AUTHENTICATED
U.S. GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION
GPO

in freedom to worship. And I understand the consternation and concern of Iraqi Shi'as when they see this most holy site wantonly destroyed.

I appreciate very much the leaders from all aspects of Iraqi society that have stood up and urged for there to be calm. They recognize two things—one, the Iraqi people want to live in a democracy. After all, 11 million people voted in the last election. In other words, given a choice of whether or not they want democracy or a different form of government, millions of people showed up to vote, making a clear statement to the Iraqi authorities as well as to the people of the world—they want democracy.

Secondly, the voices of reason from all aspects of Iraqi life—understand that this bombing is intended to create civil strife, that the act was a evil act. The destruction of a holy site is a political act intending to create strife. And so I'm pleased with the voices of reason that have spoken out. And we will continue to work with those voices of reason to enable Iraq to continue on the path of a democracy that unites people and doesn't divide them.

Finally, I do want to assure the Iraqi people that the U.S. Government is serious in our commitment in helping to rebuild that holy site. We understand its importance to Iraqi society, and we want to stand side by side with the Government in making sure that beautiful dome is restored.

Caren [Caren Bohan, Reuters].

Dubai Ports World/Homeland Security

Q. Sir, do you wish you had known earlier about the Dubai Ports deal, and were you surprised by the controversy over it?

The President. The more people learn about the transaction that has been scrutinized and approved by my Government, the more they'll be comforted that our ports will be secure. Port security in the United States will be run by Customs—U.S. Customs—and the United States Coast Guard. The management of some ports, which heretofore has been managed by a foreign company will be managed by another company from a foreign land. And so people don't need to worry about security. This deal wouldn't go forward if we were concerned about the security for the United States of America.

What I find interesting is that it's okay for a British company to manage some ports but not okay for a company from a country that is also a valuable ally in the war on terror. The UAE has been a valuable partner in fighting the war on terror. A lot of goods are shipped from ports to the United States—managed by this company.

And again, I repeat to the American people, this wouldn't be going forward if we weren't certain that our ports would be secure. But I also want to remind folks that it's really important we not send mixed messages to friends and allies around the world as we combine—put together a coalition to fight this war on terror.

And so we'll continue to talk to people in Congress and explain clearly why the decision was made. Many of those doing the explanations are around this table, and I want to thank them for bringing a sense of calm to this issue, as people understand the logic of the decision.

Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:16 a.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks at a Reception for Congressional Candidate Chris Chocola in Mishawaka, Indiana

February 23, 2006

Thank you all very much. Please be seated. Thanks for the warm welcome. I have grown to admire Chris Chocola a lot because he is a person who does in office what he said he would do during campaigns. He is a honest, decent, down-to-earth, practical man who deserves to be reelected to the United States Congress.

Chris is a rising star in the House of Representatives. And when you find a rising star, it makes a lot of sense to keep him serving you. So I want to thank you all for recognizing talent when you see it. Thank you for backing this good man for his reelection. Thank you for coming today to give me a chance to say loud and clear, Chris is the

right person for the 2d Congressional District of Indiana.

And like me, he married well—[*laughter*]—it's great to see Sarah—and Caroline and Colin. You know, being in politics is hard on your family. But it sure does help when you, in my case, marry a good wife, and in Chris's case, marry a good wife too. And there's nothing better, by the way, in the political arena than going back home after a day when maybe some sharp elbows were flying, to a family that loves you more than anything. I think it's important to have somebody in the United States Congress who places his faith and his family as a priority in his life. And that's certainly what your Congressman Chris Chocola does. And I can't thank you enough for backing him.

I want to thank Bethel College for letting us come by; I want to thank your president, Steve Cramer. And I want to thank the students. I know there's some students listening to this speech—one, I'll try to keep it short so you can get back to class. [*Laughter*] And two, please take politics seriously. In our society, all of us have a duty to participate. And one way you participate is when elections come around, you go to the polls and do your civic duty by voting. Now, I hear too often, "My vote doesn't count." Your vote counts. And by the way, when you go into the booth, vote for him.

I want to thank all the organizers of this event. It's not easy to organize an event that has been this successful of this size. And so, for all of you who have worked so hard, thanks for taking time to support Chris. I want to thank Jack Hiler, former Member of the United States Congress, who is the chairman of Chris's campaign. I want to thank Murray Clark, the chairman of our Republican Party of the State of Indiana. The attorney general, Steve Carter, is with us. General Carter, thank you for coming. Appreciate you taking time out. Most of all, thank you for being here.

