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Remarks at a Reception for Gubernatorial Candidate Charlie Crist and the Republican Party of Florida in Orlando

September 21, 2006

The President. Thank you all. Thanks for coming. I appreciate you all being here. Thanks for your time. From "Chalkboard Charlie" to "Governor Charlie." Thanks for helping this good man. He's a good, decent man. He's had plenty of experience. He knows what he needs to do. He's been the commissioner of education; he's been your attorney general; he's been a State senator. He's the right guy for the job, and I want to thank you very much for standing strong when you find somebody who is decent and honorable, willing to serve the State of Florida—and that's Charlie Crist.

And you're right, Charlie, you're following a good man. He's made our family proud. But more importantly, he's done a fine job for the people of Florida. He's the kind of guy—[*applause*]—and, Charlie, I know you'll follow this example about you—he doesn't need a poll or a focus group to tell him what to think.

And that's what is necessary to make the hard decisions when you're the chief executive officer of a State, or in my case, the United States. I'm proud to be here with Charlie. I know something about being a Governor; I was one once. It requires a man with vision and a person who knows how to set the right priorities for a State. There's no doubt in my mind Charlie Crist will make a great Governor for the State of Florida, and I want to thank you for helping him.

And my wife feels the same way. If you were smart, Charlie, you'd get Laura down here to campaign for you. She sends her love; she sends her love to Jeb; and she sends her love to our friends here in Florida. And we've got a lot of friends. We've been blessed in this great State to have made a lot of friends. And I want to thank all my buddies who were there when nobody thought we could win in 2000, and then came back through in 2004. Now you're back in 2006, and I'm grateful. It's for a good cause.

I want to thank Jeff Kottkamp, the next Lieutenant Governor of the State of Florida, who is with us today. I, too, encourage you to vote for Katherine Harris for the United States Senate. Welcome, Katherine.

One of my long-time friends here in Orange County is a guy whose son made him famous—[*laughter*]—a while ago. You might remember the incident. I was up there giving one of my best speeches. [*Laughter*] I was putting 100 percent into it. I thought I had the crowd on their feet, until I looked behind me. And Crotty's son was sound asleep. [*Laughter*] So, Crotty, you tell him, stay awake the next time he comes to one of these things. It kind of hurts an old guy's feelings. But I'm glad to be here with Rich Crotty. He's doing a fine job in Orange County.

I want to thank all the other State and local officials who are here. I want to thank the party activists who are here, starting with Carole Jean Jordan, who is the chairman of the Republican Party of Florida, and my friend Al Austin, who is the finance chairman of the Republican Party of Florida.

And raising money is one thing, and tonight is an extraordinarily successful event, and I thank you. I know it takes a lot to organize one of these events, and you've done a marvelous job. But I also want to remind you, in order for Charlie to win, he's going to need people to put up the signs and make the phone calls and stuff the envelopes—those quiet heroes of grassroots politics. So for those of you who have been involved with grassroots politics here in Florida, thank you for what you have done and thank you for what you're going to do to help this good man get elected Governor of the State of Florida.

You know, it's—one of the big issues that faces our country and your State is the issue of taxes. I think you're taxed too much; so does Charlie. And I think there's going to be a clear difference in this race, and there's certainly a clear difference nationally. You know, the—we share a philosophy, and that is, the role of Government is not to try to create wealth, but the role of Government is to create an environment in which the entrepreneurial spirit flourishes and which small businesses can grow to be big businesses. It's an environment in which people get to keep their own money. And the fundamental question facing this Nation and this

State is, who best to spend your money? We believe the best people to spend your money is you.

The Democrats believe they can spend it better than you can.

Audience members. No-o-o!

The President. And it's a fundamental, philosophical difference. I aim to make taxes a key issue across this country, and we've got a good record on taxes, and so does Brother Jeb, and so will Governor Crist.

I was proud to sign the largest tax relief since Ronald Reagan was President of the United States. I did so because I felt we had enough money to spend on your behalf in Washington, DC, and I knew that if you had more money in your pocket to save, invest, or spend, this economy would grow.

