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acts of courage and kindness that have followed. Together, Americans are moving forward with confidence and faith. We do not know God's plan, but we know His ways are right and just. And we pray He will always watch over this great country of ours.

I want to thank you for the chance to speak to this distinguished convention. May God bless you all, and may God continue to bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke by satellite at 10:42 a.m. from the Map Room at the White House to the convention meeting in Colorado Springs, CO. In his remarks, he referred to Ted Haggard, president, National Association of Evangelicals.

## Remarks on Departure for Bay Shore, New York

*March 11, 2004*

### *Terrorist Attack in Spain*

Today I spoke to His Majesty the King of Spain—Jose Maria Aznar as well—about our country's deepest sympathies toward those who lost their life as a result of terrorist bombings in Spain. I told him we weep with the families. We stand strongly with the people of Spain. I appreciate so very much the Spanish Government's fight against terror, their resolute stand against terrorist organizations like the ETA. The United States stands with them. Today we ask God's blessings on those who suffer in the great country of Spain.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:51 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to King Juan Carlos I and President Jose Maria Aznar of Spain; and Basque Fatherland and Liberty (ETA).

## Remarks in a Discussion on the National Economy in Bay Shore, New York

*March 11, 2004*

***The President.*** Thanks for having me.

***Vincent Trapani.*** Any time, any time. You can make the call; we're here.

***The President.*** I've been looking for some auto parts.

***Mr. Trapani.*** I can hook you up real easy.

***The President.*** That's good, yes.

***Mr. Trapani.*** I know a guy. [*Laughter*]

***The President.*** You know a guy? Here's what we're—we're here to talk about how the economy works and how people can find work. We've got some challenges to face. And Vince, I want to thank you for giving me the chance to come and visit with people involved in this community. We've got some entrepreneurs, and we've got some hard workers, and we've got some educators and people helping people get education. And that's what we're going to talk about.

First, I want to thank you, Vince, and your family for greeting me. Nothing like being in the presence of an entrepreneur, somebody who dreams big dreams, works hard, and ends up employing good, hard-working people to provide a product somebody wants to buy.

***Mr. Trapani.*** That's the American Dream.

***The President.*** That is the American Dream. I said, "Did you buy this company?" He said, "No, I started it on a shoestring." And it's one of the most fantastic aspects about our society, and frankly, it's the entrepreneurial spirit that we're heralding today that is enabling us to overcome a lot of obstacles.

Before I talk about the obstacles, I do want to say thanks to my friend Governor George Pataki, the great Governor of this State. He's a great buddy of mine, and he and Libby are great friends of Laura and me as well. And he's doing a good job. He's a solid, solid, smart, capable public servant.

I also flew down on the airplane today with two fine Members of the United States Congress—Peter King, from this part of the world. Peter, thank you for coming. If he looks different, he just had some cataract surgery so he doesn't wear his glasses anymore. I said, "You're looking more beautiful than ever, Congressman." [*Laughter*] And I appreciate my friend Vito Fossella is with us today. Where are you, Vito? Glad you're here. These are two strong leaders. They care deeply about the citizens of the communities which they represent. They were talking New York the entire way from Washington, DC,

to here, and I appreciate calling them friends.

I'm also proud that Jim Garner, the mayor of Hempstead—thank you for coming, big Jim. Jim, he's the president of the U.S. Conference of Mayors. That's a big deal. And I want to thank you for working with the administration on urban policy.

I appreciate very much all the local and State officials who are here. I know there's a lot of members of the statehouse and the senate and the local governments. I appreciate you coming out to say hello. It's an honor that you would show up and say hi to the President.

I'm also very proud of the fact that John DiGiano is here. Where are you, John? He's a buddy of mine. There you are. Hi, John. Is Mama with you—is your wife with you? There she is, oh, yes. John is just a good buddy. I had to say hello to him. He's a friend. He's one of the great Americans, and he's the dad of a great American family. And I'm proud you came, John. Thank you all for being here.