Before I get to my speech, I do want to thank the mayor, Jeff Rea. Jeff, thanks for coming. He gave me the key to the city. [*Laughter*] My only advice, Mr. Mayor, is pave the roads. [*Laughter*] And I know you will. [*Laughter*] I asked him, I said, "Do you like being mayor? He said, "I love serving the people." And I don't see how you can be in public office if you don't love serving the people.

Chris loves serving the people of this district. Every time I'm with him, he's talking about the people of the 2d Congressional District. He says, "I'm concerned about things; I'm worried about the small-business owner," or, "I want you to understand, Mr. President, how important Humvee is." I said, "I understand the importance of Humvee; you don't have to tell me that." [*Laughter*] He's talking about—all the time, talking about people who live here. And the reason why is because he cares about people. It's one thing to be espoused in policy; it's another thing to have, deep in your heart, the desire to help people help themselves.

One of the things about why I like working with Chris and people in Congress is that we're there for a reason. Some people in Washington just want to say, "Well, I held the office." But that's not why Chris ran. He didn't need to run. He is a successful small-business owner. Pleased to report he and I are not lawyers. For all your lawyers out there, that's all right. We need them. But we got plenty of them in Washington, DC. [*Laughter*] Seems like it makes sense to have somebody that knows how to run a business representing this important congressional district.

We're living during historic times. I wish I could report to you that the war on terror was over, but it's not. It's—these are serious times that require serious thought and serious purpose in order to do our most important duty, which is to protect the American people.

You know, my buddies in Texas, they come up to the White House quite frequently. And after they get over their initial shock that I'm there—[*laughter*]—they then ask me, "What's it like to be President of the United States?" And the best way to give a job description is it's—I make a lot of decisions. I'm a decisionmaker. And some of the decisions that—you'll see them; they're visible; they're big decisions. And some of them you'll never see. And I want to share with you the rationale as to why I made some of the decisions I've made, decisions that Chris

has been strong to support for the good of the country.

My thinking about the world changed on September the 11th, 2001. You just got to know that, so that when you see me talking about why we're doing things we're doing for the country, just keep in mind that on that day I vowed that I would use everything in my power to protect the American people; that I recognized the nature of the war we were in, and I recognized the nature of the enemy.

Let me talk about the enemy right quick. These are people who have no conscience, but they do have a philosophy. These aren't isolated cases of people that are acting out their anger. These are folks who have espoused an ideology that is the exact opposite of the United States of America. Perhaps the best way to describe their thinking is to remind you what life was like under the Taliban for people in Afghanistan. Life under the—in Afghanistan said that if you were a young girl you had no chance, no hope. As a matter of fact, you would never get educated. Life under the Taliban in Afghanistan said if you don't ascribe to the way we think about religion, you're subject to penalty—harsh penalty often, sometimes execution. In other words, there's no sense of freedom, no sense of individualism. It's all this kind of darkness prescribed by a few. It's totalitarianism at its worst.

They've made it clear their intentions. When the enemy speaks, you better have people in Congress and in the White House who takes their word seriously. See, some in Washington would like to look at the world the way they want it to be; our job is to look at the world the way it is and try to work to make it better.

And so the enemy has said, "Don't worry, America is soft and weak, and all we've got to do is use the one weapon we have, which is the capacity and willingness to kill innocent life, and they will lose their nerve." And the reason they want us to retreat from the world is because they want to find safe haven again from which they can plot and plan and attack and kill.

I told you September the 11th changed my frame of reference, changed my thinking. I am never going to give any quarter whatsoever to the enemy. We will stay on the hunt. We will be on the offense, and we will protect the American people by defeating them overseas so we do not have to face them here at home.

That's why it's important to have Members of Congress who understand that when we put any person in harm's way, he or she deserves the best training, the best equipment, the best support possible. Chris Chocola has been a strong backer of the men and women who wear the uniform of the United States of America.

I also recognize that if the enemy were able to find safe haven, that would make this country less secure. And so I put out a doctrine early on in this war, the first war of the 21st century—by the way, I wish I wasn't talking about war. No President ever says, "Gosh, I hope there's war." For those of you who are young here, I want you to know what I'm leading to is how to keep the peace and do my job that you expect me to do, which is to prevent the enemy from attacking again.

