

America should lead with strength and purpose and confidence and resolve, I'd be honored to have your support, and I'm asking for your vote.

Our differences on keeping the security of the country and protecting our families are vast. My opponent says that September the 11th did not change him much at all.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. And his policies make that clear. He says the war on terror is primarily a law enforcement and intelligence gathering operation. Well, my outlook was changed on September the 11th. I'll never forget going to the Ground Zero on September the 14th, 2001. There were workers in hardhats there yelling at the top of their lungs, "Whatever it takes." I'll never forget the sights and sounds. I'll never forget the person looking me straight in the eye and saying, "Do not let me down." Ever since that day, I wake up every morning trying to figure out how best to protect our country. I will never relent in defending America, whatever it takes.

When I traveled your State 4 years ago, I made a pledge that if I was elected, I would uphold the honor and the dignity of the office to which I had been elected. With your help, with your hard work, I will do so for 4 more years.

Thanks for coming. God bless. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:30 a.m. at the Onalaska Omni Center. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor James Bialecki of Onalaska, WI; Kristina Shelley, daughter of KnobGallery owner Joan Shelley; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; and Gen. Tommy R. Franks, USA, (Ret.), former combatant commander, U.S. Central Command.

Remarks in a Discussion in Richland Center, Wisconsin

October 26, 2004

The President. Thank you all for being here. Laura and I are—we're glad you came, and we are glad we came. I'm here to give you some reasons why I think you ought to put me back into office. I'm here to talk about issues that matter to our future. We're

going to have—we're going to do it a little interesting way today. I've asked some of your fellow citizens to come up and talk about how our policies have affected their lives. And this will perhaps give people a clear view of why I have made some of the decisions I have made.

Perhaps the most important reason why people ought to put me back into office is so that Laura will be the First Lady for 4 more years. I'm going to take my jacket off. Okay. Some of you all may relate to this. When I asked her to marry me—actually, we had gone—I don't know if you know this or not, but we were in seventh grade together in San Jacinto Junior High in Midland, Texas. We became reacquainted—are you from Midland?

Audience member. Lubbock.

The President. Lubbock, Texas, 150 miles south of Midland. Anyway, thank you, welcome.

When we became reacquainted, she was a public school librarian. It's fitting we're in a school here, by the way. We want to thank the teachers who work in this school to help every child realize their dreams. Thank you.

She said, "Fine, I will marry you"—this is after I asked her, of course—"only if you make me one promise." I said, "What is the promise?" "Promise me I'll never have to give a political speech." [Laughter] I, of course, said, "Okay, you've got a deal." She didn't hold me to the promise, thankfully. She's giving a lot of speeches, and when she does, the American people see a warm and compassionate and great First Lady.

I want to thank our friend Tommy Thompson. I want to thank him for his service to our country, and I want to thank him for his friendship. Tommy has done a great job in Washington. You trained him well. [Laughter] He was a wonderful Governor of Wisconsin; I knew that when I was looking for a Cabinet Secretary. I gave him a tough assignment, and he's handled it brilliantly. And I want to thank you, Tommy, for your service. Appreciate you.

You know, Tommy and I went to Washington to get some things done, and one of the things we had to do was to make sure our seniors had quality health care. Medicine

was changing; Medicare was not. For example, the Government would pay thousands of dollars for a heart surgery under Medicare but not one dime for the prescription drugs that could prevent the heart surgery from being needed in the first place. And Tommy and I understood that didn't make any sense for our seniors and it didn't make any sense for the taxpayers, so we worked together with both Republicans and Democrats to strengthen Medicare, to keep the promise to our seniors. And beginning in the year 2006, all seniors will be able to get prescription drug coverage under Medicare. I think it's important for you to know that when I say something, I mean it, and I'm going to get the job done.

I want to thank thank Congressman Mark Green. I appreciate you coming, Congressman, a fine young Congressman from Wisconsin. He's not from this part of the world, but you'll get to know him, and when you do, you'll like him. He's a good, honest man.

I want to thank Jack Voight for being here, the State treasurer of the great State of Wisconsin. Jack, thank you, sir. Good to see you again. And I want to thank the mayor. Madam Mayor, thanks for coming. I'm proud you're here. I appreciate you being here. It means a lot.

I want to thank U.S. Senate candidate Tim Michels and his wife, Barbara. You need to put him in the Senate. He's a good man. He's got good values. He'll make you a fine United States Senator. And I'm going to tell you who's going to make you a fine United States Congressman, and that would be Dale Schultz. Appreciate you—Schultz. He's working. He's shaking a lot of hands. He's putting up a lot of signs. I know firsthand. See, I'm taking the bus throughout this part of the world. [Laughter] And I've seen a lot of the signs, and that's a good sign. And I also want to thank Rachel—Rachel Schultz, who happens to be the district superintendent of the schools. And I want to thank you for your—being in education. I want to thank John Cler and all the folks associated with the high school for letting us come here today. I appreciate you coming. I want to thank the students. Thanks for coming, letting me come. All right. Study more than you

watch TV. [Laughter] And if you're 18, make sure you vote.

