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why won't they give these three ladies an up-or-down vote? Where's the justice? These are eminently qualified people. These are three women who are—represent the best of American jurisprudence. And why won't they let them come to the floor? If they're so fair, bring them up to a vote—today. Let these three nominees get onto the floor of the United States Senate for an up-or-down vote, and then I will listen to whether or not they're fair or not.

Yes, last question, then I've got to go.

President's Upcoming Visit to the United Kingdom

Q. Are you concerned, Mr. President, that the massive amount of protesters that are going to be in London next week will undercut your message of unity in Iraq?

The President. I am so pleased to be going to a country which says that people are allowed to express their mind. That's fantastic. You know, freedom is a beautiful thing. And the fact that people are willing to come out and express themselves says I'm going to a great country.

And secondly, I don't expect everybody in the world to agree with the positions I've taken. But certainly, those should agree with the goals of the United States, which is peace and freedom. You see, we believe that freedom is not America's gift to the world. We believe freedom is the Almighty's gift to everybody in the world. We believe free societies are peaceful societies. We believe in human justice and human dignity and human rights. We cry when we hear stories about people being tortured, women being raped in rape rooms. We weep when we discover mass graves of innocent Iraqis. We understand that tyranny is not the form of government that will bring hope and justice. And therefore, we're not only willing to defend our own security; we're also willing to defend the rights of others.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:30 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House, following a meeting with Carolyn Kuhl, nominee to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the Ninth Circuit; Janice Brown, nominee to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the District of Columbia Circuit; and Priscilla Owen, nominee to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the Fifth Circuit. In his remarks, he referred to L. Paul Bremer III, Presidential Envoy to Iraq.

Remarks at a Bush-Cheney Luncheon in Orlando, Florida

November 13, 2003

The President. Thank you all. Thanks for coming. Thanks, Jeb—I mean, Governor. [*Laughter*] It's hard to get used to it. [*Laughter*] The thing I love about Jeb is he's a modest fellow. When the Florida Marlins won, he was trying to take credit for their success. [*Laughter*] I told him he doesn't have any idea what it takes to run a championship baseball team. [*Laughter*] He reminded me I don't either. [*Laughter*]

Love being back in Florida with our friends. Thank you all for coming. I appreciate your support a lot. It means a lot to me. Listen, the political season is going to come in its own time. I'm loosening up, and I'm getting ready. But I've got a job to do for everybody who lives in this country. And I'm going to continue doing that job. And as you work the phones and go to the coffee shops and houses of worship, I want you to remind the people that I'm going to work hard to keep America strong, to keep America secure. I'll work hard to make sure we're prosperous and free.

I regret one thing about this event, and that is Laura is not with me.

Audience members. Oh-h-h.

The President. I know it. I know it. [*Laughter*] You drew the short straw. [*Laughter*] She is a fabulous sister-in-law. She's a great wife, a wonderful mother, and she's doing a heck of a good job as the First Lady of this country. I'm really proud of her. She sends her very best to all our friends here in central Florida.

I'm proud of my brother. I tell you, he is a—he has been a superb Governor. He is a principled man, principled man. When he says something, you can book it. He is a man of his word. He is a courageous person, and he's got his priorities absolutely right. He loves his faith. He loves his family, and he loves his Florida.

I want to thank the other cast of characters who have joined me on this stage. That would be Tom Petway, Zach Zachariah, and David Brown, all of whom are working hard to make sure that this campaign is well-financed. I want to thank you for your hard work. I appreciate your efforts.

