

With your help, with your hard work, we will do so for the next 4 years.

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

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:35 a.m. at Lackawanna County Stadium. In his remarks, he referred to former Lt. Gov. Bill Scranton of Pennsylvania; country music entertainer Mark Chesnutt; and Prime Minister Ayad al-Alawi of the Iraqi Interim Government. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady, who introduced the President.

Remarks in West Allis, Wisconsin

September 3, 2004

The President. Thank you all. Thank you all for coming. Thank you all. That's what I'm here to tell you. I've got the vision, the desire to lead this country for 4 more years. I want to thank you all for coming. Before I thank you for the work you're going to do and before I talk to you about why I want to be your President for 4 more years, I do want to address several situations in the news that call for our concern and prayers.

En route here we just received news that President Clinton has been hospitalized in New York. He is in our thoughts and prayers. We send him our best wishes for a swift and speedy recovery.

In Florida, our citizens are bracing for yet another hurricane. Many people there are being displaced from their homes. The Federal Government stands ready to help the people of Florida in any way we can, and the people there need to know all America is praying for their safety.

And finally, in Russia, hundreds of agonized parents are worried about the fate of their children. This is yet another grim reminder of the lengths to which terrorists will go to threaten the civilized world. We mourn the innocent lives that have been lost. We stand with the people of Russia. We send them our prayers in this terrible situation.

And finally, I'm here to thank you for your help, thank you for registering people to vote, thank you for working hard. There is no doubt in my mind, we will carry Wisconsin and carry this country.

We love coming to Wisconsin. It's the home of some really fine people. It's a beautiful State, and you play great football. You know, it's traditional when politicians come to your State that they talk about the Packers. And I understand my opponent did it the other day, and he even mentioned the legendary stadium in Green Bay. *[Laughter]* Listen, I've got some advice for him: If someone offers you a cheesehead, don't say you want some wine. *[Laughter]* Just put it on your head and take a seat at Lambeau Field.

I'm going to give you some reasons to put me in, but perhaps the most important one of all is so that Laura will be First Lady for 4 more years. Man, she gave a great speech. You know, when I asked her to marry me, it was in Midland, Texas. She said, "I'll marry you so long as I don't ever have to give a speech." *[Laughter]* I said, "Okay," but fortunately, she didn't hold me to the promise. The country got to see that she is calm, steady, compassionate, and a great First Lady.

I want to thank—the other night I had a chance to thank publicly my runningmate, Dick Cheney. He's a fine man. You know, I admit it, he's not the prettiest face in the race. I didn't pick him for his looks. I picked him because of his judgment, his experience, and his ability to get the job done.

I want to thank three Members of the United States Congress from Wisconsin who are here today. Jim Sensenbrenner, the chairman, is with us today—appreciate you. Tom Petri is with us today. Congressman, thank you for coming. And Congressman Mark Green is with us today. I appreciate you coming, Mark.

I want to thank my friend Scott Walker, who is here today. If he plays his cards right, they may just start calling him "W." I appreciate Mary Panzer and John Gard. I want to thank all the State and local officials who are here.

I want to thank the Democrats for Bush national cochairman, who is with us, Brian Lunde. You know, Brian and Zell Miller—they're leading—they're on to something. *[Laughter]* There's a lot of discerning Democrats who understand that 4 more years will make this country safer, stronger, and better.

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

The President. And this campaign welcomes all Democrats and independents. Our vision includes everybody. Our message is for every single citizen in this country.

I appreciate my friend Jim Klauser and all the grassroots activists who are here. Thanks for putting up the signs. Thanks for making the phone calls. Thanks for registering the voters, and thank you for turning out our voters, come November, to the polls.

I am honored that Greg Gracz is with us today. He is the president of the Milwaukee Professional Firefighters Association, Local 215. I received the endorsement from 215 and the firefighters. I proudly accept your support. Bradley DeBraska is with us. He is the president of the Milwaukee Police Association. I thank them for their endorsement as well. I am proud to stand with the police and firefighters of Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

I want to, finally, thank West Allis Central High School band. Thank you all for coming.

Listen, we're approaching an historic national election. The time for choosing is coming close. This election will come down to the records we have built, the convictions we hold, and the vision that guides us forward. I'm looking forward to this campaign. I'm looking forward because I understand a Presidential contest is a contest for the future. Over the next 2 months, I will tell you where I stand. I'm going to tell you where I'm going to lead this country. I'll tell you what I believe.

I believe every child can learn and every school must teach. I believe we have a moral responsibility to honor our seniors. That is why we strengthened Medicare. And one of the most important partners I had in accomplishing this political promise I made to the American people was Tommy Thompson, the great former Governor of Wisconsin. He's a good one. He's a great member of my Cabinet and a very close friend. Thanks for training him. [*Laughter*]

I believe now, and I will believe forever, in the energy and innovative spirit of the American worker, the American small-business owner, the American farmer and rancher. And that is why we unleashed that energy with the largest tax relief in a generation.