See, that's what I'm here to do. I'm here to ask people for the vote and for their help. We have a duty in this country to vote. We have a duty in democracy to go to the polls. People need to exercise their right in a free society. And I'm asking you for your help to get people to go to the polls. I know you've done a lot of work in this part of the world. I've seen a lot of signs for me, too, and I appreciate it. But those signs are important, but they don't pull the lever. And so coming down the stretch, I'm here to ask for your help in turning out the vote. And there's no doubt in my mind, with your help, we're going to carry the State of Wisconsin.

We've really enjoyed our bus trips through Wisconsin. Today we stopped off and saw John and Connie Turgasen.

Audience members. [Inaudible]

The President. Evidently you've heard of them. That's good. [Laughter] Well, I wonder if they'd reconsider when they saw four buses pull up in their front yard. [Laughter] But they're dairy farmers. There were four generations of Turgasens right there, making a living off that one farm. It reminds me about how important it is to support our small businesses, our farmers, our ranchers. When you're getting people to go to the polls, remind them of this, that under the Bush administration, the farmers are doing just fine. The income is up, and people are making a living. And that's good for people all across this part of the world. We enjoyed going to that farm, and we enjoyed meeting that great Wisconsin family.

You know, we've overcome a lot in this country. I pledged to make this country a more hopeful place, and that means hopeful for everybody. But we've had to overcome a lot in order to make it more hopeful. When you're out rounding up the vote, remind people about what this economy has been through. You know, a hopeful country is one in which people can make a living, people can stay on the farm, people who say to me, "Mr. President, we've been able to support four generations of Turgasens on this farm."

But we've been through a lot in this economy. You know, the stock market was in serious decline 6 months prior to my arrival in

Washington, DC. And then we had a recession. And then we had some corporate scandals, and that affected our economy. It's now abundantly clear that we're not going to tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America. We expect people to be responsible citizens in this country. And we got attacked. And that attack of September the 11th cost us nearly a million jobs in the 3 months after the attack. We've had some obstacles put in our path.

But we acted. I understand that when somebody's got more money in their pocket, they're likely to demand an additional good or a service. And when you demand an additional good or a service in our marketplace, somebody is going to produce it. When somebody produces it, somebody is likely to find a job. The tax relief we passed is working. The tax relief we passed has got this economy growing again.

And the facts are clear. We've added 1.9 million jobs in the last 13 months. We're growing at rates as fast as any in nearly 20 years. Our farmers are doing well. Homeownership rate is at an alltime high. The unemployment rate nationally is 5.4 percent. Let me put that in perspective for you: 5.4 percent is lower than the average of the 1970s, the 1980s, and the 1990s. The unemployment rate in the State of Wisconsin is 5 percent. We're moving forward, and we're not going to go back to the days of tax and spend. That's not an economic policy; that's a way to get in your wallet and grow the size of the Federal Government.

So there's more to do. It's one thing to talk about a record, but the only reason to look back is to be able to say to people, "Here's what we're going to do as we move forward." The job of the President is to make sure the entrepreneurial spirit is strong, the environment for small-business creation is good, that people have a chance to make a living.

So what does it take? One, it means we've got to keep your taxes low. I'm about to talk to some small-business owners here who know what it means to pay high taxes and what it means to have their taxes lowered. But taxes are an issue in this campaign. As you travel in your district and travel talking to people, remind people that taxes are an

issue. The fellow I'm running against has proposed \$2.2 trillion of new Federal spending. That's trillion with a "T." That's a lot. Even for a Senator from Massachusetts, that's a lot.

And so they said—and you know the legitimate question is, "Fine, you made all these promises; how are you going to pay for them?" And he threw out that same old line we've heard almost every campaign: "Oh, we're just going to tax the rich." Now, we've heard that before. Let me tell you the two things wrong with that.

One is that when you tax the rich—in other words, when you're running up the top two income brackets—you're going to tax small-business owners. Many small businesses pay tax at the individual income-tax rate because they're called Subchapter S corporations or sole proprietorships. Those are fancy legal and accounting words which mean they pay income tax at the individual rate. That's just the truth. About 90 percent of all small business pay individual income taxes. So when you hear somebody say, "Oh, we're just going to tax the rich," I want you thinking about the truth. And the truth is they're talking about taxing about 900,000 to a million small businesses. You know what the problem with that is? Seventy percent of new jobs are created by small businesses in America. It makes no sense to be taxing the job creators.

And here is the other thing wrong with it. If you promise 2.2 trillion, but your tax plan only raises between 600 and 800 billion, there is a gap between what is promised and what can be delivered. Now, there is a—my opponent has a history; it's a record. I like to tell people I'm running on my record. He's not running on his; he's running from his record. And part of his record—in his 20 years as Senator, part of his record is he's voted to raise taxes 98 times. That's a record; that's what he's done. I'm not making it up. That's five times every year he's been in the Senate. That's a predictable pattern. And so when you're trying to find out who's going to fill the tax gap, think about predictable patterns. In order to fill that gap, in order to make the difference between what he's promised and what he can deliver, guess who's going to get stuck with the bill? Yes, that's always what happens.

