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my opponent has spent much of his campaign talking about the day that is gone. I'm talking about the day that's coming.

We've been through a lot together. We have been through a lot together during the last nearly 4 years. Because we've done the hard work of climbing the mountain, we can see the valley below. The next 4 years, we'll work to protect our families, build our prosperity, and defend our values. We will work hard to spread freedom and liberty so we can achieve the peace we want for generations to come.

Four years ago, when I traveled your great State asking for the vote, I made you this pledge, that if I was elected to the office I hold, I would uphold the honor and its dignity. With your help, with your hard work, I will do so for 4 more years.

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

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:20 p.m. at the Hancock County Fairgrounds. In his remarks, he referred to Senator Zell Miller of Georgia, who made the keynote address at the Republican National Convention; Fran DeWine, wife of Senator Mike DeWine; Gov. Bob Taft and Lt. Gov. Jennette B. Bradley of Ohio; Mayor Anthony P. Iriti of Findlay, OH; country music entertainers the Wil Gravatt Band; 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 Pontiac, Michigan

October 27, 2004

The President. Thank you all for coming. Laura and I appreciate you all being here. You're lifting our spirits, and we're grateful. I'm so honored you're here. I'm here in Michigan today and tomorrow. I'll be back on Saturday. I'm here to ask for the vote and to ask for your help. It is important for all of us to vote. In a free society we have a duty to go to the polls. And so I'm asking you to get your friends and neighbors to go to the polls and exercise their duty. And as you get them headed to the polls, make sure you don't overlook discerning Democrats like my friend Zell Miller from the great State of Georgia. Make sure you talk to independents and, of course, our fellow Republicans. And when you get them to the polls, remind them that if they want a safer America, a stronger America, and a better America, to put me and Dick Cheney back in office.

You know, Laura and I love to campaign, and I like to tell people why I think people ought to put me back in. And perhaps the most important reason of all is so that Laura is the First Lady for 4 more years.

Audience members. Laura! Laura! Laura!

The President. I am proud of my runningmate, Dick Cheney. I see some folks out here who are follically challenged, kind of like the Vice President. I admit it, he doesn't have the waviest hair in the race. You'll be pleased to hear, I did not pick him because of hairdo. I picked him because of his judgment. I picked him because of his experience. I picked him because he's the got the ability to get the job done for the American people.

I want to thank my friend Michael Williams for joining us today. And I want to thank the other African American leaders I'm proud to call friend, who have joined me on this stage, including the Lieutenant Governor from the State of Maryland, Lieutenant Governor Michael Steele. I appreciate you coming, Michael.

I want to thank Joe Knollenberg and Thad McCotter, Members of the United States Congress from Michigan. I particularly want to thank Congresswoman Candice Miller for leading my campaign in Michigan. I want to thank Terri Lynn Land. I want to thank Betsy DeVos. I want to thank the entertainers who were here today.

And I want to thank all the grassroots activists who are here, the people who put up the signs and made the phone calls and helped turn out this huge crowd. I want to thank you for what you have done and what you are going to do as we come down the stretch. With your help, with your hard work, there is no doubt in my mind we will carry Michigan and win a great victory on November the 2d.

This election comes down to some clear choices for our families, issues of great consequence. The first clear choice is the most important because it concerns the security of your family. All progress on every other

issue depends on the safety of our citizens. This will be the first Presidential election since September the 11th, 2001. Americans will go to the polls in a time of war and ongoing threats. The outcome of this election will set the direction of the war against terror. The most solemn duty of the American President is to protect the American people. If America shows uncertainty or weakness in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This will not happen on my watch.

Our strategy is clear. We're strengthening protections for the homeland. We're reforming our intelligence capabilities. We're transforming the United States military. There will be no draft. We will keep the All-Volunteer Army an all-volunteer army. We are determined. We are relentless. We will fight the terrorists overseas so we do not have to face them here at home. And we understand that our long-term security comes from spreading freedom.

I want some of the younger folks here to understand how far the world has come in about 3¾ years. It wasn't all that long ago that young girls were not able to go to school in Afghanistan because the Taliban was so barbaric, and if their mothers didn't toe the line of the ideologues of hate, they'd be taken in the public square and sometimes killed in a sports stadium. Because we acted to defend ourselves, because we upheld a doctrine that said, "If you harbor a terrorist, you're equally as guilty as the terrorist," millions of people went to the polls to vote for a President. The first voter in the Afghan Presidential election was a 19-year-old woman.

