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21st century. There will be savings as we consolidate and close bases and facilities overseas no longer needed to face the threats of our time and defend the peace.

The world has changed a great deal, and our posture must change with it, for the sake of our military families, for the sake of our taxpayers, and so we can be more effective at projecting our strength and spreading freedom and peace.

Today, our troops have the most advanced technologies at their disposal. Weapons are more lethal, more precise than were available for you. Our troops are more mobile. They can communicate better. Yet their success in the wars we fight is being made possible by the same things that made your success possible, personal courage, love of country, dedication to duty.

As our troops fight today in Baghdad, in Najaf, in the Hindu Kush mountains, and elsewhere, I know America's veterans feel a special pride in them. They're carrying on your legacy of sacrifice and service. They're determined to see the mission through. This country stands with them.

I want to thank you for the example you have set for our men and women in uniform. I want to thank you for your idealism, for your dedication to God and our country. May God bless you all, and may God continue to bless the United States of America. Thank you all very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:04 a.m. at the Dr. Albert B. Sabin Cincinnati Cinergy Center. In his remarks, he referred to Edward S. Banas, Sr., commander in chief, Bob Wallace, Washington Office executive director, and John Furgess, senior vice commander in chief, Veterans of Foreign Wars; and Evelyn McCune, national president, and JoAnne Ott, national senior vice president, Ladies Auxiliary VFW. He also referred to the Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services (CARES) initiative of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Remarks in Traverse City, Michigan

August 16, 2004

The President. Thank you all. Thanks for coming. Boy, I'm glad to be here. This is a beautiful part of our country. It turns out I'm the first sitting President to come up here since Gerald Ford was the President. Good to be here in cherry country. Today it looks like Bush-Cheney country too.

I'm looking forward to this race. I want to thank you all for giving me a chance to come out and ask for the vote. I'm traveling your important State asking for the vote. You got some big differences in this campaign. One of them is that my opponent thinks you can find the heart and soul in Hollywood. I think you find it right here in Traverse City, Michigan.

We're going to be spending a lot of time in your important State, and there's no doubt, with your help, we'll carry Michigan, and we'll win in November of '04.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. I'm sorry Laura is not here.

Audience member. We love you, Laura!

The President. Yes. She is a fantastic mom, a great wife. Listen, I'm going to give you a lot of reasons to be for me, but perhaps the most important one is to keep Laura as the First Lady for 4 more years.

And I'm running with a good man in Vice President Dick Cheney. I admit it—I admit it, he is not the prettiest face in the race. [*Laughter*] I didn't pick him for his looks. I picked him because he can get the job done.

I want to thank my friend Dave Camp, the Congressman from up here in northern Michigan. What a good man. I'm proud to work with him—good, honorable man. I want to thank Congressman Nick Smith for being here as well. Nick, I appreciate you coming. I appreciate Trick Pony, the band that was playing here. I'm glad they're here. It's good of them to come.

Listen, I want to thank Betsy DeVos and all the grassroots activists. Let me tell you, grassroots activists are the people that put up the signs, make the phone calls, register the voters. We have a duty in this country to vote. We have an obligation to do our duty to show up at the polls. Do you realize, over 9 million people have registered to vote in Afghanistan? These people have got a taste of freedom, and they're showing up to vote. And so—our fellow citizens—so I urge you to register people. Head people to the polls,

and when you get them headed there, just tell them this country is going to be safer, stronger, and better with George Bush and Dick Cheney.

You know, we've been through a lot together. In these past few years, Americans have been through a lot and we've accomplished a great deal. But there's only one reason to look backward at the record, and that is to determine who best to lead this Nation forward. I'm asking for your vote because so much is at stake. We have so much more to do to move this country forward. From creating jobs to improving schools, from fighting terror to spreading the peace, we have made much progress, and we have much more work to do.

We have more to make our public schools the centers of excellence we all know they can be so that no child is left behind in America. You might remember the mindset 3½ years ago, when we just shuffled children from grade to grade, year after year, and they didn't learn the basics. I went to Washington for a reason. We challenged the soft bigotry of low expectations. We've raised the bar. We're now measuring in return for extra Federal help, because we want to know whether or not our children are learning to read and write and add and subtract.

