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Remarks to the Community in Alcoa, Tennessee

October 8, 2002

The President. Thank you all for coming. Thanks for coming. It's an honor to be back in East Tennessee. If I was dragging coming on this day, this Tennessee band kind of livened my step. [*Laughter*] I'm honored to see you all again. I'm proud to be in your presence. You represent a great university and a great State, and I'm honored you're here. I want to thank you all for coming. I've got some things on my mind, and I want to share them with you.

The first thing on my mind is this. I know—I know what it takes to be a good Governor. I know the characteristics necessary for someone to be able to assume that high office. Van Hilleary has what it takes to be a great Governor for Tennessee. I've also learned a lot about the United States Senate—[*laughter*]—and I know we need Lamar Alexander in the United States Senate.

I appreciate so much Bill Frist. He's a distinguished citizen. He's a good friend, a good, honorable man who cares deeply about the citizens of this State, brings a lot of expertise to the Senate. He's kind of one of those fellows who can get something done in the United States Senate, and that's the kind of attitude we need in the United States Senate. And I appreciate Bill. I want to tell you how proud I am to be on the stage with Janice Bowling, who's going to be the next Congresswoman.

I appreciate my friend the mayor, the honorable Victor Ashe, for being here. I've known Victor for a long, long time. We both proved that you don't have to graduate from—with honors from college in order to hold higher office. I'm really proud to be with Victor's mother. I've known Mrs. Ashe for a long, long time. I'm proud to see you, Martha. Thanks for coming to say hello. I'm proud you're here.

I want to talk about the future of your State and the future of our country. First, let me talk about your State. It's important you get a good soul to be your Governor, somebody who shares your values, the values of hard work and family, the values of service to others. It's important you get somebody who when they speak, they speak your language, who knows the soul of the citizens of the State. It's important to get somebody in there who doesn't need a poll or a focus group to tell them what to think, somebody who makes decisions based upon a philosophy, somebody who stands tall when sometimes the winds of public opinion may be drifting a different way, somebody you can count on, somebody, when they turn up the butane, the political butane, you know where they stand. That person, no doubt in my mind, is Van Hilleary.

One of the things I like about him is he—when the country called, he stepped up, and he served in Operation Desert Storm and Desert Shield. Then he decided that he wanted to serve in Congress. He went to one of those districts where they said, "This is a district where a Republican can't possibly win." He went out and said, "Listen, I want to represent everybody. I'm not here just to appeal to a small segment of the district. I'm here to represent a philosophy and a way of life in a State I care deeply about." And he won where people didn't think he could win. And for a while, they didn't think he could win here in Tennessee. You watch what happens on election day. Van Hilleary is going to be the next Governor.

He understands agriculture, and that's important for this State. He understands budgeting. That's important for this State. [*Laughter*] He's been dealing with the Washington budget. If you can figure out the Washington budget, I can assure you, you can figure out the Tennessee budget. But the thing I like most about Van is, he understands the most important priority of a State is to make sure that every single child gets educated.

I like—when I was the Governor of a State that started with the letter T and has a university that wears orange and called UT—[*laughter*]—I used to say that education is to a State what national defense is to the Federal Government. It's "the" priority. And I want to tell you all something, and you need to tell your friends at the coffee shops and at your community centers, that when it came to writing one of the most comprehensive pieces of education reform ever in the

history of our country, Van Hilleary played a significant role.

And let me share with you right quick the philosophy, because it's important to understand the philosophy behind educational excellence, at least our philosophy. He mentioned challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations in order to make sure every child learns in America. We must do that. We can never assign any child to failure. Every child can learn. If you believe every child can learn, then you must have a Governor who's willing to set high standards and high expectations. If you lower the bar, you see, if you believe certain kids can't learn—"Let's just move them through to get them off our—get them off the agenda"—if you lower the bar, you're going to get bad results.

