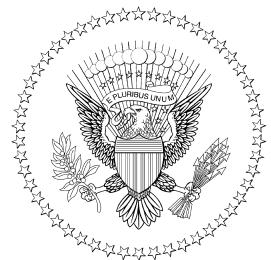


Weekly Compilation of
**Presidential
Documents**



Monday, May 17, 2004
Volume 40—Number 20
Pages 817–901

Contents

Addresses and Remarks

- American Conservative Union 40th anniversary gala—885
- Arkansas, Butterfield Junior High School in Van Buren—856
- Execution of Nicholas Berg—870
- Maryland
 - Departure for Bethesda—870
 - Discussion at the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda—870
- Millennium Challenge Account nations, ceremony honoring—847
- Missouri, Victory 2004 luncheon in Bridgeton—890
- Radio address—846
- Super Bowl champion New England Patriots—855
- Virginia, meeting with the national security team and military leaders in Arlington—849
- West Virginia, discussion at Parkersburg South High School in Parkersburg—875
- Wisconsin
 - LaCrosse, remarks—837
 - Prairie du Chien, question-and-answer session—824

Communications to Congress

- Budget amendment to establish a contingent emergency reserve fund to support operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, letter—875
- Executive order blocking property of certain persons and prohibiting the export of certain goods to Syria, message reporting—868

Executive Orders

- Blocking Property of Certain Persons and Prohibiting the Export of Certain Goods to Syria—865
- Increasing Economic Opportunity and Business Participation of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders—882

Interviews With the News Media

- Interviews
 - Al-Ahram International—817
 - American Forces Radio and Television Service—851

(Continued on the inside of the back cover.)

Editor's Note: The President was in Mequon, WI, on May 14, the closing date of this issue. Releases and announcements issued by the Office of the Press Secretary but not received in time for inclusion in this issue will be printed next week.

WEEKLY COMPILATION OF

PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS

Published every Monday by the Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC 20408, the *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents* contains statements, messages, and other Presidential materials released by the White House during the preceding week.

The *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents* is published pursuant to the authority contained in the Federal Register Act (49 Stat. 500, as amended; 44 U.S.C. Ch. 15), under regulations prescribed by the Administrative Committee of the Federal Register, approved by the President (37 FR 23607; 1 CFR Part 10).

Distribution is made only by the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402. The *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents* will be furnished by mail to domestic subscribers for \$80.00 per year (\$137.00 for mailing first class) and to foreign subscribers for \$93.75 per year, payable to the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402. The charge for a single copy is \$3.00 (\$3.75 for foreign mailing).

The *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents* is also available on the Internet on the GPO Access service at <http://www.gpo.gov/nara/nara003.html>.

There are no restrictions on the republication of material appearing in the *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents*.

Contents—Continued

Proclamations

- Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month—843
- Mother’s Day—845
- National Physical Fitness and Sports Month—844
- Peace Officers Memorial Day and Police Week—846

Statements by the President

- Executive order blocking property of certain persons and prohibiting the export of certain goods to Syria—865

Statements by the President—Continued

- Panama-United States Proliferation Security Initiative ship-boarding agreement—874
- Senate passage of the proposed “Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act”—882

Supplementary Materials

- Acts approved by the President—901
- Checklist of White House press releases—901
- Digest of other White House announcements—898
- Nominations submitted to the Senate—900

US GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE
SUPERINTENDENT OF DOCUMENTS
Washington DC 20402

OFFICIAL BUSINESS

Penalty for private use, \$300

PRESORTED STANDARD
POSTAGE & FEES PAID
GPO
PERMIT NO. G-26

Week Ending Friday, May 14, 2004

Interview With Al-Ahram International

May 6, 2004

U.S. Goals in the Middle East

Q. I have learned that President Mubarak sent you, recently, two important messages. I don't know, I mean, the contents of these messages, but I assume that of course it be linked by the situation in Iraq and Palestine. I would like to ask, in the beginning, one general question about how do you look at this vision of the Middle East.

The President. Well, first of all, I communicate with President Mubarak a lot, because I value his judgment, and we've got a frank relationship where if he thinks things are going badly, he'll tell me. In other words, he doesn't gloss over.

I think that things in the Middle East for the United States are difficult right now. I think they're difficult because people don't really understand our intentions. I think they're difficult because some people ascribe bad values and bad motives to the American people and the American Government.

Our intentions are to work for free societies and peaceful societies. Our intentions are to protect our own security, on the one hand, but also enable people to live in peace. Obviously, our reputation has been damaged severely by the terrible and horrible acts, inhumane acts that were conducted on Iraqi prisoners. Today, I can't tell you how sorry I am to them and their families for the humiliation.

I'm also sorry because people are then able to say, "Look how terrible America is." But this isn't America. That's not—Americans are appalled at what happened. We're a generous people. I don't think a lot of people understand that, so I've got to do a better job of explaining to people that we're for a lot of things that most people who live in the Middle East want. We want there to be peace. We want people to have a living. We want

people to send their kids to schools that work. We want there to be health care. We want there to be a Palestinian state at peace with its neighbors. We want there to be reform. We want people to have a chance to participate in the process.

But I'd say right now times are tough for the United States and the Middle East.

Q. I have four topics, Mr. President: Iraq, the Israeli-Arab issue, the so-called greater Middle East, and bilateral—which one do you choose of them, Mr. President?

The President. Whatever you want to do, sir. You're the distinguished journalist.

Arab-Israeli Conflict

Q. Thank you very much, indeed. Okay, I will shoot for the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The President. Okay.

Q. Many Arabs feel that after the letter of assurances you gave to Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, any future Palestinian state would exist on less than half what the partition plan offered them in '47. How do you reconcile this with a moral concept of justice?

The President. First of all, I made it very clear in my letter that I recognized circumstances had changed, but I made it very clear of a couple of very important points. One, that any final status would be negotiated by the parties, that would be the Israelis and the Palestinians, not the United States. We won't prejudge final status.

Secondly, I made it clear that I supported what the Prime Minister had done, because I think it's a great opportunity for the establishment of a Palestinian state. I'm the first President ever to have articulated the vision of a Palestinian state.

Q. I'm writing here, and I wanted to appreciate that very highly.

The President. Well, I'll tell you, and I'm somewhat amazed, sir, that the debate has already started about what the end results are going to look like when we haven't even

really begun yet to establish a state. I think the focus ought to be on putting the institutions in place for a Palestinian state that is peaceful and prosperous to emerge.

I think it's very important for reform-minded Palestinians to step up and ask the world for help, in order to build the security apparatus needed for a state to grow: Ask for education help; ask for help to stimulate the entrepreneurial class so businesses will grow. I believe it'll happen. And when it does happen, the final status issues will be much easier to solve.

In other words, when there is a state that's up and running and prosperous and has the confidence of Egypt and Israel and America and the EU and the rest of the world, it'll be much easier for these final—these tricky issues to be solved between the two parties. And so now is the time not to be arguing over what the world will look like down the road. We ought to be arguing about what the world can look like this year. And that's why the roadmap is so important.

The United States is firmly committed to the roadmap. I'm sending a letter to the—I announced today I'm going to send a letter to the Palestinian Prime Minister explaining that I'm committed to the roadmap, committed to two states living side by side in peace, but also reminding him it's now time to step up and show leadership, show leadership against the terrorists and show leadership in putting the institutions in place for a state to emerge.

Palestinian Right of Return

Q. The right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homeland and to be provided with compensation is legally assured in several U.N. resolutions.

The President. Right.

Q. The United States has also traditionally supported the right of refugees to return in recent major conflicts. How would you then justify making the Palestinian refugees an exception for accepted international laws under human rights conventions?

The President. My comment, again, was this, that—and the right of refugees is a final status issue. And that's to be negotiated on between the Palestinians and the Israelis. When I said what has changed and what will

change is when there's a Palestinian state to which Palestinians can go. There hasn't been one. And my point was, was that when a state is set up and the institutions are in place and people have a chance to make a living and it's peaceful, the entrepreneurial class is growing, small businesses, people are participating in the political process, that that's going to change the dynamic on the ground.

I fully concede there's a lot—the compensation issue is an issue that's still being negotiated. The rights of—you know, the rights of Palestinians to return to Israel will be negotiated, but what I'm telling you is when a state emerges, it'll change the dynamic. And that's all I said in my comment.