See, when I grew up, oceans would protect us. At least that's what we thought. You might remember the '50s and '60s. We'd see a threat overseas, and we were teenage kids and just didn't need to worry about it, did we, because oceans were there to protect us. That all changed on September the 11th. And so I've talked—two things to the American people—one, we've got to deny the terrorists safe haven; and secondly, we've got to deal with threats before they fully materialize.

In the old days, a threat could be there, and we could pick and choose, decide whether or not we needed to deal with it or not. That's no longer the case in the 21st century. And so I said to the people of Afghanistan, "You give up bin Laden; give up Al Qaida," because they were providing safe haven. I said, "If you harbor a terrorist, you're equally as guilty as the terrorists." And when the President speaks, he better mean what he says. And I meant what I said, and they didn't give up Al Qaida, and we routed the Taliban, and 25 million people now live in freedom.

We saw a threat with Saddam Hussein. I wasn't the only person who saw the threat. The United States Congress saw the threat; Republicans and Democrats saw the same

threat. The United Nations Security Council saw the same threat. The entire world saw that Saddam Hussein was a threat. He'd attacked his neighbors; he attacked U.S.—was attacking U.S. airplanes; he had used weapons of mass destruction; he had destroyed thousands of his own citizens. There are mass graves in Iraq because of his brutality. He was a threat. It was his choice to make: Disclose, disarm, or face serious consequences. He made the wrong choice. The world is better off without Saddam Hussein in power.

And I want to thank Chris for his strong support in this war on terror. It's important to have people who are clear-eyed in this battle. It's important never to send mixed signals to our troops in combat. It's important not to play politics with the issue of war and peace. And I appreciate his strong stand. That's not easy, by the way. I understand that. Nobody wants to go around bragging about being strong in a war. But he is. And you just got to know, it's vital to have this kind of strength in the Halls of Congress as we implement a plan for victory.

We have one option, and that is to achieve our victory. And we have such a plan, and it starts with making sure that we deny a safe haven to the terrorists in Iraq. We got a plan that, on the one hand, says that democracy can help heal old wounds. And the Iraqi people have stood up three times in the past 13 months and made it clear to the whole world that they want to live in democracy. Over 11 million people voted in the face of terror. Their voices loud and clear, "We reject terrorism; we reject the dark view of the Al Qaida that want to use them as a safe haven."

And if you want to know how tough Al Qaida is, just look at—we don't know exactly who made the bombing of this incredibly important holy shrine in Iraq, but whoever did it is trying to stop the advance of freedom, because their ideology of darkness cannot stand the light that freedom brings to people around the world. The United States of America strongly condemns the destruction of a holy site. I firmly believe that whoever did this is not a religious person but an evil person. And I praise the leaders in Iraq who have urged for calm and who continue to make sure that Iraq stays on the road to democracy.

The second part of our strategy is to train the Iraqis so they can take the fight to the enemy. One of the interesting things early on in this war in Iraq, they started bombing these recruiting stations. So the first question I asked our commanders on the ground was, are you having any problem finding recruits? And the answer was, absolutely not. The people of Iraq want to be free, and we're training people to help them secure their freedom. And as the Iraqis stand up, we will stand down. Troop decisions will not be made by politicians in Washington, DC, but by commanders on the ground. And we've got a plan for victory, a victory we will achieve.

In the long run, the way to lay the foundation of peace for our children and grandchildren and defend the United States of America is the spread of liberty. I know some have questioned whether or not it made sense, in my second Inaugural Address, to put a goal for the 21st century to be the eradication of tyranny. I can't imagine anybody questioning whether or not we should work to eradicate tyranny. Part of my decisionmaking process is based upon this principle and belief: I believe there's an Almighty; I believe that freedom is a gift from the Almighty; I believe everybody, deep in their soul, desires to be free. And therefore, you should not be surprised—I wasn't—when eleven million Iraqis said, "I want to be free." Freedom is the best way to achieve peace in the long run.

If you look at our history, we had—a lot of your relatives have died in wars on the continent of Europe. And yet, because democracy spread in Europe, Europe is now whole, free, and at peace. My dad fought the Japanese. I'm sure some of your relatives did as well. They were the enemy of the United States of America in a brutal war. And yet, today, I sit down at the table with Prime Minister Koizumi of Japan, talking about how to keep the peace.

