

at what the cost of rising premiums and defensive medicine costs the Federal taxpayer. Remember, we pay a lot of money on Medicare. We pay a lot of money for the veterans. We pay a lot of money on Medicaid. And therefore, these lawsuits are running up the cost to the Federal taxpayer.

So I said, "This is a Federal issue," and went to the Congress. Of course, we get it passed out of House, and it gets stuck in the Senate. I'll tell you why it's stuck in the Senate. The plaintiff's bar are one of the most powerful—is one of the most powerful special interests in Washington, DC. Make no mistake about it. You try to get tort reform out of the United States Senate, it gets shut down just like that because of the special interests in Washington.

So there are two ways to help you be able to afford a better plan—three ways, excuse me—HSAs, association health plans, medical liability reform. Those are three ways that will help reduce the cost of medicine and give you a chance to get a product that you can afford. [Applause] Thank you.

Yes, sir. Final question. This has got to be the last question because Laura and I are headed to Motown. That would be Detroit.

Prayers for the President

Q. God bless you, Mr. President.

The President. He has, thank you.

Q. Youngest of 11, 7 boys, all served in the military.

The President. Fantastic.

Q. The only thing I wanted to say—I don't have a question for you because you and I are on the same page, but I want you to go out throughout the country, and every time you ask for a vote, you ask for our prayers.

The President. Thank you, sir. I appreciate that very much. I appreciate you saying that. Let me conclude on this note. I appreciate that very much. That is a—you know something about this country—amazing thing is I don't have to ask for the prayers. You know why? The people are praying anyway. And I want to thank you for your prayers. I appreciate that very much.

God bless you all. Thanks for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:17 p.m. at Nashua High School North. In his remarks, he referred to Rudolph W. Giuliani, former mayor of New

York City; Gov. Craig R. Benson of New Hampshire and his wife, Denise; Gov. Mitt Romney of Massachusetts and his wife, Ann; Kathleen MacLellan Gregg, wife of Senator Judd Gregg; Mayor Bernard A. Streeter of Nashua, NH; senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zargawi; Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan; Prime Minister Ayad al-Alawi of the Iraqi Interim Government; Col. Muammar Abu Minyar al-Qadhafi, leader of Libya; President Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan; and Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of Israel. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

Remarks in Taylor, Michigan

August 30, 2004

The President. Thank you all. Thanks for coming. You know something—Bo knows Michigan, and he just told me we're going to carry this State, and I agree. I want to thank you all for coming. It is great to be here in Taylor, Michigan.

Laura and I are thrilled to be here, home of the WNBA champs; it's the home of the NBA champs. More importantly, it's the home of really decent people, good, hard-working American citizens, and I'm proud to be in your midst. I'm here to ask for your vote.

That's what we're doing. We're traveling your important State asking for the vote. I'm here to tell you I've got some—more to do to make this country a safer place and a more hopeful place for every American. But perhaps the most important reason to put me back in is so that Laura will have 4 more years. I'm proud of her. I love her dearly. She's a great mom, a wonderful wife, and a terrific First Lady.

And I'm proud to be standing by Bo. What a great man Bo Schembechler is. He is a strong, honorable citizen of this great State. You know, a few weeks ago, when my opponent was campaigning in Ohio, he said, "There's nothing better than Buckeye football, period."

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Then he came over here to Michigan, and he said, "I just go for Buckeye football."

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. It's a good thing Bo wasn't there. Then he remembered where he was,

and he called an audible. [*Laughter*] He said that the University of Michigan was a powerhouse team. You see, I'm running against a fellow who is a Washington politician, who has taken both sides of just about every issue, and now we can add Big Ten football to that list.

I'm running with a good man in Dick Cheney, a fine man. He—I admit it, he's not the prettiest face in the race. [*Laughter*] But I didn't pick him for his looks. I picked him for his judgment, his experience. I picked him because he can get the job done.