There's a fundamental difference in Washington. When we cut the taxes on child care, most Democrats voted against—on the child credit, most Democrats voted against it. We tried to get rid of the marriage penalty—it's a simple concept, by the way. You shouldn't penalize marriage in the Tax Code; you ought to encourage—most Democrats voted against it. When we tried to get the death tax on the road to extinction, most Democrats voted against it. We've got a record of cutting taxes, and they've got a record of opposing tax cuts. It's night and day. It is a clear example of the philosophical difference that divides Republicans and Democrats.

I remember in 2003 when we cut the taxes, one of the leading Democrats stood up and said, "Cutting taxes will do nothing to create jobs." Well, since that person uttered those famous words, our economy has added 5.7 million new jobs. This economy is strong.

This economy is strong because we let you have more of your own money, and we intend to keep it that way. Just the other day, a top Democrat—the top Democrat on the House tax writing committee—that's called the Ways and Means Committee; they'll be the people who decide whether or not your taxes go up or down—said this, "I can't think of one of our tax cuts that should be extended."

Now let me try to boil down Washington-speak for you. If the tax cuts are not extended, your taxes go up. It's kind of like an employer saying, you know, "I'm not going to extend your pay raise," see. And so if they're going to say, "Well, we're just not going to extend the tax cuts," that means they're going to run up your taxes. Running up your taxes would be wrong for our economy, and it would be wrong for the working families of the United States.

So I asked Charlie, I said, what's he making a priority? He said, "I'm making property taxes a priority in the State of Florida." You put him in office, he's going to cut your property taxes, and you can take that to the bank.

You know, we enacted some good legislation when it came to making sure our seniors have got good health care. You might remember, the Medicare program had gone a little stale. We would pay for surgeries but not for the prescription drugs that would prevent the surgery from being needed in the first place. And that didn't make any sense. My attitude is, if you're going to provide a service for our seniors, let's provide a good service.

And so we modernized Medicare, and today, the bills that seniors pay for prescription drugs is way down, and the days of seniors—poor seniors having to choose between food and medicine, those days are over. And I'm going to need a Governor, just like Jeb did, to make sure the modernization of this Medicare program is available for all of Florida's seniors.

When I was the Governor of Texas, I used to say, education is to the State what national defense is to the Federal Government. I think it's the most important priority of a State, is to make sure the public school system insists upon excellence for every single child. And that's what Charlie thinks too. That's why I called him "Chalkboard." [*Laughter*] He understands that a Governor, just like your Governor has done, needs to lead when it comes to challenging mediocrity when we find it in the public schools.

It's essential that our public schools work. It's essential that we set high standards and measure to make sure children are learning how to read and write and add and subtract. And if we find it early, we'll correct problems early so no child is left behind in America or in the State of Florida.

These are the issues that the people of Florida are going to have to decide upon, you know—taxes, fiscal sanity, making sure

the health care system works, and making sure every single child gets educated. And I think if Floridians of all parties—or even if they're not of a party—pay attention to the debate, they'll find that Charlie Crist stands with them. He'll be a people's Governor. He likes to shake hands; he likes people. That's the kind of Governor you want. You want somebody who feels comfortable with the people of a State, somebody who can make decisions, and somebody who can set a clear vision on behalf of this vital State. And that's Charlie Crist.

I want to talk a little bit about the stakes of the world in which we live. We're at war. We're at war with a group of ideologs that use murder as a weapon to intimidate and create fear. I wish I could report otherwise.

I vowed after September the 11th, 2001, that I would use every one of our national assets in order to protect you. The most important job of any government in this day and age is to protect the American people from further attack. That starts with making sure our homeland is secure and making sure those on the frontline of protecting you have the tools necessary to be able to protect you. We have to find out what the enemy is thinking in order to stop attacks. If an Al Qaida or an Al Qaida associate is making a phone call into the United States, we need to know why in order to be able to protect you from further attacks.

If somebody is moving money around to finance a terrorist operation, we want to know why they're moving money around, to protect you. If the CIA and the FBI need to be able to share information to protect you, we need to make sure those walls are permanently torn down. In order to protect the United States of America, we must give those on the frontline that are protecting this Nation the tools necessary to do so within the Constitution of the United States, and that is precisely what this administration is doing.