We're not going to let him tax you; we're not going to let him tax the small businesses, because we're going to carry Wisconsin and win on November the 2d.

A couple of other things that I want to talk to you right quick about to make sure this economy continues to grow. First, we will continue with good farm policy. I'm for the MILC program—MILC, which is helping our dairy farmers. I'm for the reauthorization of that. Ask your dairy farmers whether that means something to them, and you're going to find out it does.

We'll continue to open up markets, opening up markets for agriculture products and manufacturing products and high-tech products. They're good for the job creation and the job creators. Listen, we've opened up our market for goods from overseas, and that's good for you as a consumer. Think about how the market works. If you have more products to choose from, you're likely to get that which you want at a better price and higher quality. That's how the market works. So instead of shutting down our market when it comes to trade and hurting our consumers, our strategy is to say to places like China, "You treat us the way we treat you," is to open up markets, is to demand that others are fair to us. And the reason why I do that is because I know we can compete with anybody, anytime, anywhere, so long as the rules are fair.

If you want jobs to stay here, we've got to do something about the energy situation. I submitted a plan to the United States Congress 2 years ago that encourages conservation, that encourages the use of ethanol and biodiesel. Think about the idea of being able to say as the President, "The corn crop is up, and we're less dependent." Think about that, that someday it's going to happen. We're going to continue to spend research and development dollars so we can grow our way toward less reliance.

We're promoting clean coal technology so that your powerplants can have power. We're going to modernize the electricity grid. We're going to explore for natural gas in environmentally friendly ways. What I'm telling you is this: In order to make sure that jobs continue to grow, that people can make a living, this country must become less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

We're going to talk to a small-business manufacturer here. He told me he's had a problem with health care. Small businesses are having trouble affording health care. Most of the uninsured in America work for small businesses. So here's some common-sense ways to help you on health care.

Small businesses ought to be able to pool together, pool risk so they can buy insurance at the same discounts that big companies get to do. You know, there needs to be economies of purchase in the marketplace. If you're a stand-alone small business, it costs you a lot of money to afford health care. If you're able to pool across jurisdictional boundaries, if you get more people to spread the risk, you're able to get insurance at better prices for your workers. That's a common-sense way of helping small businesses.

We'll expand health savings accounts, which are commonsense ways of enabling people to be able to manage their own health care account, low-premium, high-deductible accounts where you can save tax-free. It will help your families. If you change jobs, you can take your health account with you from year to year. If you save money, you can roll over your savings in your health account tax-free. It's a way to make sure the decision-making is between you and your doctor, not between some insurance person and your doctor. The more you're able to have—the more you're involved with your health care decisions, the more likely it is there's a cost discipline in the marketplace.

Listen, we'll take care of the needy. We have an obligation in our society to do so. I'm a big believer in community health centers, places where the poor and the indigent can get good primary and preventative care. My pledge, I said in the convention speech and I'm saying all over the country, is that in a new term, we'll make sure every poor county in America has got a community health center to take the pressure off our emergency rooms and our hospitals.

But let me tell you another practical way to make sure health care is available and affordable. We must do something about the litigious nature of our society. There's too many lawsuits. Lawsuits are running up the cost of doing business. Lawsuits are running good doctors out of practice. Lawsuits are

hurting people who need health care. I have met too many ob-gyns around this country that are having to leave their practice because these lawsuits are running up their premiums. They cannot afford to practice medicine. I've met too many women who are deeply concerned about their health care and the health of their child because their local doctor no longer practices. And that's not right for America.

If we're interested in our quality of life, we'd better do something about all these lawsuits. You cannot be pro-doctor, pro-patient, and pro-personal-injury-trial-lawyer at the same time. You have to choose in life. My opponent made his choice, and he put a personal injury trial lawyer on the ticket. I have made my choice. I am standing with the Wisconsin docs and patients and small-business owners. I am for medical liability reform—now.

We have a difference of opinion when it comes to health care. I remember the debate when my opponent—they asked him about his health care plan, and he actually looked in the camera and said, “The Government has nothing to do with it.” You know, I could barely contain myself when he said that. [Laughter]

The Government has a lot to do with his plan, and that's what I want you to understand. His plan is one—for example, when you run up Medicaid, run up the eligibility for Medicaid, it provides an incentive for small businesses to not provide insurance for their employees because the Government will. It's estimated some 8 million people will go from private insurance to Government insurance. Eight out of ten people will be signed up to a Government program under his plan. I just strongly disagree. You don't want the Federal Government running your health care. When the Government starts paying, the Government starts deciding. And then the Government rations, and the Government chooses your doctor. It is not the right way to go when it comes to making sure there's quality health care for the people.

