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September 11

Q. Mr. President, some firefighters and families of the 9/11 victims—of the 9/11 victims want you to pull your campaign ad focusing on the tragedy. Are you prepared to honor their wishes?

President Bush. First of all, I will continue to speak about the effects of 9/11 on our country and my Presidency. I will continue to mourn the loss of life on that day, but I'll never forget the lessons. The terrorists declared war on us on that day, and I will continue to pursue this war. I have an obligation to those who died. I have an obligation to those who were heroic in their attempts to rescue, and I won't forget that obligation.

How this administration handled that day as well as the war on terror is worthy of discussion. And I look forward to discussing that with the American people. And I look forward to the debate about who best to lead this country in the war on terror.

Por fin.

Immigration Policy

[*A question was asked in Spanish.*]

President Bush. *Vamos a ver. Vamos a ver.* Go ahead, want to translate? To make sure I got all of it.

Interpreter. The question is on the immigration policy. The Government of Mexico wanted to know what the date certain would be for this new program or what proposals you have for temporary immigrants, and how do you believe it will affect the upcoming election process?

President Bush. Well, we just—the President just discussed the border crossing cards, the issue of the border crossing cards, and he discussed the professional visas. And so we're making progress.

I put forth what I think is a very reasonable proposal and a humane proposal, one that is not amnesty but in fact recognizes that there are good, honorable, hard-working people here doing jobs Americans won't do. And I certainly hope the Congress takes this issue up. But there's no telling what's going to happen in an election year, so it's very difficult to give a date. The date that matters to me is the date in which I laid out what I think is a reasonable plan, which was in January.

Mr. President, thank you.

President Fox. *Gracias.*

President Bush. Thank you all. Enjoy the rest of your day.

Attorney General Ashcroft

Q. Any word on John Ashcroft?

President Bush. I talked to him last night.

Q. How is he?

President Bush. He sounded groggy but optimistic that they'd get the pancreas settled down.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 11 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to White House Press Secretary Scott McClellan. President Fox spoke in Spanish and some reporters asked their questions in Spanish, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks at a Bush-Cheney Luncheon in Dallas, Texas

March 8, 2004

Thank you all very much. Thanks for coming. I told Louis I like a short introduction. [*Laughter*] He didn't let me down. I'm glad you all are here. Nothing like spending the weekend in Texas, and there's nothing better than being with a bunch of friends. I'm so pleased that you all came. Thanks for being here. If you can't count on your home State in politics, you're in deep trouble.

Texas is going to be the cornerstone of the victory that Dick Cheney and I are going to achieve in November of 2004. And I appreciate so very much your loyal friendship. It just means a lot to Laura and me. Speaking about Laura, she is in New Orleans. She's eating lunch at Galatoire's, and you're stuck with me. [*Laughter*] But she's doing great. She's a fabulous First Lady.

And Dick Cheney is a great Vice President. I'm proud to have him standing by my side. I oftentimes say Dick Cheney is the country's greatest Vice President ever. Mother says, "Wait a second." [*Laughter*]

I appreciate my friend Louis Beecherl. He's been a longtime friend, and you can count on Louis. And Louis, I want to thank

you for being the Dallas regional finance chair.

I'm honored to be on the stage with a man who's doing a fabulous job as the Governor of the great State of Texas, Rick Perry.

Texas is blessed to have two really good, fantastic United States Senators in Kay Bailey Hutchison and John Cornyn. I'm proud to call them friends. Thank you all for coming.

I want to thank Fred Meyer and Jeanne Johnson Phillips and Roger Williams and all the regional chairs and all the people who worked hard to fill up this hall. Thank you for your hard work. I want to thank my friend Mercer Reynolds from Cincinnati, Ohio, who is the national chairman for Bush-Cheney '04. He's doing a really good job.

I want to thank the Members of the United States Congress who are here, starting with Ralph Hall. Ralph, I'm for you in tomorrow's primary. I wish you all the very best. Thank you. Glad you're here.

Chairman Joe Barton is with us. Joe, thanks for coming. I'm proud you're here. Appreciate you coming. Sam Johnson is with us today. Sam, thanks for coming. Good to see Shirley. I appreciate Pete Sessions. I'm glad you're here, Pete. Pete has got a big race. I'm pulling for him. Got to make sure you turn out to vote for this good Congressman.

I appreciate Michael Burgess being here as well. Michael, thank you for coming. Finally, a man who is making a mark as a good freshman Congressman, Jeb Hensarling. I appreciate you coming, Jeb.

I saw my friend Agricultural Commissioner Susan Combs. Thank you for being here. I know Victor Carrillo is with us today, railroad commissioner. Good to see you, Victor. Michael Williams is with us. Mike, good to see you. One time I was Michael's campaign chairman in the Republican primary in Midland County and helped him come in third. [*Laughter*] He got rid of me as his campaign chairman, and now he's doing big things statewide in the State of Texas. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank very much the speaker of the house who is with us today, Tommy Craddick, from Midland. Where are you, Tommy? Thanks for coming. You're doing a fine job. All the members of the house and senate who are here, local officials.