But the facts are these: The enemy only has to be right one time to protect you—to hurt us, and we've got to be right 100 percent of the time to protect you, which means that the best way to protect the American people is to stay on the offense against these killers, defeat them overseas so we do not have to face them here at home, and bring them to justice before they hurt us again.

And that's exactly what the United States of America is doing, with a lot of other nations. We're keeping the pressure on them. It's hard to plot and plan when you're on the run. And that's what we have been doing for 5½ years, and that's what we will continue to do so long as I'm your President. The most important job we have is to protect the American people.

You know, there's an enemy that still wants to strike. I mean, it should be clear to the American people, particularly after we recently, working with the Brits, foiled suicide attacks, bombing these airplanes when they're flying into the United States. These are ruthless people. You cannot negotiate with them; you can't hope that their ambitions go away; you can't try to—you know, therapy won't work. [*Laughter*] The only thing that matters is to bring them to justice. And make no mistake about it—[*applause*].

And so our strategy is twofold. On the one hand, we'll protect you by staying on the offense. But we've got another weapon beside a fantastic military and great intelligence people, and another weapon is liberty and freedom.

First, let me talk about the first part of our strategy. One is that when the President says something, he better mean it. And when I said, "If you harbor a terrorist, if you feed a terrorist or house a terrorist, you're equally as guilty as the terrorist, and you will be held to account." That's why we removed the Taliban that was providing safe haven for Al Qaida, from Afghanistan. Twenty-five million people now are free.

The second part of the strategy is, when you see a threat, you must take threats seriously before they come and hurt us in the United States. It's a different doctrine than we had in the past, but these threats are different than the threats we've had in the past.

I want to remind you that—what the world was like in 2001. In Iraq, there was a state sponsor of terror. There was a tyrant who brutalized his own people. This man was the sworn enemy of the United States of America. He paid suicide—families of suicide

bombers to attack young democracies, for example. He had used weapons of mass destruction. He was a threat.

Now, before the President commits troops, he must try diplomacy. I want you to walk back in that period of time and remember resolution after resolution after resolution that came through the United Nations, and yet the tyrant didn't change his mind. Saddam Hussein chose war, and war he got, and the world is better off without Saddam Hussein in power.

And now Iraq is the central front on the war on terror. I hear people in the United States, "Well, that's not true." My advice to them is to listen carefully to the words of the enemy. Usama bin Laden has called Iraq world war III. He and Mr. Zawahiri, the number-two man in Al Qaida, have made it clear that their intention is to drive us out of Iraq. They want the death and suffering we see on our TV screens to cause us to abandon the 12 million people who said, "We want to be free."

And they want us to leave because they want to topple moderate governments in the region. They want to get a hold of oil resources. Imagine these radical jihadists, these extremists who've subverted a great religion, controlling oil. They would—they would love to create economic havoc on the United States of America. They have clearly stated their ambitions. The Commander in Chief must always take the words of the enemy seriously. And like them, I see Iraq as the central front in the war on terror, and unlike them, however, I refuse to yield to their barbarism. And we're going to stand strong with the 12 million Iraqis and help that young democracy survive for the sake of peace for our children and our grandchildren.

And it is hard work, but America has done this kind of work before. I believe we're in a great ideological struggle. It's the ideological struggle of the 21st century. On the one hand, you have reasonable people—moms who want their children to grow up in a peaceful world; decent people who can't stand terror and violence and who long to be free—versus ideologs, people bound together by a common philosophy who use murder as a weapon. These are the stakes of the 21st century. And I'm confident we will prevail, because I believe that liberty, liberty and freedom have got the capacity to overcome the dark vision of these ideologs.

We've seen it happen in our history before. We have seen liberty triumph over hopelessness and despair. See, in the short run, we will stay on the offense, and we will help those brave souls who want to fight the enemy overseas so we don't have to face them here. In the long run, we will lay the foundation of peace for our children by spreading liberty.