And what's the lesson to be learned? The lesson is this: that when a country adopts a democracy in their own style, reflecting their own history and their own traditions, they become a peaceful nation. Democracies do not war; democracies yield the peace. And

someday, a duly elected leader from Iraq is going to be sitting down with an American President talking about how to keep the peace, and our children and grandchildren are going to be better off.

I want to talk about another decision I made that you've been reading about in the newspapers. Right after September the 11th, 2001, I called in people who have the responsibility of helping to protect this country. We've got some really fine people, by the way. Really good people on the frontlines of fighting off these terrorists. See, if you don't believe we're not at war, then I can understand why people were concerned about my decision with the NSA. But we are at war; there's an enemy that still lurks.

I spend every morning thinking about—at least every morning thinking about how to protect you. That's what you asked me to do; that's my job. It's really important for people in this country to know that the Government is working as hard as they can to protect the American people so you can go about your business. It's hard to be a risk-taker if all you think about is war. See, you've hired a lot of us to think on your behalf.

And so I called in those on the frontline. I said, can we do anything more to protect the American people? What can we do? General Mike Hayden of the NSA is one fine public servant—came back, he said, "Mr. President, I think we can do a better job of picking up communications from an enemy before they attack so we can possibly respond." Mindful of that recommendation and mindful of the fact that I took the oath of office that said I will defend the Constitution and the laws of the United States—I called in the lawyers. I got a lot of them. [*Laughter*] I said, is what General Hayden recommended legal? Do I have the legal authority as the President of the United States to put this in practice—because it made a lot of sense his recommendation. He said, "Mr. President, we have the capacity to listen to Al Qaida or suspected Al Qaida and their affiliates in making phone calls from outside the United States, inside the United States and vice versa."

It seemed to make sense to me that if somebody associated with the enemy is making a call inside the country, that it would be helpful to know why, in order to protect the American people. Lawyers came back and said, "You got the authority, Mr. President."

I then went and said, well, gosh, if we do go forward, I know there's going to be some consternation in the Halls of the United States Congress. So we briefed people responsible for intelligence and the leadership in both bodies, in both political parties. Just like my buddy in Texas said, "If you're trying to pull one over on them, why are you briefing the Congress?" [*Laughter*] "If you're doing something illegal, why did you call the Congress in and lay it for them to fully understand what we're doing to protect the American people?"

I wanted to share that with you. I think it's important for you to know why I make decisions. I'm confident what I'm doing—the decision I made is the right decision. If Al Qaida is calling in the United States, we want to know why.

We're also making decisions about how to keep this economy growing. One thing the people of this district ought to do is judge whether or not Chris's votes on creating an environment for capital to flourish is working or not. He said, look—he and I agree the role of Government is not to create wealth but an environment in which small businesses can flourish, in which people can realize their dreams, in which capital moves more freely, so that people can find work.

And our plan is working. This economy of ours has been through a recession, an attack, a war, and corporate scandals, major storms last year, and high energy prices; and we grew at 3.5 percent. The national unemployment rate is 4.7 percent. We've added 4.7 million new jobs over the past 24 months—or a little longer than—2½ years. Productivity is at an alltime high. More people own a home today than ever before in our Nation's history. More minorities own a home today than ever before in our Nation's history.

Our progrowth economic policies are working, and it starts with keeping your taxes low. Cutting taxes was the right thing to do. And if we don't permanently keep these tax

cuts in place, you're going to have a tax increase. And raising taxes is the wrong way to cause this economy to continue to grow.

I'm proud to have somebody like Chris who understands that when you have more money in your pockets to spend and save and invest, the economy grows. I've heard it—I'm sure you've heard all the talk in Washington. They said, "Look, we need to balance the budget, and therefore, let's raise the taxes." That's not how Washington works. They're going to raise your taxes, and they're going to figure out new ways to spend your money. That's how Washington works. The best way to balance the budget is keep taxes low, grow the economy, and be wise about how we spend your money.

And I appreciate Chris's support of fiscal austerity, and he does a good job. Every program sounds like a brilliant program in Washington, but you got to set priorities with the people's money, and that's what we're doing. We're on a plan to cut the deficit in half by 2009, but the toughest deficit of all is the unfunded liabilities inherent in Medicare and Social Security.

And I recognize some of them in Washington don't want to touch that issue. By the way, it's a problem for both Republicans and Democrats. Sometimes if the issue looks too tough, the easiest thing to do is head for the hills. That's not the way Chris thinks. On Air Force One today, he said, "Mr. President, are you serious about continuing to discuss how to fix Social Security and Medicare?" And I said, "Absolutely, Chris." He understands what I know. Our job is to confront problems and not pass them on to future Presidents and future Congresses. And I intend to continue working with Chris on Social Security and Medicare reform.

