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NOTE: This proclamation will be published in the *Federal Register* on October 14. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language version of this proclamation.

Remarks at the Republican National Committee Presidential Gala

October 8, 2003

Thank you all for coming. Go ahead and be seated, unless you don't have seat. [*Laughter*] I'm honored you all are here. I appreciate your warm welcome. I thank you for your strong support and friendship. I thank you for your contributions. I thank you for your grassroots work. I thank you for your prayers. There's a lot of happy folks here tonight. There's some Cubs fans. There's some Red Sox fans, and there are some happy people from California.

I am so glad that Laura came with me tonight. As you know, she's back home from an official trip. She went to Russia to help them with literacy. She went to France. [*Laughter*] You may have seen the picture in the newspaper. [*Laughter*] Last time I was in France, I got a nice welcome but nothing like that. [*Laughter*] Laura is a great First Lady. I'm really proud of her.

I want to thank my friend Ed Gillespie for leading our great party. He could be doing a lot of other things. There's no doubt we picked the right man to lead us into this election year. I appreciate the fact that Cathy, his fine wife, is supporting Ed in this really important mission.

I not only want to thank Ed, I want to thank all of the RNC members who are here, all the county officials, all the grassroots activists. We're going to win in 2004. I appreciate your support. I appreciate the friendship of all those on the stage here tonight who helped set a record. It's important to be well funded as you go into a campaign, and you've made it possible.

I want to thank my friend Al Hoffman and his wife, Dawn, for their longtime friendship. I want to thank Ann Wagner, our party cochairman. I want to thank the gala cochairmen, Brad Freeman and David Girardi-diCarlo and Carl Linder. I want to thank all those who worked hard to make this event go so successfully.

I appreciate Monsignor Marc Filacchione who is here, the chaplain from the New York City Fire Department. I want to thank Lieutenant Kim Royster from New York—from the New York City Police Department. I'm really thankful you brought your Governor with you, a great Governor in George Pataki.

I want to thank the Wright Touch Orchestra, Jonathan Yeaworth and Michael Israel, as well as Michael Feinstein for providing entertainment here tonight.

I know we've got Members of the United States Congress with us. I had a meeting right before I came here with Speaker Denny Hastert. He told me that he wasn't able to make it. He said he's heard me speak before. [*Laughter*] But he is a great Speaker. He is a great leader for the United States Congress.

I appreciate Tom DeLay and Roy Blunt and all the House Members who are here. I also know that Bill Frist, the Senate majority leader, is here as well. What a class act he is.

I've got two goals in '04. One is slightly selfish. [*Laughter*] And the other is to make sure that Denny Hastert remains the Speaker of the House and Bill Frist the leader of the Senate.

It is in our Nation's interest that Hastert remain the Speaker and Bill Frist the majority leader. These are strong leaders. They have led the Congress in a lot of important matters. We've achieved a lot of results together, results that are good for Republicans and Democrats and Independents, results that are good for all Americans.

You know, I wasn't sure what to expect when I became your President. I was certain there would be some challenges. I wasn't exactly sure what to expect, but I knew there was going to be some problems to solve. And therefore, I knew I needed to surround myself with really strong, competent, capable people. I've assembled a great administration of Americans from all walks of life who have put their country above self.

This country is blessed to have a great Vice President in Dick Cheney. I listen to a great national security team and a great domestic policy team. Some of my members—some

of the members of my Cabinet are here tonight. The Secretary of Interior, Gale Norton, is with us. The Secretary of Agriculture, Ann Veneman, is with us. The Secretary of Commerce, Don Evans, is with us. The Secretary of Labor, Elaine Chao, is with us. And the Secretary of Energy, Spence Abraham, is with us. Thank you all for coming, and thank you for a job well done.

I knew we would face challenges, and I was right. We're at war. We face an enemy that cannot stand what America stands for. We love freedom. We love the right for people to worship freely, to speak freely. And we're not going to change, and neither will they. We got attacked on September the 11th, and this Nation must never forget the lessons of September the 11th.

We must never forget the lives lost. We must never forget the fact that oceans no longer protect us from an enemy which hates us. We must never forget the nature of our enemy. These people are nothing but cold-blooded killers. They've hijacked a great religion and kill innocent men, women, and children. They know no law. They know no rules. We must remember that the best way to deal with this enemy is to stay on the offensive. We must not tire. We must not weary. We must not be afraid.