But most importantly, I want to thank the grassroots activists. I want to thank you for what you're fixing to do, which is man those phones, put up the signs, and turn out a huge vote. We're counting on you.

Finally, it's good to see my friend Jack Graham, who is with us, the pastor of Prestonwood Baptist Church. I want to thank Jack for delivering the invocation. I want to thank you all for your prayers. It means a lot to Laura and me. It's a fantastic gift to give to anybody in public office, and for that, we're really grateful.

Last Tuesday, I placed a call to Senator Kerry. I congratulated him on his victory, and I told him I was looking forward to a spirited campaign. It's going to be an interesting debate on the issues. My opponent spent two decades in Congress. He spent a long time in Washington, and he's built up quite a record. Senator Kerry has been in Washington so long that he's taken both sides on just about every issue. [*Laughter*] Senator Kerry voted for the PATRIOT Act, for NAFTA, for the No Child Left Behind Act, and for the use of force in Iraq. Now he opposes the PATRIOT Act, NAFTA, the No Child Left Behind Act, and the liberation of Iraq. My opponent clearly has strong beliefs. They just don't last very long. [*Laughter*]

The voters have a very clear choice in this election between keeping the tax relief that is moving this economy forward or putting the burden of higher taxes back on the American people, a clear choice between an America that leads the world with strength and confidence or an America that is uncertain in the face of danger.

I look forward to setting the alternative squarely before the American people. I look forward to this campaign. I look forward to make my case to the great people of this land. We've achieved great things in the past 3 years. Most important, we have a positive vision, an optimistic vision for the years ahead, a positive vision for winning the war against terror and extending peace and freedom throughout our world, a positive vision for creating jobs and promoting opportunity and compassion at home. I will leave no doubt

where we stand, and we will win on the 2d of November.

The last 3 years have brought serious challenges, and we've given serious answers. We came to office with a stock market in decline and an economy heading into recession. We delivered historic tax relief, and now our economy is the fastest growing of any major industrialized nation.

We had to confront corporate crimes that cost people their jobs and their savings, so we passed strong corporate reforms and made it clear we will not tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America.

We saw war and grief arrive on a quiet September morning, so we pursue the terrorist enemy across the world. We've captured or killed many key leaders of the Al Qaida network, and the rest of them will learn there is no cave or hole deep enough to hide from American justice.

We confronted the dangers of state-sponsored terror and the spread of weapons of mass destruction, so we ended two of the most violent and dangerous regimes on Earth. We freed over 50 million people. And once again, America is proud to lead the armies of liberation.

When Dick Cheney and I came to Washington, we found a military that was underfunded and underappreciated, so we gave our military the resources and respect they deserve. And today, no one in the world can question the skill and the strength and the spirit of the United States military.

When we came to office, people had gotten used to gridlock, and old problems were used to score points. Old problems were politicized and debated and then just passed on from year to year. We came to Washington to get some things done for the people. We passed major reforms to raise the standards in public schools. We passed reforms in Medicare to get prescription drugs and choices to our seniors. We chose to lead, and we have delivered results for the American people.

It is the President's job to confront problems, not to pass them on to future Presidents and future generations. The President needs to step up and make the hard decisions and keep his commitments. And that is how I will continue to lead our country.

Great events will turn on this election. The man who sits in the Oval Office will set the course of the war on terror and the direction of our economy. The security and prosperity of America are at stake. My opponent hasn't offered much in the way of strategies to win the war or policies to expand our economy. So far all we hear from that side is a lot of old bitterness and partisan anger. Soon he'll learn, anger is not an agenda for America. I will confront the big issues with optimism and resolve and determination, and Dick Cheney and I stand ready to lead this Nation for 4 more years.

A big issue for every family in America is the Federal tax burden. With the largest tax relief since Ronald Reagan was the President, we have left more money in the hands that earned it. By spending and investing and helping to create new jobs, the American people have used their money far better than the Government would have.

Because we acted, our economy is growing stronger. The economy grew in the second half of 2003 at the fastest rate in nearly 20 years. Productivity is high. Business investment is rising. Interest rates and inflation are low. Homeownership is at the highest rate ever. Manufacturing is increasing. We've added more than 350,000 new jobs over the last 6 months. The tax relief we passed is working.

My opponent has plans for those tax cuts. He wants to take them away. He would use that money to expand the size and the reach of the Federal Government. I've got a better idea: To keep the economy growing and to create jobs, the tax cuts must be permanent.

