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Minyar al-Qadhafi, leader of Libya; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Remarks at the Kansas City Chiefs Training Camp in River Falls, Wisconsin

August 18, 2004

Carl D. Peterson. Thank you so much for being here. It's great to have you. Thanks for taking your time. I know you know our head coach well.

The President. I do know Dick. Thanks. Thanks for letting me come by and say hi. I appreciate you coming out to say hello. I'm in the neighborhood. [*Laughter*] I'm shaking hands. But I wish you all the best this season.

I particularly want to thank the players who, in the off-season or during the season, are helping people who hurt. I know you've got a big platform, and you can make a difference in people's lives. The fact that you can help somebody who is in need is a great contribution. It's one thing to be a star on the field; it's another thing to be a star off the field. I know a lot of you are.

Head Coach Dick Vermeil. These guys are great guys.

Mr. Peterson. We're very proud of this guy's father—Priest Holmes's dad re-upped, and he's in Iraq right now. And our prayers and thoughts are with him. And we got to see Priest set the NFL record at Arrowhead last year, 27 touchdowns.

The President. I remember when I was the Governor of Texas—[*laughter*]—I'm trying to keep his taxes low. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Peterson. Everybody here wants you to continue to do the same thing, believe me.

The President. Good luck to you all. Let me walk around and shake some hands.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:21 p.m. at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls. Carl D. Peterson, president, general manager, and chief executive officer, Kansas City Chiefs, referred to running back Priest Holmes. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks in a Discussion in Hudson, Wisconsin

August 18, 2004

The President. Thank you all. Thanks for coming. Please be seated.

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

The President. Thank you all. That's what I'm here to tell you. I'm ready to go. There's more work to be done. I'm here asking for 4 more years.

Thank you all for coming. I think we've got a pretty interesting way to explain why I'm running for President again today. What I thought I would do is spend some time talking about some issues with some of your fellow citizens here, who will help explain why I make decisions the way I do. Then if we've got time, I'd like to answer some questions from you. Then I've got to go across the river——

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. They vote too. [*Laughter*] I want to thank you all for coming. I really am out asking for the vote. I think it's really important to travel the States that are key States and ask people—and tell people why you're running. And that's what I'm doing today in your great State. You know, we came close last time in Wisconsin. This time we're going to win it.

I want to thank you all for your help. Listen, I know there's some people here who volunteer for the campaign, and I want—let me tell you what that means. It means signs. It means making phone calls. It means encouraging people to register to vote.

You know, I like to tell people an interesting story about Afghanistan, and I'll talk about that a little more later on, but there was some doubt in people's minds as to whether or not, once free, the Afghan people would participate in democracy, particularly after the Taliban drug some people off one of the buses—women—off the buses and executed them because they happened to be holding voter registration cards. Today in that country, 3½ years after being brutalized by the Taliban, over 9 million people have registered to vote. See, they are—it's a great statistic, isn't it?

We have a duty in this country to vote. So I hope you register your friends and neighbors. Tell them they have a duty to vote. And when you head them—get them headed toward the polls, tell them if they want the country safer, stronger, and better, put old George Bush and Dick Cheney back in.

I'm sorry Laura is not here. Gosh, she would love this beautiful part of the world. She is in Colorado campaigning, and then she's headed to Texas. And after my speech tonight, I'm heading down to Crawford as well. But the reason I bring her up is she is—I'm a lucky man. She is a great mom. She's really a wonderful wife, and she's doing a great job as the First Lady. She has come to realize what I have realized, that simple gestures of kindness to people really can affect their lives in positive ways, that when we've been given this awesome responsibility and a high honor of serving our country, it really doesn't take much to help lift somebody's spirits. And Laura goes around the country talking to teachers and thanking them for teaching, and talking to people who are involved with literacy programs and thanking them for their literacy programs.

I remember when she did the radio address and spoke to the women of Afghanistan. The feedback on that was fantastic. People were just so grateful that somebody in a high position in America would speak to their hopes and aspirations. Her job satisfaction level is high. I hope there's a lot of reasons you want to put me back in, but perhaps the most important one is so that Laura will be the First Lady for 4 more years.

A couple of things. I want to thank my friend Mark Green, Congressman Mark Green, for traveling today. He's a good fellow. Thank you, Congressman. He's a good, smart, honest guy with whom I've got a great working relationship.

I've also been traveling with Dale Schultz. He's going to make a fine United States Congressman. I appreciate him. He's working hard. He's knocking on a lot of doors, which is what you have to do if you're going to—if you intend on winning. I think he'll be a great Congressman.

Mr. Mayor, thank you for coming. I'm proud you're here. Where are you? There he is. Mr. Mayor, thank you. Thanks for coming.

You know, I said I want the country to be stronger and safer and better. Let me start with what it means to be a better country. A better country is a country that makes sure every child is educated. One of the reasons I'm running again is because there's more work to do to make sure that the philosophy behind No Child Left Behind is fully implemented. What that philosophy said was—is that we're going to challenge the soft bigotry of low expectations. See, if you have a system that doesn't expect the best, it's a system that tends to quit on kids too early and just shuffles them through, grade to grade. And guess who gets shuffled through? These so-called hard-to-educate. And that's not good enough for America. And so what we did in Washington is we said, "We'll spend more Federal dollars, and, in return for Federal dollars, we'll finally start asking the question, have you achieved the goals?" See, we'll start to measure. And the reason you measure is not to punish. The reason you measure is to correct problems early, before it's too late.

And so the No Child Left Behind Act sets high expectations and high standards. It believes in local control of schools. It believes in empowering parents. But it also says, "Let's measure to determine whether curriculum works, to determine whether or not our children are learning to read." And if not, let's correct the problem before it is too late. And we're making good progress. These test scores are beginning to rise. The achievement gap is beginning to close. And what I'm telling you is there's more work to do when it comes to the education. I want the high school diploma to mean something. We need to focus on math and science to make sure our youngsters have the skills necessary to compete in this world. I like to tell people we've—we're getting the job done when it comes to our schools. And by making our schools work, America will be a better place.

I'll tell you what else will make America a better place. It's a place where those of us in Government understand the limitations of Government. See, money can hand out—Government hands out money, but it cannot put hope in a person's life. That happens when people who have been called to love

a neighbor step up and put their arm around a lonely soul or somebody who hurts or somebody who needs compassion and says, "What can I do? How can I help you?" And so I'm running again to continue to rally the armies of compassion, to encourage people who want to love a neighbor like they'd like to be loved themselves to continue to do so. And equally as well is to open up Federal monies, Federal grants to faith-based organizations, people that are able to—[*applause*].

One of the examples I like to use is, if somebody is addicted to drugs, sometimes a counselor can work. But a lot of times it requires a change of heart in order to change life. And the faith-based programs are those programs that are able to help a person change their heart, to get them less hooked on drugs or alcohol. And so there's a—part of my vision is for a better country. I want everybody in America to realize the great promise of this land.