I want to thank all the grassroots activists who are here, the people that are out putting up the signs and making the phone calls. Not only are we here to ask for the vote, we're here to ask for your help. I believe we have a duty in this country to vote. I believe all of us have an obligation to go to the polls. I'm asking you to register your friends and neighbors. Give them a chance to vote. And then when you get them headed to the polls—[*laughter*—]remind them that if they want a safer country, a stronger country, and a better country, to put Dick Cheney and me back in office.

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

The President. In the past few years, we have been through a lot together, 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 am here to let you know that we have a plan to make this a safer world and a more hopeful America. I'm here to ask for your vote and your help. You see, there is more to do. There is more work to be done.

We've got more to do to make our public schools the centers of excellence we all know they can be. When we came to office 3 years ago, too many of our children were being shuffled through school, grade by grade, year after year, without learning the basics. I went to Washington to challenge the soft bigotry of low expectations. We're reforming our public schools by demanding high standards, accountability, and local control of schools. My administration will challenge those schools that will not teach and will not

change. We want no child left behind in America.

There is more work to be done to maintain this path to excellence. We'll make sure there's more math and science in our high school classrooms so our kids will be prepared for the jobs of the 21st century. We'll make sure technology is in our classrooms. We want a high school diploma to mean something. What I'm telling you, after 4 more years, a rising generation of Americans will have the skills and confidence necessary to realize the great dreams of the American system.

We got more to do to make sure health care is available and affordable. You might remember the old Medicare debate. Campaign after campaign, politicians came around and said, "Oh, we're going to fix Medicare." But it was called "Mediscare." People didn't want to deal with it, but the system was failing our seniors. In order to make sure our seniors have got prescription drug coverage, which they will in 2006, I led the United States Congress to strengthen Medicare, and our health care is better for the seniors of this country.

We've expanded community health centers for low-income Americans. We've created health savings accounts so families can save tax-free for their own health care needs. There's more work to be done. We'll introduce technologies into the health care to hold down costs.

Most Americans get their health care through their jobs. Most new jobs are created by small businesses, and many small businesses are having trouble affording health care. The best way to enable American families to get health care is to allow small businesses to pool resources together so they can buy insurance at the same discount big businesses can.

In order to make sure you've got good health care here in Michigan, we need to stop these frivolous lawsuits that are running docs out of businesses and raising your costs. See, I don't think you can be pro-doctor, pro-hospital, pro-patient, and pro-plaintiff-attorney at the same time. I think you have to make a choice. My opponent made his

choice, and he put him on the ticket. [*Laughter*] I made my choice. I am for medical liability reform now. In all we do to improve health care here in this country, we will make sure the health decisions are made by patients and doctors, not by bureaucrats in Washington, DC.

I'm running because I know we've got more work to do to keep this economy growing. You might remember what our economy has been through during the last 3½ years. We've been through a recession. We've been through corporate scandals. By the way, it's now clear that we will not tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America. We've been through the terror attack, all of which affected job creation here in America.

But we're overcoming those obstacles. We're overcoming it because we've got great workers in America. We're overcoming them because our farmers and ranchers are good at what they do. We're overcoming them because the entrepreneurial spirit in this country is strong. We're also overcome them because of well-timed tax cuts.

When it came time to reduce taxes, we did it the fair way. We said, "If you're paying taxes, you ought to get relief." We raised the child credit to help our families. We reduced the marriage penalty. The Tax Code sends the wrong message. We ought to be encouraging marriage in America, not discouraging marriage. We helped our small businesses. This time, the check actually was in the mail.

Because we acted, our economy has been growing at rates as fast as any in nearly 20 years. We've added over 1.5 million jobs since last August. The national unemployment rate is down to 5.5 percent, well below the national average of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s.

There is still more work to be done here in Michigan. The recovery has lagged here. And so as long as anybody is looking for a job, I'll work to make sure the environment for job creation is strong.

See, in order to make sure jobs are here in America, we need an energy policy. We need to become less dependent on foreign sources of energy. I submitted a plan to the United States Congress that encourages conservation, encourages research on alternative sources of energy, encourages the use of coal

in environmentally friendly ways, exploring for natural gas. But in all we do, we better make sure that we no longer have to beg for energy from other parts of the world. This country can do a better job.

