

Remarks at the Republican Governors Association Gala

February 25, 2008

Thank you all. Please be seated—unless, of course, you don't have a seat.

Governor, thank you very much for your kind introduction. Thank you all for coming, and thanks for supporting our Republican Governors. If you want to raise money, if you want to get a job done, call on the Texas Governor—and this Governor has delivered.

I appreciate all the other Governors who are here. I particularly want to thank Matt Blunt and Mark Sanford, who are leading the RGA, and all the other Governors that have—on the stage today. I can't thank you enough for your service to the country.

I also want to recognize Laura. She's starring in a new movie: mother of the bride. [*Laughter*] I'm not very objective when I say this, but Laura is a fabulous First Lady. I appreciate the members of the Cabinet who are here.

Republican Governors are smart, capable people. I'd like to read the roster of former Governors who worked in the Bush administration: Thompson, Ashcroft, Ridge, Whitman, Cellucci, Johanns, Leavitt, Kempthorne, and Schafer. Three people that worked in the Bush administration went on to be Governors: Daniels, Huntsman, and Jindal. I'm smart enough to hire Republican Governors, and so are the people in the States that these men are from.

I don't know about you, but I'm confident we'll hold the White House in 2008. And I don't want the next Republican President to be lonely—[*laughter*]. And that is why we got to take the House, retake the Senate, and make sure our States are governed by Republican Governors.

Our ideas are those embraced by the American people. American people want strong national defense, and they want the Government to protect the people from further attack, and that's precisely what Republicans will give them. Americans want lower taxes and less government, and it's precisely what Republicans will give them. Americans want strong, principled leadership, and that is precisely what Republicans will give them.

And so when I say I'm confident, I am so because I understand the mentality of the American people, and I understand the mentality of our candidates. And there's no question in my mind, with your help, 2008 is going to be a great year.

I want to talk about two issues that will affect the upcoming elections. The first is, is that we must elect candidates who understand that this Nation is involved with an ideological struggle against coldblooded killers who would like to do us harm again, and that we better be strong and resolute in the face of this enemy.

Our philosophy is that the best way to defend America is to defeat the enemy overseas so we do not have to face them here at home. And that's precisely what the United States of America is doing.

There are two major fronts in this war; one is in Afghanistan and one is in Iraq. And I want to spend a little time on Iraq. First of all, the decision to remove Saddam Hussein was the right decision for world peace and for the security of the American people.

One year ago, extremists, coldblooded killers, people who kill innocent men, women, and children to achieve their ideological objectives were succeeding in their efforts to plunge Iraq into chaos. So I had a choice to make. Do I suffer the consequences of defeat by withdrawing our troops, or do I listen to my commanders, the considered judgment of military experts, and do what it takes to secure victory in Iraq? I chose the latter. Rather than retreating, we sent 30,000 new troops into Iraq, and the surge is succeeding.

High-profile attacks are down. Civilian deaths are down. Sectarian killings are down. U.S. and Iraqi forces, who are becoming more capable by the day, have captured or killed thousands of extremists in Iraq, including hundreds of key Al Qaida leaders—the very same people that would like to hurt America once again.

The progress in Iraq is tough; the progress in Iraq is tangible; and the progress in Iraq is enabling this young democracy to begin to make progress under the most modern Constitution written in the Middle East.

I can promise you this: For the next 10 months, I will make the necessary decisions

to make sure that we succeed in Iraq. And I believe the American people understand that a success in Iraq is necessary for the long-term security of the American people. And we will elect someone in the White House who will keep up the fight to make sure Iraq is secure and free.

One of the principles by which I have been operating is this: I believe in an Almighty, and I believe a gift of that Almighty to every man, woman, and child is freedom. And I believe it is in the interests of the United States of America to free people from disease and hunger and want and tyranny. It is in our interests to make sure that we defeat the ideologues of hate with an ideology that has worked throughout the centuries. I believe 50 years from now, people will look back at this period of time and say, thank God the United States of America did not lose its faith in the transformative power of liberty to bring the peace we want for our children and our grandchildren.

And we've got to do everything we can to stop attacks on the homeland. There are thousands of people who are working day and night to do the job that the American people expect them to do, and that's to protect you from further attack. Make no mistake about it, there is an enemy that lurks and plots and plans, an enemy that would like to do us harm again.