Mel Martinez is here today. He serves in my Cabinet. Where are you? There he is. Mel. He's done a superb job in my Government. You'll hear me talk a little bit about the homeownership gap a little later on. He's the leader in making sure that we promote ownership here in America. He is a—I love his story—it's the story of America, as far as I am concerned. As you know, Mel was a part of what they call Pedro Pan—Peter Pan. It's a program that—where Cuban moms and dads had the courage to send their children—I think Mel was 13 at the time—to send this teenager to America so that they could grow up in freedom. It speaks a lot about the mom and dad. It speaks a lot about the compassion of the American families who received the Mel Martinezes of the world. As well it speaks a lot about Mel and the other men and women who came from Cuba to flee to freedom. And Mel—it touches my heart to know that this man, who could have been living in repression and tyranny, is now in the Cabinet of the President of the United States.

I want to thank Congresswoman Katherine Harris and Congressman Tom Feeney for joining us today. Thank you all for coming. I appreciate my friend Bill McCollum, former Congressman from this part of the world, for being here. Thank you for coming, Bill.

I know we've got members of the statehouse here. You're probably standing by, waiting for your orders from Governor Bush on what to do next. [*Laughter*] Oh, yes, that's not the way it works. [*Laughter*]

The Lieutenant Governor, Toni Jennings, is here, and I want to thank Toni for coming. Charlie Crist is here. I appreciate Charlie for being here, the attorney general. We call him "General" now. [*Laughter*] Tom Gallagher is here. I appreciate both the statewide holders. I know State Senator Dan Webster is with us today. I want to thank you for coming, Dan.

I know my friend Rich Crotty is here, one of the co-chairmen of the event. But most of all, I want to thank you all for coming.

Audience members. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Well, Crotty—[*laughter*]—a couple of distant cousins leading the charge there. [*Laughter*] Finally, my friend Mercer Reynolds is with us, who is the national finance chairman for Bush-Cheney '04. He's from Cincinnati, Ohio. He's an entrepreneur and a business guy who has taken time out of his life to work hard, to encourage you all to participate. It looks like he as well as the Floridian leadership did a fabulous job. I'm proud you're here, and I thank you for coming.

Over the last 3 years, our Nation has acted decisively to confront great challenges. I came to this office to solve problems and not pass them on to future Presidents and future generations. I came to seize opportunities instead of letting them slip away. My administration is meeting the tests of our time.

Terrorists declared war on the United States of America, and war is what they got. We've captured or killed many of the key leaders of the Al Qaida network, and the rest of them know we're on their trail. In Afghanistan and in Iraq, we gave ultimatums to terror regimes. Those regimes chose defiance, and those regimes are no more. Fifty million people in those two countries once lived under tyranny, and today, they live in freedom.

Three years ago, our military was not receiving the resources it needed and morale was beginning to suffer, so we increased the defense budgets to prepare for the threats of a new era. And today, no one in the world can question the skill and the strength and the spirit of the United States military.

Three years ago, the economy was in trouble, and then recession was beginning. Then the attacks happened on our country. That affected economic growth. We had some scandals in corporate America. We marched to war in order to make America more secure and the world more peaceful. That all affected the way our people felt about the future, but we acted. We acted. We passed tough new laws to hold corporate criminals to account, and in order to get this economy going again, I have twice led the United

States Congress to pass historic tax relief for the American people.

I know that when Americans have more take-home pay to spend, to save, or invest, the whole economy grows, and people are more likely to find a job. We're returning more money to the people to help them raise their families, reducing taxes on dividends and capital gains to encourage investment. We're giving small businesses incentives to expand and to hire new people. With all these actions, we're laying the foundation for greater prosperity and more jobs across America, so every single citizen has a chance to realize the American Dream.

Today, the American economy is strong, and it is getting stronger. Third quarter growth in our economy was at the fastest pace in nearly 20 years. That's a good sign. People are finding more new jobs are being created. That's a good sign. Productivity is high. Business investment is rising. The housing construction is strong. The tax relief we passed is working. We left more money in the hands of the American people, and our economy is growing stronger.

Three years ago, there was a lot of talk about education reform, but the truth of the matter is, in Washington, there was not much action. So I acted. I called for and the Congress passed the No Child Left Behind Act. With a solid bipartisan majority, we delivered the most dramatic education reforms in a generation.