Again, I'll repeat to you, people want to focus on the future, when I think we ought to be focused right now on the right now, which is what is necessary to put a Palestinian state in place so people can have a chance to live in a hopeful society. And I'm frustrated, I must tell you, a little bit, because I think that there needs to be better leadership in saying, "What can we do to help the Palestinian people develop a state?" And there needs to be a new constitution, it seems like to me.

And some of these reforms stalled. Heck, we've been talking about them for about 2 years, unfortunately, but now is an opportunity. And I think Prime Minister Sharon created an interesting dynamic, I really do, and that is withdrawal from the West Bank. You know, it wasn't all that long ago if an Israeli Prime Minister stood up and said, "We're out of Gaza and parts of the West Bank," people would have said, "That's fantastic." And so the Prime Minister makes the decision to get out and, of course, his own party rejects it, which speaks to—it speaks to his leadership, in my judgment, that he's willing to do what he thinks is right, in face of political opposition.

Israeli Disengagement Plan/Palestinian State

Q. But do you really agree that pragmatic realities mean annexation of other lands?

The President. Do I think—

Q. Do you agree on that, I mean, that pragmatic realities which, I mean, being said

repeatedly here in the States, pragmatic realities—pragmatic realities—

The President. You mean, with the conditions on the ground?

Q. Does it mean annexation of other people's land?

The President. I think what it means is, I think you're going to see over time with the emergence of a Palestinian state that the West Bank will be occupied by Palestinians. And to the extent to what the final border looks like is up for negotiations.

Q. Again, we very much appreciate the fact that you were the first U.S. President to call for the creation of an independent Palestinian state. But in all the recent proposals that are being circulated, including the latest disengagement plan, we did not see any specific timetable. What happened to your pledge to create a Palestinian state by 2005? And do you still believe that this could be possible?

The President. Well, 2005 may be hard, since 2005 is right around the corner. I readily concede the date has slipped some, primarily because violence sprung up. When I laid out the date of 2005, I believe it was around the time I went to Aqaba, Jordan. It was a very meaningful moment, where former Prime Minister Abu Mazen, myself, Prime Minister Sharon, and His Majesty, the King of Jordan, stood up and pledged to work together.

But we hit a bump in the road—violence, as well as Abu Mazen was replaced, which changed the dynamic. I don't want to make any excuses, but nevertheless I think the timetable of 2005 isn't as realistic as it was 2 years ago. Nevertheless, I do think we ought to push hard as fast as possible to get a state in place.

And I repeat to you, sir, that part of my frustrations were alleviated with the Quartet making the statement it made the other day—the Quartet being the EU, Russia, United Nations, and the United States, working together. I think we can get the World Bank involved. But there is a certain sense of responsibility that falls upon the Palestinians, reform-minded Palestinians to step up and say, "Yes, we accept these institutions necessary for a peaceful state to emerge."

There's also a responsibility for Egypt. Egypt has got, in my judgment, an important role to play to help make sure there is security in Gaza as the civil structure is put in place and as the Government structure is put in place. And President Mubarak, I think, is willing to assume that responsibility over time. I don't want to put him on a timetable, but I do believe he is committed to helping bring security to that part of the world. It's in Egypt's interest that there be security.

Egypt's Role in Creation of a Palestinian State

Q. You know, Mr. President, we did our best, I mean, getting all the factions together in Cairo, Egypt, to try to convince them to have one single opinion and that we're ready for training the police and security guards.

The President. That's right. President Mubarak has been a leader on the issue of security. He really has. As you say, he's convened a very important meeting to make it clear that in order for there to be a peaceful evolution of a state, there has to be security, and that he's willing to train police. Egypt plays a mighty important role. And it's a great country, and it should play an important role.

Final Status Issues

Q. You have said, Mr. President, in recent statements that the assurances you gave to Sharon did not differ from what was being discussed and what we mentioned now and previous final status talks. But in those talks there were proposals on land swaps and an Israeli acceptance for the return of a limited number of refugees. Why were these proposals absent from your recent letters?

The President. Look, I want to assure you once again that I understand the sensitivity of these final status issues. But they will be negotiated, not between the United States and the parties; they're negotiated between Israel and the Palestinian Government of a new state. And that's really—and that is a position I've taken all along. It's what I told my friend President Mubarak. I just told that to His Majesty, the King of Jordan. And I will explain that consistent position of mine.

People—I think some people are trying to read something into what I said or didn't say. And what—you know, I'll say it finally one

more time: This is an opportunity that we can't let go by. There's a lot of argument about final status issues, and they're very important issues, don't get me wrong. But the focus ought to be on how do we get a Palestinian state up and running and moving forward.

Q. You have praised Sharon's proposal to withdraw from Gaza, which is an idea that does not represent more than one percent of—[inaudible]—Palestine. Would you accept guarantee for granting Palestinians similar letter of assurances stating that any annexation of West Bank territory has to be minimal and that Israel has to pull out from nearly the entire West Bank, according to Security Resolution 242 and 338?

The President. No, I will write—I will say the exact same thing in a letter to the Palestinians that I have said publicly today, that I believe an opportunity exists, and it's essential that the Palestinian Authority find reform-minded leaders who are willing to step up and lead.

Israeli Security Wall/New Palestinian State

Q. The last question on Israeli-Arab issue. You have repeatedly—repeatedly stated that Israel had the right to defend itself. But do you believe that by building walls and settlements and by assassinating Palestinian leaders, Israel is enhancing security and helping and reassuring peace talks?

The President. I think that any country has a right to defend herself. And you're looking at a President who is now in the process of defending my country against terrorist attacks. It is very difficult for the President of the United States to condemn anybody for defending themselves.

My problem with the wall was not the security aspect of the wall. My problem with the wall was that at one point in time, it looked like it was trying to prejudge any final status, and that I hope—my hope is, at one point in time, the wall is unnecessary. The hope is, is that a peaceful Palestinian state, that—I keep saying that, but I think it's possible—but a peaceful Palestinian state must be a state in which youngsters are well educated and have a chance to make a living and have a chance to—parents have a chance

to realize—raise their children in a peaceful setting.

And I think that a peaceful Palestinian state will eventually change the dynamics on that which exists on the ground today.

Prisoner Abuse at Abu Ghraib Prison

Q. Okay. I thank you very much for your patience. I will move to the other topic, Iraq.

The President. Sure. Sure.

Q. You said yesterday that you first learned of the abuses of Abu Ghraib and other prison—and other prisons in Iraq generally. Why has it taken so long to adopt serious measures against those directly responsible and their commanders?

The President. First of all, I learned about the fact that there was an investigation going on. I did not know the extent of the abuse, and there was a report done as a result of those investigations. And what you're hearing here in America is, "Why didn't I see the report?" And that's a good question. That's one of the questions I'm asking, because I first saw about the pictures on television screens.

But one of the things you've got to understand about our country is that, one, we reject this kind of treatment of people. It's abhorrent, and it's not America. Your viewers have to understand, this is not our country. Secondly, that we will fully investigate. Now, there's a difference between fully investigating and rushing to judgment. We will investigate, and there's a procedure in the military that is necessary to make sure that the guilty are truly guilty. It's very important for the Commander in Chief not to prejudge.

Thirdly, the process will be transparent. Your viewers have got to know that here in America, in our system, the judicial process will be fully transparent, and you're beginning to see the transparency. The press corps wants to know different questions, and those questions need to be answered.

Tomorrow, our Secretary of Defense, in whom I've got confidence and believe in, will go up and testify at the United States Senate. So you'll see the process evolve as to—and the truth come out as to why the military needed to take the time necessary to fully investigate these horrible, horrible acts.

And I repeat to you, sir, I am sorry for the humiliation suffered by those individuals. It makes me sick to my stomach to see that happen.

I'll tell you what else I'm sorry about. I'm sorry that the truth about our soldiers in Iraq becomes obscured. In other words, we've got fantastic citizens in Iraq, good kids, good soldiers, men and women who are working every day to make Iraqi citizens' lives better. And there are a thousand acts of kindness that take place every day of these great Americans who really do care about the citizens in Iraq. It's an awful, awful period for the American people, just like it's awful for the Iraqi citizens to see that on their TV screens.