We believe in local control of schools, and we're willing to challenge the status quo when we find schools that will not teach and will not change. We're doing the hard work. When it comes to reforming our schools, there's more work to do. We're going to reform our high schools to make sure the high school diploma means something. We're going to expand math and science education so our young people can compete in the high-tech world. We'll expand the use of the Internet to bring high-level training into the classrooms. With 4 more years, we'll help a rising generation of Americans gain the skill and the confidence necessary to realize the great American Dream.

We have more to do to make quality health care available and affordable. You might remember all the old Medicare debates. Year after year, they'd come up here and tell you, "Don't worry. I'll get something done." We got the job done. More than 4 million seniors have signed up for drug discount cards, which provide real savings for our seniors. And beginning in 2006, all seniors on Medicare will be able to choose the plan that suits their needs and gives them coverage for prescription drugs.

There's more to do. We've expanded community health centers, and we'll continue to do so for low-income Americans. We want people getting their primary care in these centers and not in our emergency rooms in our hospitals. We've created health savings accounts so families can save tax-free for their own health care needs. When it comes to giving Americans more choice, more opportunity in health care, we're getting the job done, but there's more work to be done. Most Americans get their health care through their businesses. Most new jobs are created by small businesses, and a lot of small businesses have trouble providing health care for their employees. To help more American families get health insurance, we must allow small employers to gather together to purchase insurance at discounts just like big companies get to do.

I'll tell you what else we need to do. We must end the frivolous lawsuits that run up the cost of health care. You cannot be—you can't be pro-doctor and pro-patient and pro-plaintiff-attorney at the same time. You have to choose. My opponent made his choice, and he put him on the ticket. I made my choice. I am for medical liability reform now.

We'll harness technology to reduce costs and prevent health care mistakes. We'll expand research to seek new cures for terrible diseases. And in all we do to improve health care for America, we'll make sure the health decisions are made by doctors and patients, not by bureaucrats in Washington, DC.

We've got more to do to make this economy stronger. Listen, we've come through a lot together. Think about what this economy has been through. We've been through a recession. We've been through terrorist attacks. We've been through corporate scandals. We've been through a stock market decline. We've overcome these obstacles because of the hard work of America's entrepreneurs and farmers and ranchers and small-business owners and workers. We've come through a lot.

We've also come through it because of two well-timed tax cuts. We didn't pick winners or losers. We did it the fair way. If you pay tax, you get relief. We helped our families by raising the child credit. We reduced the marriage penalty. I mean, what kind of Tax Code is it that penalizes marriage? We ought to be encouraging marriage in America. We helped the small businesses. And this time, the check actually was in the mail. [*Laughter*]

Because we acted, our economy since last summer has grown as a rate as fast as any in nearly 20 years. Because we acted, Americans added about 1.5 million new jobs since last August. The national unemployment rate is down to 5.5 percent.

Listen, I fully understand we face challenges in some of our manufacturing communities. In some parts of Michigan, the recovery has lagged, but there are good signs. This economy is strong. It's getting stronger. We will not rest until anybody who wants to work can find a job.

I've got a strategy to make sure good jobs stay here in America. To make sure the jobs are here, our regulations need to be reasonable and fair. Some of you fill out paperwork—I can't promise you whether anybody has ever read it in Government. [*Laughter*] To keep jobs in America, we need tort reform. To keep jobs in America, we must become less dependent on foreign sources of energy. To keep jobs in America, we must be wise about how we spend your money and keep your taxes low.

We've got only 2 months left in the campaign, but the fellow I'm running against already has made about $2.2 trillion of new spending promises. No telling what's going to happen when we come down the stretch. So they said the other day, "How are you going to pay for it?" He said, "Oh, I'll just tax the rich." You've heard that talk before, haven't you? The rich hires accountants, and guess who gets stuck with the tab? You do. But we're not going to let him win, are we?

In order to keep jobs here, we'll insist on a level playing field when it comes to trade. Listen, we want Traverse City cherries being sold and purchased all around the world. We can compete with anybody, anywhere, anyplace, so long as the rules are fair. We want our farmers not only feeding Americans, but we want them feeding hungry mouths all across the globe. Farm income is up, and one of the reasons it's up is because of exports of agricultural products are on the rise, and I intend to keep it that way.

In order to make sure this economy continues to grow, we've got to use our resources wisely, like water. It starts with keeping the Great Lakes water in the Great Lakes Basin. You might remember what my opponent said earlier this year about Great Lakes water diversion. He said it would be a delicate balancing act.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. It sounds just like him. [*Laughter*] My position is clear: We're never going to allow diversion of Great Lakes water.

