

Week Ending Friday, September 3, 2004

**Remarks to Journalists in
Miami, Florida**

August 27, 2004

Hurricane Charley

I have just been briefed by Mike Brown here at FEMA about the progress that the Federal Government, in working with the State government, is making toward helping these poor people who got hurt by Hurricane Charley and Tropical Storm Bonnie.

When I came down here a while ago, I said that—I promised that there would be a full-scale Federal focus on helping the State of Florida. And I tasked Mike Brown to make sure that that happened, and he has done a great job. I appreciate you serving the people of this State.

And Jeb has done a fine job too. He is—he understands that a Governor must lead, and he had led. And he has helped focus resources on helping these people that need help.

There is further work to be done here in Florida. Chairman Bill Young is with us. We have been discussing the need for a supplemental fund, supplemental funding request of the Congress for \$2 billion to help continue to rebuild Florida. The Chairman and I had a good discussion on this issue. He knows Florida well. He knows the west coast of Florida really well. And as importantly, he knows how the Congress works well. And he said as soon as they get back, they'll take this matter up. This money will help for cleanup and housing and other services, small-business loans that are provided through FEMA.

As well, we're concerned about the citrus growers here in Florida, the nursery men and women in the State of Florida. We think there is ample money in the agricultural budgets to handle the damage done by Charley to the citrus industry and the nursery industry and the vegetable industry. If not, we'll work with the Chairman to provide

money at the Federal level to help this State rebuild.

The main thing that's happened here in Florida is the people have responded. I want to thank the Red Cross for being at the table here. The Red Cross is always first on the scene to provide compassion and love. Senator Miller used to be a Governor, and he spent time at disasters. And as Governor of Texas I have too, and Jeb obviously has, and as President I've been there too. And always, the Red Cross led the army of compassion at the sites. And the people of Florida have responded really well, provided compassion and decency and care.

I also want to thank the power companies from the Southeast that have responded. It's amazing how much electricity has been restored. We're down to, here in this State, less than 20,000 people—I think it is, isn't it, Mike—that are looking for electricity. Heck, the last time I was here, it was 1.7 million people that didn't have electricity. And a lot of the reason why the electricity has been restored is, not only have the Florida power companies responded, but the power companies from around the Southeast have responded.

What I'm saying is, is that these disasters cause a lot of harm and grief, but they also bring out the best in our citizenry. And there's a lot of compassion for the people whose lives have been turned upside down. And I want to thank those here in Florida and around this part of the world for providing that help.

Again, Jeb, good job, and same to you, Mike. Thank you all for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:36 p.m. at Fire Station Number Two. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida; and Senator Zell Miller of Georgia. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Remarks in Miami

August 27, 2004

The President. Thank you all for coming. *Vamos a ganar en Noviembre.* Thanks for coming. I like a line of work where you get introduced by your wife. I love her dearly. She's a great wife, a wonderful mother, and she is a terrific First Lady. I'm going to give you some reasons why I think you need to put me back in, but perhaps the most important one of all is so that Laura is the First Lady for 4 more years.

Listen, Laura and I are thrilled to be here with our friend Zell Miller from Georgia. He is—I've asked him to give a big speech next week. He's the keynote speaker for our convention. I asked him because he puts his country above partisan politics. I asked him because he's a man of—he's got a great heart, and he cares about people from all walks of life. I picked the right guy to give a big speech for us next Wednesday night.

I'm sorry my brother is not here, *mi hermanito*. He's working. He's doing what the people of Florida expect him to do, and that is to do his job. I just saw him, and we were talking about the damage done by Hurricane Charley and the response by the Federal Government and the State government, which has been swift and sure. We're helping the people that need help on the west coast and throughout the interior of your State. We're doing our jobs as public servants.

I was just talking to the chairman of the Appropriations Committee. He was with us. He happens to be from Florida as well, Chairman Young, and we both agreed we'll provide the money necessary to help people with their housing and small-business loans and Government assistance as well to help the citrus growers and vegetable growers and nursery men and women who've been hurt by this storm. I want to thank them for their hard work.

I appreciate Congressman Mark Foley who's with us today—Congressman Foley. I want to thank my friend Mario Diaz-Balart, who's with us today. Mario—*bienvenidos*, Mario.

I want to appreciate David Dermer, who happens to be the mayor of Miami Beach. I appreciate him being here. Mr. Mayor,

gracias por su apoyo. Su apoyo es muy importante.

I appreciate my friend Lynn Swann. He's the head of the President's Council on Physical Fitness, and he is an—he sets an important message: Exercise. [Laughter] Take care of your bodies. Get out and move around. He just warned me, he forgot to tell me what it means to fall off a mountain bike. [Laughter] But I'm proud of my friendship with Lynn. I want to thank him.

I want to thank all the grassroots activists who are here, the people who are participating in the political process. We have a duty in this country to vote. See, we have a duty in a free country to go to the polls. I'm asking you to register your friends and neighbors to vote. See, reach out to people from all walks of life. You can find Republicans who need to register. You'll find some discerning independents who need to register. You can find some Democrats just like Zell who need to register. And get them to the poll and remind them that if they're interested in this country being safer, stronger, and better, put Dick Cheney and me back in office.

Now, I want to thank you for what you have done. I want to thank you for what you're going to do, which is to turn out that vote. When we're coming down the stretch, get your friends and neighbors to the polls and remind them that we've been through a lot together during the past years and we've accomplished a lot. But there's only one reason to look backward, and that is to determine who best to lead us forward. I'm here to tell you, I'm ready to lead this country for 4 more years. I've got an agenda.

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

The President. We have more to do. We have more to do to make sure our public schools are the centers of excellence we know they all can be. You might remember what it was like 3½ years ago. We had a system that just shuffled the children through, grade after grade, year after year, without them learning the basics. We came to Washington to challenge that system. Listen, we provided more Federal funding to help the schools down here, but we now expect results. We're