Let me talk about another issue, and then we're going to talk to our guests. I have made a commitment to our seniors not only to good-quality Medicare but to Social Security. And Tommy and I were talking about the

2000 campaign. We were coming down the stretch, and they ran some ads here in this State that said to the seniors of Wisconsin, “If George W. gets elected, you're not going to get your check.” I don't know if you remember those. Tommy sure remembered them. Well, I want you to tell your friends and neighbors this: George W. did get elected, and the seniors got their checks. And the seniors will continue to get their checks. The Social Security trust, no matter what the politicians say, is in good shape for our seniors. It's going to meet—the seniors have nothing to worry about. Every 4 years, the scare tactics come out. I just assure you, you're going to get your checks. And baby boomers like me, we're in pretty good shape when it comes to the Social Security trust.

But a President must deal with problems—you want a President who confronts problems, not passes them on to future generations and future Presidents. We have a problem with Social Security when it comes to our children and our grandchildren. When the baby boomer generation retires, there is a question as to whether or not the children will have a—Social Security accounts available for them unless we think differently. I believe younger workers ought to be allowed to take some of their payroll taxes and set up a personal savings account, a personal savings account that will earn a greater rate of return than the current Social Security trust, an account they call their own, an account the Government cannot take away.

Eric Sauey is with us. Eric, you ready to say something?

Eric Sauey. Yes, sir.

The President. Good. [Laughter] I hope so. I call him “Mr. President.” He's the president of?

Mr. Sauey. Seats, Incorporated.

The President. Based in?

Mr. Sauey. Reedsburg, Wisconsin.

The President. What do you do?

Mr. Sauey. We manufacture seating for vehicles with wheels or tracks, other than passenger cars.

The President. Okay. [Laughter]

Mr. Sauey. Some of the markets that we serve are off-highway equipment, semi tractors, commercial turf mowers, firetrucks, delivery vans, many different custom-types of seats.

The President. Are you making a living?

Mr. Sauey. We're making a living.

The President. Good. Tell me—first of all, I want you to know—how are you organized?

Mr. Sauey. We're an S corporation. We're a family-run, family-owned business. We're an S corporation. We're in the process of trying to expand here into Richland Center. Some of the things that we have, from the basic values that we have—[applause].

The President. Sounds like they want you here. [Laughter]

Mr. Sauey. We have some values of a small business that were passed on to me by my father, who helped start this business, and my mother, that—we can't take all the profits out of the business. We have to put them back into the business to grow the business, to nurture it. I'm second generation. I hope to pass it—the business goes to my kids or nieces and nephews, and we can't do that if we're paying taxes. We need to invest that back into the business for capital, reinvestment, R&D.

The President. Perfect. Let me—so here's the tax relief. Remember all the rhetoric about the tax relief, "only certain people benefit." When you cut the taxes for everybody who pays taxes, you're benefiting small-business owners like Subchapter S corporations. Have you hired anybody this year?

Mr. Sauey. We've hired a lot of people this year. We're up to about 380 people right now; we're looking to hire more.

The President. Yes, see, they're hiring. They're expanding. They're growing. One reason why they're doing well, they've got innovative leadership. Isn't that right?

Mr. Sauey. Yes, sir. [Laughter]

The President. Another reason why is they've got more money. See, the money is not going to the Federal Government; the money is staying with his company, which gives him the optimism and confidence to expand. Seventy percent of new jobs are created by small businesses. Our economic policies recognize that and we say to people like

Eric, "Go for it. Expand. Here's some extra money, your money to begin with." And he says he's going to hire. He may come here to Richland Center.

And so my opponent says, oh, he's just going to tax the rich. You're looking at the rich. [Laughter] You're looking at a man who said, "We may come to Richland Center. We may hire new people." They're less likely to expand and to hire new people if the Federal Government takes money from them. That just makes sense. That's just simple economics.

Let me ask you something. Do you ever invest?

Mr. Sauey. We invest a lot. Every year we invest in excess of \$1½ million. This last year we've invested more than \$2 million in capital equipment. We are in the process right now of installing a computerized—[inaudible]—machine, a computerized—[inaudible], a 400-ton punch press—[laughter].

The President. That sounded like a big one to me. [Laughter] You see, good tax policy says to businessowners, "Invest," because you know what investment means? Investment means jobs. And so in our tax policy we said to small-business owners that you're able to deduct up to \$100,000 for equipment expensing in the year in which you buy it, as opposed to \$25,000. And why did we do that? Because we want to encourage Eric to invest. And so he says he buys a 400-ton—

Mr. Sauey. Punch press.

The President. Punch press. [Laughter] Kind of hard to say if you're from Texas—[laughter]—punch press. But guess what, because of the decision he made, two things happened: One, his business is more productive; it's more likely that he can compete. He's bought a piece of equipment that makes him more competitive. And we live in a competitive world, and the more competitive he is, the more likely it is someone is going to work for his company. The more competitive he is, the more likely it is he's going to expand his business here. But guess what else, because he bought the 400-ton punch press, somebody had to make it. And when somebody makes it, somebody is more likely to find work at the punch press manufacturing business.