We've got to make sure regulations are fair and reasonable on the employers of America. To keep jobs here in this country, we need reasonable automobile policies. American automobile makers are making the cleanest cars and trucks in history. We can do more. My administration has worked with manufacturers to set wise fuel efficiency standards. We will cut air pollution from diesel vehicles by more than 90 percent. My opponent has taken a different approach. He's consistently supported arbitrary, unfair fuel standards that could cost Michigan thousands of jobs and makes our cars less safe.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Now it's campaign time here in this great State, and he's shifted into reverse. [*Laughter*] Says he's not committed to drastically increasing efficiency standards. You know, he hasn't sounded this confused since he tried to decide if he owns an SUV.

In order to make sure jobs are here, we want to make sure that we're treated fairly around the world. Listen, our markets are open, and that's good for Michigan consumers. You've got more choices to choose from. You're going to get better price and better quality. What I'm saying is, is that we're treating you one way; you treat us the same way. We can compete with anybody, anytime, anywhere, so long as the playing field is level.

In order to make sure jobs stay here in America, we will expand our access to our community colleges so workers are able to gain the skills necessary to fill the jobs of the 21st century. In order to keep jobs here in America, we'll be wise about how we spend your money. See, I think the Federal Government ought to set priorities and let you keep your own money. You can spend your money far better than the Federal Government can.

In order to keep jobs here in America, we've got to keep your taxes low. Running up taxes on the American people will hurt this economic recovery. We have a difference of opinion in this race. My opponent went

out there, and he's already promised about \$2 trillion in new spending.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. We've still got September and October to go. [Laughter] So they said, "How are you going to pay for it?" He said, "Tax the rich." You've heard that before, haven't you? You know what that means. The rich dodge, and you pay. But we're not going to let him. We're going to carry Michigan and this country in November.

We have more to do—

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

The President. We have more to do. We've got more to do to wage and win the war on terror. Our future depends on our willingness to lead in this world. If America shows uncertainty or weakness in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This is not going to happen on my watch.

The world changed on that terrible September morning, and since that day, we have changed the world. Before September the 11th, Afghanistan served as the home base of Al Qaida, which trained and deployed thousands of killers to set up terror cells around the world, including our own country. Because we acted, Afghanistan is a rising democracy. I don't know if you know this or not, but over 10 million people have registered to vote in the upcoming Afghan Presidential elections. Because we acted, many young girls now go to school for the first time in Afghanistan. Because we acted, Afghanistan is an ally in the war on terror, and America and the world are safer.

Before September the 11th, Libya was spending millions to acquire weapons of mass destruction. Today, because America and our allies sent a clear and easy-to-understand message, 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. He was firing weapons at American pilots who were enforcing the world's sanctions. He had pursued and he had used weapons of mass destruction. He harbored terrorists. He attacked his neighbors. He subsidized the families of suicide bombers. He and his henchmen murdered

thousands of his own citizens. He was a source of great instability in the world's most volatile region. I saw a threat.

After September the 11th—one of the lessons of September the 11th, an important lesson that this country must never forget, is that we must take threats seriously before they fully materialize.

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

The President. And so I went to the United States Congress. I said, "We see a threat." The Congress looked at the same intelligence, remembered the same history of Saddam, and concluded that Saddam Hussein was a threat and authorized the use of force. My opponent came to the same conclusion that Saddam Hussein was a threat and authorized the use of force.

The last option of a President is the use of military. And so, therefore, I went to the United Nations in the hopes that we could solve this problem diplomatically, that we could deal with this threat through diplomatic means. There was a debate in the United Nations, and the Security Council of the United Nations voted unanimously to say to Saddam Hussein, "Disclose, disarm, or face serious consequences." The world spoke with united voice about the threat of Saddam Hussein.

But as he had over a decade, he chose to defy the demands of the free world. He ignored the demands of the free world. As a matter of fact, when the U.N. sent inspectors into Iraq, he systematically deceived them. So I had a choice to make: either forget the lessons of September the 11th and trust the word of a madman, or take action to defend this country. Given that choice, I will defend America.