This is a fantastic country we have. And the values are—when I'm talking about changing America one heart and one soul at a time, I'm talking about Scout masters who take time to work with these kids to pass on good, solid values. I'm talking about people who go see a neighbor and a shut-in. See, we can change and will change America one heart at a time, one soul at a time. Listen, I recognize somebody can't do everything, but somebody can do something to help this country be a compassionate, hopeful place.

I'm here to talk about making the country a stronger country. That starts with making sure our economy is strong. Listen, we want people working. That's what we want in America. And we've been through a lot. When you're out there campaigning and talking to people, remind them what we have been through as a country. We've been through a recession. That means we're going backwards. That means it's hard to find work. It means if you're a small-business owner, you're nervous about making payroll.

And then we went through a terrorist attack. They estimated it cost us, after that attack, about a million jobs. It hurt when the enemy hit us. We also went through corporate scandals, which affected us. I mean, look, we're a country that depends upon honesty. I mean, when people—when you're an investor or when you're looking at balance sheets, you expect there to be good, honest numbers. And when we started to uncover the fact that some didn't tell the truth, it began to affect our confidence. It just did. We acted. I mean, it's real clear right now that if you are dishonest in the boardrooms of America, there's going to be a consequence. But we've overcome these obstacles.

And one of the reasons why I believe we overcame the obstacles is because of tax relief. I believe by cutting the taxes, it helped. And I want to thank the Congressman for his work on that. We did it, I think, the fair way. We said, "If you pay taxes, you get relief." We raised the child credit to help people with children. We've mitigated the consequences of the marriage penalty. We believe that the Tax Code ought to encourage marriage, not discourage marriage.

We helped our small businesses—we're going to talk to two entrepreneurs today about what the tax relief meant for their business. They can explain it better than I can. After all, they're the ones—they're the risktakers; they're the people who are on the frontline of when it comes to hiring people.

Before we talk to them and talk to some others who are benefiting from the tax relief and have got some interesting things to talk about, I do want to talk about what else needs to be done. You know, there's concern about jobs going overseas. I share the concern. We want people working here. We want our jobs here. And the best way to do so is to make sure this is the best place to do business in the world. The best way to make sure jobs are here is, this is a place for risktakers, feel comfortable taking risk, and you're able to do so without getting sued right and left. So we need tort reform.

And you know, I got to tell you, the plaintiff's attorneys are tough politically. But I believe it's the right thing to have a justice system that's fair, that you're not—that the legal system doesn't look like a lottery, but in fact, if somebody gets hurt, they've got their day in court. But if we keep having frivolous and junk lawsuits that threaten our employers, it's going to be hard to keep the job base active and alive here. So we need tort reform. We need less regulation.

In order to make sure that our economy continues to grow and jobs stay here, we've got to have free and fair trade. Let me tell you about the trade issue and my point of view on that. Most Presidents believe that it's important to have our markets open for foreign goods. Why? Because if you're a consumer, the more goods you have to choose from, the more likely it is you're going to get better quality at a better price. That's how the market works. And so administrations from both parties said, "Let's open up our markets for the good of consumers." My attitude is, is that if we treat a country by opening our markets, they ought to treat us the same way. That's good trade policy. We open up our markets; you open up yours.

And it's paying off. Our trade policy is paying off. Look at the agricultural sector here in America today. It's strong. You know why? Because our farmers can compete with anybody, anyplace, anywhere. All they needed was markets opened up to sell their products.

We need an energy plan. If we want to have jobs here, you know, we've got to have energy. And right now, we're too dependent on foreign sources of energy. That's just the way it is. I submitted an energy plan to the United States Congress over 2 years ago. It was a plan that said we've got to diversify our energy supply, but we've got to be—and we've got to be wise about how we use the energy we have. We need clean coal technology to make sure we can use precious coal. We can explore in environmentally friendly ways. We need alternative sources of energy like ethanol and biodiesel. We need to be better at conservation. We need to promote technologies which change habits and uses, like hydrogen-driven automobiles. But for the sake of economic security and for the sake of national security, I need an energy plan on my desk to make us less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

Health care is obviously an issue that matters as to whether or not we can keep jobs here at home. Listen, most people receive their health insurance through their jobs. And most—a lot of small businesses are having trouble affording health care. And what we need to do is allow small businesses to pool together so they can be able to purchase health care at the discounts that big businesses are able to do. It's prohibited now from doing that. It's called association health plans.

You'll hear me talk about health savings accounts in a minute, as an innovative way for people to be able to make sure that the decisionmaking process is between them and their doctors, and it's a way to hold down costs. We've got somebody here who has actually used a health savings account that has worked. There are things we can do to help people who can't help themselves. My philosophy of government says government ought to help people who can't help themselves and help people help themselves. And part of helping people who can't help themselves is to expand community health centers so low-income people can get primary care in places other than emergency rooms in your hospitals.

We delivered on a promise. As I said when I was campaigning, we'd modernize Medicare, and was able to get that through the Congress. The Medicare system was—is a really important system, but it was old and wasn't working that well. Think about this. We would pay for the heart surgery of a senior, and we wouldn't pay for the medication to prevent the heart disease in the first place. I didn't think that made much sense for the taxpayers and for the seniors. So I went to Congress and said, "Well, look, let's do our duty. Let's kind of set aside all this bickering and why don't we focus on what's good for the seniors."

And I was proud to sign a Medicare reform bill that, first of all, provides drug discount cards for seniors. And if you're a senior here, I would strongly urge you to look into the drug discount cards for savings for your prescriptions. Secondly, in '05, we're now going to pay for screenings, preventative screenings, for the first time for our seniors, so we diagnose early, before it's too late. And in '06, a system will show up where seniors actually have choices. If you want to stay in the system as it is, you can do so, and you get prescription drug coverage. If you want choice in the marketplace, you're able to design the program that meets your needs. So in other words, we're doing good work when it comes to health care.

And one thing I want to assure you, in all the discussion about health care, we're going to make sure that the doctor and patient are the decisionmakers, not bureaucrats in Washington, DC.

I'll tell you a national issue that's an important issue when it comes to health care is medical liability reform. Green informed me that he had helped pass medical liability reform here in the State of Wisconsin. And it may not be nearly as big an issue here as it is elsewhere, but a lot of these lawsuits are driving docs out of business. I'm telling you, in State after State, one of the biggest complaints I hear from people is that, "My doc is leaving the business," or "His premiums are so high to stay in business, he's running up my cost."

Now, look, I don't think you can choose—I mean, I know you have to choose between patients and doctors and plaintiff's attorneys. You have to make a choice. You can't be for both. And my opponent made his choice, and he put him on the ticket. [*Laughter*] I made my choice. I'm for medical liability reform now, for the sake of affordable and available health care.

Finally, let me talk about two quick things, and then we're going to talk to some of your fellow citizens here. One, education is really important for workers. If we want to keep jobs here in America, we better have a system that enables people to become retrained for the jobs which exist. That's why I'm a big backer of the community college system, and it's a system that's working. It's a system that is available and affordable. They're everywhere, at reasonable price, and there's plenty of Government aid to help.