See, we believe in high standards. We're going to challenge the soft bigotry of low expectations. We believe every child can learn to read and write and add and subtract, and we expect every child to learn to read and write and add and subtract. We've increased the education budgets for Title I students. But for the first time, now the Federal Government is saying, ''Show us some results.'' For the first time, we're saying the days of excusemaking are over. We expect results in every classroom so not one single child is left behind.

We reorganized our Government and created the Department of Homeland Security to better safeguard our ports and borders and better secure the American people. We passed trade promotion authority to open up markets for Florida's farmers and ranchers and entrepreneurs. We passed budget agreements to maintain much-needed spending discipline in Washington, DC. On issue after issue, this administration has acted on principle, has kept its word, and has made progress for the American people.

The Congress gets a lot of credit for the progress we've made. I want to thank the Speaker, Denny Hastert, and Majority Leader Bill Frist for providing strong leadership. I want to thank the Members who are here. And you've got a great delegation from Florida with whom I've been able to work. I want to thank them for their hard work. See, what we're trying to do is to change the tone in Washington, DC. We're trying to get rid of all the needless politics and focus on the people's business, focus on results, and not the ugly process that sometimes takes on. We're making good progress. We really are.

And one of the reasons why this administration has been successful is because I've called upon people from all walks of life, people like Mel Martinez, to join our Government. I have put together a fantastic administration for the American people. Our country has had no finer Vice President than Dick Cheney.

Audience member. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Okay, I agree. Mother may have a second opinion. [*Laughter*]

In 3 years, we've come far, we've done a lot. But our work is only beginning. I've set great goals worthy of a great nation. First, America is committed to expanding the realm of freedom and peace for our own security and for the benefit of the world. And second, in our own country, we must work for a society of prosperity and compassion so that every citizen has a chance to work and to succeed and realize the great promise of America.

It is clear that the future of freedom and peace depend on the actions of America. This Nation is freedom's home and freedom's defender. We welcome this charge of history, and we are keeping it. The war on terror continues. The enemies of freedom are not idle, and neither are we. This country will not rest; we will not tire; we will not stop until this danger to civilization is removed.

We are confronting that danger in Iraq, the latest front in the war on terror. We're

confronting that danger where Saddam holdouts and foreign terrorists are desperately trying to throw Iraq into chaos by attacking coalition forces and international aid workers and innocent Iraqi citizens. They know that the advance of freedom in Iraq would be a major defeat for the cause of terror. This collection of killers is trying to shake the will of America. America will not be intimidated.

We're aggressively striking the terrorists in Iraq, defeating them there so we will not have to face them in our own country. We're calling for other nations to help. You see, a free Iraq will make the whole world more secure. We're standing with the Iraqi people as they assume more of their own defense and as they move toward self-government.

These are not easy tasks, but they are essential tasks. We will finish what we have begun, and we will win this essential victory in the war on terror. Our greatest security comes from the advance of human liberty, because free nations do not support terror, free nations do not attack their neighbors, free nations do not threaten the world with weapons of mass terror.

Americans believe that freedom is the deepest need and hope of every human heart. I believe that freedom is the future of every nation. And I know that freedom is not America's gift to the world; freedom is God's gift to every man and women who lives in the world.

We understand that unprecedented influence brings tremendous responsibilities. We have duties in this world, and when we see disease and starvation and hopeless poverty, we will not turn away. On the continent of Africa, America is leading the world. We are committed to bringing the healing power, the healing power of medicine to millions of men and women and children suffering with AIDS. This mighty, strong, powerful Nation is a compassionate nation. And I'm proud to say, we're doing everything we can in the important work of human rescue.

We've got challenges here at home, and we'll be equal to the challenges. We'll continue to push a pro-growth environment. I want people working. We'll continue to work on our economy until everybody who wants to work and is not working today can find a job.