Today at the airport, I met Rich McKeon. You probably never heard of Rich. Rich is a volunteer. He's a mentor. He's involved with Operation Hope, teaches youngsters about the—financial math, about how the economy works. He's been a member of Big Brothers and Big Sisters. The reason I bring up Rich is because a lot of times we talk about the strength of our country. One of the strengths, of course, is our military, and by the way, I'm going to keep it strong. Another strength is the fact that we've got—that we're a wealthy nation compared to others, and we intend to keep it that way. But the true strength is the hearts and souls of our citizens. That's really the strength of America.

The strength of this country—you know, we can change the country one heart at a time when somebody takes time out of their lives to love a neighbor like you'd like to be loved yourself. And that happens. That happens in every neighborhood in America. It happens whether Government says, ''Do it,'' or not. People follow their heart because they hear a higher calling.

Here's old Rich. He's working to make a living, and yet he's taking time out of his life to surround a child with love and to give a child a little extra knowledge. Where are you, Rich? Thank you for coming. I appreciate your service.

My call is if you want to serve your country like Rich is, find a way to help somebody in need. Many of you probably are, and if you are, thanks a lot from the bottom of this Nation's collective heart.

Listen, we've overcome a lot. See, I'm sitting here next to Vince, and he's optimistic about the future. He just told me he was. And I don't think you were faking——

***Mr. Trapani.*** There's no question about that.

***The President.*** See——

***Mr. Trapani.*** We live in a great country.

***The President.*** Well, that too. And—but I want you to remember what we've been through, just to keep this conversation in perspective, about why we should be optimistic about what this—the future of this country.

First of all, we went through a recession. That means things were going backwards. The stock market started to decline—that affects people who had savings—in March of 2000. And then we had negative growth. And during negative growth, people who work for a living begin to wonder whether or not there's going to be a job. That's what that means. There's uncertainty. Business leaders and planners wonder whether or not the markets are going to be available for them to sell a product.

And we started to recover, and then the enemy hit us. And you know what it meant to have the enemy hit us, particularly in neighborhoods like these. John knows what it meant to have the enemy hit us. It was a devastating blow. It was a blow to our psychology. It was a blow to our economy.

By the way, this Nation rallied. It rallied, in large part, thanks to the citizens of the great State of New York, because they refused to be intimidated by terrorists and killers. It rallied because of the courage of the firefighters and police officers that people all around the country got to know via their television set. That's—it rallied. We're a strong nation.

And yet, that attack hurt us. It hurt us economically. They say over a million jobs were

lost because of that attack. And then we started to recover, because we're a strong nation full of strong people. And then we found out some of the corporate citizens of America forgot what it meant to be a responsible citizen. In other words, they didn't tell the truth. They didn't tell the truth to their shareholders. They didn't tell the truth to their employees. But we passed tough laws. And by the way, that hurt the economy. If you can't have trust in the business leaders of an economy, the economy will suffer. It hurt. And so we passed tough laws. And so we're running them—these people are being held to account, let me put it to you that way. Justice is being delivered. We will not tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America.

And then I made a tough but necessary decision. The lesson of September 11th is this: We must deal with threats before they fully materialize. If you think there's a threat, you must deal with it early, before it is too late. That's the lesson of September the 11th. It's a lesson people must never forget.

I looked at the intelligence in Iraq and saw a threat. The United States Congress looked at the same intelligence; they saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council, right up the road there, looked at the intelligence, and it saw a threat. And so I went to the U.N. and said, ''Look, let's deal with the man. He needs to reveal, disclose, and destroy weapons programs. That's what he needs to do.'' The world spoke, not just the United States of America. We spoke. He chose defiance. I had a choice to make at that point in time: Either trust the word of somebody who had deceived the world and had used weapons of mass destruction on his own people, or defend America. And given that choice, I will defend our country every time.

The march to war hurt the economy. Laura reminded me a while ago that—she said, ''Remember what was on the TV screens''—she calls me George W.—''George W.'' I call her First Lady. No, anyway—[*laughter*]. She said, ''We said 'March to War' on our TV screens.'' It's hard to run a business if you're marching to war. It's not conducive to capital investment. Marching to war is a negative thought, and if you're in the business world and you're trying to hire people or you're looking for work, it's not a conducive time to do so. Now we're marching to peace. We took the tough decision, but now we're marching to peace. We've overcome a lot, and our economy is growing.