I've got another position that's clear. We're spending money—Federal money to help clean up contaminated sediment in Lake Michigan and Superior, Erie and Huron, and Ontario. We want to make sure our natural resources are well preserved.

Give me 4 more years, and this economy will still be the greatest of any industrialized nation in the world. Our farmers will be doing well. Small businesses will be vibrant, and people will be able to find high-paying, good jobs.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. We have more to do to wage and win the war on terror. America's future depends on our willingness to lead in this world. If we show uncertainty and weakness in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This isn't going to happen on my watch.

The world changed on a terrible September morning, and since that day, we have changed the world. Prior to September the 11th, Afghanistan served as the home base of Al Qaida, which trained and deployed thousands of killers who set up terror cells in dozens of countries, including our own. Today, because we acted, Afghanistan is a rising democracy. Afghanistan is an ally in the war on terror. Many young girls now go to school for the first time. America and the world are better off.

Audience members. U.S.A.! U.S.A.! U.S.A.!

The President. Before September the 11th, Libya was spending millions to acquire weapons of mass destruction. Today, because America and our allies have sent a strong and easy-to-understand message—[*laughter*]—the leader of Libya has abandoned his pursuit of weapons of mass destruction, and America and the world are safer.

Before September the 11th, the ruler of Iraq was a sworn enemy of America. He was defying the world, firing weapons at American pilots who were enforcing the world's sanctions. He had pursued and he had used weapons of mass destruction. He had harbored terrorists. He invaded his neighbors, and he subsidized the families of suicide bombers. He murdered tens of thousands of his own citizens. He was a source of great instability in the world's most volatile region. He was a threat.

After September the 11th, we must take threats seriously, before they fully materialize. It is a vital lesson our country must never forget. It's one of the lessons of that terrible day. So I took the threat seriously. I went to the United States Congress and said, "I see a threat. Why don't you take the matter up." They looked at the intelligence I looked at. They remembered the history I remember. And members of both political parties, including my opponent, came to the same conclusion that Saddam Hussein was a threat.

Diplomacy is important, and so I went to the United Nations, again. They looked at the intelligence, and they unanimously concluded, in the U.N. Security Council, that Saddam Hussein was a threat and that he must disclose, disarm, or face serious consequences. As he had for over a decade, Saddam Hussein defied the free world. He had no intention of listening to those resolutions. As a matter of fact, he systematically deceived the inspectors that the world sent in. So I had a choice to make at that point in history. Do I forget the lessons of September the 11th and trust a madman or take action to defend America? Given that choice, I will defend America every time.

Even though we didn't find the stockpiles we expected to find, remember that Saddam had the capability to make weapons of mass destruction, and he could have passed that capability on to others, our enemies. And after September the 11th, that is a risk we could not afford to take. Knowing what I know today, I would have taken the same action. America and the world are safer because Saddam is in a prison cell.

And now, almost 2 years after he voted for the war in Iraq and 7 months after switching positions to declare himself the antiwar candidate, my opponent has found a new nuance. He now agrees it was the right decision to go into Iraq. After months of questioning my motives and even my credibility, the Senator from Massachusetts now agrees with me that even though we have not found the stockpile of weapons we all believed were there, knowing everything we know today, he would have voted to go into Iraq and remove Saddam Hussein from power. I want to thank the Senator for clearing that up. [*Laughter*] But I want to remind you, there's still 78 days for him to change his mind again. [*Laughter*]

I'm running because I understand clearly there's more work to be done to aggressively pursue the terrorists and foreign fighters in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere. You cannot talk sense to these people. You cannot negotiate with these killers. You must not hope for the best. We will engage these enemies around the world, so we do not have to face them here at home.

And we will continue to lead the world with confidence and moral clarity. We put together a strong coalition to help defeat the terrorists. There are nearly 40 nations involved in Afghanistan and some 30 nations involved in Iraq. I know you agree with me when I send my appreciation to the mothers and dads of the soldiers from those countries, who stand side by side with our soldiers to bring freedom and peace to the world. And I will continue to build our alliances and work with our friends to spread peace. But I will never turn over America's national security decisions to leaders of other countries.

In these crucial times, America's commitments are kept by the men and women of our military. At bases across our country and around the world, I've had the privilege of meeting those who wear our uniform. I've seen their great decency. Today I met Petty Officer 3d Class Joel Oliver. He's from here.