This economy is moving because people like Eric are confident about the future. He's sitting here in front of all these cameras and these people saying, "I'm going to expand my business." That's what you want to hear. And the question is, which one of the Presidential candidates, one, understands the importance of small businesses and the entrepreneurial spirit, and which one of us has the plans to make sure Eric feels comfortable investing and expanding his business? And I make the case to the people of Wisconsin, it is George W. Bush who understands that. Ready to go, Greeley?

Jim Greeley. I'm ready for you, I think.

The President. All right. Jim Greeley, small-business owner. What do you do?

Mr. Greeley. Thank you.

The President. Greeley Signs, yes.

Mr. Greeley. Yes.

The President. Tell us what you do.

Mr. Greeley. Well, Mr. President, I have a sign company that I started about 30 years ago. And I'm at the point now where I'm passing it along to my son. But in the last 2 years, we've expanded with a 20,000 square foot addition. We've added new printing equipment so we can print giant posters, such as political posters. If you need any, you know where to look. [Laughter]

The President. It's a little late. You should have gotten your order in early. But anyway. [Laughter]

Mr. Greeley. We've added a laser engraver, and we've added several other such printing equipment—

The President. So you've been investing.

Mr. Greeley. Pardon?

The President. You've been investing.

Mr. Greeley. I've been investing, and we've been putting our money where our mouth is. We have to. We have to have confidence in the future of America—

The President. Right.

Mr. Greeley. —and confidence in the future of this country.

The President. See, he's investing \$140,000 this year. I hope you didn't mind me saying that. [Laughter] And he saved \$27,000 as a result of the tax relief package, because of the investments. See, good tax policy says to Jim, "If you make a capital investment, there's an incentive to do so." And

it's very important for people to understand that the reason we passed tax policy when we did was to help move this economy forward, and the best way to move it forward is to talk—is to address the needs of small-business owners. If 70 percent of the new jobs in America are created by the Jims of the world, then we ought to encourage him, and we ought to provide incentives for him to expand his business.

Did you hire anybody? Are you going to hire anybody? Tell me.

Mr. Greeley. Oh, yes, we'll keep hiring.

The President. Good. Well, it says here you hired three in 2004.

Mr. Greeley. Say again?

The President. You hired three people in 2004.

Mr. Greeley. Yes, we've hired three in 2004, and we'll hire more because we have plans of continuing to expand. In fact, we have dibs on another acre and a half of land.

The President. There you go.

Mr. Greeley. We want to keep on—

The President. See, here's what's happening in America. Small businesses hire 3 people there, 100 here, 50 there, and it's the real vitality of our economy, when you think about it.

I want to say something else about small-business ownership, two other things. And this relates to our farmers too. You heard both these men say they're thinking about passing their business on to their family members, but our Tax Code discourages that. The Tax Code makes it really hard for somebody—the Turgasens were talking about it, how hard it is to pass their dairy farm on to the next generation. You know why? Because this Tax Code of ours taxes a person twice, once when they're living and once when they die. And the death tax is hard on our small-business owners and really hard on our farmers. If you're interested in keeping family farms alive, then you need to support me when it comes to getting rid of the death tax forever. If you want there to be a small business—[applause].

Thank you, sir. You did a great job.

Mr. Greeley. Did you see the Packer-Dallas game? [Laughter]

The President. I saw that, and I know the Wisconsin Badgers are undefeated, you

know. And let me tell you what else I know. I know the Packers beat Dallas at Lambeau Field. Who invited you? [Laughter]

Anyway, you know, one of the things we did—good tax policy also helps families. And part of our tax plan was to help families be able to better afford life and better enable them to raise their children.

Margie Seamans is with us. When people are arguing about this Tax Code, remind them we raised the child credit to 1,000. We reduced the marriage penalty. By the way, there is a—I can't imagine a Tax Code that penalizes marriage. The Tax Code ought to encourage marriage.

And so what do you do?

Margie Seamans. I work at Land's End, and I do payroll and scheduling.

The President. Very good company. Yes. And David—your husband, David?

Mrs. Seamans. Yes. My husband, David, is not employed right now.

The President. Right.

Mrs. Seamans. He has a back injury that he had in the service.

The President. Service, right.

Mrs. Seamans. And so he currently stays home right now.

The President. You're bringing home the money.

Mrs. Seamans. I'm bringing home the money.

The President. And children?

Mrs. Seamans. I have two children—Danielle, 13, and Megan, 11.

The President. Fabulous. Teenage years, I remember them fondly. [Laughter] The tax relief we passed saved this family \$1,700 a year. Now that may not sound a lot to people in Washington, DC. It's a lot for this family.

Mrs. Seamans. It was a blessing when we received the child tax credit. My husband had outstanding medical bills, and we used those—used that money to pay for those. And just having that lower tax from my paycheck each week, it makes a big difference, a noticeable difference.

The President. See, here's the fundamental difference in the campaign. By the way, my opponent voted against all this tax relief. It would have cost the average family—middle-class family \$2,000 extra in Federal taxes, and that's the philosophical dif-

ference. Who do you want spending your own money?

See, we're setting priorities in Washington, and we'll meet those priorities. You're going to hear me talk about a big priority here pretty soon, which is defending the homeland. But I believe this family can spend their money better than the Federal Government can spend their money.