And therefore, it is incumbent, it is essential that the professionals who are working hard to protect you have the tools they need to be able to do the job we expect them. And one such tool is the ability to listen to the phone conversations or the trafficking of the enemy. We need to know what they're thinking, who they're talking to, and what they're planning in order to do the job the American people expect us to do.

And that is why we worked with the United States Congress last summer to pass the Protect America Act. And the Congress passed the act, giving our professionals the tools they need. The problem is, the act expired recently, and yet to—the threat to America has not expired. And so now we're in a debate about whether or not we ought to pass a good piece of legislation necessary to protect the American people.

And here's the crux of the problem: Companies that were believed to have helped us protect America from attack are now being sued for billions of dollars. That's wrong; it's a mistake, and the United States Congress needs to give those companies liability protection. And let me tell you why.

First, it is not fair to treat these companies this way. Our Government told them that their participation was necessary in order to protect us from further attack. And we asked them—and when we asked them to make those protections, we told them it was legal to do so. And I firmly believe it is legal for them to help us protect the American people. And now they're getting sued. What's more important, lawyers or protecting the United States of America from further attack?

Secondly, these lawsuits would require disclosure of information which would make it harder to protect the country. If these trials—if these cases go to trial, these companies will have to defend themselves. And they'll be asked all kinds of questions about the tactics they have used to help protect our country. It makes no sense to reveal our secrets to the enemy.

Thirdly, and finally, these—without law, without liability protection for a job that we asked them to do in service to the United States of America, it will make it harder to convince companies to participate in the future. If you've done something that you think is perfectly legal and all of a sudden you're facing billions of dollars of lawsuits, it is going to be hard to provide—with credibility—assurances that you can go forward.

And that's the crux of the problem. People say, "Well, you know, it's a—there's a bunch of folks that just don't see it that way." Well, I want to remind you that a good, bipartisan bill came out of the United States Senate. And there's enough votes in the House of Representatives to pass this piece of legislation. It is time the leadership in the House stops worrying about lawyers and starts worrying more about protecting the United States of America from further attack.

And one thing the American people can be assured of, our Republican candidates understand the threats facing us, and our Republican candidates will make sure that our

professionals have the tools necessary to protect the American people.

Our domestic agenda is based upon this simple principle: We trust the American people, and we will empower them to make the right decisions for their families. We trust in the collective wisdom of the American citizenry.

On health, we trust patients to make their own decisions. And we empower them with HSAs and AHPs, all aimed at making sure health care decisions are made between patients and doctors, not by bureaucrats here in Washington, DC.

We trust parents when it comes to education and empower them with strong accountability. We believe in an ownership society for Americans from all walks of life. When it comes to the economy, this is the basis for our views. We trust America's consumers and farmers and ranchers and producers and small-business people, and we empower them by allowing them to keep more of their own money.

Now, I want you to understand and remind you of the history of our economy, recent history. We've been through a lot. In 7 years, we've been through a recession and attacks on the United States of America and corporate scandals and war and natural disasters and high oil prices. But instead of increasing the size of government, we cut taxes on everybody who pays taxes in the United States of America and had 52 months of uninterrupted job growth—the longest in the history of the American economy.

And at the same time, we were fiscally responsible with your money. Now, I admit, we increased spending in certain areas, and I'm going to continue to increase spending in this important area. We will make sure that our troops have all that is necessary to do the job the United States of America has asked them to do. And you can bet our Republican candidates will do the exact same thing.

On nonsecurity discretionary spending, we reduced it lower than the rate of inflation and have submitted to the United States Congress a budget which will be in balance by 2012.

Now our economy is facing uncertainty again, and the fundamental question is, what

do we do? Some in Washington want to increase spending. Fortunately, enough realize that the best way to deal with this economic uncertainty is to empower our consumers and our businesses, both large and small, to make investments that will affect job growth this year.

And so I was pleased to sign a \$157 billion progrowth economic package, which should help us deal with these economic uncertainties. People say, "What else should we do?" Well, unless Congress acts, most of the tax relief we delivered over the past 7 years will be taken away. We cut taxes on families with children. We cut taxes on small businesses. We cut taxes on capital gains. We cut taxes on dividends. We've put the death tax on the road to extinction. We cut taxes on everybody who paid taxes, and unless the Congress acts, those tax cuts will end.

Some Democrats argue that letting tax relief expire is not a tax increase. Well, they're going to have to explain that to 116 million American taxpayers who would see their taxes rise by an average of \$1,800. That may not seem like a lot of people, in Washington, DC, but it's sure a lot of people who are trying to make their mortgages and send their kids to college.