Q. Again, sir, do you feel like you need to apologize to the Iraqis and the Arab world after you said that, "I'm sorry"?

The President. Well, I'm sorry for the prisoners. I really am. I think it's humiliating, and it is, again—what the Arab world must understand is a couple of things. One, under a dictatorship, these—this wouldn't be transparent. In other words, if there was torture under a dictator, we would never know the truth. In a democracy, you'll know the truth, and justice will be done. And that's what people need to know.

U.N. Security Council Resolution on Iraq

Q. What are the main pillars of the upcoming Security Council resolution on Iraq? How much control are you ready to cede to the United Nations and the future Iraqi Government?

The President. Well, I think the Iraqi Government wants the sovereignty. And I think that's the proper—the proper relationship is for the Iraqi—the sovereignty to be passed to the Iraqi Government with help from coalition as well as the United Nations. I'll tell you, a very good role for the United Nations is to help set up the elections that will take place in January of 2005. And the United Nations Security Council resolution is important, because it says to members of the world, please participate in helping this Government grow.

But the sovereignty—Iraqi people want to run the Government themselves. That's not to say they don't want help. Of course they

want help. But they want to run their Government. Frankly, you hear frustrations about America there in Iraq. And I can understand that, because the Iraq—nobody wants their Government run for them. The people of Iraq want to run their own Government, and that's what will happen.

Timing of U.S. Withdrawal From Iraq

Q. How long do you think the United States will stay in Iraq?

The President. As long as necessary, and not one day more.

U.S. Future Role in Iraq/ Accomplishments

Q. A recent Gallup Poll showed that 71 percent of Iraqis considered the United States an occupying power. Does this disappoint you?

The President. No, listen, I understand. I mean, if I were an Iraqi and I saw people—was asked, am I happy that somebody is running my Government for me, which basically is what the question implies, the answer would be, "No, we want to run our Government ourselves." And that's why we're transferring sovereignty.

I'll tell you, however, the Iraqi people understand that America needs to be around for a while to help make sure that the killers—the foreign fighters who are there, disgruntled former Saddamists—don't wreak havoc. There are thousands of Iraqis losing their lives at the hands of these killers. And they are—and they need help right now, until security—Iraqi security forces are efficient, are formed in a way that will be able to be responsive to the dangers of these few people. It is essential that there be a secure environment as Iraq emerges from this period of tyranny, and they want our help there. They also want the reconstruction aid.

Q. And it has been delayed a lot.

The President. Well, it has, for a reason. Early in the winter there was fast movement on the reconstruction projects. I mean, there's some wonderful things that have happened in Iraq, which of course don't get mentioned very often.

For example, I'll tell you an interesting thing that's happened, is that the currency,

the old currency was replaced by a new currency in about a 6 or 7 month period of time. That's hard to do. And yet, it was done without a lot of arbitrage, a lot of counterfeiting, theft. There was no theft, and the currency is stable, which is a remarkable feat, when you think about it. The electricity levels were climbing quite dramatically. The oil production, which is Iraqi oil production, it's not American, it's—Iraq owns the oil—it's up to about 2½ million barrels a day.

So in other words, there were positive signs going on. And then we had this period of fighting, where elements in society decided to fight, because they saw freedom coming and they wanted to try and stop it, is what they're trying to do. And we took them on and are defeating them.

What's happening now is that big projects are starting back up again, because the security situation is a little better, and big companies are moving in with these reconstruction projects. It will start back up, and Iraq will be better for it.

President's Meeting With Iraqi Women's Delegation

Q. I am aware of a very emotional meeting that took place recently between you and the Iraqi women delegation—

The President. Yes.

Q. —and met you there with lots of tears.

The President. Yes, there were.

Q. Do you care to share the details of that meeting with us?

The President. Only because you asked. I did have the honor of welcoming a group of women to the Oval Office. I was told ahead of time that some members of the delegation did not want to come in the Oval Office because they didn't want to get their picture taken, because they were afraid, not of American reaction but of reaction back home. In other words, there is still fear in people's heart.

I met with those ladies later. The door opened to the Oval Office, and the first woman that walked in looked at me, and she burst out in tears and said, "You are my liberator." It touched my heart. It really did. And I, of course—I held her in my arms and tears came to my eyes as she cried out of

joy. It really made me feel great. She said, "Thank you, Mr. President. You liberated us." I said, "No, the American people helped liberate you." And then another lady came in, and another lady came in. We had about six of us in our office.

And it was a touching meeting. These were people that were obviously somewhat taken aback that they were in with the President of the United States. And yet, when they were with me, it was deeply emotional. It touched my heart. I still remember it clearly today. It made me very joyous inside to think that people who had been enslaved to tyranny, fearful of torture, probably had friends in mass graves, would be so thankful for the chance to live in peace.

And I'll tell you what's really important for the people—those people, those women, and I think about them all the time, is for me to never show any weakness in the face of the dangers in Iraq. In other words, those killers want us to leave. But my attitude is, having met with these women, if we leave, they will be in jeopardy. And I have an obligation, no matter how difficult it gets, to stay strong on behalf of those women and their chance to raise their children in freedom.

The other day I had the Olympic Committee from Iraq come, two members of the Olympic Committee. It was an exciting moment. I love sports, for starters, and the head of the women's Olympic committee came. She was a former runner. And she told me about her 2-year-old son and 1-year-old son. She had quit the Olympic team because she didn't want to run for one of Saddam's sons, for fear of her life, and yet she was so grateful for the freedom she has. It's heartening.

I met with Fulbright Scholars, young Iraqis that are here studying in the United States. I met with doctors from Iraq who are getting new training, all of whom are desperate for there to be a free society so they can live in peace, and that's why we share the same goal.

Vision for the Greater Middle East

Q. On greater Middle East, Mr. President, has your vision on the greater Middle East initiative changed at all in light of recent reactions from Arab and European countries?

What will be presented to the G-8 leaders in their meeting next month?

The President. My vision for the greater Middle East reforms were strengthened by the Alexandria Library Conference. You might have heard of that. [Laughter] I saw the spirit of that conference. There are people in the Middle East who understand the need for reforms.

Now, when I talk about reforms, I fully understand the pace of reform will be different from country to country. But nevertheless, there has to be a commitment to reform for a better life for every citizen. I am as strong today on reforms in the greater Middle East as I have ever been.

I fully understand criticism. I mean, I get criticized all the time in my job. I think the job of a leader is to have a vision, a vision that is hopeful and optimistic and one based upon certain principles, a principle like rule of law, a principle like human dignity by empowering individuals to make decisions in the political process, a principle that every person deserves respect, a principle that says that a peaceful society is more likely to be one that is a free society. And therefore, I won't abandon those principles, no matter how significant the pressure.

Q. Last question.

The President. Okay, one more question. Then we've got to go.

Syria

Q. Why does your administration insist on imposing sanctions against Syria?

The President. Because they will not fight terror, and they won't join us in fighting terror. We've asked them to do some things, and they haven't responded. And Congress passed a law saying that if Syria will not join—for example, booting out a Hezbollah office out of Damascus—that the President has the right to put sanctions on.

I have yet to impose a sanction yet, but the bill enables me to do so. And we've talked to the Syrian leader very clearly, and these aren't—these are reasonable requests, and thus far, he hasn't heeded them. And that's why, if I make the decision to put on sanctions, it will be because he hasn't been a full partner in the war against terror.

Q. That would create another—more problems in the area.

The President. Well, we'll see. But I think that people need to understand that there needs to be a full commitment. I mean, there's no need to harbor people who are expressing hatred. And if the world would join together to rout out terrorist organizations who want to kill innocent people, it would be a heck of a lot better off.

See, here's my objection. We've got Muslims killing Muslims in Iraq. There are Muslims who will kill an innocent Muslim for the sake of trying to create fear. We can't let that happen. Civilized people must not allow that to happen. What they're trying to do is they're trying to shake our will, our collective will. For those of us who love freedom, they were trying to say, "Well, don't work for freedom. Leave us alone so we can kill other people." We just can't let that happen. There are too many peaceful people who need protection, and we want to help them. And most importantly, we want to help them help themselves, so they can be self-governing in Iraq.

But the killing of innocent life for political purposes is not acceptable in the 21st century. And you know that, and I believe that.

Arab-U.S. Relations

Q. I assure you that, you know, the Arab people really have nothing against the American people. Maybe the only—the only issue is the Palestinian-Israeli—

The President. Israeli issue, yes.