So I travel the country a lot. And let me tell you an interesting story. I met a lady in Phoenix, Arizona, went to Mesa Community College. She had worked for 12 years as a graphic artist. She decided to go back to college, got a little help to do so, went back and got an associates degree. And her—in other words, she enhanced her skills. And her first job out of the community college paid more in her first year than she was making in her 12th year as a graphic artist. In other words, what education does is it makes you a more productive worker. And Government has got to encourage people to go back to community college by helping them to do so.

And if we want to keep jobs here, we've got to train people for the jobs which actually exist. This is a changing world. The economy is changing. I was thinking about down in North Carolina where some of these textile plants have moved out because they couldn't compete, but the health care industry was strong. And so the compassionate thing to do is to help people who have lost their job gain the skills necessary to work in a field that is dynamic, and you make more money doing so.

Now, finally, I want to talk about fiscal discipline and fiscal sanity in Washington, DC. In order to keep the job base expanding so people can find work here, we must not overspend your money. And we must keep your taxes down. See, running up the taxes right now will hurt our economy. And we'll talk to some people that—when we run up—if their taxes get—they're not going to get run up; the guy is not going to win. And so it's—but your fellow citizens ought to worry about somebody who is out there making promise after promise after promise, like over $2 trillion worth of new promises and not telling you how he's going to pay for it. You know, he says, "Well, we can pay for it because we'll tax the rich." Well, we've heard that kind of language before. And you know what happens with this kind of tax-the-rich deal. That's why they've got accountants and lawyers. [*Laughter*] So the rich figure out ways not to pay, and you get stuck with the tab. That's not going to happen in 2004.

Old Mike Shaver is with us. Where are you, Mike? Mike is a small-business owner. He owns Hudson Machine and Tool. Before you say something, Mike, I want to tell people how you're organized, if you don't mind. He is a Subchapter S corporation. You know what that means? He pays taxes at the individual income tax rate. So when you hear somebody saying, "Tax the rich," I want you thinking about small-business owners.

Most of small businesses in America are Subchapter S corporations or sole proprietorships. They pay tax at the individual income tax rate. Therefore, when we said, "Let's cut taxes on everybody who pays taxes," we're also talking about small businesses. Seventy

percent of new jobs in America are created by small businesses. And if you're worried about people find work—finding work, it makes sense to stimulate the small-business sector of our country.

So here's a Subchapter S. All right, tell us about your company. Here's your chance. [*Laughter*]

[*Mike Shaver made brief remarks.*]

The President. How many did you hire? How many did you hire?

Mr. Shaver. We hired about half a dozen people, eight people, maybe.

The President. Yes, that's it. Let me tell you something. He hires eight. Another vibrant small business hires eight, and all of a sudden, you got people working in America. That's what I'm talking about.

Go ahead.

Mr. Shaver. But what made it possible for us to hire these people is the policy that you put in place has enabled me to purchase capital equipment, and if I purchase capital equipment, I have to have people to run it.

The President. Let me tell you something. Part of the tax relief for small businesses was not just cutting the rates. We also incentivized people to buy equipment. In other words, if he bought equipment, he got a little extra help in the Tax Code.

And so what did you buy?

Mr. Shaver. We bought a horizontal machining center, and we added on to the building too.

The President. See, buys a horizontal machining center. [*Laughter*] But somebody had to make it, right? [*Laughter*] You see, we give—he makes a decision because the Tax Code said, you know, "It's in your interest if you do," which was to buy a machine. And somebody had to make the machine. And so what he just told you was, by buying a machine, it enabled him to hire two people. And by buying the machine, it also made the machine manufacturer more likely to either keep an employee or add one to help meet his demand. I think that's the way it works, don't you?

Mr. Shaver. That is correct.

The President. Yes, I understand it. Tell me about—he's got an interesting idea. First of all, are you planning on investing again?

Mr. Shaver. Yes, we've already—I've bought a—we spent about $150,000 this year so far on a new truck and a vertical machining center.

The President. You got the horizontal machining center—[*laughter*]. Education is really important. [*Laughter*]

Tell me about your—you got an interesting idea. See, one of the things that's important about having a vibrant small-business sector is that there's some really great ideas that happen through these entrepreneurs.

And so tell me about your apprenticeship program.

[*Mr. Shaver made further remarks.*]

The President. See, job training takes place in community colleges; job training takes place on the floors of small businesses. It's really important to make sure the small-business sector of the country is dynamic. The role of a Government is not to create wealth. The role of Government is to create an environment in which people like Mike Shaver feel comfortable about expanding the job base of America.

And I want to thank you for coming.

Mr. Shaver. Thank you very much.

The President. Appreciate you.

Doug Richardson is with us.

Doug Richardson. Right here, Mr. President.

The President. Yes, you're the same guy I met recently. [*Laughter*] He is the co-owner—you know, one of the things I love to talk about is ownership in America. I love it when guys like Mike and Doug own their own business. I love the idea of more people owning their own home. Do you realize that homeownership rates in America are at an alltime high? Isn't it wonderful to think about a country where more people own something. They open up their front door and say, "Welcome to my home." This guy Doug Richardson is co-owner, which is—I love the ring—he's an entrepreneur.

Tell us what you do.

Mr. Richardson. You stand up too.

The President. He's the other owner?

Mr. Richardson. The other owner is here too, Tim McCormick.

The President. Well, we've got you here because you're better looking. But anyway

—[*laughter*]—let me tell you, Dick Cheney is not the prettiest guy in the race. [*Laughter*] Of course, I didn't pick him because of his looks. I picked him because he can do the job. He probably picked you because you're a great co-owner. [*Laughter*] God, I hope he's still for me. Anyway—[*laughter*]. Sorry, Doug, I didn't mean to dis your guy here.

Mr. Richardson. That's okay. I do it all the time. [*Laughter*]

The President. What do both of you do?

Mr. Richardson. Well, you talk about risk. We bought Parco Manufacturing, which—we manufacture vinyl windows and patio doors. Talk about increasing business, I'm sure a number of you are in need of windows around here.

The President. This guy is a marketing genius. [*Laughter*] Except, you need to look over there for the cameras; it's a much bigger crowd.

[*Mr. Richardson made brief remarks.*]

The President. Are you investing at all?

Mr. Richardson. We invested about 170,000 in equipment over the last 2 years——

The President. Horizontal or vertical? [*Laughter*]

Mr. Richardson. Neither.

The President. Yes, that's good. What do you buy, seriously?

Mr. Richardson. We buy delivery trucks.

The President. Good.

Mr. Richardson. We buy manufacturing equipment to build our windows. And we've also invested a half-million dollars into property and another factory.

The President. Great, congratulations. Classic small business: two guys, two buddies, said, "Let's get after it." They take a risk. That's part of how the economy works; they're willing to take risk. And because they're dreamers and doers, people are working. And the role of Government is to encourage through good tax policy. We don't need to be running up the taxes. Look, let me remind you all, when you hear, "Tax the rich—oh, don't worry, we're just going to raise the top rates," it's going to affect the entrepreneurial class of America because most small businesses are Subchapter S corporations. We need to keep the taxes low on the small businesses of America, in order for them to feel comfortable about expanding the job base.