There will be Presidential elections in Iraq in January. Think how far that country has come from the days of torture chambers and mass graves. Freedom is on the march, and we're more secure for it. Free societies are peaceful societies, and we believe everyone desires to live in freedom. Freedom is not America's gift to the world. Freedom is the Almighty God's gift to each man and woman in this world.

A President must lead with consistency and strength. In a war, sometimes our tactics have to change but never your principles. Americans have seen how I do my job. Even when you might not agree with me, you know what I believe, where I stand, and where I intend to lead this Nation. On good days and on bad days, when the polls are up or when the polls are down, I will do everything I can to defend the American people, and I will support our troops in combat.

I am honored to be the Commander in Chief of such a fine group of people, the people in the United States military. I want to thank the veterans who are here today for having set such a great example. I want to thank the military families who are here. And I will assure you that so long as I'm the Commander in Chief, our troops will have that which is necessary to complete their missions.

That's why I went to the United States Congress and asked for $87 billion of supplemental funding to support our troops in combat. As you gather the vote, I want you to remind people of this startling statistic: There were only four Members of the United States Senate that voted to authorize the use of force and then voted against funding for our troops in harm's way—only four Members—two of whom were my opponent and his runningmate.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. They asked him why he made his vote, and Senator Kerry uttered perhaps the most famous statement of the 2004 campaign when he said, "I actually did vote for the $87 billion, right before I voted against it."

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. The Commander in Chief must be consistent. After repeatedly calling Iraq the wrong war and a diversion, Senator Kerry this week seemed shocked to learn that Iraq was a dangerous place full of dangerous weapons. The Senator used to know that, even though he seems to have forgotten it over the course of the campaign. Of course, that's why we went into Iraq. Iraq was a dangerous place run by a dangerous tyrant who hated America and who had a lot of weapons. And we have seized or destroyed more than 400,000 tons of munitions, including explosives, at thousands of different sites. And we're continuing to round up more weapons almost every day.

I want to remind the American people if Senator Kerry had had his way, we would still be taking our "global test."

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. We would be waiting for yet another United Nations resolution to make us more safe.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Saddam Hussein would be in power. He would control all those weapons and explosives and could have shared them with the terrorist enemy.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Now, the Senator is making wild charges about missing explosives, when his top foreign policy adviser admits he does not know the facts. He said, quote, "I don't know the truth," end quote. But think about that. The Senator is denigrating the actions of our troops and commanders in the field without knowing the facts.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Our military is now investigating a number of possible scenarios, including that the explosives may have been moved before our troops arrived. This investigation is important. It's ongoing. And a political candidate who jumps to conclusions without knowing the facts is not a person you want as Commander in Chief.

Unfortunately——

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

The President. Unfortunately, that is part of a pattern of a candidate who will say anything to get elected. My opponent is throwing out the wild claim that he knows where bin Laden was in the fall of 2001 and that our military passed up a chance to get him at Tora Bora. You might remember that discussion during our debates. I think this is unjustified criticism of our military commanders in the field. This is the worst kind of Monday morning quarterbacking.

Our commander in Afghanistan, General Tommy Franks, recently wrote this about Tora Bora, quote, "The Senator's understanding of events doesn't square with reality." That's what the man knows what—who knows what he's talking about said. The general says that American Special Forces were actively involved in the search for terrorists in Tora Bora and that intelligence reports at the time placed bin Laden in any of several countries.

Before Senator Kerry got into political difficulty and revised his views, he saw our actions in Tora Bora differently. In the fall of 2001, on national TV, he said, quote, "I think we have been doing this pretty effectively, and we should continue to do it that way." He went on to talk about Tora Bora. The Senator said this: "I think we have been smart. I think the administration leadership has done it well, and we are on the right track." All I can say to this is, I am George W. Bush, and I approve of that message.

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

The President. The security of our families is very important. And my opponent's record on national security has far deeper problems with just election-year flip-flopping. On the largest national security issues of our time, he has been consistently wrong. He has a record. When Ronald Reagan was confronting the Soviet Union at the height of the cold war, Senator Kerry said that President Reagan's policy of peace through strength was making America less safe.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. History has shown that Senator Kerry was wrong and President Ronald Reagan was right.

When former President Bush led a coalition against Saddam Hussein in 1991, Senator Kerry voted against the use of force to liberate Kuwait.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. History has shown that Senator Kerry was wrong and former President Bush was right.