Now, one way to make this point to you and to the American citizens is to remind people about an interesting experience that I just had, when I flew to Memphis, Tennessee, with the Prime Minister of Japan. Prime Minister Koizumi and I went to Elvis' place. [*Laughter*] It was an interesting experience. I chose to go for three reasons: One, I had never been to Elvis' place—[*laughter*]—and I thought that would be fun to do; plus, Laura wanted to go to Elvis' place. [*Laughter*] Secondly—and secondly, the Prime Minister wanted to go to Elvis' place—[*laughter*]—because he's a big Elvis fan. He loved Elvis Presley. Isn't that interesting? The Prime Minister of Japan thought Elvis was "It."

But I also wanted to make a point to the American citizens, and it's this: My dad, and many of your relatives, fought the Japanese. They were the sworn enemy of the United States of America. And yet his son had invited the Prime Minister of the former sworn enemy to travel to Elvis Presley's place. And on that plane going down there, we talked about peace. We talked about what we could do, working together, to deal with Kim Jong Il in North Korea. We talked about the fact that Japan had 1,000 of her troops alongside our brave troops in Iraq to help this young democracy defeat the forces of hatred. We talked about HIV/AIDS on the continent of Africa and how the United States and Japan can work together to save lives. We talked about feeding the hungry. We talked about helping the fledgling democracy in Afghanistan survive against the Taliban's attempts to overthrow them.

Isn't it interesting? My dad fought the Japanese—or our dad fought the Japanese, and his son is now talking about the peace with

the sworn enemy. Can you imagine somebody in 1948, after this terrible war, with all the hatred and bloodshed, standing up in front of the country and saying, "I predict an American President someday will be taking a leader of the sworn enemy to the singer's house." [*Laughter*] They would have run him out of town. [*Laughter*]

But it happened; it happened because Japan adopted a Japanese-style democracy. And the lesson of history is that liberty has got the capacity to change enemies into allies. Liberty has got the capacity to lay the foundation of peace. Someday, an American President will be sitting down with duly elected leaders in the Middle East talking about the peace, and a generation of Americans will be better off.

These are trying times for our country. We've got a lot of stuff going for us, though, you know. We've got a fantastic military. And I will assure you this, that our military will have whatever it takes to do their job and defend this country.

But we also have a lot of people who understand that liberty is not just an American concept. Liberty is universal. I personally believe there is an Almighty, and I believe that that Almighty's gift to each man and woman on the whole face of the Earth is the desire to be free. And I know that when people are able to realize that ambition, no matter what their religion, no matter where they live, the world will become a more peaceful place.

It's an honor to be the President of a country that has got such good values—determined country, a country that knows that history can repeat itself with perseverance and strength of character. No, these are challenging times, but out of these times will come a more secure America and a more peaceful world.

Thanks for helping Charlie. May God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:55 p.m. at the Ritz-Carlton Orlando. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida; Mayor Richard T. Crotty of Orange County, FL, and his son, Tyler; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan; and Chairman Kim Jong Il of North Korea.

Message on the Observance of Rosh Hashanah, 5767

September 21, 2006

I send greetings to those around the world celebrating Rosh Hashanah.

During these holy days, Jewish people begin the new year by answering the call of the Shofar and gathering in synagogues. It is a time to reflect on the past, celebrate the beginning of life, and welcome the promise of the future with a spirit of renewal and hope.

On this sacred holiday, I appreciate the Jewish people for your efforts to ensure that your values and traditions are passed on to future generations. As you begin the Days of Awe, your faith in the Almighty reminds us of the gift of religious freedom in our country and helps make the world a more hopeful place.

Laura and I send our best wishes for a peaceful Rosh Hashanah.

George W. Bush

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this message.

Proclamation 8055—National Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve Week, 2006

September 21, 2006

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

In times of war or crisis, the citizen-soldiers of our National Guard and Reserve are ready and willing to answer the call of duty. During National Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve Week, we express our deep gratitude to these brave men and women and to the employers who support them and enable them to serve.

Members of the National Guard and Reserve put on the uniform of the United States when our country needs them most. In the war on terror, thousands of these civilians from all walks of life have been called away from their jobs and families and mobilized