We have overcome a recession, corporate scandals, a terrorist attack. Our economy is growing, and it is getting stronger. This morning, we received the jobs report for August, and it shows that our economy has added 144,000 new jobs, plus revisions of upwards of 60,000 for the two previous months. We gained 22,000 manufacturing jobs last month. The national unemployment rate is down to 5.4 percent. That is nearly a full point below the rate last summer and well below the average of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. The unemployment rate in your great State is 4.7 percent.

By supporting our small-business owners, our entrepreneurs, and our workers, the economy of Wisconsin is strong, and it is getting stronger.

The most solemn duty of the American President is to protect the American people. If America shows uncertainty and weakness in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This is not going to happen on my watch.

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

The President. I am running for President with a clear and positive plan to build a safer world and a more hopeful America. I'm running with a compassionate conservative agenda that says Government should help people improve their lives, not give people orders on how to run their lives. I believe this Nation wants steady, consistent, principled leadership, and that is why, with your help, we're going to retain the White House in November of '04.

This world of ours is changing. I want you to know I understand that. We're changing jobs. Many people have many careers and jobs during their lifetime. That's not the way it used to be. Women are now working inside the house and outside the house. The workforce is changing. And it's a time of great opportunity here in America, but Government must stand side by side with the American people during times of change.

I want you to hear this. Many of the fundamental systems of our society, the Tax Code, health coverage, pension plans, and worker training, were created for the world of yesterday, not tomorrow. In order to make sure that the American people have a chance to

realize their dreams, we must change these fundamental systems to enable people to better realize their own hopes and aspirations. Any plan begins with making sure this economy stays strong, and my plan does that. See, to create more jobs in America, we must have an atmosphere in which America is the best place in the world to do business.

That means we must have an energy policy in this country. I submitted a plan to the Congress 2 years ago that encouraged conservation, encouraged the development of renewable sources of energy, encouraged clean coal technology, encouraged using our resources at home more wisely. In order to keep jobs in America, we must become less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

We open up our markets from goods and services from overseas. They need to open up their markets. The best trade policy is to create a level playing field, because we can compete with anybody, anytime, anywhere, as long as the rules are fair.

To keep jobs here, we must reduce the regulations on our small businesses. We must get rid of these frivolous and junk lawsuits that are making it hard on employers. We must be wise about how we spend your money, and we must keep your taxes low. We have a difference in this campaign. My opponent already has promised \$2 trillion of new spending.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Yes. And we've still got the rest of September and October to go. [Laughter] So they said, "How are you going to pay for it? How are you going to pay for all these promises?" He said, "Oh, don't worry, I'll just tax the rich." You've heard that before, haven't you? You know how that works. The rich dodge, and you get stuck with the bill. But we're not going to let him tax you because we're going to win in November.

One of the systems that needs to be changed is our Tax Code. It is a complicated mess. It is full of special interest loopholes. We spend about 6 billion hours to try to fill out forms. In a second term, I will call together Republicans and Democrats to reform and simplify the Federal Tax Code.

Our worker training programs need to be updated and modernized. Listen, there are

new jobs being created, but oftentimes, workers don't have the skills to meet those jobs. There's a skills gap. We will close that gap by making sure the worker training programs work, by expanding access to community colleges, by giving our workers a chance to be able to fill the jobs of the 21st century.

In order to make sure that people realize their dreams here in America, we got to make sure our education system works well. Listen, most new jobs are filled by people with at least 2 years of college. Yet, in this country, only one in four students gets there. We can do a better job than that. We'll fund early intervention programs in high schools to make sure children don't get discouraged and fall behind. We'll place a new focus on math and science. We'll require a rigorous exam before graduation. What I'm telling you is, by raising performance in our high schools and by expanding Pell grants for low-and middle-income families, we will help more Americans start their careers with a college diploma.

In a time of change, we must do more to make sure quality health care is available and affordable. More than one-half of the uninsured in America are small-business employees. Many small businesses are having trouble affording health care. In a new term, we must allow small firms to join together to purchase insurance at the discounts big companies get.

Last night I proposed new steps to encourage small businesses and employees and low-income Americans to set up health savings accounts. These accounts give workers the security of insurance against major illness, the opportunity to save tax-free for routine health expenses, and the freedom of knowing you can take your account with you whenever you change jobs. Under my plan, small businesses will receive a rebate when they contribute to their employees' health savings accounts.