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

The President. Even though we did not find the stockpiles we expected to find, Saddam had the capability of making weapons and could have passed that capability on to the enemy. That was a risk we could not afford to take after September the 11th. Given what I know today, I would have made the same decision. America and the world are safer with Saddam Hussein sitting in a prison cell.

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 now 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, my opponent now agrees with me that even though we haven't found the stockpiles we all thought were there, knowing everything we know today, he would have voted to go into Iraq and remove Saddam Hussein from power. I appreciate the fact that he cleared that up. [*Laughter*] But I do want to remind you, there are still 64 days for him to change his mind again.

I'm running because I know we've got more to do to defend this country. We must continue to work with friends and allies around the world to aggressively pursue the terrorists in Afghanistan and Iraq and elsewhere. You cannot talk sense to these people. You cannot negotiate with them. After September the 11th, you just can't hope for the best. We must aggressively pursue them around the world so we do not have to face them here at home.

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

The President. America will continue to lead the world with confidence and moral clarity. We have put together a strong coalition to help us defeat the enemy. There are nearly 40 nations involved in Afghanistan; some 30 nations are involved in Iraq. During the next 4 years, we will continue to build on these alliances, call upon our friends to work in concert to make us more secure. But I will never turn over America's national security decisions to leaders of other countries.

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

The President. We will keep our commitments to the people of Afghanistan and Iraq. We will help them become democratic and peaceful societies. It's in our national interest that they do so. These nations are now governed by two strong leaders who believe in the aspirations of their people. We've got a clear goal in those countries, countries that will be allies in the war on terror, countries that are headed down the road to democracy.

Our troops are helping to stabilize those countries. More importantly, they're helping to train Afghan citizens and Iraq citizens so they can do the hard work, so they can fight off the terrorists, so they can realize their dreams of a free society. Our military will complete this mission as quickly as possible so our troops do not stay a day longer than necessary.

And we will prevail. One of the reasons we'll prevail is because we've got a fantastic United States military. I've seen—I've had the privilege of meeting with them around our country and all around the world. I've seen their decency and their unselfish courage. I want to thank the veterans who are here for setting such a fine example for those who wear our uniform.

I made a commitment to those who wear our uniform and to the loved ones of those who wear the uniform, that they will have the resources they need to fight and win this war against the terrorists. I went to the United States Congress last September and proposed supplemental funding to support our troops in their missions in Afghanistan and in Iraq. This legislation provided funding for body armor and vital equipment, hazard pay, health benefits, ammunition, fuel, and spare parts. It was necessary funding. We received great bipartisan support for the funding request. As a matter of fact, the support was so strong that only 12 Members of the United States Senate voted against it—

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. —two of whom are my opponent and his runningmate.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. And so they say—asked him why. He said, "Well, I actually did vote for the \$87 billion, before I voted against it." Then they pressed him further, and he said, well, he was proud of his vote. Then they pressed him even further, and he said, "Well, 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, a free and peaceful Afghanistan will be powerful examples in a part of

the world that is desperate for freedom. Free nations do not export terror. Free nations listen to the hopes and aspirations of their people. By serving the cause of liberty, we're helping others, but we're making America more secure. By serving the cause of liberty, we are spreading the peace.

Laura and I were having dinner one evening with the Prime Minister of Japan in Tokyo. He's a fellow who's running a country that my dad was at war with. So was your dads and granddads. They were the enemy. But after World War II, my predecessors and others had this great, deep faith that liberty could transform societies, that liberty could convert an enemy into a friend. And they stood strong on those values.

The Prime Minister and I were talking about the peace. We were talking about how to work together to make the world a more peaceful place. By standing the line for what we believe in, by holding true to our values, someday an American President will be sitting down with a duly elected leader of Iraq, talking about how to make the world a more peaceful place.