We've got robust growth in the last half of 2003. Inflation is low. Interest rates are low. Manufacturing activity is up. Homeownership is at the highest rate ever. Unemployment rate is at 5.6 percent. There's still more to do; don't get me wrong. There's still people looking for work. There's still people worried about the job they now hold. And I'm going to talk a little bit about that before we get to some of our participants.

But let me remind you why I think we were able to overcome all we did. One, the entrepreneurial spirit is strong in America, and we intend to keep it that way. Two, the workers of America are the best in the world, the most productive, best, hardest working people on the face of the Earth. And three, we cut the taxes. If a family has more money to spend, it means they're going to demand an additional good or a service. And when they do, somebody is going to produce the good or a service. And when somebody produces it, somebody is going to work. That's what that means. When somebody goes and buys a car because of the extra money they've got in their pocket, they just might be buying a part for that car right from this shop right here. At least Vince wants them to.

***Mr. Trapani.*** That's okay by me.

***The President.*** And if they buy a part for the car manufactured here, it means that this workforce is more stable. That's what that means. Tax relief worked.

And you hear a lot of talk in Washington about tax relief and taxing the rich and all that business. Let me tell you something. First, good policy says you cut the taxes on everybody who pays taxes, not try to pick and choose. Secondly, we increased the child credit to $1,000 per child to help families, and you're going to hear about some families who have been helped by this. The other thing we did is we reduced the marriage penalty. I mean, it doesn't seem to make much sense to penalize marriage when you're trying to encourage marriage in our society, yet the Tax Code did. And we made that better.

But you know what else we did—and this is important for people to understand when you hear this talk about the Tax Code. When you cut the taxes on individuals, you really reduce the taxes on small businesses as well, because most small businesses are sole proprietorships and Subchapter S corporations. And you see, when you cut the taxes on a small business, it gives that small-business owner more money to invest. And when that person invests, it means somebody is more likely to keep a job. Make no mistake about this: That tax cut was good for the small businesses of the United States of America, and that's one of the reasons why this economy is so strong.

A couple of other things, if you don't mind.

***Mr. Trapani.*** Any time. [*Laughter*]

***The President.*** Thank you, sir.

I told you there's more work to do. Let me tell you some of the things that we need to do. These tax cuts expire, which means taxes are going up on people. That's what that means. When you hear, ''We're going to repeal the tax cuts,'' that's Washington, DC, code for ''I'm fixing to raise your taxes.'' That's what that means. It doesn't make any sense to raise taxes on people who are beginning to employ people. If you're a small business, we shouldn't be raising the taxes on the small-business owners. We shouldn't be raising taxes on the hard-working families. It makes no sense to take money out of the pockets of the people that are driving this economy forward, and so we need to make the tax cuts permanent. Congress needs to listen to the voices of the people.

There's too many junk lawsuits in our society. We need tort reform in order for people to be—expand their businesses. You hear talk about outsourcing; I'm as concerned about outsourcing as the next person. But the way to deal with outsourcing is to make America a better place to do business, not a worse place. Raising taxes will make it harder to create jobs. Lawsuits make it harder to create jobs. We need an energy policy so people can plan their businesses around a solid supply of energy. We need to be less dependent on foreign sources of energy if we want to make sure jobs stay here.

You know how else you make sure that jobs stay home—is you have a health care policy that's reasonable and the prices are—and we do something about the high cost of health care for employees and employers. There's three things, the practical things we can do: one, associated health care plans to allow small businesses to pool risk in order to be able to have affordable health care for their employees; health savings accounts, which will help employees and employers better afford health care; and national medical liability reform to stop the junk lawsuits which are running up the cost of health care for these businesses.

One other thing we need to make sure of, we need to make sure we don't become isolated from the world. It's what I call economic isolationism. It's beginning to creep into the dialog. People are saying, ''Well, we'll stop jobs from going overseas by making sure we put up walls and barriers between the United States and the rest of the world.'' That's lousy policy. You're about to hear a businessowner that relies upon exports. People work for him because he's able to export. One in five factory jobs in America exist because they're selling products somewhere else. Six million people in this country work as a result of somebody saying, ''This workforce of ours is so good, I'm going to build a plant''—like Honda right outside of Cleveland, Ohio, for example. Consumer prices will go up if we wall ourselves from the rest of the world. Economic isolationism is bad economic policy, and it will cost people jobs. It will make it harder for you to keep your work.