Q. —and the American bias to it.

The President. I hope we can get that solved. I mean, I truly believe that a peaceful state will emerge. And listen, I've got great respect for Arab culture. I've got great respect for the Muslim religion. I reject this notion that this is a war against Muslims. This is not a war against Muslims. The Muslim religion is a peaceful religion. Islam is peace. This is a war against evil people who want to kill innocent life. That's what this is.

And it is—they've killed in our country. They've killed in your country. They killed a great man in Sadat. And it's essential that freedom-loving people and peaceful people fight terror. It's the call of our time. It's the

challenge of the 21st century. And we've got to work together to do so.

And I appreciate you giving me a chance to visit and share my views to the people who need to learn more about our intentions and our deep desire for peace.

Q. I do thank you very, very, very much.

The President. Thank you, sir.

Q. And I hope to see you very soon.

The President. Good job. Very good job.

Very good interview.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 3:37 p.m. in the Map Room at the White House for later broadcast, and the transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 7. In his remarks, the President referred to President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt; Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of Israel; Prime Minister Ahmed Korei and former Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) of the Palestinian Authority; King Abdullah II of Jordan; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; Ahmed Al-Samarrai, president, and Iman Sabeeh, member of the executive office, National Olympic Committee of Iraq; and President Bashar al-Asad of Syria. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session in Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin

May 7, 2004

The President. Thank you all. Thanks for coming. I better take off my jacket. Listen, thank you all for coming. They told me we were coming—please sit down. It may take a while. [Laughter] They told me I was coming to Cabela's, and I said, "All right, fine. I'm looking for some power worms." [Laughter] I like to be in hunting and fishing country.

I thought what I'd do is share some thoughts with you, I'd talk to some of the citizens of this part of the world about what life has been like as a small-business owner or a family trying to raise their children and then, if we've got time, answer some questions. And then we've got to get on the bus and head up the road.

First, I want you to know I'm asking for your vote. I'm here to—it may seem like a

little early to start. It may seem like the election is pretty far away. But if you really want to win, like I want to win, you can't start too soon. And I want you to know that my purpose after this is to let you know I have a reason for running. I know where I want to lead the country. And we've got a job to do together to make this country safer and stronger and better. We've got a mission together.

Probably the best reason to put me back in there is so that Laura has got 4 more years as the First Lady. We were both raised in Midland, Texas, which is a relatively small west Texas town. And when I met her later on in life—we actually went to San Jacinto Junior High together in the seventh grade—and then when I saw her afterward, after we'd both gone to college and did some things, she wasn't particularly fond of politics or politicians. [Laughter] Fortunately, she said yes when I asked her to marry me, and now she is a fabulous First Lady of our country.

She has come to realize what I know, that in this office that we both occupy, President and First Lady, that we can make an enormous difference in people's lives, that we can help people help themselves. It's such an honor to be the President of such a great country. It really is, and I'm so proud that Laura is standing by my side with such calm and dignity and love.

I really appreciate the Cabelas for being here. You'll hear me talk about the entrepreneurial spirit, and, Ms. Cabela, you are a true entrepreneur. You had a dream. You counted on good people to help you realize that dream, and you built one of the great companies in America. And we're proud to be here at the Cabela site in this part of Wisconsin.

And I know this: I know that if Mr. Cabela were standing up here, he'd say, "Yes, I had a good idea, but it's the people that worked with me that have made this company grow." I want to thank the folks who work here at Cabela's for your hospitality. Thanks for letting us disrupt your day. [Laughter] Thanks for making sure the fishermen and hunters of the country have got—well-equipped.

I'm here to ask for your help as well. I hope I give you some reasons to go out and turn to your fellow citizen and ask them to

make sure they vote. I think you ought to talk to everybody from all political parties, people who don't even like politics. You need to tell them to show up and do their duty in democracy. I'd start, if I were you, by telling them that a President has got to put together a good team of people to serve the country, which is what I've done. I've surrounded myself with excellence, people from all walks of life, people from different backgrounds, people who have come to Washington, DC, to serve their country and not their self-interest.

I'm running with a fabulous guy in Dick Cheney. He is a great Vice President of the country. I, one time, said in front of my mother, I said, "Dick Cheney is the finest Vice President our country has ever had." [Laughter] She said, "Wait a minute, buster."

I want to thank Steve Freese for coming. Mr. Speaker, thank you. I'm proud you're here. I want to thank all the other—thanks for coming over. I want to thank Gabe Loeffelholz for coming as well. I'm honored you're here. I appreciate the local officials who have come out. We had the mayor of Lancaster show up. We did an impromptu stop. There were people in the town square there, so we stopped the bus just to say hi. The mayor was there. I said, "Mayor, I've got some advice for you: Fill the potholes." [Laughter] I don't know if he appreciated the advice or not.

I'm here to talk about ways to make this country safer and stronger and better. My biggest duty and most solemn duty is to protect America and—from another attack. And you've just got to know there's an enemy out there that still hates us. September the 11th changed the country. It changed how we've got to look at our future. September the 11th made us realize that oceans would not protect us from people who would want to do our citizens harm.

There are some other lessons that we must learn in order to protect the country: One, that we face a killer that has no conscience. The people of this country have a conscience. The people we face don't. Secondly, these are not religious people, in my judgment. These are people who have hijacked a great religion. This is a battle between good and evil. These are people that are so evil that

they will kill innocent life, trying to shake the will of the United States of America, trying to get us to retreat from our duties in the world.

There was another lesson on September the 11th, and that is, when the American President says something, he better mean it. I told the American people this is a different kind of war than we were used to. I have an obligation to remind the American people, no matter how painful it may be to some, that we're still at war. That's my duty, to remind people that we're—there's still danger. And remember, the enemy only has to be right one time, and we've got to be right 100 percent of the time to protect the country.

You need to know there's a lot of really good folks that are working really hard to protect the homeland. We've got wonderful people in law enforcement at all levels of government, the local level, the State level, the Federal level, that are talking like they have never talked before, sharing intelligence like they have never shared intelligence before, nor were allowed to share intelligence, by the way, prior to September the 11th, in some cases.

I don't know if you know this, there's a lot of talk about what they call the PATRIOT Act, but the PATRIOT Act was passed to allow the criminal division of the FBI to be able to talk and share intelligence with the intelligence division of the FBI. Prior to September the 11th, they couldn't even talk together. How could you possibly defeat an enemy that is able to slide in our country if you can't share intelligence among law enforcement?

At any rate, there are good people working hard. We've got people that are doing a better job of guarding our borders and our ports. You know, they're making you take off your shoes at the airports. [Laughter] I know it's a pain, but it's necessary to do everything we can to protect the homeland. But the best way to protect the homeland is to stay on the offense and bring these killers to justice before they hurt us again. [Applause] Thank you.

I told the American people that we would go on the offense and we would stay on the offense, that we would do so with firm determination and resolve. And that's what I want

to do. If I'm fortunate enough to become your President for 4 more years, I will continue to lead this great Nation in utilizing every asset we have, not just a few or some but every single asset we have to protect the American people. That's our most solemn duty.

I also said right after September the 11th that if you harbor a terrorist, you're just as guilty as a terrorist. I want to tell you something which is true about this job: When you speak you better mean what you say. The President has got to speak clearly so there's no ambiguity about what his words mean, and then when he says something, he's got to act on it. In order to keep the world—make the world more peaceful, the President must be sincere about when he says something. And so when I said that I was—I meant it, and we told that to the Taliban.

The Taliban were these awful characters that were running Afghanistan. I say awful—look at the movie “Osama,” and you'll know what I'm talking about. Let me put it to you this way: They were so bad that they would not allow many young girls to even go to school. They were so backwards, so barbaric that they literally enslaved people to an empty ideology. And so we said, “You're training Al Qaida. You're harboring Al Qaida. Give them up.” They said no, and they're no longer in power. And the world is better off for it. The United States of America is better off for it, and so are the people of Afghanistan.

I want you all to know that because we enforced doctrine, because we worked to make our own country more secure, we liberated people. People now have a chance to realize their dreams. Free societies are peaceful societies.

A cornerstone of my vision in foreign policy is the understanding of the power of freedom and what freedom can mean for people. I believe free societies are peaceful societies. I know that where people do not have hope, freedom can change that. And so we have freed the people of Afghanistan, and a peaceful society is beginning to emerge.