We must do more to keep this economy growing so people can find work. We need to maintain fiscal discipline in Washington, DC. We need to protect small-business owners and employees from the frivolous and junk lawsuits that make it expensive to do business. We need to help control the cost of health care by association health care plans, health savings accounts, and this Congress must pass national medical liability reform. We need to open up markets for Texas farmers and ranchers and entrepreneurs and manufacturers. We need to pass sound energy legislation to modernize our electricity

system and to make this country less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

My opponent talks about job creation, but he is against every one of these job-creating measures. Empty talk about jobs and economic isolationism won't get anyone hired. The way to create jobs is our pro-growth, pro-entrepreneur economic agenda.

This economy of ours is going through a time of challenge and change. We're helping people to gain the skills and security to make a good living, to look forward to a good retirement. All skills start with education. That's why I worked so hard with Congress to pass the No Child Left Behind Act. This good law is challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations. We've raised the standards. We're demanding accountability in every public school in America. We expect every child in this country to learn to read and write and add and subtract so not one single child gets left behind.

There's more to do. I look forward to working with Congress. We must help high school students who fall behind in reading and math. We've got plans to help our community colleges train workers for the industries that are creating most new jobs. Education is the gateway to a hopeful future, and this administration clearly understands that gate must be open to all Americans.

We're working toward an ownership society in this administration in which more people own their own homes and build their own savings. That's what we want. We want more people owning their own small businesses. We want people to own and manage their health care plans. We want younger workers to own and manage their retirement under Social Security. When people have solid assets, they gain independence and security and more control over their future. I believe in private property so much, I want everyone in America to have some.

On issue after issue, there is a clear choice. My opponent is against personal retirement accounts, against putting patients in charge of Medicare, against tax relief. He seems to be against every idea that gives Americans more authority, more choices, and more control over our own lives. It's the same old Washington mindset: They'll give you the orders, and you will pay the bills. I've got news for the Washington crowd. America has gone beyond that way of thinking, and we're not going back.

Our future also depends on America's leadership in the world. The momentum of freedom in our time is strong, but we still face serious challenges. Al Qaida is wounded but not broken. Terrorists are testing our will in Afghanistan and Iraq. Regimes in North Korea and Iran are challenging the peace. If America shows weakness and uncertainty in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This will not happen on my watch.

This Nation is strong and confident in the cause of freedom. And today, no friend or enemy doubts the word of the United States. America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Afghanistan. The Taliban chose defiance, and the Taliban are no longer in power. America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Iraq. The dictator chose defiance, and now the dictator sits in a prison cell.

September the 11th, 2001, taught a lesson I will never forget: America must confront threats before they fully materialize. In Iraq, my administration looked at the intelligence information, and we saw a threat. The Congress looked at the intelligence, and they saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence, and it saw a threat. The previous administration and Congress looked at the intelligence and made regime change in Iraq the policy of our country.

In 2002, the United Nations Security Council yet again demanded a full accounting of Saddam Hussein's weapons programs. As he had for over a decade, Saddam Hussein refused to comply. So we had a choice to make—I had a choice to make—either to take the word of a madman or take action to defend our country. Faced with that choice, I will defend America every time.

My opponent admits that Saddam Hussein was a threat, he just didn't support my decision to remove Saddam from power. Maybe he was hoping Saddam would lose the next Iraqi election. [*Laughter*] We showed the dictator and a watching world that America means what it says. Because our coalition acted, Saddam's torture chambers are closed. Because we acted, Iraq's weapons programs

are ended forever. Because we acted, nations like Libya have gotten the message and renounced their own weapons programs. Because we acted, an example of democracy is rising in the very heart of the Middle East. Because we acted, the world is more safe and America is more secure.

We still face thugs and terrorists in Iraq who would rather go on killing the innocent than accept the advance of liberty. They know that a free Iraq will be a major defeat for the cause of terror. A collection of killers is trying to shake our will. They don't understand America. America will never be intimidated by thugs and assassins.

We are aggressively striking the terrorists in Iraq, defeating them there so we will not have to face them in our own country. We're calling on other nations to help Iraq to build a free society, which will make the world more secure. We're standing with the Iraqi people as they assume more of their own defense and move towards self-government. These aren't 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.

On national security, Americans have the clearest possible choice. My opponent says he approves of bold action in the world but only if other countries don't object. I'm for all—I'm all for united action, and so are the 34 coalition partners we have in Iraq right now. America must never outsource America's national security decisions to the leaders of other countries.

Some are skeptical that the war on terror is really a war at all. Just days ago my opponent indicated he's not comfortable using the word ''war'' to describe the struggle we're in. He said, ''I don't want to use that terminology.'' He also said the war on terror is far less of a military operation and far more of an intelligence-gathering, law enforcement operation. I disagree. Our Nation followed that approach after the World Trade Center was bombed in 1993. The matter was handled in the courts and thought by some to be settled. But the terrorists were still training in Afghanistan, plotting in other nations, and drawing up more ambitious plans. And after the chaos and carnage of September the 11th, it is not enough to serve our enemies with legal papers. With those attacks, the terrorists and their supporters declared war on the United States of America, and war is what they got.