You know, there's always a series of choices in Washington, DC, and I understand there's still uncertainty in the economy. And I understand why. There's a lot of changeover with new jobs, and you got some folks here in this district that lost work. And this troubles our fellow citizens, and it troubles me, and it troubles Chris. And we have a choice to make during this period of uncertainty, and that is whether or not we become protectionists and isolationists, or whether or not we're confident about the capacity of the United States to continue to lead the world's economy. And I'm proud to have a partner who ascribes to the latter philosophy.

Our view is this: We shouldn't fear the future because we intend to shape the future. And you shape the future with good tax policy and good spending policy. You shape the future with good legal policy. We got too many junk lawsuits making it hard for people to invest capital. We need legal reform in the United States of America if we intend to lead the world economy.

We intend to shape the future by encouraging research and development so this country remains the leading exporter and developer of new technologies. We're going to shape the future by changing our energy habits. I understand when an oil guy—I'm a guy from Texas—stands up and says, "We're addicted to oil," it caused people to take a second look. But I'm going to tell you something, being addicted to oil puts us in an economic bind as well as a national security bind. And I intend to do something about it.

I'm glad to have a partner with Chris. We're going to spend money wisely—your money wisely on research and development so we can develop advanced new batteries, so you can plug in your car at night and be able to drive 40 miles on electricity, not using a drop of gasoline. We're going to continue to expand the use of ethanol. It makes sense, by the way, to use research and development—your dollars for research and development to figure out ways to burn—better ways to burn corn and wood chips and saw grass. I want it so the American agriculture sector is providing energy for United States automobiles, not unstable parts of the world providing energy for U.S. automobiles.

We've got an aggressive agenda. We believe in things. We're optimistic people. We believe in our philosophy, and we know you've sent us to Washington to produce results. And one of the really important areas I know for people in this part of the world is to make sure health care is available and affordable, particularly if you're a small-business owner. Everywhere I go small-business owners say, "It's tough for me to stay in business because I'm having trouble with my health care costs." And that's dangerous for the United States. Two-thirds of all new jobs

in the United States are produced by small-business owners, and so we got to do something about it.

I want to warn you, however, that there is a philosophical debate in Washington and I would very—listen very carefully to the rhetoric during a political campaign. The debate is this, whether or not we should encourage market forces to help set price, or whether or not the Federal Government ought to be setting price. I strongly do not believe the Federal Government ought to be running our health care system, and neither does Chris Chocola. We believe that we ought to strengthen the doctor-patient relationship, bring transparency to pricing and medicine, encourage the development of information technology so medicine is modern.

In order to make sure health care is available and affordable, we've got to do something about these lawsuits—not necessarily in Indiana—but around the country that are running good docs out of business and running up the cost of medicine for the taxpayers.

We have passed what's called health savings accounts. It's a great new vehicle to add market pricing into medicine and to put doctors and patients in charge of medicine. I strongly urge people who have run the small businesses to take a look at health savings accounts. And I look forward to working with Chris to make health savings account more acceptable and more available as an important antidote to those who want to federalize health care.

I do want to talk about one aspect of health care that is a Federal responsibility, and that's Medicare. When I got to Washington, DC, I decided to do something about a health care system that had become stagnant and old as a result of Federal bureaucracies making decisions. I'll give you an example. The Government would pay your taxpayers' money—your money to help a person with an ulcer surgery. It may cost 50 grand; I don't know what ulcer surgeries cost. Fortunately, I haven't had one. But it costs a lot. But wouldn't pay a dime for the prescription drugs to prevent the ulcer surgery from happening in the first place. That seemed like the system was a little old to me, and stale.

If you make a commitment to somebody, you got to make the commitment of excellence. And so I worked with Congress, Congressmen like Chris, to modernize Medicare, to provide a prescription drug benefit for our seniors. The Medicare modernization bill not only introduced HSAs but it gave seniors different options from which to choose. It's amazing what happens when you interject a sense of competition into a system. Do you realize that when we first analyzed the prescription drug benefit for seniors, they thought it was going to cost about $35 a month for the seniors? Because of competition, it's down to less than $28 a month. Competition works. Trusting people to make decisions works. Modernizing Medicare is an important, vital thing to have done. The Medicare bill I signed, that Chris supported, is going to make medicine for our seniors modern, and it's been necessary to do.