The other lesson on September the 11th that's very important to understand is that when we see a threat, we must not allow it to gather. In other words, when we see a

threat, we've got to deal with it. In the past, if you didn't feel like you were a battlefield in the war on terror, you could see a threat and maybe hope that it would go away, but you were pretty certain it wouldn't affect you. 9/11 changed that. It's essential for the President of the United States to understand the realities we face, and the reality is that there's an enemy out there that is able to train and gather and equip and gets help from different places.

And so I looked at the intelligence after September the 11th and saw a threat in Iraq. And the United States Congress looked at the very same intelligence, and they came to the same conclusion I did, that there was a threat in Iraq. I want to remember—I want to remind you of the history. The United Nations Security Council looked at the same intelligence, and they saw a threat. The Security Council saw the threat, and the members on the Security Council saw the threat. These are nations like France and Russia and other countries that looked at the same intelligence—Saddam's a threat. And so the world said, “Disarm, or face serious consequences.” And of course, we said the same thing. If America says something, you better mean what you say.

The reason why I believe that the world reacted the way they did is because not only did they look at the intelligence, they remembered what Saddam Hussein was like. He attacked countries in his own neighborhood. He paid terrorists to go kill innocent Israelis. In other words, he was funding terrorist activity. Suiciders would receive money from him. He had terrorist connections. And by the way, we're still seeing some of the people that were in Iraq, still moving in Iraq right now, a guy named Zarqawi—he used weapons of mass destruction against people in neighboring countries, and he used weapons of mass destruction against his own people.

So the world remembered the history. We remembered what he was like, and I remembered the lessons that we learned on September the 11th. We saw a threat. I had a choice to make. Either trust the decision of a madman, a tyrant, a torturer, a hater, or to protect America. And given that choice, I will protect America every time. [Applause] Thank you all.

Because we acted, torture chambers are closed. Because we acted, countries like Libya understood we meant business, and they voluntarily disarmed. Because we acted, there is a democracy beginning to grow in a part of the world that needs freedom and hope. Because we acted, this man's weapons programs will never be. Because we acted, our country is more secure. Because we acted, the world is more free.

We've got hard work to do in Iraq now. It's really hard work. And the reason it is, is because there are people who want to stop the advance of freedom. Freedom frightens terrorists. Freedom frightens people who believe that they can impose their will through acts that are unconscionable, through killing innocent people. That's what you're seeing.

You're seeing a mixture of supporters of a young Shi'a named Sadr who is a—he's promoting lawlessness. You're seeing people that used to be loyal to Saddam Hussein who realized that there's no hope for them unless there's anarchy and the rule of law doesn't prevail. And you're seeing the influence of foreign fighters, like this guy Zarqawi. That's what you're seeing. You're also seeing incredibly brave action by American troops as we stay on the offensive.

The enemy wants us to quit. That's what they want. The Iraqi citizens who long for freedom are worried that we will. See, some people don't want to take a risk for peace, if they think they do, and then they're—and then they were punished if there's not security. And the enemy is trying to shake our will. My job as your President is to stand strong. My job as your President is to be as—to show utmost determination in our belief that freedom will prevail, and it will prevail.

I believe that freedom is embedded in everybody's soul. I believe people want to be free. I believe moms and dads want to raise their children in a peaceful environment. I believe moms and dads want their children to be educated and to be able to grow up and realize their dreams. I believe that is the aspirations of all people. I know freedom is not America's gift to world. Freedom is the Almighty God's gift to each man and woman in this world. And I believe this strong and generous and compassionate nation must work to continue to spread free-

dom, not only for our own security but for the sake of others who have been enslaved by tyrants.

I've told the Iraqi people this, and I mean it: We will transfer sovereignty to the Iraqi people on June the 30th. Of course, I know I'm—American citizens hear, "Well, maybe the Iraqis don't want us to occupy them." Who wants to be occupied? Nobody wants to be occupied. People do want to be liberated. The Iraqis want us there to help with their security, but they want to run their own country. And I don't blame them. And so on June the 30th, we'll start the—we will transfer sovereignty and start a process that will allow them to have elections in January 2005.

The closer we come to sovereignty, the more the enemy will make us want to leave, and I know how hard it is. I know how hard it is for moms and dads who have got troops overseas. I know how hard it is for a mom or dad to lose a son. It's tough. And nobody in America—America suffers when one of us suffers, is the best way to put it. But I've told those mothers and dads when I've had the opportunity to see them, "We will finish what we have begun. Your son or daughter will not die in vain."

I see we've got some troops here. I want to thank you all for coming. I have the duty to make sure they get what they need. When we put somebody in harm's way, those of us in positions of responsibility have the duty to make sure they've got the best possible equipment. That's why I asked Congress to vote for an \$87 billion, what they call, supplemental. That just means \$87 billion available, 67 of which is available to the troops to make sure they have the best equipment.

I don't want to get too political here, but my opponent voted against it, and they asked him why. His answer was, "I voted for the 87 billion, right before I voted against it." Let me tell you something: This country doesn't need double talk; it needs plain talk; and it needs people to be able to support these troops.

I'll just say one other thing about our troops—a couple other things. I told our commanders, "Tell me how many you need on the ground, and you'll get it." This war is going to be—the decisionmaking part

about what the troops need in this war is going to be made by generals, not politicians. The people in the Army, the Marines, and the Air Force will be making the decisions. The President sets the strategy. The President sets the goals, and our commanders on the ground tell us what it takes to meet those goals.

The second thing I want to say about our military, I'm just as disgusted of those pictures you've seen on TV as you are. This isn't the America we know. Let me tell you something: Those few people have stained the honor of this country. They have put—they've helped paint a picture of the country that doesn't exist. The men and women we have sent into harm's way for our security and for freedom in the world are the finest of citizens in this country. [Applause] Thank you all. And I can't tell you how proud I am to be their Commander in Chief.

I want to say one other thing about this, these horrible pictures and what we've seen. In a free society, we will find out the truth, and everybody will see the truth. In a society that is a free society, there will be transparency in the process. People will testify. There will be fair trials, if there are trials. The truth will be known. In societies run by tyrants, you never see the truth. You never find out the truth. This country honors every individual. We believe in human rights and human dignity, and the example we will set for the world will confirm that.

Now, let me talk a little bit about how to make the country stronger. You make the country stronger by making sure the entrepreneurial spirit in this country is strong so that people can find work. The role of Government is to create an environment in which small businesses can grow to be big businesses, in which people can realize their dreams by starting their own business, so that people can find work. That's the role of Government. That's what I want to talk a little bit about today.

First, I can't tell you how optimistic I am about our economy. In fact, we had a pretty good job increase today—just came out at 288,000 new jobs for the month of April has just been posted. We're growing. That's 1.1 million jobs since last August have been created. That's really incredibly good news.

When I find out people are looking for work, it troubles me. So my job is to work to make an environment such that people expand their businesses so people can work. That's what we want. We want people working. We want people realizing their dreams of being able to put food on the table for their families, and it's happening.

But let me remind you right quick what we have overcome. I think it will help make these numbers even more amazing to you. This country, in a very brief period of time, overcame the stock market decline, starting in March of 2000. If you're a saver, that affected your outlook in life. If you're a retired citizen that has stock that you're relying upon in your retirement, it affects your outlook.

Then we went to a recession. Starting in early 2001, we went through a recession. That means we're going backward. That means if you're a worker, you're wondering about whether or not you're going to keep your job. That means if you're a small-business owner, you're wondering whether it makes sense to make investment. It is a negative period.

And then, just as we were coming out of that recession, the enemy hit us. I've talked to you about what it means from a foreign policy perspective. It also meant we lost jobs and work. It affected our economy. It just did. Any time your country gets attacked as significantly as it was, it affected the economy. We overcame that.

Then we had another problem in our economy, one that shook the confidence of the American people, and that is we had some people forget to tell the truth. There's some corporate CEOs who fudged the numbers and didn't tell the truth, and it affected us. We acted on that, by the way. I worked with both Republicans and Democrats in Congress to pass tough law—tough law. The message is real clear in America. If you're in a position of responsibility, you behave responsibly when it comes to shareholders and employees, or you'll be held to account. We're not going to tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America.

Then of course, I've talked about my decision to go into Iraq. But remember, on your TV screens it said "March to War" during that period of time. That's something the

economy had to overcome because when you read about marching to war, it is negative. People who are making capital decisions or decisions to expand take a look at that and say, "Gosh, I'm not sure I want to expand if we're marching to war." Now we're marching to peace.