So what I want to do is, I want to take a different tack. You see, our markets are pretty open for other people. And what we're going to do is tell other people, ''If our markets are open for you, you open yours for us.'' You see, we want to have trade, but trade that is fair. Level—we want a level playing field. We can outcompete with anybody. See, pessimistic people say, ''America can't compete.'' An optimistic person says, ''We can compete with anybody, just let's make sure the rules are fair and the playing field is level.''

No, this plan of ours is a plan that says we're not going to have outsourcing because we want to make sure we've got better jobs right here at home—better, high-paying,

high-quality jobs. And the way to do that is have an optimistic, progrowth economic policy. And that's what I intend to put forth to the United States Congress.

You ready to go? I've been talking too much. And if there appears to be a lot of hot air in here, it's probably because of me. [*Laughter*]

Robert Silverstein is with us today. Let me just say, Robert does not make a living by talking too much, like I do. Robert is an entrepreneur. He's got a very interesting little business. And Robert, do you mind telling us what you do?

[*At this point, Mr. Silverstein, president, Orelube Corp., made brief remarks.*]

***The President.*** Yes. Let me ask you, how many employees have you got?

***Mr. Silverstein.*** We've got 13 employees right now.

***The President.*** So first of all, we're talking to a small-business owner. You know how many businesses like Robert's are around the country? We're talking thousands and thousands and thousands of people who employ 20 people or less. It's really the backbone of the economy, when you think about it, isn't it? Small businesses, vibrant small businesses all over.

Did you hire anybody recently?

***Mr. Silverstein.*** We just hired somebody this past November, and we just hired somebody this past February. That's two in the last 4 months, 5 months. And we plan this year to hire—a technology hire to boost the technology base of our company so we could expand our sales even further as well into these new countries that we're selling to now, as well as new countries.

***The President.*** So he's gone from, like, 12 to 15. I heard the other day somebody kind of belittling that, that—oh, they were talking about a small business that only increased their employees by two or three people. You see, a country is vibrant when you've got small businesses who are optimistic and excited and are willing to take on additional employees. It's not the three—just three employees of Robert. There are thousands of Roberts who are hiring people. Most new jobs in America are created by small-business owners. And good Government policy, good tax policy rewards entrepreneurs like Robert.

So, Robert, I want to thank you for coming. I want to thank you for employing people. I want to tell you something: If we fall prey to economic isolationism, the jobs that he now has in his company are going to be vulnerable. If he can't export, if there's trade wars, if people throw up barriers, his people won't be working. We need to be confident in this country. We need to say, "If you're going to accept—if we're going to accept your product, you make sure you accept ours." We can compete with anybody. Robert's showing you he can do that.

And I want to thank you for being a good business leader, Robert, and thanks for coming.

All right, Vince. I met your dad. Yes, I've got a good one too—and mother, by the way. Are you still telling him what to do? Yes. Bar is still telling me what to do too. [*Laughter*]

Listen, so Vince started his own business. By the way, Robert's grandfather started his. It's pretty neat, isn't it, to be talking to the grandson of an entrepreneur who had enough faith to leave it to the dad, and the dad passed it on to Robert.

One of the problems we have, in order for families to leave businesses, is the death tax. The death tax is a bad tax. The death tax means we're going to tax a person's assets twice, once when they're living and the second time after they're not. And it is a bad tax. It makes it hard for entrepreneurs to build up their companies and leave their assets to whom they want to leave them to. The Congress started passing that—getting rid of the death tax, and we just got—one of the reasons why we need to make the tax cuts permanent is so the death tax is gone, so dreamers can leave their assets to whomever they want.

***Mr. Trapani.*** Fine by me.

***The President.*** Yes, I'm ready. Tell us about how you started. I mean, here you are, a good-looking guy, wondering what you're going to do with yourself.

[*Mr. Trapani, president, U.S.A. Industries, Inc., made brief remarks.*]

***The President.*** First of all, you're getting it a little backwards. Government doesn't

create wealth. All Government does is create an environment for you who has got a good idea and willing to work to succeed. That's the difference between different visions of Government.