I met with Judy Geiger today. She is a small-business owner. She is from Cudahy. She used to provide her employees a PPO. The rising cost of premiums made her change. Last month she signed up for a health savings account. She's saving about \$300 a month on her personal premiums and

\$2,000 a month on the premiums for her employees. Here's what she said. She said, "It's wonderful to have this opportunity for our people." What I'm telling you is, there are ways to hold down costs, ways to help small businesses, ways to make sure people have got insurance. And we have got a plan to do that.

A big problem in America is the frivolous lawsuits that are running up the cost of your medicine and running docs out of business. You cannot be pro-doctor and pro-patient and pro-plaintiff-attorney at the same time. You have to choose. My opponent made his choice, and he put him on the ticket. [*Laughter*] I made my choice. I am for medical liability reform—now.

I'm for an ownership society because I know in changing times, if you own something, it brings stability to your life. You know, one of the most fantastic statistics today is the homeownership rate is at an all-time high in America. We'll continue to promote homeownership. As I said last night, there's nothing better than somebody opening their door and saying, "Welcome to my home. Welcome to my piece of property."

Our retirement systems must change with the times. If you're a baby boomer, Social Security is just fine. If you're older than being a baby boomer, you're in great shape. Nothing is going to change. But if you're a younger worker, you better listen carefully to the debate in this campaign. I believe younger workers ought to be able to save some of their taxes in a personal account, a nest egg they can call their own. A clear difference in philosophy in this campaign—if you listen carefully, you'll understand my opponent is running to expand Government. We're running to expand opportunity.

In a world of change, some things don't change: the values that we try to live by, courage, compassion, reverence, and integrity; the institutions which are important to our society, our families, our schools, and our religious congregations. Because family and work are sources of dignity and stability, I support welfare reform that strengthens family and requires work. I support a culture of life in which every person matters and every person counts. We strongly support the religious charities that are providing hope to mil-

lions. Government should never discriminate against faith-based programs. We support family and marriage, which are the foundations of our society. I will continue to appoint Federal judges who know the difference between personal opinion and the strict interpretation of the law.

This election will also determine how America responds to the continuing danger of terrorism. Since the terrible morning of September the 11th, 2001, we have fought the terrorist across the Earth, not for pride, not for power, but because the lives of our citizens are at stake. Our strategy is clear. We're defending the homeland. We're transforming our military. We're strengthening our intelligence services. We're staying on the offensive. We're striking the terrorists abroad so we do not have to face them here at home.

And we're working to advance liberty in the broader Middle East, because we know freedom will bring hope and peace, the peace we all want. Our strategy is working. Just remember this: Four years ago, Afghanistan was the home base of Al Qaida; Pakistan was a transit point for terrorist groups; Saudi was fertile ground for terrorist fundraising; Libya was secretly pursuing nuclear weapons; Iraq was a gathering threat; and Al Qaida was largely unchallenged as it planned its attacks. Because we acted, because we were resolute and strong and firm, the Government of a free Afghanistan is fighting terror; Pakistan is capturing terrorists; Saudi is making raids and arrests; Libya is dismantling its weapons programs; the army of a free Iraq is fighting for freedom. And more than three-quarters—three-quarters—of Al Qaida's key members and associates have been detained or killed. We have led, many have joined, and America and the world are safer.

This progress involved careful diplomacy, clear moral purpose, and some tough decisions. The toughest one of all was in Iraq. We knew Saddam Hussein's record of aggression and support for terror. Remember, he subsidized the families of suicide bombers. Terrorist organizations were in and out of his country, people like Zarqawi and his network or Abu Nidal and his network. We knew his long history of pursuing and using weapons of mass destruction. And we know

that after September the 11th, this Nation must take threats seriously before they fully materialize.

In Saddam Hussein, we saw a threat. So I went to the United States Congress. They looked at the same intelligence I did, remembered the same history of Saddam, and they saw a threat. My opponent looked at the very same intelligence, and when asked to vote on a resolution that authorized the use of force, he voted “aye.”

The last choice of the Commander in Chief is to put troops in harm’s way. So I felt it was important to try diplomacy. I went to the United Nations. The United Nations looked at the same intelligence, and the United Nations Security Council resolved—unanimously resolved—that Saddam Hussein must disclose, disarm, or face serious consequences.

The world had spoken, but as he had for over a decade, he ignored this resolution as well as over 10 resolutions. He had no intention of listening to the demands of the free world. As a matter of fact, he deceived the inspectors that were going in to try to get him to adhere to the demands of the free world. We had given him a choice, a final choice. It was his decision to make, and he clearly made his decision. So I had a choice to make: Trust the word of a madman and forget the lessons of September the 11th, or take action to defend the country. Given that choice, I will defend America every time.