In 1994, just 1 year after the first bombing of the World Trade Center, Senator Kerry proposed massive cuts in America's intelligence budget, so massive that even his colleague from Massachusetts, Ted Kennedy, opposed them. [*Laughter*] History has shown that Senator Kerry was wrong and—we've got to be fair—Senator Kennedy was right.

During the last 20 years, in key moments of challenge and decision for America, Senator Kerry has chosen the position of weakness and inaction. With that record, he stands in opposition not just to me but to the great tradition of the Democrat Party. The party of Franklin Roosevelt, the party of Harry Truman, the party of John Kennedy is rightly

remembered for confidence and resolve in times of war and in hours of crisis. Senator Kerry has turned his back on "pay any price" and "bear any burden," and he's replaced those commitments with "wait and see" and "cut and run."

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Many Democrats in this country do not recognize their party anymore, and today I want to speak to every one of them here in the State of Michigan. If you believe America should lead with strength and purpose and confidence in our ideals, I would be honored to have your support, and I'm asking for your vote.

The second clear choice in this election concerns your family's budget. When I ran for President 4 years ago, I pledged to lower taxes for American families. I kept my word. We doubled the child credit to $1,000 per child to help moms and dads. We reduced the marriage penalty. We believe the Tax Code ought to encourage marriage, not penalize marriage. We lowered—we dropped the lowest tax bracket to 10 percent to help our working families. We reduced income taxes for everybody who pays taxes. After-tax income in America is up by 10 percent since I've become the President.

We have overcome a lot. I want you to remind your friends and neighbors about what this economy has been through. Six months prior to my arrival in Washington, the stock market was in serious decline. Our economy was slowing. We had a recession. We had corporate scandals. And then the attacks on September the 11th cost us nearly a million jobs in the 3 months after those attacks.

But our economic policies are working. They've led us back to the path of growth. We're growing—our economy is growing faster than any in the major industrialized world. Small businesses are flourishing. The entrepreneurial spirit is strong in America. Michigan farmers are making a good living under the Bush administration. We've added more than 1.9 million jobs in the last 13 months. The national unemployment rate is 5.4 percent. That's lower than the average rate of the 1970s, the 1980s, and the 1990s. There is more work to be done to make sure this economy continues to grow so people in Michigan can find work, but one thing is certain: This economy of ours is strong, and it is getting stronger.

My opponent has a very different view about your budget. He intends to take a big chunk out of it.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. He voted against the higher child tax credit. He voted against the marriage penalty relief. He voted against lower taxes. If he had had his way over the last 3 years, the average American family would have been paying $2,000 more in Federal taxes.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. That may not sound like a lot to people in Washington. It's a heck of a lot for people living in Michigan.

You know, my opponent has been in the United States Senate for 20 years. And hear this fact: He voted for increased taxes 98 times. That's five times for every year he's been in the Senate—nearly five times. I would call that a predictable pattern. I'd call that a indicator. [*Laughter*] When a Senator does something that often, he must really enjoy it. [*Laughter*] The problem is you won't enjoy it. If he raises your taxes—as a matter of fact, here's another indicator. He's promised $2.2 trillion of new spending. That's trillion with a "T." That's a lot even for a senator from Massachusetts. [*Laughter*]

And they said, "How are you going to pay for it? How are you going to pay for it?" He said, "Oh, we'll just tax the rich." Now, we have heard that before. Let me tell you two things wrong with that. One, most small businesses pay tax at the individual income tax. Ninety percent of small businesses are what they call Subchapter S corporations and sole proprietorships, and they pay tax at the individual income tax rate. Seventy percent of new jobs are created by small businesses. And so when you start running up the top two income brackets, guess who you're taxing? You're taxing the job creators in America, and that makes no economic sense.

And secondly, by taxing the rich you raise about 600 to 800 billion dollars. So you can see there is a gap between that which he has promised and that which he can deliver. I would call it a tax gap. And guess who usually gets to fill the tax gap?

Audience member. We do!

The President. The good news is we're not going to let him tax you. We're going to carry Michigan and win a great victory.

The third clear choice in this election improves the quality of life for our families. A good education and quality health care are important to a successful life. As a candidate, I pledged to end the soft bigotry of low expectations in our schools. And as President, I have kept my word. We passed the No Child Left Behind Act, which is an historic achievement for public education. We are raising the standards in our schools. We've increased Federal spending, especially for poor students. But in return for an increase of Federal spending, we're now saying, "Show us whether or not a child can read or write, and add and subtract. Show us whether or not children are becoming literate. Show us whether or not we're ending that practice of just shuffling kids through school, year after year, without learning the basics."