Thanks for coming, Margie. I appreciate you being here.

Finally, we've got Corey Kanable. Welcome.

Corey Kanable. Thank you. [Applause]

The President. You've got quite a following here. [Laughter] I'll tell you why he's here. He bought a home. You know, one of the greatest things in America is when somebody opens up the door where they live and says, "Welcome to my home. Welcome to my piece of property." Do you realize the homeownership rate is at an alltime high under my administration.

So when did you buy it?

Mr. Kanable. We bought our home in July 2003.

The President. Good. What's it like? You like it?

Mr. Kanable. Oh, we love it. It's a three-bedroom ranch on the west side of town. It's a nice quiet neighborhood—most of the town is. It's real comfortable to be in your hometown. My wife, Gretchen, and I both grew up in this area and wanted to come back here and—

The President. Fantastic. Good.

Mr. Kanable. It allowed us to do so.

The President. And you were a renter before?

Mr. Kanable. We rented 2 years out of the area. And I mean, the American Dream of owning your own home was realized to us because of the tax credit and the interest rate. We couldn't go wrong.

The President. Well, this is important for, I think, for the future of this country, is to encourage owner—homeownership as well as ownership. We want youngsters being able to own and manage their own Social Security account. We want businesses flourishing and people to own their own small business. And we want people owning their own home. You

know why? Because when you own something, you have a vital stake in the future of your country. I like to tell people, no one ever washes a rental car. [Laughter]

Mr. Kanable. Absolutely.

The President. So how has it changed your life? If somebody is watching and hears—says, “Gosh, I don’t know whether I want to buy a home or not,” how has it changed your life?

Mr. Kanable. Oh, it’s great. I mean, you have something of your own, something you’ve invested in. We’ve had the privilege of doing some remodeling to it, things that, you know, it would be great to be able to do. We would like to do this. We recently were able to get a FEMA grant to fix our basement; it had a water problem. So now we can finish that off. You know, we’re looking at new siding, new roofing, and maybe adding a garage on. We’re planning on building a deck this spring, things that we just—you know, in an apartment, you can’t do that.

The President. Right, it’s your home.

Mr. Kanable. That’s right.

The President. The tax relief saved this family \$1,000 this year and last year. So you hear a person say, “Gosh, I’m thinking about adding a garage,” you know, “I’m thinking about doing something to my piece of property.” Tax relief has helped people realize their dreams. Tax relief is a vital part not only of helping this economy recover, but it’s a vital part of enhancing the quality of life of our citizens. And that’s why I’m going to keep your taxes low.

I’ve got a couple other things—if you’ve got time, I’ve got a couple other things on my mind.

First, I’ve been talking about a changing world, and it’s important that we know the world is changing. In a changing world, jobs change, the nature of jobs change, the skill sets necessary to fill jobs change. That’s why education is so vital. That’s why we’ve got to make sure we get it right. The No Child Left Behind Act is a great piece of legislation because we believe in high standards and accountability. We’re challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations. We want to make sure the high school diploma means something. We’ll expand Pell grants for lower and middle-income families so more children are

able to start their career with a college diploma. I’m a big believer in the community college system, because community colleges are able to devise curriculum for the jobs which actually exist, to be able to help people get the skills necessary to fill the new jobs which are being created.

But in times of change, some things do not change, the values we try to live by, courage and compassion, reverence and integrity. We stand for a culture of life in which every person matters and every being counts. We stand for marriage and families, which are the foundations of our society. And we stand for judges who know the difference between personal opinion and the strict interpretation of the law.

And on these issues, there is a difference of opinion. My opponent’s words on values issues are a little murky—[laughter]—but his record is clear. You know, the Congress in the mid-nineties voted on what was called the Defense of Marriage Act. It’s an act that defined marriage as between a man and a woman. It received big bipartisan support. Republicans voted for it. Democrats voted for it. President Clinton signed the bill into law. My opponent was one of a few out-of-the-mainstream Democrats that voted against the Defense of Marriage Act. He voted against the ban on the brutal practice of partial-birth abortion. He has said that the Reagan years were a period of moral darkness. There is a mainstream in American politics, and he sits on the far left bank. He can try to run, but he cannot hide from his record.

And finally, I want to talk to you about how to keep the peace. I want to talk to you about the overriding issue in this campaign, which is the security of the American people. See, all we’ve talked about is really important, but unless we’re secure, unless we’re able to achieve the peace, we won’t be able to achieve a hopeful America. And the people are confronted with a clear choice in this campaign on this issue.

Let me tell you what I have learned and what I know about the post-September the 11th world. First, that we’re fighting against a ruthless enemy that has no conscience, which means you cannot negotiate with them, you cannot appease them, you cannot

hope for the best with them. The way to deal with them and protect the American people is to stay on the offense, find them where they hide, defeat them overseas so we do not have to face them here at home. Secondly—[*applause*]. Thank you. Thank you all.