Secondly, you've got to trust the local folks. See, one in—one of the key parts of the bill says that one size doesn't fit all when it comes to education, that you've got to trust local people to chart the path to excellence. You've got to empower local people to make the decisions for the children in their district. The people that care more about the children in Tennessee aren't in Washington; they're in Tennessee. And therefore, local control of schools is a fundamental part of education reform.

But let me tell you one other part. And it's important for the citizens of Tennessee to pay attention to this part of the education debate. If you believe every child can learn, like we do—see, if you believe that every child can learn, then you're willing to measure to determine if every child is learning. Those who don't believe every child can learn will say, "We don't need to measure," because if you don't believe they can learn, then why should you care? In order to make sure every child learns, it's essential that the good people of this State have a Governor who's willing to insist upon accountability.

We need to know in society—we need to know whether or not the curriculum is working. We need to know whether our teachers have the tools necessary to teach. We need to know whether or not schools are on the right track. We need to know whether or not each child in Tennessee can read and write and add and subtract. If you can—if you can't find out, you'll never know. If you don't measure, you'll never know. In order to make sure no child gets left behind—I don't mean any single child in this State—you better have a Governor who is willing to hold people accountable for results. And when you find children trapped in schools that won't teach and won't change, you better have a Governor who's willing to challenge the status quo, and that man is Van Hilleary.

And I'm proud to strongly endorse the candidacy of Lamar Alexander. There's no question in my mind, and there should be no doubt in the minds of your fellow citizens, Republican, Democrat, or independent alike, that this man has proven his worth in the public sector and will be another great United States Senator from the State of Tennessee.

He knows education. He knows fiscal responsibility. But let me tell you another reason why we need him up there. One of the most serious parts of my job is to make sure that the Federal bench has got good judges on it, good, honorable, decent people who are willing to serve their communities and their Nation on the Federal bench, people who won't use the bench to act like or serve like a legislator. See, we've got the legislative branch. We don't need our judges acting like legislators. We need our judges there to strictly interpret our United States Constitution.

And I've named good judges. I named a lady the other day from the State of Texas, who I know well. She got elected several times statewide in my State, overwhelmingly so; came out of the law school class—one of the tops in her law school class; was ranked by the American Bar Association with the highest of high ratings; was embraced by both Republicans and Democrats alike. I put her nomination up there. They played politics with her nomination. They distorted Priscilla Owen's record. I need Senators like Lamar Alexander who will join me in making sure our Federal judiciary is strong and sensible and will not rewrite the Constitution from the bench.

And I appreciate Janice Bowling, willing to run and serve in Washington, DC. It's very important that we make sure that Denny Hastert is the Speaker of the House, make sure that coming into the next session that

we've got a Speaker with whom I can work. Janice stands for a lot of good things, stands for a lot of good issues, but the thing that I'm most impressed with is, she'll vote for Denny Hastert to be the Speaker of the House in Washington, DC.

We've got a lot of work to do in Washington. We've got a lot of work to do to make America a stronger place and a safer place and a better place. Making sure America is a stronger place really means we've got to make sure people can find work if they can't find work—people are able to find a job. We've got to do everything we can to make sure that the policies in Washington stress economic growth, to do things that stimulate that part of the economy which will grow jobs.

See, I worry about it when people can't find work. If somebody is looking for a job and they can't find work, we've got a problem in America. We want our people to be able to put food on the table. Obviously, I'm concerned as well when the stock market is declining. But I want you to know, I'm optimistic about our future. Interest rates are low; that's a good sign. Inflation is low; that's a good sign. We've got the best workers in America. Our productivity is the highest in the world. Our entrepreneurial spirit is strong. The foundation for growth is good. But I'm going to work as hard as I possibly can to do everything we can do to make sure our economy grows.

It starts with a—the belief, the firm belief that when times are slow, we must let people keep more of their own money. When times are slow, the best way to encourage economic growth is not to increase the size of Government but to increase the size of money in our citizens' pockets.