Okay, he's a Subchapter S corporation, which means he pays tax at the individual income tax rate. And so when you hear him talking tax for the rich, here he is. He's a small-business owner. They're trying to run his taxes up as a business owner. It doesn't make any sense to be raising taxes on small businesses.

Are you hiring anybody?

***Mr. Trapani.*** Well, let's put it this way: Last year we were fortunate enough to have 208 great employees. Now we're fortunate enough to have 221 employees. We're looking at the possibility—and we're out here discussing things with our real estate agent—about the possibility of another 30,000 square feet of manufacturing potential, which would possibly create another 20 to 25 new jobs and, pray to God, more.

***The President.*** See, he's hiring people. Why do we want to take money out of his pocket when he's hiring people? We don't.

Now, let me tell you another thing. Part of the Tax Code said that if you make an investment, you get a tax incentive to make the investment. In other words, we accelerated depreciation. That's a long word for saying we're trying to encourage the Vinces of the world to go out and buy some equipment. That was part of the tax plan. Some businesses need additional equipment—additional computers, additional software, and there was an incentive to go out and purchase them.

Did you buy any equipment?

***Mr. Trapani.*** Oh, yes. [*Laughter*]

***The President.*** Could you share with us what it was? [*Laughter*]

***Mr. Trapani.*** It would be my pleasure. We spent a lot of our money basically in technology. It's technology, where we've spent our money in machinery and things like that—enable us to compete. We compete against——

***The President.*** What kind of machine?

***Mr. Trapani.*** We went out and we bought some heavy-duty air conditioning compressors, things like—not air conditioning—air compressors. And the reality of our air compressors, they're enabling us basically to do things more efficient. So besides the fact that the benefit of what the proposal in the tax plan was, we were able to save money on our utility costs. Now we're even more energy efficient.

***The President.*** See, there's a lot of talk about productivity increases. It means his workers are more productive. They can make more products in the same amount of time as before. That means they're more productive. And the reason they're more productive is because he bought some equipment. And one of the reasons why he bought some more equipment is because the Tax Code encouraged him to do so. Congress will take that away unless they make the tax cuts permanent, by the way.

Let me tell you something else that's interesting, so that everybody understands. When he goes out and buys an air compressor, somebody has to make the air compressor. And when somebody makes the air compressor, it means somebody is more likely to find a job. The economy works when you stimulate small-business owners and consumers. It works as the result of people meeting demand. And that's what we tried to do. We tried to create more demand. We wanted Vince to say, "I need a new compressor," and encourage him to buy it, and he did. His workers are more productive, he's more competitive, and somebody had to make the compressor. And that's the way the U.S. economy works with good Government policy.

The problem is, is that when you're raising people's taxes and you're increasing their regulations and you're walling off America, you make it more difficult for Vince to be aggressive in creating more jobs. And that's why I'm glad you invited me here. Keep hiring people.

***Mr. Trapani.*** We intend to keep hiring people. But you have also created the environment. We have interest rates that enable us to go out and borrow, that—my parents don't remember how successful this here situation has become. So with the situation and the opportunities of lower interest rates, and more than anything, the tax savings—the tax savings that come back to people, that come

back to America. My accountants are in the audience. They're happy.

***The President.*** Yes, good. I'm glad they're happy. Wait until you get their bill. [*Laughter*] Then you won't be happy.

Okay. Pedro Ramos. *Como esta, Pedro?*

***Mr. Ramos.*** *Bien.*

***The President.*** Pedro works here. He's—how many children you got? *Cuantos ninos?*

***Mr. Ramos.*** I've got two children. I've got a wife. I've got a house. I own a house. I've been working for him almost 14 years. I've been doing—he's been doing great for me. He's the best boss that I could have in this country. I think that I live in a very good country. We have such good opportunities in this country. I want to focus to get a better future for my children. My refund taxes, I always use it in my house, to fix my house. I invest all the money, my refund, in my house.