This administration is leading the world to make the world more secure. We have a solemn duty, not only to our homeland but to help others who embrace freedom. History has called us into action, and we will not let history down. We must remember that one of the lessons of September the 11th is these killers will try to find safe harbor. And that's why I laid out a new doctrine for American foreign policy. It said, ''If you harbor a terrorist, if you feed a terrorist, if you hide a terrorist, you're just as guilty as the terrorists.''

It's important, as you begin to make the case for this administration, that not only do we lay out doctrine, but more importantly, we enforce doctrine. And the Taliban found out what we meant. Because of the bravery of our troops in Afghanistan, America is more secure, the world is more peaceful, and the people of that country are now free.

One of the important lessons of September the 11th, 2001, is that our country must deal with gathering threats before they materialize, before they come back to haunt us. And that's what we did in Iraq. We saw a gathering threat, a man who had possessed and used weapons of mass destruction on his own people, a man who sponsored terror, a man who is a danger in the region in which he lived.

But it wasn't just us who recognized a threat. Free nations recognized the threat. The United Nations passed resolution after resolution after resolution calling upon Mr. Saddam Hussein to disclose his weapons and to disarm. And finally, in Security Council Resolution 1441, led by the United States, he was told that he had one final chance to disarm—disclose what he had and disarm, or there would be serious consequences. The world spoke. He chose defiance, and Saddam Hussein is no more.

The lessons of September the 11th are lessons we must not forget. I was not about to leave the security of the American people in the hands of a madman. I was not going to stand by and wait and trust the sanity and restraint of Mr. Saddam Hussein.

So our coalition acted, and we acted in one of the swiftest and most humane military campaigns in history. Iraq is free. America is more secure. Since the liberation of Iraq, our investigators have found evidence of a clandestine network of biological laboratories, advanced design work on prohibited long-range missiles, an elaborate campaign to hide these illegal programs.

There's a lot more to investigate. Yet it is now undeniable—undeniable—that Saddam Hussein was in clear violation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1441. It is undeniable that Saddam Hussein was a deceiver and a danger. The Security Council was right to demand that Saddam disarm. And America was right to enforce that demand.

Thanks to our brave troops and a coalition of nations, America is now more secure, the world is more peaceful, and Iraq is free. Iraq is a free of a brutal dictator. Iraq is free of the man who caused there to be mass graves. Iraq is free of rape rooms and torture chambers. Iraq is free of a brutal thug. America did the right thing.

One of the problems we faced when we came was that morale in our military was beginning to suffer. So this administration worked with the Congress to pass new budgets for our defense, budgets that would meet the threats of a new era. And today, nobody in this world can question the skill and the spirit and the strength of the United States military. In order to win this war on terror, our military must be strong. I will keep the United States military strong.

We faced another problem. You might remember that in March of 2000, the stock market began to decline, and right about the time we got sworn in, the country was headed into a recession. That's a problem. That's a challenge, mainly a challenge for people who want to work. It's a challenge for those who have got to put bread on the table for their families.

And just as the economy was kind of getting better, thanks to a historic tax cut, the enemy hit us. September the 11th hurt, but we're dealing with that. I said then that it didn't matter how long it's going to take, those who inflicted harm on America would be brought to justice, and that's precisely what we're doing.

The battles in Afghanistan and Iraq affected consumer confidence. Corporate scandals affected consumer confidence. But we acted. We weren't timid. We did what we thought was right. We not only passed one tax relief package for the American people, we passed two, because we know when you have more money in your pocket, it's your choice to save or to spend or invest. More money means more growth, and more growth means more jobs.

There's more to do. We need to make sure we open up markets for America's entrepreneurs and farmers and ranchers. And while we open up markets, this administration will make sure that trade is not only free but it is fair.

We need an energy plan. We need reliable sources of energy. For the sake of national security and economic security, we need to be less reliant on foreign sources of energy.

We need tort reform, and we've got to make sure that there's certainty in the Tax Code. This tax relief we passed, because of a quirk in the rules, will go away. For the sake of economic vitality, for the sake of job creation, the Congress must make the tax relief permanent.

This administration has got a strong agenda to keep this Nation secure and prosperous. And we lead. We're willing to stake out the high ground and lead. My job as your President is to set great goals worthy of a great nation.