I tell people that if we show uncertainty or weakness during these troubled times, this world of ours will drift toward tragedy. It's not going to happen so long as I'm your President. I understand that we must not show weakness. We must be certain in our resolve. The terrorists must absolutely understand they can't intimidate us; they can't force us to not defend our freedom.

Second lesson is that when the President says something, he better mean what he says in order to keep this world peaceful. And I meant what I said when I said, "If you harbor a terrorist, you're equally as guilty as the terrorists." In other words, this is a different kind of—we have a different challenge to defend our country. And I was speaking at that moment in time specifically to the Taliban in Afghanistan.

Why was I doing that? Because you might remember, some 3½ years ago, Al Qaida was training in Afghanistan. They were like the parasite, and the host was slowly but surely being overcome by the parasite, it seemed like to me. But there was a—kind of a convenience of philosophy. These people are ideologues of hate. They have a backward, dim vision of the world. I want the kids here to understand what life was like in Afghanistan. Young girls could not go to school. There was a grim ideology that expected certain things, particularly out of women. And if the women did not toe the line, they were taken to the public square and whipped and sometimes executed in a sports stadium.

These are barbaric people, the Taliban. This is their view of the world and Al Qaida's view of the world. They've hijacked a great religion. They hate what we stand for because we're the opposite. We believe in freedom. We believe people can express their opinion anyway they see fit, that you can worship the Almighty or not worship the Almighty in America and you're equally American. And if you choose to worship the Almighty, you're just as American if you're a Muslim, Jew, or Christian. That's what we

believe in our country. And that's the opposite of them. They don't believe that.

And so I said, you know, "If you harbor a terrorist, you're equally as guilty." And they just ignored what we said. And we removed the Taliban from power, thanks to a great United States military, and as a result—it's important to uphold doctrine when you say it—sent a message throughout the world that when America says something, we mean it. When we say we're going to defend ourselves, we mean it.

And as a result of the Taliban being removed from power, Al Qaida no longer trains in Afghanistan. As a result of the Taliban no longer being in power, millions of citizens registered to vote and voted in a Presidential election. And the first voter was a 19-year-old woman, the first voter in the Afghanistan election. Unbelievable moment.

Think about how far that society has come in a brief period of time. You know, I'm confident there were a lot of doubters as to whether or not democracy would take hold in Afghanistan. You can understand why. I mean, who would have ever thought that people that had been subjected to such a brutal life would conceivably want to vote. But they forgot what we know: Freedom lurks in everybody's heart. People want to be free in the world. Freedom is on the march, and America is more secure for it.

Thirdly, when we see a threat, we must take it seriously before it comes to hurt us. Prior to September the 11th, if we saw a threat, we could deal with it or not deal with it because we felt secure. We felt oceans could protect us. But we learned a different lesson on September the 11th. It's essential the American people and the American President understand that when we see a threat, we must take it seriously. Otherwise, it might come and hurt us. I saw a threat in Saddam Hussein, and the world is better off with Saddam Hussein sitting in a prison cell.

And our strategy in Iraq is clear. We'll train Iraqi citizens so they can do the hard work of defending their freedom against the likes of Zarqawi. You know, I've heard the critics say, "Well, if we hadn't be as active as they are." Well, Zarqawi was planning in

Afghanistan; he was in a training camp until we arrived and closed the camp down. Then he moved to Baghdad, where he's beheading people and setting off car bombs. What do these people think Zarqawi would be doing? Do they think he'd be kind of a peaceful small-business owner? [Laughter] He hates America. It is best we defeat Zarqawi in Iraq so he doesn't come here and hurt us. It is best we secure our country by defeating the enemy overseas.

And we're training the Iraqis to do the hard work. I remember the debates. He said, "Well, America is suffering all the casualties." That excludes and ignores the casualties being lost by the Iraqi people as they defend their own country. We mourn every single life in America, and we mourn the lives of those brave souls who are defending freedom in Iraq as well.

Iraq is going to have elections. Think about how far that country has come in a brief period of time from the days of torture chambers and mass graves, the days of a brutal tyrant. We're better off with America helping to promote liberty around the world. And so we'll get those countries on the path to stability and democracy as quickly as we can. And then our troops will come home with the honor they have earned.

I want to thank those who are here who have set such a great example for those who wear the uniform, our veterans. I appreciate your service to our country. I want to thank the military families who are here for your sacrifice. I want to thank those who wear the uniform. We got a great United States military. [Applause] And I want to assure—please be seated, thank you. We've still got a lot—a little work left to do. Just a little, then we're heading on the bus to Cuba City.

So I want to assure the loved ones of those who wear the uniform that so long as I'm the Commander in Chief, we'll give your loved ones all the support they need to complete their missions. That's why I went to the Congress and asked for \$87 billion of vital funding for our troops in harm's way, and it was important. It was important—such an important request that we got great bipartisan support. I want you tell your friends and neighbors of this startling statistic: 4 Members of the United States Senate, 4 out

of 100, voted to authorize the use of force and then voted against the funding to support our troops in combat—4 people, 2 of whom were my opponent and his runningmate. Think about that—voted "yes" for the authorization but voted "no" when it came time to support the troops.