Things have changed. Our economy is growing. It's strong, and it's getting stronger. Witness the numbers today. And what it really speaks to is the fact that the entrepreneurial spirit in this country is strong, that small businesses are vibrant and strong. Seventy percent of new jobs in America are created by small businesses. And if you've got your job base growing as fast as it is, it means somebody is growing the job base. We're going to talk to a couple of small-business owners here today.

I'd like to take a little credit for the pro-growth that's happening today because of the tax cuts. See, I believe that when you give people more of their own money—and notice I said "more of their own money"—it's not the Government money we're passing back. It's the people's money we take in the first place. We're going to talk about the effect of tax cuts on some families here. But when you've got more money in your pocket, you're likely to demand an additional good or a service, and when you demand an additional good or a service in our marketplace-type economy, somebody will produce it. And when somebody produces the good or a service, somebody is more likely to keep a job or find work. That's just the way it works.

The tax cuts were important economic policy. They also helped families because we've increased the child credit. We reduced the marriage penalty. My attitude about that is, why do you want to penalize marriage? You ought to encourage marriage and family. And we helped small businesses. But the tendency in politics is to focus on the now. My job is to focus on the future, to make sure that we're the most competitive place to do business in the world. In other words, it's a good place to do business so that the job base expands. So the question is: What do we need to do to make sure we're the leader in the world?

Let me tell you a couple ideas. I want to talk about one other thing, and then I'm going to talk to some of our citizens here.

First, I believe there needs to be certainty in the Tax Code. We should not raise the taxes on the American people right now, in order to keep this economy growing, and it's an issue in the campaign. I'm telling you, it's an issue. We've been counting the number of new promises the fellow I'm running against is making. He's up to \$1.9 trillion so far, of new promises. And we got a long way to go in the campaign. Pretty easy to stand up in front of people and say, "Well, I promise you this, and I'll spend that," and then it begins to mount up after a while. So the question is, how is he going to pay for it?

And the answer—his answer, of course, is taxing rich people, but the problem is there's not enough tax revenue to be generated to pay for \$1.9 trillion worth of new spending by taxing rich people. And so there's a tax gap, and I'll tell you how he's going to fill the tax gap. You get to fill the tax gap. In order to fulfill the promises, the only way he can do so is to tax the hard-working people of America. The good news is, we're not going to let him do it.

Right quick, let me tell you how you have a vision—how you implement a vision to make sure people can find work. One, education matters a lot. We got to make sure our children learn to read and write and add and subtract early so that they're better able—this No Child Left Behind Act I've signed is good, really good. I'll tell you why: It raises the bar. We spent more money at the Federal level for Title I kids, and for the first time the Federal Government says, "Please show us whether or not the children can read and write and add and subtract." If they can't, we'll find out early and get the kids extra help. If they can, we'll praise the teachers for doing the work that we expect them to do. If the curriculum works, we'll find out. If it doesn't work, we'll find out.

We'll find out a lot through making sure that the facts are known as to whether or not children are learning. The way to make sure you challenge the soft bigotry of low expectations is to raise the bar and measure and correct problems early, before they're too late.

A second challenge for education is, is that technology races through our economy. It's one of the facts of the 21st century. There's new technologies happening all the time. Take the health care field. It's changing dramatically in a very rapid period of time. And there's a lot of communities looking for health care workers, but a lot of times, the worker doesn't have the skill necessary to fill the job. And so we've got to be really wise about how we use places like the community college system, to make sure that they match willing workers with people looking for work, with the skills necessary for the jobs for the 21st century. By reeducating people for the jobs which actually exist, we also increase the productivity level of the workforce. And a more productive workforce is a workforce that makes more money.

Let me give you an example. I've been to a lot of community colleges around the country because I believe so deeply in their value, and they're important. Again, the economy changes, and we're in a period of change now, and we better make sure the workforce has got the skills to change with it. And so I met a lady in Mesa Community College in Arizona, and she was telling me her story. She went back and got an associate's degree with a high-tech emphasis. And she had been a graphic design artist and, after 12 years, she was making X number of dollars, went back to the community college—and by the way, there's money available to help people. There's trade adjustment assistance. There's Pell grants. There's money, and that's good. The Federal Government wants to help retrain people.

And she got retrained, and she made more money in her level entry job, having gotten an associate's degree, than she made after 12 years of being a graphic artist. In other words, going back to school makes the citizen more productive, and they make more money.

Secondly, there's a lot of talk about trade. When you're good at something, you want to promote it. And we're in farm country here. We're really good about growing things in America. We've got the best farmers in the world. We've got the most productive—and where we're from, we think we're pretty good about raising cows. [Laughter] But if

you're good at it, you want to open up markets rather than close markets. Farm income is strong now. A lot of it has to do with the fact that we're selling more farm product overseas than ever before. Trade policy needs to be confident, not pessimistic, in the ability for Americans to compete.

Most Presidents have opened up our markets for other countries. That's good for consumers. If you've got more product from which to choose, you're likely to get a better price and better quality. In other words, the more choice you get, the more that people will meet demand with better product at a price you can afford.

But the problem is, other countries haven't responded. And so rather than becoming economic isolationists, for the sake of long-term job growth, this country must say, "Treat us like we treat you." With a level playing field, we can compete with anybody, anywhere. Good trade policy is necessary to make sure jobs exist not only in the short term, in the long term.

We need to make sure we do something about the cost of health care. I'm for health savings accounts, association health care plans, and medical liability reform at the Federal level so that health care costs make it—don't make it impossible for small businesses to continue to employ people.

Two other quick points, then one other point. [Laughter] Laura said, "Keep it short. The bus might leave." [Laughter] She's been hearing me give a lot of speeches for a long time, which means she's a pretty patient lady.

We need tort reform. If you're a business owner, somebody expanding the job base of small business, a frivolous or junk lawsuit makes it awfully hard on you as a businessperson. Remember, jobs are created when businesses expand. And if people are afraid to risk capital, which is how you expand, because of a junk lawsuit, it makes it very hard. We need justice in America. But we've got to make sure the justice—the scales of justice are balanced and fair.

And finally, it is very important for us to have an energy policy in America. We've got to increase supply in this country. We have got to—we've got to utilize—of course, we want to work on the demand side by encouraging conservation. That's important. And

we've got things in the bill that will encourage conservation. But you can't conserve your way to a lack of dependence on foreign sources of energy. You've also got to increase supply so that you don't have to rely upon foreign sources of energy. And one of the things we've got in the energy bill is the continued expansion of the use of soybeans and corn to diversify the energy supply. It makes a lot of sense to do so.

I'm a supporter of biodiesel and ethanol because I understand the practicality of it. At some point in time, we're going to say, "Gosh, the yields on corn are real good, and now we're less dependent." We need clean coal technology. We've got a lot of coal. We need to expand clean coal technology. We need—in my judgment, we need to have a safe nuclear energy program in order to expand. We need to be drilling for natural gas in environmentally friendly ways. What I'm telling you is, in order to make sure that we're a good place to do business, so we can expand the job base, we need to become less reliant on foreign sources of energy.

The other strategy is to make America a better place. The Government can help, but Government is not love. Government is justice and law. Love comes from the hearts and souls of citizens. And that is—which is the true strength of the country, by the way. We talk about our military, and it's an important part of our strength, and we'll keep you strong. We talk about our wealth, and that's an important part of our strength, and we want to continue to expand our economy. The true strength of this country is the hearts and souls of the American citizens.

Let me tell you what I mean by that. That happens—the strength happens when somebody takes time out of their life to love somebody who hurts. In the land of plenty, there are people who are—who hurt. There are people who are addicted, people who are homeless, people who are hungry. And the best way to cure that aspect of our society's ills is to rally the armies of compassion. See, society can and does change one heart, one soul at a time.

I want to be your President for 4 more years, not only to keep the country safe and stronger but to continue to rally the spirit of America, to call upon our fellow citizens

to heed the universal call, the call of all religions, to love your neighbor just like you'd like to be loved yourself.