We have a duty to keep our commitment to America's seniors by strengthening and modernizing Medicare. After years of debate and delay and deadlock, the Congress is nearing final passage of the biggest improvements in senior health care in nearly 40 years. We're on the verge of giving our seniors prescription drug coverage, expanded coverage for preventive medicine and therapies, more health care choices. Members of Congress have supported these Medicare reforms with their words. Now it is time to support these reforms with their votes. The House and the Senate must quickly reconcile their differences and send me a bill. We need to give our seniors a modern Medicare system before the year is out.

And for the sake of our health care system, we need to cut down on the frivolous lawsuits which increase the cost of medicine. I appreciate Jeb's leadership on this important issue, and it's an important issue. If you've been harmed by a bad doctor, you deserve your day in court. Systems shouldn't reward lawyers who are simply fishing for a rich settlement. Jeb's taken on this issue, and so have I. And the reason I have is because frivolous lawsuits drive up the cost of health care, and they therefore affect the Federal budget. Medical liability reform is a national issue that requires a national solution.

I put out a good proposal. It was passed by the House of Representatives. It is stuck in the United States Senate. It is important for those Senators who are preventing this bill from going forward to understand that nobody has ever been healed by a frivolous lawsuit.

I have a responsibility as the President to make sure the judicial system runs well, and I met that duty. I've nominated superb men and women for the Federal courts, people who will interpret the law, not legislate from the bench. Today I met with three superb women in the Oval Office before I got on the airplane to come to Florida, three fantastic nominees, people who will represent their judiciary with class and distinction and integrity. Yet, their nominations are being held up. They can't get a vote on the floor. I call upon the Florida Senators to let these three women get a vote on the floor of the

United States Senate. Every nominee deserves a fair hearing and an up-or-down vote. It's time for Members of the United States Senate to stop playing politics with American justice.

This country needs a comprehensive energy plan. We must promote energy efficiency and conservation and develop clean technologies to help us explore in environmentally sensible ways for energy. For the sake of economic security and for the sake of national security, this Nation must become less dependent on foreign sources of energy. They passed a bill out of the House. They passed a bill out of the Senate. They need to reconcile their differences and get the energy plan to my desk before they go home this Christmas.

A strong and prosperous nation must also be a compassionate nation. I'm going to continue to advance our agenda of compassionate conservatism, which means we will apply the most effective, innovative techniques and ideas to help fellow citizens who hurt. There's still a lot of people in our country, millions of men and women who want to end their dependence on Government and become independent through hard work. We've got a bill on the success of welfare reform to bring work and dignity into the lives of more of our citizens.

Congress needs to complete the ''Citizen Service Act'' so that more Americans can serve their communities and their country. Both Houses should reach agreement on my Faith-Based Initiative to support the armies of compassion, the soldiers of which are mentoring children, caring for the homeless, offering hope to the addicted. Government can hand out money, but it cannot put hope in people's hearts. This country is strong because we're a country of all faiths, we welcome all faiths. And our Government should not fear the positive influence of faith when it comes to the help of healing broken hearts.

A compassionate society must promote opportunity for all, including the independence and dignity that come from owning something, from ownership. This administration will constantly strive to promote an ownership society in America. We want more people owning their own home. There is a minority homeownership gap in America that must be closed. Mel and I have developed a plan to close that gap. I've submitted elements of the plan to the United States Congress.

We want more people owning and managing their own health care plans. We want more people owning and managing their own retirement accounts. We want more people owning their own small business. This administration understands that when a person owns something, he or she has a vital stake in the future of our country.

A compassionate society—in a compassionate society, people respect one another, and they take responsibility for the decisions they make in life. The culture of America is changing from one that has said, ''If it feels good, do it,'' and ''If you've got a problem, blame somebody else,'' to a culture in which each of us understands we're responsible for the decisions we make in life. If you're fortunate enough to be a mom or a dad, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart. If you're worried about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you're responsible for doing something about it. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you're responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And in a responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourself.