Thank you. Good job. I appreciate you coming.

Roger Ripplinger is with us. Hey, Rog, how are you?

Roger Ripplinger. Doing great.

The President. Good. Well, me too. He is a—what do you do?

Mr. Ripplinger. I hire people.

The President. Yes, my kind of guy. Get after it, will you? [*Laughter*]

[*Mr. Ripplinger made brief remarks.*]

The President. Yes, good. In other words, you're good at what you do. They hired you. Did you make any more money?

Mr. Ripplinger. I make a lot more money.

The President. Yes, see, what's happening is, is that, you know, it's an interesting world we're in—people are changing jobs, and that's a little unsettling. But if you're able to upgrade your skills or be good at what you do, a lot of times when people change jobs, they can make more money.

Now, one of the things that—let's see, you got a little tax relief. How much? Got to turn on his mike. I'll say that. He got a lot, he said. I'll be your interpreter. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Ripplinger. We got a check last July. And it was just in time—there we go—and it was just in time for back to school shopping, when all the sales hit, so we could even stretch it even farther. It was wonderful.

The President. He saved about $2,400 in his taxes last year. That's a lot of money for a family. And it's—you see, my philosophy—thank you, Rog—my philosophy is that Government meets priorities; once it meets its priorities, then the people can spend their money better than Government can. And I want Roger having that 2,400 in his pocket, because it helps the economy grow.

Did you do anything with it?

Mr. Ripplinger. Yes, we actually—we invested some.

The President. Good. That's a good thing.

Mr. Ripplinger. Yes, and we bought a new vehicle.

The President. That means there's more capital, by the way, available for people when they go out an buy horizontal machines.

[*Laughter*] That's how the economy works. When he says "investing," it's part of saving. Go ahead.

Mr. Ripplinger. And we bought a new vehicle as well.

The President. Good, yes, well, somebody had to sell it to you. And then somebody had to make it. By the way, parts of the tax relief package expire. See, the tax relief was not permanent—a permanent fixture. They said, "We'll give you tax relief for a while." And the child credit goes down to $700 a child this year if Congress doesn't act. The marriage penalty goes up if Congress doesn't act. The 10-percent bracket is affected if Congress doesn't act. This guy will pay $1,100 more in taxes if Congress doesn't act. So when you hear me going around the country saying, "Let's keep the tax cuts permanent," that's what I'm talking about, not taking money out of his pocket.

All right, Rog, thanks for coming.

We got the Garzas with us. There they are. Oh, yes. Who you got with you?

Jesse Garza. This is Page.

The President. Page.

Mr. Garza. Say, "Hi, Mr. President."

The President. Yes, I know how you feel sometimes. [*Laughter*] Thanks for coming. Kate and Jesse are workers—both of them in the workplace?

Mr. Garza. My wife is a hospice social worker here in——

The President. Thanks. Thanks for doing that.

Mr. Garza. Yes, no problem.

The President. No, I'm talking to her. [*Laughter*] Thanks for doing that—we'll try it again.

Kate Garza. My husband works for his family business and manages that.

The President. Great. The reason I've asked them to come is to talk about tax relief again. See, oftentimes in the course of the discussion about tax relief, we talk numbers. And people seem to forget—particularly in Washington—that tax relief affects people's lives in incredibly positive ways. How much relief did you get, 1,200? Yes. Isn't that right?

Mr. Garza. Yes, we did.

The President. And this year about $1,700, they tell me?

Mr. Garza. I hope so.

The President. She wants to talk.

Page Garza. Hi, Mr. President.

The President. There you go. [*Laughter*] All education begins at home, by the way.

So what has it meant for you, tax relief? Explain. Here's your chance to tell people who say, "Oh, tax relief only benefited certain people."

[*Mr. Garza made brief remarks.*]

The President. Oh, fantastic. See, it helps people. It helps them with their lives. They improved their home because they've got another child coming. Tax relief helps families in tangible ways, and Congress needs to make it permanent. We don't need to be taking money out of the pockets of our small businesses and the working people here in America.

Mr. Garza. Mr. President——

The President. Yes. Go ahead.

Mr. Garza. If you want to help our family and the families out here, just do one thing: Win.

The President. Thank you, sir. I intend to. Thank you all. Thanks for coming.

Finally, we've got Kris Walker with us. There he is.

Kris Walker. Mr. President.

The President. Yes. I'm George Walker Bush. He's old, just plain Kris Walker. [*Laughter*] Cousin.

Mr. Walker. Right on.

The President. Kris has done something; he's bought a health savings account. I've asked him to come because I want him to explain what it means. It's an interesting way for people to take care of their own health care needs. It's a very interesting concept, by the way, for small-business owners who are struggling with affordable health care.

Go ahead and tell us what it is.

[*Mr. Walker made brief remarks.*]

The President. Now, let me tell you what that is. Here's the way it works. He goes out and buys a high deductible, catastrophic plan, which means that after the deductible, insurance takes care of the health care needs. And then the health savings account says you've got your high deductible and then you can contribute, tax-free, to cover from zero to the limits of your deductible—tax-free.

And the money stays in your account and earns interest, tax-free. And you can take the money out, tax-free. And so in other words, it is an incentive program that he has used, and it is $700 a month less expensive.

Mr. Walker. [*Inaudible*]—dollars less. And for me, it's a great thing, and I think for the 35 million Americans that are uninsured, it's a fabulous way to be insured. And for small business, it's a great way to be competitive in the market.

The President. Yes, it really is. I appreciate you saying that. What's really interesting about this plan, by the way, is that it's—you see your own money. See, you put your own money in, tax-free. It's your money. You can save it over time if you don't spend it, obviously, and therefore, it provides an incentive to make better choices about health care needs. And all of a sudden, Kris starts saying, "Well, you know, I may not need this"—doc says you think you need it—"I may not need it." In other words, he is directly involved with the pricing and purchasing of health care, which I think is a vital component to make sure that health care decisions are aligned properly and that a health care market begins to adjust to consumer demand. And that's really what health savings accounts do. I really want to thank you for sharing with us his idea.

By the way, he got tax relief, and he got a tax relief big enough to make the cash contribution equal to his deductible. So in other words, it's—smart guy. I appreciate you sharing that with us.

Mr. Walker. Thanks for having me. Good luck in '04.

The President. Yes, thank you, sir. I appreciate you coming.

Listen, I want to thank you all for coming. I hope you found this to be an innovative way to talk about how to keep the country stronger. Let me talk about how to keep it safer.

I tell people that if this country shows weakness and uncertainty in this decade, the world will drift to tragedy. It's not going to happen on my watch. Our country changed on September the 11th. Our whole perspective about security and peace must change with the lessons of September the 11th. Let me share some of the things I've learned as the President.

First, we face an enemy that is—that has no conscience. They are—they'll cut off a head just like that and not care. They will take innocent life in order to achieve a dark vision. That's the reality of these people. That's why I tell people you cannot negotiate with them. You cannot hope for the best with them. In order to secure our country, we must stay on the offense and bring them to justice, defeat them elsewhere so we do not have to face them here at home.