Here's what we believe, and this is a fundamental difference between some of the voices in Washington and what I believe and what others on this stage believe. By letting people keep more of their own money, they will then more likely demand a good or a service. They'll demand something. And in a marketplace economy, somebody is likely to produce that good or a service. If there's a demand for a good or a service, in our society somebody's going to produce it. And when somebody produces it, it means somebody is more likely to find work.

The tax relief plan that Van supported and Senator Frist supported and many members of the Tennessee delegation supported came at the absolute right time. It was important that we cut the taxes on the people to provide wind to the economic growth and vitality. And there are some in Washington who want to get away with that—get rid of that tax relief plan. There are some who don't believe—it's a good, honest debate—they don't believe in our philosophy. But for the sake of economic vitality, we must not let them raise your taxes. And for the sake of economic vitality, we must make the tax relief permanent.

The House has got a budget, and I want to thank Van for working on the Budget Committee, and it's a good budget. It's a budget that says, we can get back to balance if we're realistic on how we spend your money. The Senate doesn't have a budget. And you can imagine what that could mean for your money. Without a budget, without kind of a go-by, without constraints in a society or in an environment in which every program sounds like a brilliant program, except they all cost billions of dollars, it's likely that we could have some runaway Federal spending. And we can't have that, for the sake of economic vitality. We can fund our priorities—listen, we've got plenty of money to fund the priorities. We can stay focused with your money on our priorities. But for the sake of job creation, the Congress must not overspend. For the sake of economic vitality, for the sake of the strength of the future of our economy, the Congress must remember whose money they're spending. It's not the Government's money. It's your money. They need to be responsible with your money, in order to make sure the foundation for economic growth is strong.

And before they go home, there's something else they can do. They can pass a terrorism insurance bill. See, there's $15 billion worth of construction projects which are on hold around America because people can't get insurance for the project. The enemy hit us, and it made it very difficult for people to be able to insure those projects. And so, therefore, I think it's a useful role for the

Congress to serve as a backstop against a potential terrorist attack.

This is a jobs program. This is a way to get our people back to work the right way, to encourage private sector jobs. There's over 300,000 jobs, good hardhat jobs that have been delayed because we can't get a terrorism insurance package out of the United States Congress. There's a lot of voices up there talking about the economy, and I'm glad they're talking about it. But they ought to stop talking, and they ought to start doing, by getting a terrorism insurance bill to my desk so we can get people back to work. And that terrorism insurance bill must remember who we're trying to help. We're not trying to help the trial lawyers. We're trying to help the hardhats of America. Now, I—the economy is on my mind because I want our fellow countrymen working; I want them to be able to put bread on the table.

The safety of the country is on my mind, too. See, there's still an enemy which hates America, lurking around. And so long as that's the case, my most important job is to protect you. My most important job is to rally the assets of Government at all levels to do everything we can to deny the enemy, to prevent them from hitting America.

People say, "Well, why"—and I know a lot of kids are probably asking, "Well, why America?" And you've just got to understand that the enemy hates us because of what we love. We love freedom. We love the idea of people—[*applause*]. We love the fact that, in this great country, people can worship an almighty God any way they see fit. That's what we love. We love free political—we love the debates. We love free—we love the discourse of free people. We love a free press. We love everything about our freedom, and we're not going to change. We're going to stand tall and stand strong.

We also value life in America. Everybody counts. Everybody has worth. Everybody is a precious soul. And the enemy we—the enemy doesn't regard life the way we do. You see, they hijack a great religion and kill innocent people. They don't care, but we do. And so long as we hold those values dear, which we will, the enemy will try to strike us.

And so we've got a lot of good people, you just need to know, working hard to protect you, a lot of good folks. We're sharing information. I mean, we're running down every hint, every idea. Every piece of evidence we get, we're chasing it down so that we can say to the American people, "We're doing everything we can do."