They asked him why, and he said, "I actually did vote for the \$87 billion, right before I voted against it." [Laughter] I haven't been in any coffee shops in this part of the world; I suspect not a lot of people talk like that. [Laughter] He's given a lot of explanations since, a lot of them. One of the most interesting ones of all is, he finally said about the \$87 billion vote, "The whole thing was a complicated matter." There is nothing complicated about supporting our men and women in harm's way.

I believe that liberty has the power to transform societies. It's etched in my very being. Let me help make my case by describing our relationship to Prime Minister Koizumi of Japan. We like him a lot—I say, "we"; Laura and I do. We've had him to our ranch. He's a good man. I saw him in the U.N. I said, "You know, I'm out on the campaign trail, and I'm telling people about my relationship with you. I hope you don't mind." He said, "Oh, fine, go ahead and talk about it." What I didn't ask him was permission to tell you that Elvis was his favorite singer—[laughter]—true.

Anyway, so we have got a good relationship with him. And that's—I'm sure to some doesn't seem odd. "So what, the President of the United States and the Prime Minister of Japan working together; it's happened with other Presidents." That's right, except it wasn't all that long ago that we were at war with the Japanese. Some 60 years ago, Japan was the sworn enemy of the United States of America. There's a generation of Americans still alive today that fought in that war. My dad was one; your dads—I'm sure somebody here did that very same thing. There's a gentleman right there. Thank you, sir. There's another man. Yes, sir. There's another gentleman. Thank you. Another one—well, they're everywhere. Yes, sir, thanks. It makes my point. It wasn't all that long ago that we were at war with the Japanese. They were the bitter enemy of the United States.

And after we won that war, Harry S. Truman, President of the United States, believed in the power of liberty to transform an enemy into an ally and worked to build a democracy in Japan. Now, there was a lot of skeptics. You can understand why. Why should we help an enemy? A lot of people's lives were turned upside down as a result of that war with the Japanese, and they weren't interested at all about helping the Japanese. I'm sure there were skeptics saying the enemy couldn't conceivably become a democracy—a lot of doubters. There was also people in this country had faith in the ability of liberty to transform societies. As a result of that faith, I sit down at the table with Prime Minister Koizumi, talking about how to keep the peace that we all want.

Think about that. Think about what liberty can do to a society. And that's what I want the young to understand, what's taking place in the world today. Someday, an American President will be sitting down with a duly-elected leader from Iraq, talking about the peace in the broader Middle East. And our children and our grandchildren will be better off for it.

I believe everybody yearns to be free. I believe people in the broader Middle East want to be free. I believe that because freedom is not America's gift to the world; freedom is the Almighty God's gift to each man and woman in this world.

So I've come to your good city to ask for the vote and ask for your help. I know why I'm running again. I want to extend prosperity and hope to every corner of the country. I want to promote an ownership society where more and more citizens from all walks of life can say, "I own my home. I own my business." I want people to be able to realize a great tomorrow by making sure this country is safe and secure from an enemy. I know where I want to take us. We've done the hard work together over 3¾ years. We've climbed the mountain, and now we can see the valley below, a valley which is hopeful and prosperous and peaceful. And with your help, we will get there together.

God bless. Thank you for coming. I appreciate you being here. Thank you all. Thank you, sir.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:43 a.m. at Richland Center High School. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Rita Kidd of Richland Center, WI; Dale Schultz, candidate for Congress in Wisconsin's Third Congressional District, and his wife, Rachel, district administrator, Richland School District; John Cler, principal, Richland Center High School; senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab al Zarqawi; and Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan.

Remarks in Cuba City, Wisconsin

October 26, 2004

The President. Thank you all for coming. I am honored you're here. Thanks for coming today. You know, Cuba City is known as the City of the Presidents. Kind of makes sense that a President stops in to say hello, doesn't it? A few months ago, I was the first sitting President to pass through Cuba City. Today I'm the first sitting President to stop in and give a speech. And I'm looking forward to signing my name to the shield of the 43d President.

As I'm traveling your beautiful State asking for the vote and I'm asking for your help, I'd like to encourage you to get your friends and neighbors to go to the polls. We have a duty in this democracy to vote. We have an obligation. When you get them headed to the polls, don't overlook discerning Democrats—[laughter]—people like Zell Miller, the Senator from Georgia who is strongly for my candidacy. Remind people if they want a safer America, a stronger America, and a better America, to put me and Dick Cheney back in office.

Listen, I'm going to give you—I've been traveling Wisconsin a lot, giving people reasons to put me back into office. But perhaps the most important one of all is so that Laura is the First Lady for 4 more years. When I asked her to marry me, she said, "Fine, just make me a promise." I said, "What is it?" She said, "Promise me I'll never have to give a political speech." [Laughter] I said, "Fine, you know, you've got a deal." Fortunately, she didn't hold me to the deal. [Laughter] She is giving a lot of speeches. And when she does, the American people see what I know, that she is compassionate; she is warm; she is a strong, great First Lady.