That is the reality of the world we live in today, and it's a stark reality, but it's necessary. It's a reality that is in the forefront of my thinking. The Government has a solemn duty to protect us, and so when you hear talk about staying on the offense, that's why. And we're making progress. We're dismantling the Al Qaida network. And it's a hard work.

It's a different—I see some great vets here with us today. This is a different kind of war that we're in. It is a—[*applause*]. Thanks for coming, men. But it is a different kind of war than you're used to. It's a war where there is a patient, ruthless enemy that hides and waits for countries to lower their guard and then strikes. And they're trying to intimidate us. This is really—the war on terror is an interesting way to describe the world in which we live. It's really a battle and a struggle against ideological extremists who have hijacked a great religion and used terror as a weapon to intimidate people of good heart and good soul and good conscience. I clearly see the task at hand.

Secondly, in this new kind of war, we must not only deal with the terrorists; we must send clear signals to those who would harbor terrorists. See, we've got to disrupt their capacity to find safe haven. And when an American President speaks, he better speak clearly and mean what he says. If a President sends mixed signals, the world will drift toward tragedy.

And so I said to the Taliban, "Give them up, or face serious consequences." "Give them up" meant give up Al Qaida. They defied. They said, "America really doesn't mean what it says." But I did. And so we put together a coalition, and we routed the Taliban.

We upheld the doctrine. We said—[*applause*]. And the world is better for it. America is safer as a result of our action.

I told you about the people showing up to vote in Afghanistan. It is amazing to me, at least, to think that 3½ years ago, the Taliban, these unbelievably barbaric people, by the way, were running the country. They would take a woman out in the public square and whip her because they didn't think she conformed to their dark view of the world. If you dared speak out, if you dared exercise your religion in a way you were comfortable with, you were punished. And now they're headed toward a democracy. People are showing up to vote. The world is more peaceful as a result, and Afghanistan is an ally. They're an ally in the war on terror.

You know, I was in Cleveland a couple of weeks ago, and I was there to kick off the International Children's Games. And right there to my right as I stood up to say welcome to America, was the Afghan girls soccer team. It was amazing. It was a very emotional moment for me. I was so proud of our country that, in acting in our own self-interest, we acted in the interests of those young girls, who would not have been in our great country to play soccer had it not been for our willingness to uphold doctrine, to defend our security, and to liberate people.

Another lesson of September the 11th which is a vital lesson, and it's a lesson that's very important for our security, is that we must take threats seriously, before they fully materialize. See, I'm confident no—very few Americans would have ever felt that a President would have needed to stand up and say that, except September the 11th came. We used to think oceans could protect us. If we saw a threat overseas, we could say, "Gosh, well, there's a threat. We may have to deal with it, may not have to deal with it, but it's unlikely to cause us any harm." That's what happened on September the 11th—we no long have that luxury of thinking our security is afforded by protection from oceans.

And so I saw a threat in Saddam Hussein. I looked at his history. He had used weapons of mass destruction. He had the capability of making weapons of mass destruction. He harbored terrorists. Remember Abu Nidal? He's the guy that killed Leon Klinghoffer. His organization was harbored there in Iraq. Zarqawi, we knew, was in and out. He's the guy who beheads people now and brags about it on Arab TV, trying to intimidate us. He was in and out of Iraq. He funded families of suiciders. That's an unconscionable act, and yet this guy said, "We'll provide a little financial incentive for you." He killed thousands of his own people. He's a dangerous man.

And remembering the lessons of September the 11th, I went to the United Nations and the Congress. I said to the Congress, I said, "Look, he's a threat. The intelligence shows he's a threat. His history shows he's a threat. And we've got to remember the world we live in." And the Congress responded. Members of both political parties looked at the same intelligence and data and came to the conclusion I came to. By far, the vast majority of Members of the Senate and the House—including my opponent, by the way—looked at the same intelligence and said, "Saddam Hussein was a threat."

I then went to the United Nations, and I did for a reason—one, I want that organization to be effective. And so I basically said, "Look, you can either be an empty debating society or an effective international organization. When you say something, you mean it." And secondly, they had said year after year after year, resolution after resolution after resolution, "You're a problem, and we'll deal with you," and they never did, which, in my judgment, emboldens a tyrant. It certainly didn't frighten the tyrant.

So I went to the United Nations and said, "Look, this is a different era. The world changed. We see a threat. Do you?" And in a 15 to nothing vote in the United Nations Security Council, they said, "Saddam is a threat. Disclose, disarm, or face serious consequences." That is what the free world said.

And so we—but as he had for decades—a decade, Saddam Hussein defied the demands. He wasn't about to listen to the demands of the free world. As a matter of fact, we agreed to inspectors. We thought they would be a good thing.

Let me say something. Let me step back. The reason I thought diplomacy was important and the inspectors were important is because the use of military is the last option

of the President. It's serious business when the President puts people into harm's way. It is the toughest decision a Commander in Chief can make, to say to moms and dads and husbands and wives, "I believe it's necessary for your loved one to defend our security." And so I was hoping that we could solve this diplomatically and peacefully.

You know, he deceived the inspectors. So I'm confronted with a choice at this point. Having tried diplomacy, working with the United States Congress, and seeing the deception taking place, do I forget the lessons of September the 11th and trust the word of this madman and hope for the best, or do I take action to defend the country? I will tell you, given that choice, I will defend America every time. [*Applause*] Thank you. A couple of other points I want to make. [*Applause*] Thanks. Thanks a lot. I appreciate that.

You know, we didn't find the stockpiles with thought we would find, but I want to remind you, he had the capability of making weapons. And had he once again defied the world, he would have made them. And having that capability, it also gave him the opportunity to pass them on to an enemy. It's a risk we just simply couldn't take. Knowing what I know today, I would have made the same decision. I firmly believe America and the world are safer with Saddam Hussein sitting in a prison cell.

Let me talk about three more points, then I'll answer some questions if we have time. Sometimes I can get a little windy. [*Laughter*]

We put together a vast coalition, nearly 40 countries in Afghanistan and nearly 30 in Iraq. And it's important we work with others in this war on terror because you've got to share intelligence, and you've got to work to cut off money. And when we find a threat, it's important to be able to pick up the phone and call a friend like Great Britain and say, "Pick this person up, please," because—"and here's the evidence." In other words, there's got to be a collaborative effort. And we are. And we're working closely with countries around the world. I'll continue to work on this coalition when I'm your President for 4 more years. But I will never turn over our security—national security decisions to leaders of other countries.

I'm proud of the coalition we've put together. And it's very important for those of us with the microphones to be singing the praises of the coalition partners and thanking the moms and dads from Great Britain, Italy, South Korea, Japan, Poland, from all around the world, for the same contributions that the families of our troops have made.

And speaking about our troops, I made a pledge to those who wear the uniform and their loved ones: They'll have all the support that we can give them from the Federal Government. And we met that duty. I don't know if you know this, but military pay is up by 21 percent since I've been the President. Housing is better for those who—for the loved ones of those who wear the uniform. We're transforming our military, which is important.