By serving the ideal of liberty, we're serving the deepest ideals 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've got more to do to protect this country. I'm running because I understand there's an enemy out there that still lurks. They hate what we stand for. You know, we have a difference of opinion on these terrorists. My opponent said that going to war with them is actually improving their recruiting efforts. I'm sure you've heard that before. I believe the logic is upside-down. I think it shows that people don't understand the nature of these folks. See, during the 1990s, the terrorists were recruiting and training for war with us, long before America went to war with them. They don't need an excuse for their hatred. You don't create terrorists by fighting back. You defeat the terrorists by fighting back.

There's a lot of really good people at the Federal level and the State level and local level who are working hard to protect you. We reorganized the homeland defenses into the Department of Homeland Security to better communicate, to better respond.

We're making needed reforms in our intelligence-gathering. It is essential that we renew the PATRIOT Act so our law enforcement officials have the tools necessary to disrupt the terrorist cells. We're doing more to protect our borders and our ports.

We're working hard, but reform in Washington isn't easy. There's a lot of entrenched interests there, a lot of people who say, "I love the status quo." It's not enough to advocate reform; you've got to be able to get the job done. So when you're out gathering the vote, remind people that when it comes to reforming the schools and raising the standards and closing the achievement gap, we're getting the job done. When it comes to health care reforms to give our families and seniors more access and more choices, we're getting the job done. When it comes to improving this economy so people can find work, we're getting the job done. When it comes to better securing the homeland and defeating the terrorists and spreading freedom and peace, we're getting the job done. When you're out there campaigning, remind people, when it comes time to choose a President, put somebody back in there who can get the job done.

You know, we're living in exciting times. We really are. But they're times of change, and change can be unsettling for American families and workers. That's why I believe so strongly in promoting an ownership society in America. We want people owning their own health care accounts that they can take from job to job. We want people owning their own retirement accounts. Listen, baby boomers like me are just fine when it comes to Social Security. But for you younger workers out there, look carefully at the rhetoric during this campaign. Look carefully at the fiscal solvency of the Social Security system. I believe younger workers ought to have the option of taking some of their own money and putting it in personal savings accounts that they can call their own.

We want more people owning their own business in America. You know, one of the most hopeful statistics at the beginning of the 21st century is the homeownership rate is at an alltime high in America. We'll continue to promote homeownership in America. I love the fact that somebody opens up

their door to their house and says, "Welcome to my home. This is my piece of property." I believe strongly in ownership, because I know if you own something, you have a vital stake in the future of the United States of America.

In these changing times of ours, however, there are some things that won't change, the individual values we try to live by, courage and compassion, reverence and integrity. Our beliefs won't change, in liberty and opportunity and the nonnegotiable demands of human dignity. During changing times, we must support the institutions that give us direction and purpose, our families, our schools, and our religious congregations.

We stand for institutions like marriage and family, which are the foundations of society. We stand for a culture of life in America, where every person counts and every person matters. We stand for judges who faithfully interpret the law instead of legislating from the bench.

We stand for a culture of responsibility in this country. You know, the culture is changing from one that had said, "If it feels good, just go ahead and do it," and "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each of us understands we're responsible for the decisions we make in life. If you're fortunate enough to be a mom or a dad, 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 supporting your teachers and 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 a responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourselves.

Today I got off Air Force One and met Annie Kaigler. She is—she works for the foster grandparent program. She is a volunteer. She takes time out of her life to mentor children. She takes time out of her life to change America one heart at a time. The strength of this country is the hearts and souls of the American people. During the next 4 years, I will continue to rally the armies of compas-

sion so this country can be a great, hopeful place.

For all Americans, these years in our history will stand apart. There are quiet times in the life of a nation when little is expected of its leaders. This isn't one of those times. This is a time when we need firm resolve, clear vision, and a great belief in the values that make us a great country.

None of us will ever forget that day when one era ended and another began. On September the 14th, 2001, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers. It's a day I'll never forget. There were workers in hardhats yelling at me, "Whatever it takes." A fellow grabbed me by the arm as I was trying to thank people, and he looked me right in the eye, and he said, "Do not let me down."

I have a duty that goes on for this country. I wake up every morning trying to—how best to secure this country. I will never relent in defending America, whatever it takes.