***The President.*** Pedro, where were you born?

***Mr. Ramos.*** I born in El Salvador.

***The President.*** El Salvador. Got a great President, by the way. Paco Flores is one of my good friends.

***Mr. Ramos.*** He said that you're good friends.

***The President.*** Yes, he's a good fellow. [*Laughter*] You worked here *catorce anos?*

***Mr. Ramos.*** Yes.

***The President.*** Fourteen years he's worked here?

***Mr. Ramos.*** Fourteen years, yes.

***The President.*** How old are your children?

***Mr. Ramos.*** The older one is 9.

***The President.*** *Donde?* Oh, there.

***Mr. Ramos.*** They're sitting right there. My wife is right there, also.

***The President.*** Oh, thanks.

***Mr. Ramos.*** The second one is 6 years old.

***The President.*** Six years old.

***Mr. Ramos.*** Yes. I'm so proud of my children and my wife and my boys.

***The President.*** I want you to listen to what he said. He said, ''I took the tax relief and worked on my house.'' There's two things I want to share with you on that. One, there's nothing better than a society which encourages people to own something, isn't there? Either to own your own business—how about the fact that this is a fellow who was born in El Salvador, comes here to our country, and now owns his own home. Isn't that one of the spectacular aspects?

The tax relief we passed—his family saved $1,900 in taxes. Now, that doesn't sound like a lot to people in Washington, probably. I know it sounds a lot to the Congressmen who are here. But that's a lot to Pedro. Think about that $1,900, what that can mean. That's, by the way, because of the child credit and the marriage penalty and reducing the 10-percent tax bracket. His family has 1,900 more dollars of their own to spend.

And so he made a decision. He said, ''I'm going to fix up my house.'' Well, you can't fix it up out of air. He's got to go buy things to fix it up with. I bet you bought some paint.

***Mr. Ramos.*** That's correct, yes.

***The President.*** Paint?

***Mr. Ramos.*** Yes, paint.

***The President.*** So somebody had to make the paint.

***Mr. Ramos.*** And this year I plan to use my refund to do my fence. I want to do all my—the outside of my house.

***The President.*** So that's good. That's how the economy works. Pedro takes the extra money in his pocket, and he goes—Home Depot? Where did you go?

***Mr. Ramos.*** I go to Home Depot. Right, yes. [*Laughter*]

***The President.*** See? Now you do. [*Laughter*] So he goes to Home Depot, and he buys something. Somebody had to make the product. The economy works when people demand things, and we increased demand. Let me tell you the problem: Congress needs to make the child credit and the marriage and the 10-percent bracket reductions permanent. Right now these are the parts of the Tax Code that begin to expire. They need to make all taxes permanent, and they need to start with these three. Otherwise, this good fellow pays $913 more in taxes next year. If they don't make the tax cuts permanent, it's a tax increase on Pedro. He pays more taxes. It makes no sense to be taxing this good family, right now, more money. It makes no sense. Congress needs to make the child credit and the marriage penalty and the 10-percent bracket, as a beginning, make them

permanent this year, so Pedro has got more money to spend.

Good job. Good job.

Okay, Maureen White is with us. This is a really interesting story here that we're about to hear. It is a—it is innovative and compassionate. Maureen is senior vice president-chief nurse—chief nurse executive—even better—[*laughter*]—of the North Shore Long Island Jewish Health System. She is here with Maria Rais. What? Yes, exactly—Maira Rais. [*Laughter*] As I was saying, Maira Rais, yes. But why don't you tell us about your program, about your vision, and maybe introduce Maira? Thanks.

[*Ms. White made brief remarks.*]

***The President.*** Yes, you're doing great. Thank you. Very good job. Unbelievably articulate.

Yes, Maureen was—first of all, is really well-spoken. [*Laughter*] I could take a lesson or two from you. [*Laughter*]

A couple of points that I think are important: One, there are jobs. There are jobs that need workers. They need nurses. Oftentimes people don't have the skills necessary to be a nurse. This hospital, an incredibly responsible group of people, said, ''We'll train. We'll help. We'll pay for the training.'' And then the Nassau Community College stepped up and provided the curriculum, provided the trainers.

We've got an issue in front of Congress, by the way, that will boost job training through the community college system. You hear people talking about—worrying about outsourcing and jobs moving overseas, and one reason why is because they don't have the skills necessary to take the jobs of the 21st century. We have an obligation in society to help train the people for the jobs which exist. And so job training has got to focus in smart, practical ways.