I said the culture is changing, and the culture of service is growing. I started what's called the USA Freedom Corps to give Americans a chance to participate in making their communities and cities and neighborhoods better, and the response has been fantastic. Our charities are strong. Neighborhood healers are active all across America. Our policemen and firefighters and people who wear our Nation's uniform remind us on a daily basis what it means to sacrifice for something greater than yourself. Once again, the children of America believe in heroes, because they see them every day.

In these challenging times, the world has seen the resolve and the courage of the American people. I've been privileged to see the compassion and character of the American people. All the tests of the last years have come to the right Nation. We're a strong country, and we use our strength to

defend the peace. We're an optimistic country, confident in ourselves and in ideals bigger than ourselves.

Abroad, we seek to lift whole nations by spreading freedom. At home, we seek to lift up lives by spreading opportunity to every corner of America. This is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it, and we know that for our country, the best days lie ahead.

May God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:09 p.m. at Disney's Grand Floridian Resort and Spa. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida; Tom Petway III and Zach Zachariah, Florida State finance cochairmen, Bush-Cheney '04, Inc.; and Tom Gallagher, chief financial officer, Florida Department of Financial Services. He also referred to Title I of the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 (Public Law No. 103–382), which amended Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (Public Law No. 89–10).

Remarks at the Engelwood Neighborhood Center in Orlando

November 13, 2003

Thanks for coming. Thanks for the warm welcome. I want to thank the Engelwood Neighborhood Center for hosting us. [*Applause*] You're awfully kind to have us. Behave yourself. [*Laughter*] I wish I had time for a workout. I saw your facilities. [*Laughter*] One good way to help people maintain their health is to encourage people to exercise. And I want to thank those of you who are encouraging people of all ages to get a little exercise on a daily basis. The best way to make sure your health is strong is to prevent disease in the first place. Nothing like going out for a good stroll to keep yourself healthy.

I also want to thank our friends in my administration and the seniors who are participating in the discussions in Denver, Philadelphia, Phoenix, Cleveland, and Dallas. I notice that Surgeon General Carmona is hosting an event on the SMU campus. That kind of warms my heart, because First Lady Laura Bush went to SMU. I don't know if they still remember her there—[*laughter*]—but I certainly remember her here. [*Laughter*] And she sends her very best.

I want to thank you all for being here at what I would call an historic time when it comes to the health of our seniors, because I believe, with hard work and the right focus and with your help, we can reform Medicare. We can reform Medicare for the benefit of people who are on Medicare, and we can reform Medicare for those of us who are soon to be on Medicare. We have an obligation in this country. After years of debate and deadlock and delay, both Houses of Congress are nearing final passage of the biggest improvements in senior health care in 40 years. We're on the verge of giving seniors prescription drug coverage, expanded coverage for preventative maintenance medicine and therapy, and more health care choices.

Members of Congress say they support these Medicare reforms. Now it's time for a final vote. Members of Congress must resolve their remaining differences. The House and the Senate must resolve their differences and get a bill to me. For the sake of America's seniors, I call on the United States Congress to get the job done.

I appreciate Josefina's service to our Nation. As you know, she's the Assistant Secretary for Aging, U.S. Department of Health. Her boss, Tommy Thompson, a former Governor of Wisconsin, Cabinet Secretary, is now—has been on the Hill today working out the differences between the House and the Senate. He is intricately involved in making sure we get us a good Medicare bill.

I want to thank my brother, the Governor of this great State, who cares. He's got the right priorities. I know his priorities because we were both raised by the same mother. [*Laughter*] By the way, she wants there to be a modern Medicare system. [*Laughter*] But Jeb prioritizes his faith and his family and the people of Florida. He cares deeply about the people here. I'm proud of his leadership. They may say I'm not very objective, but he's a great Governor.

I'm honored that five distinguished Members of the United States House of Representatives have joined us here for this discussion. They are people who are going to help make the decision. I view them as allies in this important issue as well as allies in