In times of uncertainty, we don't need uncertainty in our Tax Code. And the United States Congress must make the tax relief we passed permanent. And the American people can be assured that our candidates will not be running up taxes.

Those are the two big issues facing us, who best to protect America and who best to keep taxes low. I'm looking forward to this campaign. I'm excited about taking our message to the American people. With your help and hard work, there's no doubt in my mind—no doubt—that we'll win.

And I'm looking forward to finishing my term in office. I want to tell you this: I'm going to finish strong. My vision is clear. My energy is high. My enthusiasm for the United States of America has never waned since I've had the high honor of serving you as President.

I thank you for your prayers. I thank you for your support. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:56 p.m. at the National Building Museum. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Rick Perry of Texas, chairman, Republican Governors Association, who introduced the President; Gov. Matt Blunt of Missouri, vice chairman, and Gov. Mark Sanford of South Carolina, dinner chairman, Republican Governors Association; former Secretary of Health and Human Services Tommy G. Thompson; former Attorney General John Ashcroft; former Secretary of Homeland Security Tom Ridge; former Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency Christine Todd Whitman; former U.S. Ambassador to Canada Argeo Paul Cellucci; former Secretary of Agriculture Mike Johanns; Secretary of Health and Human Services Michael O. Leavitt; Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne; Secretary of Agriculture Edward T. Schafer; Gov. Mitchell E. Daniels, Jr., of Indiana; Gov. Jon M. Huntsman, Jr., of Utah; and Gov. Bobby Jindal of Louisiana.

Remarks to the Leon H. Sullivan Foundation

February 26, 2008

Thanks for coming. I appreciate the warm welcome. Last Thursday, Laura and I returned from a 6-day visit to Africa. It happened to be her fifth visit and my second. Without a doubt, this was the most exciting, exhilarating, uplifting trip I've taken since I've been the President. It was an unbelievable experience.

And I want to thank the Sullivan Foundation for letting me come by to visit with you about the trip. And I appreciate the good work they're doing on behalf of the people on the continent of Africa. Hope, thank you very much for introducing me and inviting me back. It's always an honor to be with Andrew Young, chairman of the board of directors of Leon Sullivan.

By the way, I should have recognized Carl Masters, your husband—[laughter]. That was a major faux pas, just like I should have recognized that my wife, unfortunately, is not here, but she sends her very best regards.

I do appreciate very much Ambassador Howard Jeter for his service to the United States. I thank the members of the Leon H. Sullivan Foundation who are with us. Pleased to see members of the diplomatic corps who have joined us.

I'm honored that Congressman Donald Payne, who is the chairman of the Africa and Global Health Subcommittee, has joined us today. Thank you for coming, Mr. Chairman. He's knowledgeable about the issues on the continent of Africa, and that's good. And I want to thank you for your interest and your diligence. Sheila Jackson Lee—she's supposed to be here. If she's not here, I'll give her an excused absence—after all, she is from Texas.

I appreciate so very much Jendayi Frazer. She is a—[applause]. I probably won't have to say anything else. [Laughter] She's been awesome to work with, in putting this strategy in place.

I appreciate very much Rear Admiral Tim Ziemer. He's in charge of the malaria initiative. Admiral Ziemer, he's a no-nonsense guy. I hope people have come to realize I am too. I'm not interested in promises; I'm interested in results. That's why I went to Africa, to see results firsthand. Admiral Ziemer, we're getting great results on the malaria initiative thanks to your leadership.

Lloyd Pierson, President and CEO of the African Development Foundation—appreciate your leadership, Lloyd. Jody Olsen, Deputy Director of the Peace Corps—[applause]—contain yourselves. [Laughter] Although, I'll tell you—it's not a part of this speech, but I had a wonderful lunch with Peace Corps volunteers in Ghana. Our Peace Corps is full of compassionate, hard-working, decent people who are serving America on the frontlines of compassion. And I really can't thank the Peace Corps enough.

Last time we met was at your summit in Nigeria, and that was during my first trip to Africa. You know, things have changed in Africa since then, I mean, striking changes. These changes are the result of a new generation of African leaders. They're reformers who are determined to steer their nations toward freedom and justice, prosperity and peace. They're also the result of new American policy and new American commitments.

In my first term, we more than doubled development assistance to Africa. And at the beginning of my second term, I asked the United States Congress to double our assistance again. It is an important commitment that Congress can make. I'm looking forward