Maureen talked about a really practical job training program. I want to thank the Nassau Community College people, if any are here, for being flexible and available to work with the hospital system to help people train to become nurses, to help them become skilled in the jobs which actually exist.

I'll tell you one quick story, and then we're going to go to Maira. I was out in Arizona at a community college, and a woman who worked for a graphic artist—as a graphic design artist for 15 years, I believe it was, 12 or 15 years—a lot—and she went back to Mesa Community College and took a program to give her some additional skills in technology. And she stayed there for 6 months—got paid by, by the way, worker displacement money that Congress has provided as the result of trade policies. If somebody loses a job because of trade, you can get money necessary to learn the skills for a new job. And she made more money in her first year of her new job, having gone to get new skills and to be more productive, than she did after 15 years of being a graphic artist. So not only does getting new skills help you find a job, it helps you find a higher paying job.

And that's why, Maureen, I want to thank you for sharing your story. I want you to tell your hospital people thanks. I know my friend Fred Wilpon is on the board. I wish him all the best for the Mets this year—[*laughter*]—but tell him, as importantly, he's done a good job in the hospital.

Maira, tell us about your story.

[*Ms. Rais, nurse assistant, North Shore Long Island Jewish Health System, made brief remarks.*]

***The President.*** You know something, the story you just heard from Maira is—it's a hard story. There's a lot of people that say, ''Well, I can't possibly go back to school and learn skills for the new jobs.'' But this economy of ours is in transition. There's fantastic opportunities. In some cases, however, people are going to need to go learn new skills in order to take advantage of the situation.

And it's hard, I fully understand, if you're a mom and you're kind of wondering whether or not it makes sense. But I want anybody out there listening to listen to Maira's story, that you can improve yourself, that you can go back to school, and it can make a huge difference in your life. I would—am I putting words in your mouth to say it's making a big difference in your life?

***Ms. Rais.*** No, no, no, it's the truth. And I'm hoping when I graduate, work for North Shore, and I know my salary is going to be

twice as much. So I'm looking forward for that. [*Laughter*]

***The President.*** Yes, she's got the chance to have three times her current salary as a result of having gone to school, paid for by her potential employer. And it's an amazing opportunity. And the reason why I'm so thrilled you all are here is that there are opportunities like that all over New York and the country. There's fantastic opportunities to gain new skills and become more productive, to take advantage of the new jobs of the 21st century.

It's unsettling when the economy changes. I fully recognize that. But in the midst of a changing economy, there are fantastic opportunities. And here is a great story of Maira Rais, newly arrived to America—well, not newly arrived, been here since 1980—but nevertheless is seizing the moment, is taking—taking advantage of the opportunity. And her salary is going to go up three times—and this good lady is going to have a better employee as a result of the training.

By the way, their family saved $1,200 in tax relief. So when Congress starts thinking about whether or not to let those taxes go back up on the people, think about Maira. I'm not worried about the two Congressmen over here, by the way. [*Laughter*] They're solid. But I want people to think about Maira. That $1,200 means a lot to Maira and her family. I know it doesn't sound like a lot in Washington, DC, terms, but it's a lot to her.

***Ms. Rais.*** I can tell you what I did with those $1,200.

***The President.*** Well, why don't you tell us then.

***Ms. Rais.*** I really—because I have my son who is in college. He's graduating this May.

***The President.*** You don't look old enough to have a son in college.

***Ms. Rais.*** Yes.

***The President.*** He's graduating in May? Fantastic.

***Ms. Rais.*** Yes, but he's going to transfer—he's looking forward to transfer to another college to complete his degree in business administration.

***The President.*** Fantastic.

***Ms. Rais.*** My daughter—two excellent students, honor students, so I'm proud of them and my whole family.

***The President.*** And so you're going to use the money to help your son?

***Ms. Rais.*** Well, I really did, because when I got the tax refund money, I used it for his books, my books that I had to pay for. It helped a great deal.

***The President.*** Now, see, the tax relief helped her go back to school so she can make three times the amount of money, possibly, than she was making. The tax relief helps average Americans. Congress needs to make the tax relief permanent; otherwise, she's going to be paying more taxes. It makes no sense to raise the taxes on Maira or Pedro or any of the entrepreneurs up here. We're doing good things with the—the people are doing good things with their own money. They're making this economy grow.

