to travel the country with some of the bill sponsors, two of whom are here, both Republicans and Democrats, to sign this bill. That's a good signal to America that we're coming together to work on what's right for the country.

And I want to welcome Judd Gregg from the State of New Hampshire, who is one of