You know, we were configured—our troops deployments were configured for the cold war. We were configured to fight an enemy that no longer exists. The Soviet Union doesn't exist, and yet we had troops stationed around Europe, for example, with the equipment necessary to take on the Soviet Union. That's why at the VFW the other day, I said, "Wait a minute. Let's be smart about how we deploy our troops. Equipment has changed since the Soviet era. We can replace tanks with Stryker Brigades and achieve the same objective. We don't need as many troops stationed overseas anymore because the Soviet era is no longer a threat."

When you can replace land troops with more effective aircraft, it means people are stationed at home, that they can be deployed rapidly, and it means less unsettling times for our troops, less rotations, less pressure on the system, plus taxpayer savings. We're doing wise things with our military. We're funding the military and we're transforming the military to meet the threats of a new era. And it's important for the Commander in Chief to see clearly how best to align our military to keep the peace.

When it came to funding our troops, we have a difference of opinion in this campaign. I put a supplemental up to the Congress in September of last year. It was money for body armor and spare parts, ammunition,

and fuel, that which is necessary when you've got people in combat in both Afghanistan and Iraq. And I want to thank the members of both political parties for their strong bipartisan support. We had great bipartisan support, so much so that only 12 United States Senators voted against it, 2 of whom are my opponent and his runningmate. It's an issue in this campaign. He—when pressed, my opponent said, you know, "I actually did vote for the $87 billion, before I voted against it." It's kind of an interesting explanation. People around here are plain talkers. And then he went on, when pressed, to say, "Well, gosh, it was"—you know, "I did the right thing," or he's proud of his vote, I think he said, and then said, "It's a complicated matter." Now, there's nothing complicated about providing for our troops in combat. I will continue to be a Commander in Chief who supports our troops.

Two quick points. One, the goal in Iraq and Afghanistan is for there to be democratic and free countries who are allies in the war on terror. That's the goal. We will meet that goal by providing security so that their political processes can work. There will be Presidential elections this fall in Afghanistan. There will be elections in Iraq. There are two leaders in Afghanistan and Iraq who believe in the aspirations of their people. These are people who are committed to democracy. It's—we will stay there to get the job done.

It's—the Iraqis—it's tough to go from tyranny to freedom. You can imagine a society in which, if you stepped out of line, you were either done in or tortured. And so people in Iraq are watching us carefully. They wonder whether or not America is going to honor its word. That's why the other day I took exception when my opponent said, if he's elected, we'll substantially reduce the troops in 6 months. He shouldn't have said that. See, it sends a mixed signal to the enemy, for starters, so the enemy hangs around for 6 months and 1 day. It sends a mixed signal to our own troops, and it says something to the Iraqis. It says, maybe America isn't going to keep its word. It's vital when we say something to the Iraqi people, we keep our word, so that they begin to take risk toward a free society. They want to be free—they want to be free.

And so what the strategy is, to stay there as long as it takes to get the job done and not one day longer. That's the message I send to the people of Iraq and our troops and the enemy.

And you'll see an Afghan army grow up, and you'll see an Iraqi police force and army grow up to take care of those who want to stop the advance of freedom, and that's really what we're talking about.

Just real quick, I believe freedom changes societies, and I believe a free society is a peaceful society. And therefore, it is in our national interests to promote a liberty in a part of the world that is full of hatred and resentment and intolerance.

I talk about a dinner I had with Prime Minister Koizumi, and I think I talked about that today with some people on Air Force One, if I'm not mistaken. And anyway, so I'm having dinner with Koizumi, and we're talking about North Korea. See, I made the decision that no longer can we convince Kim Chong-il to disarm if it's only the United States talking to the North Koreans. I felt it was important to bring other countries into the mix, like China and Japan and South Korea and Russia, so there's now five countries saying to the tyrant in North Korea, "Disarm—disarm."

And so I'm talking to Prime Minister Koizumi about that. Really what I'm talking about is how to keep the peace, how to use U.S. influence and Japanese influence, in this case, to keep the peace. He's the Prime Minister of a country that my dad went to war with. It's amazing, isn't it, that, gosh, half a century later, after a young Navy pilot—and I'm sure your dads or granddads might have fought in the same theater—we're back talking peace with a former enemy. You know why? Because after World War II, my predecessor and others believed that liberty had the capacity to transform an enemy into a peaceful partner, and that's what happened.

There were some doubters and skeptics. "The reconstruction effort wasn't going well," or, "It was too tough over there, and maybe, maybe the Japanese don't have the capacity to self-govern." But somebody that served in Government had great faith in liberty and didn't abandon the concept that we hold dear. And here I am, sitting down with

the Prime Minister of Japan talking about the peace. Someday, when we complete our job in Iraq, an American President is going to be having dinner with an elected leader from Iraq talking about peace, and the world will be better for it.

I want to talk—just real quick, a story, and then I'll be glad to answer your questions. Let me say also, when I say liberty, by serving the cause of liberty, I tell people, serves our security interests. It also serves something which I believe is part of the American soul. Freedom is not America's gift to the world; freedom is the Almighty God's gift to each man and woman in this world. We believe that in America. I think it's one of the most noble aspects of our national character, is that we believe in human dignity, no matter the religion of the person.

Let me tell you an interesting story, and then I promise to answer some questions. [*Laughter*] If Laura were here, she'd be giving me the hook. [*Laughter*] That's the way it is. [*Laughter*]

Anyway, the Oval Office door opens up and in walks seven men from Iraq, all of whom had had their right hands cut off by Saddam Hussein. They had been to Houston, Texas, where a newscaster had—a quite famous newscaster—had raised money and set up a foundation to help people. He saw their story through a documentary, and he flew them to Houston to get new hands. So these guys come walking in the Oval Office—I mean, it was a powerful moment. The Oval Office is a—it's a shrine to democracy, and it tends to take everybody's breath away who walks in—except Mother's—[*laughter*]—who is still telling me what to do. [*Laughter*] And I'm listening—about half the time. [*Laughter*]

Anyway, so these guys walk in, you know, and I was emotional. They were emotional. And I said, "Why you?" He said, "The Saddam dinar had devalued and"—he was a merchant, a small-business man; I don't know if he was a Subchapter S corporation or not, but he was a small-business man. And he had sold dinars on a particular day to buy another currency, euros or dollars, so he could buy gold to manufacture his product. And because the Iraqi * dinar had devalued, Saddam Hussein plucked this guy out of society to punish him and six other small merchants, for the devaluation of their currency. He just summarily said, "You're it, come here," and cut his hand off.

Isn't it an amazing contrast, to think of a country that was ruled by a tyrant who just said, "We'll cut the hands off of people to make me look better," and a country that has got a compassionate individual who is willing to pay for their way to America to get a new hand? That's what we're talking about. It's such a stark, vivid contrast about a country that is compassionate and strong and decent and noble and a country run by a tyrant, where seven poor individuals had their lives severely affected until rescued by an American.