He was standing back there. He told me he served in the Navy, and he said something really interesting—when he'd come back from Iraq, he said, "This is a great time to serve. I was actually a part of history." He is a part of history. He's a part of spreading freedom and peace. I appreciate his service, and I appreciate the service of all who wear the uniform.

And I have made a commitment to those who wear the uniform and their loved ones. They will have the full support of Government. Last September, while our troops were in combat in both Afghanistan and Iraq, I proposed supplemental funding to support them in their missions. This money is for body armor and vital equipment, hazard pay, health benefits, ammunition, fuel, spare parts for our military. It was necessary money. And my request received strong bipartisan support in both the House and the Senate. As a matter of fact, so strong that only 12 United States Senators voted against it, 2 of whom are my opponent and his runningmate.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Here's how he tried to explain his vote. He said, "I actually did vote for the $87 billion, before I voted against it." [*Laughter*] I suspect not a lot of people talk like that up here. [*Laughter*] I expect the people up here like the plain-spoken fellow. He got pressed a little further on that vote. He said he was proud of his vote. Then he said, "The whole thing is a complicated matter." [*Laughter*] There's nothing complicated about supporting our troops in combat.

In the long run, our security is not guaranteed by force alone. We must work to change the conditions that give rise to terror, poverty and hopelessness and resentment. A free and peaceful Iraq and a free and peaceful Afghanistan will be powerful examples to their neighbors. Free countries do not export terror. Free countries believe in peace.

Those are the lessons we learned after World War II. After all, one of my strongest allies in peace is the Prime Minister of Japan. Think about that. I'm talking about how to keep the peace—the man who runs a country that my dad fought against in World War II, and your dads did as well. And yet, we sit at the table and talk about peace. Listen, liberty can change attitudes. That's what Americans believe.

By serving the ideal of liberty, we bring hope to others, and that makes us more secure. By serving the ideal of liberty, we're spreading the precious peace. And by serving the ideal of liberty, we serve the deepest ideals of the American soul. Freedom is not America's gift to the world. Freedom is the Almighty God's gift to every man and woman in this world.

We have more to do to protect America. There are enemies who hate us, and they're still plotting to harm us. We have a difference of opinion about the nature of the enemy. The other day, my opponent said that going to war with terrorists is actually improving their recruiting efforts. I—the logic is upside-down, as far as I'm concerned. So is the misunderstanding of the enemy. See, during the 1990s——

Audience member. Louder! Louder!

The President. ——the terrorists—[*laughter*]—during the 1990s, the terrorists were recruiting and training for war with us long before we went to war with them. They don't need an excuse for their hatred. It is wrong to blame America for the evil in the hearts of these killers. We do not create terrorists by fighting back; we defeat the terrorists by fighting back.

I agree with the conclusion of the 9/11 Commission when it said, the actions we've taken since September the 11th has made us safer but not yet safe enough. I understand that. You've just got to know, there's a lot of good people working hard to protect our homeland. We've created the Department of Homeland Security. We're communicating better than ever before. Intelligence sharing between domestic and foreign agencies are—is seamless and good. The PATRIOT Act is a vital part of the defense of America. Our law enforcement officers need to have the tools necessary to defend you. I'm looking forward to working with Congress to create the position of National Intelligence Director so that one person is in charge of coordinating all our intelligence efforts overseas and at home.

There's more work to do—there's more work to do. But reform is never easy, particularly in Washington. There's a lot of entrenched interests up there. People are willing to defend the status quo. It's not enough to advocate reform; you have to get the job done.

I'd like for you to remind your friends and neighbors, when it came to reforming schools and providing an excellent education for all our children, we're getting the job done. When it comes to health care reforms to give our families more choices, we're getting the job done. When it comes to improving our economy and overcoming obstacles so people can find work, we're getting the job done. When it comes to better securing our homeland and defeating the terrorists and spreading freedom and peace, we're getting the job done. And when it comes to electing a President, put somebody back in there who can get the job done.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. You know, we're living in exciting times. It's a time of change, and that can unsettle people. I understand that. But one way to help people during a time of change is to have Government encourage an ownership society. We want people owning their own health care accounts so if they change jobs, they can take it from job to job. If you're a younger worker, I'm a little concerned about the fiscal stability of Social Security. For old guys like me, we're doing okay when it comes to Social Security. But if you're younger, why don't you join me in advocating for personal retirement accounts that you can call your own.