That's why I went to Congress and asked them to put together a Department of Homeland Security, to join me in creating a new Department, so we could better coordinate the over 100 agencies that are involved with protecting you. And we got a good bill out of the House, and it's stuck in the Senate.

And the reason it's stuck in the Senate is because there is a disagreement over how best to manage the agency. On the one hand, they want us to have a thick book of rules to micromanage the decisionmaking process. I'll give you one example. The Customs agents should be wearing radio detection devices—radiological detection devices on their belt so that, if when they're looking for weapons of mass destruction and they come close to one, it—this device will send a signal. It ought to be a part of their job. But the thick book of rules says, "Well, that's up for collective bargaining before you can make a person do that." See, we've got—that violates a rule, and therefore, we got to negotiate that out.

Folks, we don't have time to negotiate a lot of these issues. We've got time to negotiate some issues. We've got time to negotiate some issues, of course. But we don't have time to sit around and negotiate the work rules necessary to protect you. The enemy doesn't sit around worrying about a thick book of regulations. And so, for the sake of our national security interests, the Congress, the Senate ought to give this President and future Presidents the ability to put the right people at the right place with the right equipment at the right time to protect America.

But the best way to protect America for the short term and the long term is to hunt the killers down, one person at a time, and bring them to justice, and that's what we're going to do. I say one at a time, because that's the kind of war we're in. See, we're facing an enemy which hides in caves and sends youngsters to their death, suicidal deaths. They don't have tanks. They don't have big

infantries. They don't have industrial complexes. They are coldblooded killers. And the only way to measure success against this part of the war against terror is to hunt them down one at a time. A man named bin al-Shibh popped his head up the other day; he's no longer a problem to America.

It's a different kind of war. You might think about it as an international manhunt, which means we've got to make sure that those of us—that those hunting with us are strong and buoyed in their—our mutual love for freedom. That's why the doctrine that says, "Either you're with us, or you're with the enemy," still stands; it still holds. We've got a lot of people working with us to chase these people down. And I want you to know, the coalition that we put together is still strong, still viable, and still necessary.

I bet you we've—I say, I bet you—I don't have an exact count, but we've hauled in a couple of thousand or more. And like number haven't been so lucky, thanks to the United States military, in large part. We've making progress. Slowly but surely, we're making progress. And that's the kind of war we fight. Sometimes you'll see it on TV, and sometimes you're just not going to see it on your TVs, as we make progress.

I submitted a significant increase in defense spending to the Congress to—because I want to send two messages. One, anytime we put one of our youngsters into harm's way, any time we put our military into harm's way, they deserve the best training, the best equipment and the best possible pay. We owe that to those soldiers, and we owe it to their loved ones.

I also want to send a clear message to friend and foe alike that the United States is in this for the long haul, that there is not a calendar that says, it's time to quit. See, when it comes to the defense of our freedoms, it doesn't matter how long it takes to defend our freedom. We love our freedoms, and we're not going to quit. We're not going to look at this kind of—group of international killers and say, "Well, it's time to go home." That's not the way we think in America, and that's not the way we want the world to see us.

See, we want the world to see us the way we are. We're determined, and we're after them. And we're going to stay after them until we're able to more secure the peace. And that's why the United States Congress needs to get the defense bill to my desk before they go home. They've been talking about this defense bill for quite a while. Before they go home, they ought to stop playing politics with the defense bill and let me sign it. It's important for the future of the country.

Last night, I continued a dialog on the war on terror. I talked about a significant threat to our country, and that threat is Saddam Hussein and some of the folks in Iraq.

Audience member. Chase 'em out!

The President. I truly believe that, as you could tell from my discussion last night if you listened, that he is a threat. He is a threat to the United States. He's a threat to our friends in the region. He's a threat to anybody who holds freedom dear to his heart.