You cannot solve a problem until you diagnose a problem, and we are diagnosing problems, and we're solving more and more problems, so that our children are learning to read and write. We're closing an achievement gap in America, and we're not going to go back to the days of low expectations and mediocre results.

We will continue to improve life by making sure health care is affordable and available. To make sure health care is available, we will expand community health centers so the poor and the indigent can get good primary and preventative care. We will make sure our low-income—children for low-income family program for health care is fully subscribed.

To make sure health care is affordable, here are three commonsense ways to help the American family. First, we'll expand health savings accounts to help our small businesses and families have an affordable health care account that you manage and you call your own. Secondly, we will help our small businesses by allowing them to pool risk across jurisdictional boundaries so they can buy insurance at the same discounts that big companies are able to do. And thirdly, we will do something about these frivolous lawsuits that are running up the cost of health care and running good docs out of practice.

You cannot be pro-doctor and pro-patient and pro-trial-lawyer at the same time. I think you have to make a choice. My opponent made his choice, and he put a personal-injury trial lawyer on the ticket.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. I have made my choice. I am standing with the families of Michigan. I am standing with the docs of Michigan. I'm standing with the hospitals of Michigan. I am for real medical liability reform—now.

We have a difference of opinion when it comes to your health care. I don't know if you remember that debate when he—my opponent, when they asked him about his health care plan, looked straight in the camera, and he said, "The Government doesn't have anything to do with it." You know, I could barely contain myself. [*Laughter*] The Government has got a lot to do with his health care plan. Eighty percent of the people would end up on a Government-run health program. See, if you increase Medicaid eligibility, it provides an incentive for many small businesses to drop private coverage because the Government will be providing coverage for their employees. That's moving people from the private sector to the public sector. And when the Government writes a check, the Government makes the rules. And when it comes to your health care, when the Government makes the rules, the Government starts making decisions for you and for your doctors. Federalizing health care is the wrong prescription for America's families.

In all we do to reform health care, we will make sure the health decisions are made by doctors and patients, not by officials in Washington, DC.

The fourth clear choice in this election involves your retirement. Our Nation has made a solemn commitment to America's seniors on Social Security and Medicare. When I ran for President 4 years ago, I promised to keep that commitment and improve Medicare by adding prescription drug coverage. I kept my word. Beginning in 2006, all seniors will be able to get prescription drug coverage under Medicare.

And we'll keep the promise of Social Security for our seniors and strengthen it for generations to come. I don't know if you remember the 2000 campaign, when they were running ads that said, "If George W. gets elected, our seniors will not get their checks." They may be running some here in Michigan now for all I know, trying to scare our seniors again. As you're rounding up the vote, I want you to remind your friends and neighbors that George W. did get elected, and our seniors got their checks. And our seniors will continue to get their checks. Nobody is going to take away the Social Security checks of our seniors. And baby boomers like me, and like a couple others out there I see—[*laughter*]—we're in pretty good shape when it comes to Social Security.

But we need to worry about our children and our grandchildren. We need to worry about whether the Social Security system will be there when they need it. And that's why I believe younger workers ought to be able to take some of their own payroll account—some of their payroll taxes and set up a personal savings account, an account they call their own, an account that will earn better interest, an account the Government cannot take away.

My opponent takes a different approach on the Social Security issue. He talks about protecting Social Security. But I want you to remind your friends and neighbors about this fact: He's the only candidate in the race who has voted eight times for higher taxes on Social Security benefits.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. He can run, but he cannot hide. And when it comes to offering help for the next generation, he's offered nothing. The job of a President is to confront problems, not to pass them on to future Presidents and future generations. In a new term, I will bring Republicans and Democrats together to strengthen the Social Security system for generations to come.

The fifth clear choice in this election is on the values that are so crucial to keeping America's families strong. I stand for the appointment of Federal judges who know the difference between personal opinion and the strict interpretation of the law. I stand for marriage and family, which are the foundations of our society. When Congress passed the Defense of Marriage Act, the vast majority of Democrats supported it, and my predecessor, Bill Clinton, signed it into law. But Senator Kerry was part of an out-of-the-mainstream minority that voted against the Defense of Marriage Act.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Reasonable people can find common ground on difficult issues. Republicans and Democrats came together and agreed we should ban the brutal practice of partial-birth abortions. I proudly signed that bill into law. My opponent was part of an out-of-the-mainstream minority that voted against the ban on partial-birth abortion.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. I'll continue to reach out to Americans of every belief and move this good-hearted Nation to a culture of life.