One very important part of this war is intelligence gathering, as Senator Kerry noted. Yet in 1995, 2 years after the attack on the World Trade Center, my opponent introduced a bill to cut the overall intelligence budget by $1½ billion. His bill was so deeply irresponsible that he didn't have a single cosponsor in the United States Senate. Once again, Senator Kerry is trying to have it both ways. He's for good intelligence, yet he was willing to gut the intelligence services. And that is no way to lead a nation in a time of war.

Our intelligence professionals are taking great risks and doing a great job. And so are the men and women of the United States military. At bases across our country and the world, I have had the privilege of meeting with those who defend our country and sacrifice for our security. I've seen the great decency and their unselfish courage. I assure you, ladies and gentlemen, the cause of freedom is in good hands.

This Nation is prosperous and strong, yet we need to remember that our greatest strength is in the hearts and souls of our citizens. We're strong because of the values we try to live by, courage and compassion, reverence and integrity. We're strong because of the institutions that help give us direction and purpose, families and schools and religious congregations. These values and institutions are fundamental to our lives. They deserve the respect of our Government. We stand for fair treatment of faith-based groups so they can receive Federal support for their works of compassion and healing. We will not stand for Government discrimination of people of faith.

We stand for welfare reforms that require work and strengthen marriage, reforms which have helped millions of Americans find independence and dignity. We will not stand for any attempt to weaken those reforms and to send people back into lives of dependence.

We stand for a culture of life in which every person counts and every person matters. We will not stand for the treatment of

any life as a commodity to be experimented upon, exploited, or cloned.

We stand for the confirmation of judges who strictly and faithfully interpret the law. We will not stand for judges who undermine democracy by legislating from the bench and try to remake the culture of America by court order.

We stand for a culture of responsibility in America. We're changing the culture of this country 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 are responsible for the decisions we make. If you're fortunate enough to be a mother or a father, 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 this new responsibility culture, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourself.

For all Americans, these years in our history will always stand apart. There are quiet times in the life of a nation when little is expected of leaders. This is not one of those times. You and I are living in a period when the stakes are high, when the challenges are difficult, when the choices are clear, a time when resolve is needed.

None of us will ever forget that week when one era ended and another began. September the 14th, 2001, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers. I'll never forget that day. Workers in hardhats were shouting, ''Whatever it takes.'' One man pointed at me and said, ''Don't let me down.'' As we all did that day, these men and women searching through the rubble took it personally. I took it personally. I have a responsibility that goes on. I will never relent in bringing justice to our enemies. I will defend the security of America, whatever it takes.

In these times, I've also been a witness to the character of this Nation. Not so long ago, some had their doubts about the American character, our capacity to meet serious challenges or to serve a cause greater than self-interest. But Americans have given their answer. I've seen the unselfish courage of our troops. I've seen the heroism of Americans in the face of danger. I've seen the spirit of service and compassion renewed in our country. We've all seen our Nation unite in common purpose when it mattered most.

We will need all these qualities for the work ahead. We have a war to win, and the world is counting on us to lead the cause of freedom and peace. We have a duty to spread opportunity to every corner of America. This is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it, and we know, for our country, the best days lie ahead.

May God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:03 p.m. at the Fairmont Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Louis A. Beecherl, Jr., Dallas regional finance chairman, Jeanne Johnson Phillips, Texas State finance vice chairman, J. Roger Williams, north Texas regional finance chairman, and Mercer Reynolds, national finance chairman, Bush-Cheney '04, Inc.; Gov. Rick Perry of Texas; Fred Meyer, chairman, Republican National Committee Presidential Victory Team; Shirley L. Johnson, wife of Representative Sam Johnson of Texas; Susan Combs, commissioner, Texas Department of Agriculture; Victor G. Carrillo, chairman, and Michael L. Williams, commissioner, Railroad Commission of Texas; Tom Craddick, speaker, Texas House of Representatives; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Remarks at a Bush-Cheney Reception in Houston, Texas

March 8, 2004

Thank you all. Go ahead and be seated—[*laughter*]—unless you don't have a seat. Thanks for a great Houston welcome. I'm so glad to be back home. Nothing like a weekend in Texas to kind of refresh the soul. By the way, if you see 41, tell him I was asking about him—[*laughter*]—or Mother, over there at the Rice Epicurean. [*Laughter*] I do want to thank you all for being so kind to Mother and Dad. They love Houston. They love the citizens of Houston. They're proud to call this place home, just like I'm proud to call Texas home.

I'm feeling pretty good about my chances in Texas. [*Laughter*] But I'm not going to take anything for granted. With your help,