You know what I'm talking about. You know how societies can change. You've seen what happens in your communities when people take it upon themselves to help those who hurt, to build a home for the homeless through Habitat for Humanity, who take time out to instill values in Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts. You've seen what it's like when people say, "I'm going to be a coach in a Little League to help a kid learn a team sport and, at the same time, sportsmanship." You know what it means when you've seen church groups come together and say, "Let's go feed this family that hurts." You have seen what happens when the great compassion of this country wells up and starts saving lives. The strength of this country lies in the hearts and souls of our fellow citizens, which makes us such a fabulous nation.

I've asked some folks to come today. Paul Darley is a small-business owner, W.S. Darley. He is the president and chief operating officer.

Tell us what you do.

Paul Darley. Our company is a 96-year-old family business. We manufacture fire-fighting equipment, specifically firetrucks, fire pumps, that we distribute all over America and around the world.

The President. Based right here?

Mr. Darley. We're based in Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin. We just last year built a \$3.8 billion plant. And additionally, we bought equipment worth over \$1 million, which we were able to do as a result of the tax relief that took place over the last 2 years.

The President. One of the important parts of the tax relief that I hope people understand is this: Most small businesses, like this good man's business, pay tax at the individual income-tax level. A lot of citizens don't know that. But if you're a Subchapter S corporation or a sole proprietorship, you pay tax at the individual income-tax level. So when you heard us talking about reducing individual income taxes, not only, obviously, did it affect citizens, it affects small businesses. And so when you hear people say, "We're going to tax the rich by running up some of those income taxes," they're taxing small

businesses. It's important for people to understand that.

The other thing we did was we helped with what they call bonus depreciation. In other words, if you make an investment, you get to deduct more money. In other words, there was an incentive in the Tax Code.

So what did you do with the money? You built a—

Mr. Darley. We built a new \$3 million plant. We also built about a million dollars' worth of equipment. But additionally, we were able to take that money, through less—because we had less dividends to pay out because our tax burden was less, we were able to reinvest that money back into our business. We were able to create jobs. We were able to train our employees. We were able to compete in a global environment.

The President. Yes. See, when he builds something, like expands his plant—I think he needed to add employees?

Mr. Darley. We did.

The President. So when you hear—the reason I bring this up is when you hear that tax relief encourages investment—there's two aspects to investment—two effects of investment. First, when he buys equipment, new equipment, somebody has got to make it, right? If somebody makes it—some business makes it, some laborer who is making the product for the business is more likely to keep a job, or if the demand is greater, they'll add jobs to make the new equipment, orders for new equipment.

Secondly, when he says he's invested in his company because of the tax incentives, he's got to have people to work that additional plant and equipment. So when you hear "investment equals jobs," that's how it works. He makes a decision. Somebody produces the product for him, and as he expands his business, he hires new people.

Is that what happened? So how many people did you hire last year?

Mr. Darley. I think 24 in the last 2 years and then, additionally, 9 since the beginning of January this year, and we plan to hire 14 or 15 more in the next 7 months.

The President. That's good news. It's good news if you're somebody—thank you, Paul.

There's a lot of small businesses like Paul's, a lot of companies. See, the entrepreneurial spirit is strong. You heard him say, "I'm thinking about hiring 14 more." There's a lot of people out there feeling the same way now. That's really encouraging.

And so the key is whether or not the workforce is trained to be able to do the jobs he's looking for. You heard him say, "I took some of the savings so that we could train workers." There's all kinds of ways workers get trained. I mentioned the community college, but a lot of times, businesses train their own workers too. And tax relief has helped make his workforce more productive.

I want to thank you for hanging in there. Thanks for expanding your business.

Jim Hutchison is with us as well. Jim is the owner—when did you start your business, and what does it do?

Jim Hutchison. 1994. And first of all, thank you for coming to Prairie du Chien, Mr. President.

The President. Well, I'm glad to be here.

Mr. Hutchison. We started in 1994.

The President. Thanks for the excuse of getting out of Washington. [Laughter]

Mr. Hutchison. And it's a nice drive for you too.

The President. It's beautiful. It really is—a little different from Midland, Texas—[laughter]—which is flat and in the desert. Go ahead.

[*Mr. Hutchison, owner, Prairie Industries, made brief remarks.*]

The President. Did you start this?

Mr. Hutchison. I started it in 1994. We started with seven people.

The President. How did you think of it?

Mr. Hutchison. Well, I heard some people from the 3M company were shipping a lot of work out of the area. They didn't have anyone to package for them. And I was able to get an interview with them. I thought it would last 15 minutes. It lasted 4 hours. And 300 people later, here we are.

The President. That's in 10 years. Good. I don't want to hog the spotlight, but the entrepreneurial spirit—you just heard it. He just defined what that means. The guy had a dream. He said, "I can do something better than that which was being done. Give me

a chance to compete." And the key is for policy to encourage those dreams to go on, for people to say, "Look, with a good idea and hard work, I can achieve a dream."

Go ahead.

[*Mr. Hutchison made further remarks.*]

The President. Sixty employees this year—see, it's happening. Here's an optimistic guy. He stands in front of the President and the cameras and people and says, "Look, I'm optimistic. I'm growing my business. I want to compete, and I'm investing so I can become more productive." That's how the economy works. Good tax policy encourages this.

By the way, if the Congress doesn't act on some of this tax policy, the taxes go up. And to me, if the taxes start going up at this point, it changes the attitude of those who are risking capital. So I've told you we don't need to be raising taxes right now. I'm trying to put a face as to why we don't need to. See, it's one thing for me to stand up there and say it. They'll say, "Sure, he's running for office." But the reason—I have a reason to say it, and these small-business owners helped me make the case.

Thank you both for coming. I'm proud of your entrepreneurial spirit. Good job, real good.

Christine and Mark Seeley are with us. I'm proud you all are here. They're a family of—they got three kids. And the reason I've asked them to come, along with the Hendricksons, is so that people can hear what tax relief has meant to their life. Again, it's easy for us to spew numbers in Washington, but tax relief affects people in such positive ways that it's important for people who don't agree with the tax relief or are willing to take—raise the taxes on people to understand the consequences. And that's why they're here.

First of all, what do you do?

Mark Seeley. I'm an athletic trainer with Prairie du Chien Memorial Hospital right here in town.

The President. Good. My knee hurts. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Seeley. See me afterwards. [*Laughter*]

The President. Yes.

Mr. Seeley. And Christine is a stay-at-home mom.

The President. That's good. Congratulations.

Christine Seeley. Thank you.

The President. Because we raised the child credit, expanded the 10-percent—reduced—created a 10-percent bracket, and relieved the marriage penalty, this couple saved 2,200?—\$2,200 in '03 and in '04. That may not seem like a lot to people who are throwing around a lot of zeroes in Washington, but I bet—well, I'll let them tell you if it means anything to them. I'm like—I'm not a lawyer, you'll be happy to hear, but I realize I'm leading the witness. [*Laughter*] Tell us about the money.

Mr. Seeley. Well, what we were able to do with that refund is basically invest it right back into our house. We were having a couple issues with some leaky roofs, so we hired a couple—

The President. Right. Pretty hard to raise a family with a leaky roof.

Mr. Seeley. That's right. You have to keep the roof over their heads, so we hired a couple of contractors to come in and repair our roof. And that's where that money went.

The President. Good. Somebody had to come over. In other words, you got the relief, and you said, "We better get on the phone and call Joe's Roofing Company." Is that who it was? [*Laughter*]

Mr. Seeley. Randy Jones Construction.

The President. Randy. All right, here's Jones' chance. Did you do a good job? Did he do a good job?

Mrs. Seeley. Oh, fabulous.

Mr. Seeley. Yes, he did a great job.

The President. Great job. Good. I don't know where Jones is. If he's listening, he just got a plug for business. Anyway, he came over. I presume he didn't do it by himself.

Mr. Seeley. No, he had actually two other crew members, and then we had another company that put on some rubber roofing in back of the house. And I think they employed—had four guys with them.

The President. Yes. Let me tell you what happens if Congress doesn't act. These folks pay a \$1,000 tax increase, see? That's the debate in Washington. You're hearing this debate about whether to make the tax relief

permanent. That's not the way to look at it. The way to look at it is, if Congress doesn't act, instead of \$2,200, they're going to be \$1,000 less than that. It's like a tax increase. That's \$1,000 less money in their pocket. I like to remind people that this economy is cranking and beginning to grow because the people have spent their money far better than the Government would have.

Now that you've got the floor, you can say anything you want. [Laughter] Thanks for coming.

Mr. Seeley. Thank you.