In a changing world, it's a fantastic thought to know that homeownership rates in America are at an alltime high. I love the idea of somebody opening their door and saying, "Welcome to my home. This is my piece of property." We want more people owning their own small business. We're going to continue to advocate an ownership society because we understand that when you own something, you have a vital stake in the future of our country.

In these changing times, there are some things that will not change: our belief in liberty and opportunity and the nonnegotiable demands of human dignity; the individual values we try to live by—courage and compassion, reverence and integrity; the institutions that give us direction and purpose—our families, our schools, and our religious congregations.

We stand for institutions like family and marriage, which are the foundations of our society. We stand for a culture of life in which every person matters and every person counts. We stand for judges who faithfully interpret the law, instead of legislating from the bench. That's why I named Judge Rick Griffin to the Federal courts. He's right from here. He's a good, honest fellow. The problem is, people like my opponent are playing politics with the judicial system on the Floor of the United States Senate.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Rick needs an up-or-down vote in order to make sure these courts in this part of the world are able to function like you want them to. Stop playing politics with American justice.

We're making—we stand for a culture of responsibility in America, and we're making progress. See, this culture of ours is changing from one that has said, "If it feels good, do it," and "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 in life. If you are fortunate enough to be a mother or a father, you are responsible for loving your child with all your heart and all your soul. If you're worried about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you are 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 responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourselves.

I'm running for 4 more years because I want to continue to rally the armies of compassion. See, Government can hand out money, but it can't put hope in a person's heart or a sense of purpose in a person's life. That happens when a loving soul puts their arm around somebody who needs help, and says, "I love you," and "What can I do to help you?" I know by rallying the armies of

compassion we can change America, one heart, one soul, one conscience at a time.

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 its leaders. This is not one of those times. This is a time when we need firm resolve, strong belief in the values that have made us a great nation.

None of us will ever forget that week when one era ended and another began. On September the 14th, 2001, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers. It is a day I will never forget. I will never forget the workers in hardhats yelling at me, "Whatever it takes." I was working the ropelines saying thanks to people, and a fellow with bloodshot eyes—he had just come out of the rubble, searching for one of his buddies—said, "Do not let down." He took that day personally. Everybody on that site took it personally. I know you took it personally, and so do I. I have a duty that goes on. I wake up every day thinking how better to protect our country. I will never relent in defending America, whatever it takes.

We have come through much together. We've done a lot of hard work. During the next 4 years, we'll spread ownership and opportunity to every corner of this country—I mean, every corner. We'll pass the enduring values of our country to another generation. We will continue to lead the world in the cause of freedom and peace, and we will prevail.

Four years ago, I traveled your great State and our great country asking for the vote, and I made a pledge that if you honored me with this great responsibility, I would uphold the dignity and the honor of the office to which I had been elected, so help me God. With your help, I will continue to do so for 4 more years.

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

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:16 p.m. at the Grand Traverse County Civic Center. In his remarks, he referred to Betsy DeVos, chairman, Michigan Republican Party; Col. Muammar Abu Minyar al-Qadhafi, leader of Libya; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan; and Richard A. Griffin, nominee to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the Sixth Circuit.

Proclamation 7805—National Airborne Day, 2004

August 16, 2004

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Americans look to the members of our Armed Forces as examples of honor and patriotism. On National Airborne Day, we commemorate the first official Army parachute jump on August 16, 1940, and salute a distinguished group of individuals whose courage and dedication have earned them a cherished place in American history.

Our Nation's Airborne forces have helped liberate millions from oppression and extend peace and freedom around the world. From the initial tests of this new medium of warfare, to the establishment of venerable units serving today, these brave men and women have expanded the vision and capabilities of our Armed Forces. The Army designated the first Airborne division on August 15, 1942, and the 82nd Airborne Division set the standard for achievement and built a proud legacy of service. Many units followed in their footsteps, fighting bravely in battle and serving our country with distinction in World War II, Korea, Vietnam, and other critical missions.

Today's Airborne forces continue the tradition of excellence and determination as we fight the global war on terror. In Afghanistan and Iraq, they have helped advance peace and democracy and defended the American people from danger. We are grateful for their service and continue to stand solidly behind the men and women of our Airborne forces, and all those in our military, as they serve on the front lines of freedom.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim August 16, 2004, as National Airborne Day. I encourage all Americans to join me in honoring those who have served in the Airborne forces. I call