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

The President. Because we acted, because we took action to defend ourselves, more than 50 million people have been liberated. I like to tell people these are historic times. I truly believe they are. One reason I say that is because I’ve seen what’s happened in Afghanistan. This is a country that has gone from darkness to light, a country where the Taliban wouldn’t even let young girls go to school. They’d whip their mothers in the public squares or kill them because of their beliefs. They were backward, and they were wrong. And yet today—yet today, 3 years after the liberation, 10 million Afghan citizens have registered to vote.

Freedom is powerful. In Iraq, there’s a strong Prime Minister, a national council.

National elections in that country are scheduled for January. Our strategy is clear. We will stand with the people to help them start their political process. We will train Afghan citizens and Iraqi citizens so they can defend themselves against the few who are trying to stop the march of liberty. Our troops will stay there as long as necessary to finish the mission, and they will come home with the honor they have earned.

We have a great United States military. I want to thank all the veterans who have set such a fine example for those who wear our uniform. I have made a commitment to our troops and their families. They will have all the support they need from the Federal Government to complete their mission. That is why I went to the Congress last September and asked for \$87 billion of supplemental funding to support them in their missions in Afghanistan and Iraq. This money was for fuel and spare parts, ammunition, hazard pay, health benefits. It was a vital funding request. We got great support. As a matter of fact, all but 12 United States Senators voted to support the funding. Two of those who voted against it were my opponent and his runningmate.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Only four United States Senators voted to authorize the use of force and then voted against funding our troops. Two of those Senators were my opponent and his runningmate.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. So they asked him, “Why did you vote?” He said, “Well, I actually did vote for the \$87 billion, before I voted against it.” [Laughter] That’s what he said.

Audience members. Flip-flop! Flip-flop! Flip-flop!

The President. Then he said he’s proud of his vote, and then he said the whole thing was a complicated matter. There is nothing complicated about supporting our troops in combat.

During the next 4 years, I’ll continue to build alliances. You know, there’s nearly 40 nations involved in Afghanistan, some 30 nations in Iraq. I’m proud of their service to the cause of freedom and peace. We’ll continue to build those alliances, but I will never

turn over America's national security decisions to leaders of other countries.

I believe in the transformational power of liberty. I've seen it happen throughout history, and so have you. We've seen nations in our own hemisphere become free nations and allies in the sake of peace. Our parents' generation saw the transformational power of liberty when, after World War II, Japan, because we believed in democracy, Japan became a friend. You know, I sit down at the table with Prime Minister Koizumi and discuss North Korea and other issues, on how to keep the peace. I'm able to do so because my predecessor and other citizens of this great country believed that liberty could convert an enemy into a friend.

There was a lot of cynics and doubters in those days. You can understand why. Japan was a fierce enemy. I mean, people couldn't envision how liberty could transform a society. But there were fellow countrypeople of ours who did believe that then. And today we sit down with an enemy and talk about the peace. See, that's what's taking place. Liberty is powerful. Someday an American President is going to be sitting down with a duly elected leader of Iraq talking about keeping the peace, talking about—[*ap- plause*].

A free Afghanistan and a free Iraq will set powerful examples in a neighborhood that is desperate for freedom. Women who long for freedom in the Middle East will see examples of a free society in their neighborhood. Young men will realize a free society is one in which they can realize their hopes and aspirations; they don't have to strap suicide belts on. Freedom is powerful. I'll tell you why I believe so strongly in freedom. I understand it's not America's gift to the world. It's the Almighty God's gift to every man and woman in this world.

I believe we're living in a century that will be called the century of liberty. By promoting freedom at home and abroad, we'll build a safer world and a more hopeful America. Over the next 4 years, we'll continue to work hard for the American people to reform those institutions that need to change to make you more free. We'll spread ownership to every corner of this country. Opportunity will abound. We'll pass the enduring values

of our country on to a young generation. We'll be steadfast in our pursuit of freedom and peace, and we will prevail.

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 is not one of those times. This is a time that requires firm resolve, clear vision, and an unshakeable belief in the values that make us a great country.

When I traveled your State 4 years ago, I made a pledge to you. I said if I was honored to be able to hold this great office, I would uphold the honor and the dignity of the office to which I had been elected. With your help, for 4 more years I will continue to uphold the honor and the dignity of the White House.

God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:38 p.m. at the Wisconsin Exposition Center. In his remarks, he referred to Milwaukee County Executive Scott Walker; Wisconsin State Senator Mary E. Panzer; Wisconsin State Representative John Gard; James R. Klauser, chair, Wisconsin Leadership Team, Bush-Cheney '04, Inc.; senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi; 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.

Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.

August 28

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Troy, OH, where he began a bus tour.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Lima, OH. Later, he traveled to Perrysburg, OH. While en route aboard the bus, he participated in an interview with Matt Lauer of NBC's "Today" show for later broadcast.