Good public policy is more than just talking about economic issues or cultural issues which matter to the United States as well. I'm proud to have a partner in promoting a culture of life in the United States of America. Banning partial-birth abortion was an important bill I signed and sends a signal that the United States of America should value all life in all forms.

The true strength of the United States of America is not our military strength or our economic strength, but it's the—the strength lies in the hearts and souls of our citizens. I am always astounded at the social entrepreneurship that takes place all around our country. I'm impressed by the thousands who have joined the armies of compassion to help bring hope where there's hopelessness and love where there's a lack of love.

Chris and I understand that the role of Government is limited, and it's a fact that Governments don't love. Governments can dispense law and justice but not love. And therefore, one of the most important initiatives of my tenure as your President has been to promote the Faith-Based and Community-Based Initiative, which recognizes Governments should welcome people of faith in helping to solve the intractable problems of our society. We should not fear faith in America. We ought to say to those who want to love their neighbor just like they'd like to

be loved themselves, "You should have equal access to Federal money, so long as you're helping to meet a Federal need." And we have a lot of need when it comes to saying to a brother or sister who's lost, "I love you. What can I do to help you?"

I've probably been going on a little too long. I hope the food's not getting cold. [*Laughter*] But I do tell you I'm proud to be here. I'm honored to stand by this good man. He's a fine, fine person and a great Member of the United States Congress who ran for a reason. And today I hope I can share some of the reasons why both he and I are proud to serve our country. I hope you can get a sense of philosophy behind why. We're not making up our minds based upon polls or focus groups. We're making up our mind based upon a philosophy and what we think is right for all the people of this country.

Please send him back to the United States Congress. He's necessary. He's important, and he's doing a fantastic job for the people of the 2d Congressional District.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:30 p.m. at Bethel College Indiana. In his remarks, he referred Sarah Chocola, wife of Representative Chris Chocola, and their two children, Caroline and Colin; Indiana Attorney General Steve Carter; Mayor Jeffrey L. Rea of Mishawaka, IN; Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Remarks to the American Legion

February 24, 2006

Thank you all. Please be seated. Thanks for the warm welcome. Mr. Commander, thank you for letting me come by and visit with you about the subject of how to keep the peace and protect the United States of America. I'm proud to be with my fellow Legionnaires. Always a pleasure to be in the midst of veterans who served our country. I see some people who are not quite veterans yet that are with us, members who are serving all branches of Government, and I thank you all for coming. I appreciate your interest in the direction this country must continue to lead in order to protect ourselves and promote the peace.

I want to thank Carol Van Kirk, who's the national president of the American Legion Auxiliary. Old Tom Bock is wise enough to always include the Auxiliary. He knows something about leadership. I want to thank Paul Hasz. I want to thank John Sommer, executive director. He spends quality time in the Oval Office, along with the commander. He's never shy to express his opinion, but that's what you pay him for. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank the chairman of the Senate Arms Services Committee, Senator John Warner. Senator, it means a lot to me and it means a lot to the folks here that you take time to come here to be with them. And I'm honored you're here. Thanks for coming.

The American Legion is one of America's great organizations. From your founding after World War I to today's war on terror, Legionnaires have fought for our freedom, and you fought for the brave veterans who defended our freedom as well. You served our country in uniform, and you serve our country in civilian life. The Legion was founded, in the words of your constitution, "to build a sense of individual obligation to the community, state, and nation." And when Hurricane Katrina struck our Nation's gulf coast, Legion posts all across America swung into action to help neighbors in need.

Take, for example, Post 338 in Bradner, Ohio. These good folks helped arrange medical transportation to reunite a sick child with his family, after the family was forced apart because of the storm. Or Post 27 in DeRidder, Louisiana, which turned its bingo hall into an emergency shelter for 41 kidney dialysis patients and their caregivers and their loved ones.

I think it's very interesting what the post commander, Retired Navy Master Chief Bill Loftin, said—by the way, he said it when he was cooking hot meals and helped care for disabled evacuees. He put it this way: "This is for human life. That's what the Legion is all about." In times of crisis, our citizens know Legionnaires always come through, and I appreciate you.

Members of the American Legion are showing the heart of the Legion every single day, not just when catastrophe hits. Across America, Legionnaires and members of the