Listen, I want to thank them for coming, and I want to thank you all for coming. I hope you get a—share the same sense of optimism I do about the future of our country. When you hear about the entrepreneurial stories, you've got to be optimistic. These guys are hiring people. They believe the future is going to be better. When you hear the story of compassion coming out of the local hospital, it's got to make you optimistic about the decency of the people of this country. And then when you hear about the stories of these hard-working citizens of our country who have got big dreams for their families, and willing to achieve those big dreams, it's got to make you optimistic. I really am.

Listen, the strength of this country is in the hearts and souls of our citizens. I want to thank the citizens up here today for sharing your hearts and for sharing your souls. May God bless you all, and may God continue to bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:32 p.m. at U.S.A. Industries, Inc. In his remarks, he referred to Libby Pataki, wife of Gov. George E. Pataki of New York; President Francisco Flores Perez of El Salvador; and Fred Wilpon, owner, New York Mets.

## Remarks at a Bush-Cheney Reception in East Meadow, New York

*March 11, 2004*

***The President.*** Thanks for coming. Thanks for the warm welcome. It's great——

***Audience member.*** New York loves you!

***The President.*** Thank you, sir.

***Audience member.*** We need you!

***The President.*** Let me get started. [*Laughter*] Thanks for coming. Thanks for your friendship. Thanks for your support. It is great to be back in New York. We have had a fantastic day here today. And it's topped off by what is a successful effort to make sure that my campaign is properly fueled—[*laughter*]—for the charge ahead.

We're going to compete here in New York, and we're going to compete here hard. I'm counting on you. I'm counting on you to help us. The Vice President and I look forward to bringing our message to this great State. New York is going to be a part of what is going to be a great national victory in November of this year. Speaking about our Vice President, I made a really good pick when I asked Dick Cheney to join me. He's the finest Vice President our country has ever had.

***Audience member.*** Your dad was! [*Laughter*]

***The President.*** You know something, you sounded exactly like my mother. [*Laughter*]

Speaking about marrying well—[*laughter*]—that is precisely what I did. Laura is a fabulous First Lady. She's really a comforting soul who loves our family and loves our country. I'm really proud of the job she's done.

I'm also proud of the job that Governor George Pataki has done for the State of New York. He is a great Governor. I'm proud to call Pataki friend. I really am. It's comforting to know that he's out there on the stump defending his buddy George W. And he does a good job of it. He really does. I'm proud—thank you, George, for being here. I also want to thank my friend Rudy Giuliani for being here as well. He too is out there defending his buddy. And both these men have got a lot of credibility because they've done such a great job in their—one as Governor and one as mayor during difficult times. And I'm proud to call them friends.

I'm also pleased that Peter King traveled with me today from Washington, DC, to his district here in New York. I want to thank Peter for his service. He's a fine United States Congressman, as is Vito Fossella. Vito is a New York Congressman as well.

I want to thank all the grassroots activists who are here. I want to thank Sandy Treadwell and Mike Long. I want to thank Joe Mondello. Pat Acampora is with us today. These are all people who are willing to spend time energizing the grassroots. Those are the people who are willing to put up the signs and make the phone calls and turn out the vote. I'm counting on you. You can't run a campaign alone. You need people from all neighborhoods around this country willing to work. And for those of you who are going to work on our behalf, I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart. We're counting on you. We're not going to let you down. And I'm looking forward to the contest.

I finally got an opponent. [*Laughter*] It was my honor to call Senator Kerry and to welcome him to the race and to congratulate him on running a good campaign. I look forward to the debate, a debate on the issues. And it's going to be an interesting debate because he's built up quite a record. [*Laughter*] Senator Kerry—he's been in Washington long enough to take both sides of every issue. [*Laughter*] Senator Kerry voted for the PATRIOT Act, voted for NAFTA, voted 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. He clearly has strong beliefs. [*Laughter*] They just don't last very long. [*Laughter*]

There will be a very clear choice in this election, the choice between keeping the tax relief that is moving the economy forward or putting the burden of higher taxes back on the American people, a 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 laying these alternatives squarely before the people.

I'm glad the campaign has begun. I have something I want to tell the people. The first