At one point in this campaign you might remember that my opponent said the heart and soul of America can be found in Hollywood.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. No, I agree. I understand. I understand most American families do not look to Hollywood as a source of values. The heart and soul of America is found in places like Oakland County, Michigan.

No, this election is an important election. It's about important choices, and the decision is in the best of hands. It is in the hands of the American people. I am optimistic about the future of this country. I believe so strongly in what we stand for, and I understand the strength of this country. It lies in the hearts and souls of our fellow citizens. That's the true strength of America.

You know, one of my favorite quotes was written by a fellow Texan named Tom Lea, and here's what Tom said. He said, "Sarah and I live on the east side of the mountain. It is the sunrise side, not the sunset side. It is the side to see the day that is coming, not to see the day that is gone." During this campaign, my opponent has spent much of the campaign talking about the day that is gone. I'm talking about the day that is coming.

I see a day that's coming where America is more safe and our families are more secure, a day when this country is prosperous

in every corner of the land, a day in which every child can read and write and add and subtract, a day in which we defend the bedrock values that make our society such a compassionate, decent place.

When I campaigned across your State 4 years ago, I made this pledge, that if I got elected, I would uphold the honor and the dignity of the office to which I had been elected. With your help, I will do so for 4 more years.

Thanks for coming. God bless. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:33 p.m. at the Pontiac Silverdome. In his remarks, he referred to Senator Zell Miller of Georgia, who made the keynote address at the Republican National Convention; Michael L. Williams, commissioner, Railroad Commission of Texas; Lt. Gov. Michael S. Steele of Maryland; Michigan Secretary of State Terri Lynn Land; Betsy DeVos, chairman, Michigan Republican Party; 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 Saginaw, Michigan

October 28, 2004

The President. Thank you all. Thanks for coming out to say hello. I got to tell me, you have lifted my spirits, for which I am grateful. It's good to be back in Saginaw. I'm grateful so many of you came out to say hello.

Listen, I'm traveling your State asking for the vote and asking for your help. It is close to voting day. We have a duty in our country to vote. In our free land, free citizens must vote. And so I'm asking you to get your friends and neighbors to go to the polls, turn out our fellow Republicans, find independents who understand we have a better tomorrow ahead of us, and don't overlook discerning Democrats. Tell your fellow citizens that if they want a safer country, a stronger country, and a better country, to put me and Dick Cheney back in office.

My only regret is that Laura is not here to see this fantastic crowd. She headed off to campaign today in Florida. You know, when I asked her to marry me, she said, "I'll marry you, but make me a promise." I said, "What is it?" She said, "Promise me I will never have to give a political speech." [*Laughter*] I'm sure some of you can relate to that. I said, "Okay, you got a deal." Fortunately, she didn't hold me to that deal. She is giving a lot of speeches, and when she does, the American people see a strong, compassionate, great First Lady. Perhaps the most important reason why people ought to put me back in office is so that Laura will be the First Lady for 4 more years.

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

The President. I am proud of my runningmate, Dick Cheney. He is doing a great job. Although, I admit, he does not have the waviest hair in the race. [*Laughter*] You will be pleased I didn't pick him because of his hairdo. I picked him because of his experience. I picked him because of his judgment. I picked him because he can get the job done for the American people.

I'm proud to call Dave Camp my friend, and I know you're proud to call him Congressman. And I want to thank Terri Lynn Land for joining us, the secretary of state for the great State of Michigan. And I wish Myrah Kirkwood all the best in her run for the United States Congress. I want to thank Betsy DeVos and all the grassroots activists who are here. I want to thank the Saline Fiddlers. I want to thank the Saginaw Area Band. I want to thank the Wil Gravatt Band for joining us. Thank you for entertaining this good crowd.

Most of all, I want to thank you all. I want to thank you for what you have done on behalf of my candidacy and what you're going to do. By working the phones, by getting people to—by reminding people of their duty to vote, by putting up the signs, by turning out that vote, there is no doubt in my mind, we will carry Michigan and win a great victory in November.

Five days from now, the people go to the polls. We are choosing the leader of our country at a time of great consequence to our Nation. We're at war against a terrorist enemy unlike any we have ever seen. We have much more to do to win a decisive victory against the terrorists. The most important duty of the American President is to protect the American people. If America shows