The guy takes a Sharpie. He holds the pen, and he writes "God Bless America" in Arabic. It was a powerful moment in my Presidency. I told him, I said, "Welcome to the Oval Office." I said, "I want you to understand that the Office of President is bigger than the individual, and when you have a free society in Iraq and have the institutions bigger than the people, no longer will a thug be able to summarily affect your life the way Saddam Hussein did." He said, "Thank God for America." He said, "You're my liberator." I said, "No, I want you to walk out and look in the camera, and I want you to thank the moms and dads of our service people and the taxpayers of America for liberating you and making you free."

These are historic times—these are historic times. I'm asking for 4 more years to spread freedom and peace.

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

The President. Let me answer some questions right quick.

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

The President. You can chant that, or I'll answer questions. [*Laughter*] Yes, sir. Sit down, please. First of all, great color shirt. [*Laughter*] Go ahead and yell it. If I don't like it, I'll just change the question. [*Laughter*]

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* White House correction.

Praying for the President

Q. On behalf of all—thank you and God bless you. We're praying for you.

The President. Thank you. He said he's praying for me. I appreciate that. Thanks. And by the way, I appreciate the prayers. It's an amazing country, where people pray for me. It really is. It's great. Thank you.

Go ahead. Do you have a question?

The President and Labor Unions

Q. Yes. Being that Wisconsin and Minnesota are swing States and——

The President. Minnesota and Wisconsin are swing States, I agree with that.

Q. Thankfully, I believe, because of talk radio.

The President. Yes.

Q. But in addition to that, they're also big union States.

The President. Sure, union States.

Q. Being in a union——

The President. You're a union member. Good, see, I'm interpreting faithfully. [*Laughter*]

Q. But being a union member, I have had a lot of feedback that you're not 100 percent for unions, and I'd like you——

The President. Yes, he said—the question is, do I like unions?

Q. Well, that's one of—yes, that is the question.

The President. I respect everybody's right to unionize if they so choose. But let me tell you what's equally important. When you cut taxes, you cut taxes on people whether they're in a union or not. Your union members have got more money in their pocket, thanks to what I did. This wasn't a union-nonunion tax cut. This was a tax cut for everybody. And when you're securing America, you're securing it not only for union people but nonunion people. But go ahead. You tell your workers I respect unions, and I respect the people who work for unions.

Yesterday I was in Ridley, Pennsylvania, at a Boeing plant, a unionized plant, was warmly received on the shop floor by union workers. Go ahead. This is kind of like a dialog, you know. [*Laughter*]

Q. They believe the reason why is because of your views or your regulations on immigration, and I——

Immigration Policy

The President. Yes. He's asking my views on immigration. Thanks. Here's what I believe. I believe that we have a policy today that is not working, and my responsibility is to address problems. We have a situation where we've got willing employers who can't find workers here in America to fill jobs, who are looking for people who are coming across the border. Talk to some of your farm workers—they know what I'm talking about—or your—people—meatpackers. I mean, there's a lot of workers—lot of employers who can't find workers. Interestingly enough, there's a lot of people who want to improve themselves, and so they're willing to walk miles to work. And so I believe a good policy is for a willing employer, who can't find a U.S. citizen to fill the job, to be able to look in a legal fashion for somebody who's willing to fill the job.

I think that's an important part of keeping the economy growing. I also know it's an important part of being a compassionate America. I mean, why would you want to have a system where the employer is illegal, the worker is illegal, and if the worker gets harmed, he or she is fearful of bringing a complaint, for fear of not being able to fulfill their function.

Look, I was the Governor of the great State of Texas. We had a—[*applause*]—thank you, ma'am. We had a—there you go. We had a—we obviously had an issue with this. There's moms and dads who live in Mexico who feel an obligation to work to feed their kids, and if they can make $5 in America as opposed to 50 cents in Mexico, they're going to come. And so, therefore, in order to, in my judgment, to better enforce our borders, which we must do, we need a temporary-worker program that says to people—again, I repeat, if you can't find a worker, let's have it legal so you can find somebody to do the job.

Now, this will enable somebody to go back and forth to their country. There will be a—you know, looking forward to working with Congress on limiting this. This doesn't mean automatic citizenship. I don't think you ought to penalize people who have been waiting in line for citizenship with somebody who has got a temporary-worker card. But I think

the system needs to be changed, and that's what you can tell your union buddies, that this is a system that says we can't—if you can't find a worker, then you ought to be able to legally be able to hire somebody who's willing to do the job.

Let me also tell you something. One reason I'm for trade in our neighborhood is because I know ultimately the way to keep pressure off our borders is for people to be able to find work close to home, that people want to be able to work close to home. You got to understand, moms and dads in Mexico have the same desire as moms and dads here to put food on the table for their families. And if they can find work at home, it's going to take the pressure of our borders. And the best way to do so is to have free and fair trade in our neighborhood as well.

Yes, sir.

Culture of Life

Q. Could you tell us how you intend to cultivate what you call the "culture of life" in America?

The President. He wants to know about culture of life. Well, culture of life says that, Mr. President, sign the partial-birth abortion bill, in order to discourage the brutal practice of partial-birth. Encouraging a culture of life is to encourage parental notification laws. Encouraging a culture of life is to say that if a pregnant mom is killed, that that person who killed that mom is also equally culpable for the death of their child. In other words, it's to pass reasonable laws that begin to say to people, life matters in America.

Now, cultures change slowly, and this is still a very—it's a very heartfelt debate on behalf of—in the political process, on the abortion issue. And my attitude is, is that I'll sign laws that begin to change people's perception of life and, at the same time, speak out for a culture of life, because I think a culture of—a society that embraces a culture of life is a much more hospitable, generous, and compassionate society. [*Applause*] Thank you.

Yes, what you got? The mike holder has got a question.

Drug Use/Faith-Based Initiative

Q. What I would like to ask——

The President. Here I'm standing by the speaker. Kind of blew me——

Q. Well, first of all, is that I agree with this gentleman. I'm glad that we're all praying for you.

The President. Thank you.

Q. I'm a local youth minister, recently hired. And one of the things—two of the things we've talked about today are enemies and freedom. And I believe that the enemy that we need the greatest freedom from right now happens to be Satan, and it's the enemy that we also don't necessarily always see. There's so many people who are being attacked on every level. A lot of those people are youth that are in our middle schools and our high schools. And I was just wondering how we can do more for faith-based initiatives for children, before they're drug addicts?

The President. Yes. I appreciate you saying that. Look, well, first of all, it's for me to call upon people such as yourself to interface with children early, before it's too late. You answered the question by your actions. But in terms of reducing demand for drug—you ask a specific issue on drug use, for example. We've got a collaborative effort with faith-based groups, community groups, neighborhood groups all aimed at sending the same message you're sending. And it's a kind of universal effort necessary to say to a child, "Drugs will destroy you." And it's working, frankly. We've reduced drug use by 11 percent in 3½ years—it's not "we," it's community groups have done so in 3½ years.