People are concerned about Saddam, and I understand that. But a lot of Americans have understood that the dynamics have shifted since 11 years ago, because of what happened on September the 11th. No longer are we secure. No longer can we feel free because we've got two oceans separating us from—from that part of the world, for example. And therefore, it's very important for us as a country to think about how best to protect us for the short run and the long run. We owe this to our children. This debate is an incredibly important debate for our country to have.

I want to thank members of both political parties for taking a—for realizing the seriousness of this issue. This week, you'll see the Congress debate this issue. As I said last night, this isn't an issue of committing our military one way or the other. It doesn't say this—the resolution—threat is imminent, nor does it say it's unavoidable. But it does send a clear signal to the world, and I mean not only the United Nations but the whole world, that we take this threat very seriously in America, that we'll be speaking with one voice, that we love our freedoms, and that if the United Nations is unable to deal with the problem—and I certainly hope they can—that the United States will lead—and if Saddam Hussein chooses not to deal with it. See, he's the guy who said he would have no weapons of mass destruction. He's the

person who told the world plainly, "I won't have chemical weapons or biological weapons," or, "I won't seek a nuclear weapon." He said that. He's the man who said, "I promise you I won't do this." Yet for 11 years, he's defied resolution after resolution after resolution. It's his choice to make.

And the U.N. can show whether or not it's the United Nations or the League of Nations. They get that choice to make, too. It's their choice. But my message, and the message from the Congress, people of both political parties, will be, for the sake of peace—and I emphasize, for the sake of peace—if they won't deal with this man, the United States of America will lead a coalition to disarm him—for the sake of peace.

I take my responsibilities as the Commander in Chief very seriously. A military option is my last choice, the last choice. But should we commit our military, we'll be ready; we'll be prepared; we'll have a great plan. And make no mistake about it, we will prevail.

And finally, as we work to make America stronger and safer, we've got to make—work to make America a better place, too. Always got to remember that a better America is on the forefront of our agenda. That not only means a working America, but that means an educated America. That means making sure we've got a health care system that's modern and make sure we understand that medicine has changed and Medicare hadn't. We need prescription drugs for our seniors to make sure Medicare is a modern program that works.

But there's something else we can do in this country. We can fight evil by doing acts of kindness and decency. We can fight evil by loving our neighbor like we'd like to be loved ourselves. In our society, in this great land, this great society and this wonderful country, there are pockets of despair and hopelessness. There are people who hurt in America, people who hurt because of addiction or loneliness, people who wonder whether or not the American Dream—what that means. It's empty words for some. They just don't see any future. There is no hope. And we can change that in this country. We can change it.

Listen, Government is limited in its scope. It can hand out money. But what Government cannot do is put a sense of purpose in people's lives or hope in people's lives. That happens when a neighbor says to a person in need, "I love you. What can I do to help you? What am I able to do to make your life more hopeful?"

See, our society can change and, in my judgment, will change, one heart, one soul at a time, because people are now understanding that after September the 11th, 2001, there is a new definition to patriotism. Patriotism is more than just putting your hand over your heart. Patriotism is serving your community by helping somebody in need.

And that can happen all kinds of ways. See, if you mentor a child like Linda Clark does—I met Linda, who's a—she's a soldier in the army of compassion. She came out to the Air Force One to say hello. She started a mentoring program. She's involved with Project Grad. She understands one person can make a difference in somebody's life. I don't know where you are, Linda. Where are you? You've got a lousy seat. But anyway, Linda mentors a fifth grade child. She's making a huge difference in that child's life.

You can go to a shut-in's home and say, "I love you." That's part of what I'm talking about. Run a Boy Scout troop or a Girl Scout troop or a Boys or Girls Club. There's all kinds of ways that each of us can make a difference. We've got different talents; we've got different views; and each of us can use those talents and our views to make a difference in changing America for the better.