First, this country is committed to expanding the realm of freedom and peace, not only for our own security but for the benefit of the world. It is essential that this Nation not grow weary in the war on terror. It's essential that we remain determined and strong. You see, the enemies want to create a sense of fear and intrepidation. They don't understand America like I know America. This Nation will not be intimidated. We will continue our war on terror until this threat to civilization is removed.

But the war on terror is more than just chasing down the killers or holding tyrants to account. The war on terror—our security comes in the war on terror from the spread of human liberty. See, free nations do not develop weapons of mass destruction. Free nations do not intimidate their neighbors. Free nations are peaceful nations. And so one of the missions of this administration is to spread freedom. I understand that freedom is the deepest need and hope of every heart. And I believe that freedom is the right of every person and the future of every nation. And that's exactly what we're now doing in Iraq. We believe that freedom is not America's gift to the world, we believe that freedom is God's gift to each and every individual.

And so we're working in Iraq, working with other nations to make sure that Iraq is free and peaceful. Terrorists don't like that. Freedom is a threat. Freedom contradicts their way of life. A free Iraq in the middle of the Middle East will change the world. This is historic times. This Nation will stay the course until Iraq is free and peaceful and prosperous.

And in our own country, we must work for a society of prosperity and compassion—and compassion—so that every single citizen has a chance to work and succeed and realize the great promise of this country. That starts

with making sure that everybody can find work. This administration understands the role of Government is not to create wealth but an environment in which the entrepreneur can flourish, in which small businesses grow to be big businesses. We will stay with our pro-growth policy until our fellow citizens can find a job.

We understand that a compassionate and hopeful tomorrow requires that every child be educated. We have led on this issue. We called for Congress to pass historic education reforms, and they responded. And now, in return for record amounts of Federal money, we expect every public school in America to teach the basics.

And we say, ''You must measure to show us whether or not a child can read or write and add and subtract. And if they can't, there will be extra resources to help that child.'' But at some point in time, if a child is trapped in a school which will not teach and will not change, we believe the parent ought to have different options to liberate that child. No child should be left behind in America.

A hopeful tomorrow—make sure America keeps its promises. We have led on the issue of Medicare. The House passed a bill. The Senate passed a bill. They're working out differences to give seniors more choices, more options, just like the Members of Congress have, and at the same time, prescription drug coverage. Congress needs to come together and get a good Medicare bill to my desk.

There are a lot of ways to make sure America remains hopeful, a prosperous economy, good health care, a great education system. But we must remember that in our society, there are some who seem hopelessly lost, some who hurt, some who are lonely. Government can pass out money, but it cannot put hope in a person's heart or a sense of purpose in a person's life. And that's why the job of the President is to capture the great spirit of our country, to call people to service.

I recognize that our strength is not in our armies or in our pocketbooks. Our strength is in the hearts and souls of American citizens, people from all faiths, all walks of life, whether they be Christian, Jew, or Muslim, or Hindu, people have heard the universal call to love a neighbor just like they'd like to be called themselves. No, that's our strength.

In order to make sure this country meets the great goal of hope and respect and decency, the President must be willing to rely upon the strength of the country. And that's why I put forth a Faith-Based Initiative, recognizing that in our houses of worship of all faiths, we find love and compassion and decency.

There are some whose problems can only be solved when a brother or sister puts their arm around you and says, ''I love you. What can I do to help you? I want to mentor you. I want to teach you how to read. I'll provide food if you're hungry, shelter if you need a place to stay.'' No, the strength of this country is the heart and soul of the American people, the decency, the compassion, the soldiers in the armies of compassion.

There's no question in my mind that America will be a hopeful place. And there's no question in my mind that with your help, in November of 2004 we will win a great victory and will continue to work to keep America strong and secure and prosperous and free.

Thank you all for coming. May God bless. God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:53 p.m. at the Washington Hilton. In his remarks, he referred to Ed Gillespie, chairman, Ann Wagner, cochairman, and Al Hoffman, finance chairman, Republican National Committee; pianist and singer Michael Feinstein; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Remarks at Pease Air National Guard Base in Portsmouth, New Hampshire

October 9, 2003

Thanks for coming. Thanks for such a warm welcome. I'm pleased to be back in the great State of New Hampshire again. And I'm honored to be with the Army and Air National Guard, and with reservists from every branch of our military. You are demonstrating that duty and public service are alive and well in New Hampshire. You stand ready to defend your fellow citizens, and you