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

The President. We have come through much together. We've done a lot of hard work, but there's more to do. Over the next 4 years, we'll spread ownership and opportunity and hopes throughout every corner of this country. We'll pass the enduring values of our country on to a young generation. We will continue to spread freedom and peace.

When I traveled your State 4 years ago, I said if I had the great honor of serving the American people as your President, I would uphold the honor and the dignity of the office. With your help, with your hard work and help, I will do so for the next 4 years.

May God bless you all. Thank you for coming. Thank you all. Thank you all very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:53 p.m. at Heritage Park. In his remarks, he referred to Bo Schembechler, former head coach, University of Michigan football team; Col. Muammar Abu Minyar al-Qadhafi, leader of Libya; President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan; Prime Minister Ayad al-Alawi of the Iraqi Interim Government; and Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady, who introduced the President.

Remarks to the American Legion Convention in Nashville, Tennessee

August 31, 2004

Thank you all. Thanks for having me. And thank you for the warm welcome. Thank you all. I'm honored to be here at your 86th national convention.

I—there's another convention going on in New York you might have heard about. [*Laughter*] Tomorrow they're going to choose a Presidential nominee. I think I got the inside track. [*Laughter*] I'm taking nothing for granted, however. I'm taking nothing for granted, so Laura headed to New York this morning to make my case, but I do want you to know she sends her very best regards.

I also want to let you know that Americans' veterans are the heart and soul of this Nation. When freedom was under threat, you risked your lives in places like Omaha Beach and Okinawa, Keshan, Kandahar, and Baghdad. Because you served, Americans live in freedom. I'm proud to stand before you as your Commander in Chief and look in the eye and say, America is grateful for your service.

And America is grateful for the service of Senator John McCain. He gave a great speech last night in New York. He's a great American. He's a great American who gave his Nation some of the most difficult and distinguished service in the history of our military. He fought for America. He suffered for America. He returned for honor, and his service continues today. I'm proud to have John McCain with us and standing by my side.

I have enjoyed working with the national commander, John Brieden. Maybe we got along so well because we both speak the same language—[*laughter*]—Texan. [*Laughter*] But he served this august body with class and dignity, and I'm proud of your service, John. Thank you, sir. And I was pleased to be introduced by Katherine Morris as well. She too speaks Texan. [*Laughter*] I want to thank her for her leadership as the American Legion Auxiliary national president.

I'm pleased to be here with my friend Tony Principi, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs. I want to thank Les Brownlee who is with us, the Acting Secretary of the Army.

I appreciate the mayor of this great city of Nashville joining us. Mr. Mayor, thank you for coming.

I appreciate Congressman Cooper from the State of Tennessee for joining us.

Most of all, I want to thank the Legion members who have been so gracious in your hospitality. Thank you and the Auxiliary members for welcoming me.

Since your founding, the American Legion has always been faithful to God and to country. You served our Nation in uniform, and you still serve today. When Hurricane Charley hit Florida a few weeks ago, American Legion posts gathered food and helped neighbors in need. In moments of crisis, Americans know Legionnaires always come through.

Members of the American Legion and the Auxiliary are also serving your neighbors every day, volunteering in veterans hospitals, sponsoring scout troops and youth baseball, and collecting scholarship money for deserving students. You've started a scholarship fund for the children of troops killed since September the 11th, 2001, in the war on terror. Our country owes these families so much, and I thank you for showing the gratitude and the good heart of the United States of America.

The most important gift you give our country is the example you set for the men and women of our Armed Forces. In Afghanistan and Iraq and other fronts in the war on terror, today's service men and women are carrying on your legacy of selfless service and courage under fire. I know you share America's pride in them. They are serving our country with pride, and they are bringing honor to the uniform.

Our fighting men and women are serving America under a proud flag, and that flag should be cherished and protected. When John and your national adjutant general, Bob, have come by the Oval Office, they always remind me about the Citizens Flag Alliance. I appreciate your leadership in that important alliance. Like you, I support a constitutional amendment to protect the flag from desecration. I think John McCain put it best when he said, "American blood has been shed all over the world for the American flag, and I believe it deserves respect."