Listen, the enemy hit us. They didn't know what they were thinking about. They probably thought we'd file a lawsuit or two. [*Laughter*] They didn't know America, did they? See, they didn't know this. They didn't know that this great Nation loves freedom and loves peace, and we will work hard to achieve and maintain both. They also didn't realize that we're also not only a tough nation, but a compassionate nation, a nation which is a nation full of people who are going to respond to this evil with helping a neighbor in need.

You know, there's a period of personal responsibility, I think, coming into the country.

Really important for our youngsters to understand that the culture which has said, "If it feels good, do it, and you've got a problem, blame somebody else," is a culture that's moving on. It's being replaced. We're replacing it with a culture that says, "Each of us are responsible for our behavior and our decisions." If you're a mother or a dad—if you're fortunate enough to be a mom or a dad, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart and all your soul. If you're lucky enough to live in Tennessee or Knoxville, Tennessee, you're responsible for the quality of education in a neighborhood. If you're running a corporation, you're responsible to tell the truth to your shareholders and employees.

I feel it happening. I feel it happen, which allows me to boldly predict that, because we're the greatest nation on the face of the Earth, we will not only face down evil, but we can achieve peace in a country which is more hopeful, more decent, more optimistic for everybody who's lucky enough to be called an American.

Listen, thanks for coming today. May God bless you all, and may God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:30 a.m. at McGhee Tyson Airport. In his remarks, he referred to gubernatorial candidate Van Hilleary; senatorial candidate Lamar Alexander; Janice Bowling, candidate for Tennessee's Fourth Congressional District; Mayor Victor Ashe of Alcoa, and his mother, Martha Ashe; Texas Supreme Court Justice Priscilla Owen, whose nomination to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the Fifth Circuit failed on September 5 when the Senate Judiciary Committee refused to send it forward for a vote by the Senate; Ramzi bin al-Shibh, an Al Qaida operative suspected of helping to plan the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, who was captured in Karachi, Pakistan; and President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Remarks at a Luncheon for Gubernatorial Candidate Van Hilleary in Knoxville, Tennessee

October 8, 2002

Thanks for coming. Thank you all very much. Please go ahead and be seated. Well, thank you for that kind introduction, "Governor." There's no doubt in my mind that Van Hilleary is the right man to be the Governor of Tennessee. And I want to thank you all for coming. I feel comfortable in a State where the university is UT, the colors are orange and white, and the political climate is friendly. [*Laughter*]

I made a lot of friends here, and I'm proud to be amongst you all. Thanks for your prayers, and thanks for your support. My only regret is that Laura didn't come with me today. She sends her very best to Meredith and Van and sends her best to our buddies here in Tennessee. I don't know if you know this or not, but when I married Laura, she was a public school librarian. She didn't care for politics. She didn't like politicians. [*Laughter*] And now she's the First Lady of the United States, and she's doing a fabulous job. I'm really, really proud of her, and we're doing great. We really are.

And I want to thank, for those of you who came through the line here recently and said they pray for our family. That's the kindest thing you can do for a President and his family.

I believe strongly that the character of a person matters, and I believe Van Hilleary has the character necessary to be the kind of Governor that you can trust. He's a down-to-earth fellow that speaks his mind. He is the kind of person who does in office what he said he would do. He doesn't require focus groups or polls to tell him what to believe. And he can get the job done, and that's what you want in a Governor. See, I know what it takes to be a Governor, and he's got what it takes to be your Governor.

And I had the privilege of meeting Meredith, the next first lady. She's a schoolteacher. I think it makes a lot of sense to have a schoolteacher as the first lady for the State of Tennessee. I think it makes sense that—it's also good to meet Van's mom and dad. It kind of looks like he got saddled with the same kind of mom I've got, somebody who will tell you exactly what she thinks. [*Laughter*] But I love the fact that they've got a strong family, and they care for each other a lot.

There's no doubt in my mind that Lamar Alexander will be a great United States Senator from Tennessee. And I'm not saying that just because he married a Texan. [*Laughter*]