You're right, there needs to be a positive message sent to our youth. There also needs to be a focused effort on helping the drug addicts who consume most of the drugs. A percentage of—a relatively small percentage of the people consume most of the drugs, and that's why I'm working with Congress to fund a drug recovery program, of which an integral part of that will be a Faith-Based Initiative. And the way it works is, is a person gets a voucher that he or she can redeem at the program he or she chooses that meets her own or his own needs. And that includes the ability of faith-based programs to become involved, as I told you, with helping people change their hearts and, therefore, change their lives.

Thank you for what you do. I appreciate you being a youth minister. Thanks.

Yes, ma'am. You're not nervous, are you? [*Laughter*]

Funding for the Arts

Q. No, not at all.

The President. You kind of look like it. [*Laughter*]

Q. Mr. President—[*inaudible*]—pray for you.

The President. Thank you.

Q. ——I realize what you've done, and I was curious to know what your—[*inaudible*]—is for funding leaders involved across the United States.

The President. Funding the arts? Well, we do that through the National Endowment of the Arts, is the best way to do that. It's the vehicle that we use in Washington, DC.

Q. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Sure. You're welcome. Glad you're here.

Yes, ma'am.

Prescription Drug Costs

Q. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Yes. Great question. Her question was about the cost of drugs. Well, one is to expedite generic drugs on the market. Generic drugs are sold at a vast discount from brand-name drugs. And we put through, in the Medicare bill, as well as executive action through the FDA, a way to speed generics to the market so people are able to buy the very same drug that's sold at 50 at 10.

Secondly, I believer that part of good marketing is for people to have exposure to price of drugs. So one of the things we've done is we've put a virtual market right on the computer for people to look up the different costs of drugs at their local pharmacy, so that there's better selection when it comes to purchasing.

Thirdly, we are studying whether or not importation will work. I put together a committee to make sure that—look, what I don't want to do is be the President that says, "We'll allow for importation," and all of a sudden, drugs that are manufactured somewhere else come in over the Internet, and it begins to harm our citizens. But I'm looking at this. There is a lot of pressure in Congress for importation. So I think it makes sense for us to make sure that we can do so in a safe way. If it's safe, then it makes sense.

But again, I repeat to you, I have an obligation to—for the safety of our citizens. And what I don't want is somebody to say, "Oh, gosh, I'll be able to buy a cheaper drug from Canada," and that drug ends up coming from another country without proper inspection and proper safety. I believe—I know Government has an obligation to make sure, before we put policy in place, that that which somebody buys is actually the product they think they're buying and it's safe. We have an obligation to do that.

So there are some of the decisions that will make—hopefully help keep the cost—but by far, the most effective way to help on drug costs is to move generics to the market faster. People say, "Well, why aren't they moving fast?" Well, first of all, you want people to be able to recoup investment. I mean, part of allowing for a drug company to be able to price a drug at a higher rate for a while is so that they can recoup research and development. And we want our pharmaceutical companies to be on the leading edge of change. I mean, they've come up with some amazing cures for diseases through research and development. And it's an incentive for them to be able to recoup that investment.

But for a while, until we got in there, they were able to deny or delay generic drugs from being able to come on the market to compete with the brand-name drug through all kinds of interesting head fakes, I guess, is the proper way of putting it. In other words, they'd say, "Well, there's a patent issue here or a patent issue there," and they would delay, delay, and delay. And so what we've done is we've said, "Here's a reasonable time for you to recoup your investment, and then generics are coming behind." And there's a lot of generics coming on to the market. And part of making sure that people get drugs at a reasonable price is for there to be consumer information available. And that's also a response of the—responsibility for Medicare bureaucracy.

Listen, I've got the hook. I got the sign to go. We could be here for hours, but the problem is there's about 15,000 people waiting somewhere else—[*laughter*]—equally as important as you all. They vote. It's an important State, as the guy said. He said, "It's a swing State." We intend to not only carry Wisconsin but Minnesota as well.

I want to thank you all for coming. I hope you've enjoyed this as much as I have. Thank you for your help. God bless. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:28 p.m. at Lakefront Park. In his remarks, he referred to Dale Schultz, candidate for Congress in Wisconsin's Third Congressional District; Mayor Jack Breault of Hudson, WI; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi; President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan; Prime Minister Ayad al-Alawi of the Iraqi Interim Government; Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan; and Chairman Kim Chong-il of North Korea.

Remarks in St. Paul, Minnesota

August 18, 2004

The President. Thank you all very much for coming. Thanks for having me. I'm glad we came, Mr. Mayor. I'm proud to stand by your side. I am really proud to have your endorsement. St. Paul has got a wise and tough and principled man as the mayor of this city. I appreciate him bucking the political winds to do what he thinks is right in the 2004 campaign.

You know, there's a lot of differences in this campaign. The other day, my opponent said he thought you could find the heart and soul of America in Hollywood. I think you can find it right here in this hall. I'm proud to be with the heart and soul of America tonight, and thank you for coming. I'm here to ask for the vote. I'm in this important State to let the people know I'm asking for the vote. There is more to do to make America a safer place, a stronger place, and a better place for every single citizen.

I'm also here to thank the grassroots activists for your support. I want you to work hard to put up the signs, man the phones, register your friends and neighbors to vote. I appreciate all your hard work, and when you get them headed toward the polls, remember that George Bush and Dick Cheney are what's best for this country. [*Applause*] Thank you. With your help, we will carry the great State of Minnesota. With your help, we'll achieve a great victory in November of this year.

I only wish Laura could be here to see and hear this crowd. She's a wonderful mother and a great wife. Listen, I'm going to give you some reasons to put me back in, but perhaps the most important one of all is so that Laura has 4 more years as the First Lady.

I'm proud of my runningmate, Dick Cheney. Listen, I admit it. He's not the prettiest face in the race. [*Laughter*] I didn't pick him for his looks. [*Laughter*] I picked him for his judgment, his experience, his ability to get the job done.

I'm proud to be up here with a great United States Senator, Norman Coleman. I appreciate his service. He's here with his dad. It's good to see you, Mr. Coleman. Thank you for being here. I want to thank members of the Minnesota congressional delegation who are here, Gil Gutknecht, John Kline, and Mark Kennedy, three fine Members of the House. Thank you all for coming, proud you're here.

I want to thank Pat Anderson and Erik Paulsen for coming. I want to thank all the elected officials who are here. Thank you for serving your State and your community.

I appreciate Laura Ingraham for being the emcee of this fine event. I want to thank all the veterans who are here tonight. I appreciate you coming. I want to thank my friend Joe Repya. I want to thank the Minnesota Teen Challenge Choir for joining us tonight. Thank you all for coming. And I appreciate my friend Ricky Skaggs for being here as well.

Most of all, thank you all for taking time out of your day to come by and say hello. I appreciate it. It means a lot—it means a lot. You know, in the past few years we've been through a lot together. We've accomplished a great deal. But there's only one reason to look backward at the record, and that's to determine who best to lead this Nation forward. I'm asking for the vote because so much is at stake. We have so much more to do to move this Nation forward. We've got more to do to create jobs and to improve