The President. Glad you're here. I appreciate you taking time out of your life. Where are the little ones? Are they here?

Mr. Seeley. They couldn't make it.

The President. They're at home?

Mrs. Seeley. Yes.

The President. Too little.

Mrs. Seeley. Yes.

The President. Afraid the President would speak too long. [Laughter] I understand.

Tina and Mike Hendrickson are with us as well. Oh, there they are. Good. Thank you all for coming. They are—what do you do, Michael?

Michael Hendrickson. I work for the highway county department.

The President. Good. So when I said, "Fill the potholes," you knew what I'm talking about. [Laughter]

Mr. Hendrickson. That's right.

The President. I wasn't speaking to you. I was speaking to the decisionmaker. Maybe you are the decisionmaker?

Mr. Hendrickson. No, I get told to go fill the potholes. [Laughter]

The President. That's right. And Tina is a worker.

Tina Hendrickson. Yes, I work at Prairie Industries. I'm a warehouse manager.

The President. Thank you. Great. Thanks for coming. I'm proud you're both here. They've got two young children. So when we increased the child credit to \$1,000, it affected them. And they're married, and so we've reduced the marriage penalty—it affected them, and so did the expansion of the 10-percent bracket, all of which will go away next year unless Congress acts.

The tax savings were?

Mr. Hendrickson. I forget—\$3,000, something like that.

The President. Less.

Mrs. Hendrickson. 1,900.

The President. 1,900—well, 1,900 here, 3,000 there. [Laughter] And so what—how does it affect you? What do you do? When you get a \$1,900 check, less taxes, how does it affect your thinking?

Mrs. Hendrickson. A lot. Well, we've been able to start saving for college for the kids.

The President. Good.

Mrs. Hendrickson. That's a plus.

The President. Doing their duty as a mom or a dad, taking that extra money, it makes it easier for them to fulfill their obligations. And I appreciate that.

What else?

Mrs. Hendrickson. We went to St. Louis in April—short vacation.

The President. Good. And I presume—you stayed in a motel, or what?

Mrs. Hendrickson. Yes.

The President. Yes. So the clerk at the motel was able to keep a job, because if the motel was empty, there wouldn't be a need to have a clerk.

Yes, thank you all for coming. I'm glad you're here.

The reason why—this tax relief affected people. It increases their confidence about the future. It enables them to better raise their families. These people are working hard to raise their two sons. They're thinking about, "How can we put money aside for college," which is a vital part of the duty of being a parent, isn't it? And you want your children to be able to realize their dreams, and college is an important part of it. The tax relief matters, and Congress does not need to be raising the taxes on these people.

The reason I've asked them to come, both small business and individuals to come is, I hope it helps you better understand the progrowth package, how it works, and the philosophy behind the decisions we made.

I think I've got a little time to answer some questions. This is called "Ask George Bush," so you might as well start asking so at least we fulfill the promise of the program's name. But I'll be glad to answer—ask some questions.

Yes, what have you got? This is a written question. [Laughter] This isn't exactly off the top of your head, is it? [Laughter]

Q. I was afraid I couldn't read my own writing, so I did go ahead and type it. [Laughter]

The President. Are you a doctor?

Religious Freedom

Q. No, I'm not. [Laughter] Mr. President, as a member of the local clergy of this city, I'm appalled at the different lengths of political correctness that has affected religious rights in Canada, Australia, France, and other European nations. Laws are being passed to limit offensive speech. If reelected, what will your administration do to the rights—to help the rights of conservative Christians so that courts in America can't limit our free speech when it comes to offensive speech toward different groups?

The President. Yes. Look, here's the thing. Freedom to speak is a valuable part of our country, and a President has got to protect that. People ought to be allowed to speak the way you want to speak, but there are limits. And it is very important for our society to work with those that push the limits without abridging anybody else's freedom to speak.

Let me talk about freedom of religion as well, which is an incredibly important part of our society. My job as the President is to make sure—this may get to your question, by the way, besides speech—an incredibly important part about what you're asking is, can people worship freely as well? Yes. That's the part of the job of the President, is to make sure that people can worship any way they want—any way they want. And they can choose any religion they want, or they can choose no religion. You see, you're just as big a patriot—as good a patriot as the next fellow if you choose not to worship. It's your choice to make. And the freedom of this country is that you can choose to do any way you want. And it's important that we keep that freedom real and intact.

I happen to believe that it would be very difficult to be the President without believing. I believe that—I know it's been an important part of my Presidency. And I appreciate the fact—but what I'm answering to you

is, is that we've got to be very careful about tampering with freedoms in America, the freedom to speak or the freedom to worship. It is the thing that sets us apart from other parts of the world, that people can come to this country and express themselves the way they see fit.

Obviously, there's a line to cross when it comes to speech. That's been a difficult challenge for our country, to figure out where it is and where it isn't. You know, sometimes on TV, there are things you don't want to see. But that's why you put an off-on button on there. You just kind of turn it off. You don't have to watch it. You can also pay attention—and there are other things we can do to make it easier for parents to make sure their children aren't watching garbage. And there are things you can do on the Internet to make sure that garbage doesn't get in your living room. But it's very important that we remain a country of free speech and free religion.

Anybody else got something? Yes, ma'am.

Steel Industry/International Economy

Q. Hi. I'm from LaCrosse. My name is Karen Heffner. My husband and I own a small steel fabricating business.

The President. Oh, good.

Q. I know. You'd like that one, right? [Laughter]

The President. Well, first of all, I'm glad you own a business. How long have you owned it?

Q. Since '92.

The President. Good.

Q. And we have been growing steadily too. We started with about six employees—but a couple of setbacks along the way. I just want to know—my question is, with the steel market so volatile, what can we do to help stabilize that and all the construction trade?

The President. Yes. She is referring to the fact that the price of steel, which was very low at one point, is now higher. And the reason why is, is because the world's economies are beginning to grow. For a period of time, the world was in recession. We were recession—in recession, and other countries were. And all of a sudden, the world is beginning

to come out of its recession. There's a cyclicality to economies, and the cycle is now coming on an upswing.

In a country like China, it's really booming, and they're absorbing a lot of the supply of steel in the world, which is, in fact—I believe you're referring to the price of steel getting higher, which is making it more difficult for you to work. I believe that the higher price of steel will serve as an incentive for people to produce more steel, and that—it's a price-driven industry, as you know, and that as people produce more steel, it should take—relieve the pressure.

It's just like what's happening in the energy markets today. For a while, there was excess supply because the world's demand was depressed. And now the world is growing, very much like the steel prices. And by the way, I'm sure the energy prices affects your business too, I would think, which is high and hard to deal with, I fully recognize. We're seeing it at the gasoline pumps as well, and that's not positive for American consumers and American people.

It has to do with the fact that the demand is increasing relative to supply and that when you get these countries beginning to grow and they're not very fuel-efficient to begin with, like China, they're taking a lot of world oil off the market in order for their economy to grow, and it's affecting our prices.

That's why we need an energy bill. That's why we need to be diversified. I believe there will be an increase in fuel supply in response to price, which would make it—which would then begin to ease off.

About 3 years ago, if I'm not mistaken, the price of your product was significantly different than it is today. And I guess what I'm telling you is you're going through a rough cycle. But I don't think the Government policy can say, "Okay, fine"—you know, make people go out and produce more product to relieve the price. I think the market is going to have to adjust to do that.

And I also suspect you're a little nervous about reliability of electricity. I hear from small manufacturers all the time, and a part of the energy bill that's stuck in the Congress, by the way—I've been trying to get it moving for the good of the country. It's stuck. Part of it is to make sure that our electricity sys-

tems are modern, that the electricity systems have got maximum reliability standards from these sellers of electricity as well as modern ways to attract capital to expand the electricity systems and modernize them.

That was a very good question on steel. Commodity prices go up and down, and the thing that our country must not do, as I mentioned to you, in response to economic conditions, is wall ourselves off from the rest of the world. I think it would be a terrible mistake to become isolated from the rest of the world. Economic isolationism is pessimistic, and it does not lead to a hopeful future. Again, I'm going to repeat what I said about not becoming isolated from the rest of the world. If you're good at something, and we're very good at things, with a level playing field we can compete. And as we compete, people are more likely to find a job.

Anybody got anything? Yes, ma'am.

Education

Q. I'm an eighth grade teacher and—

The President. First, thanks for teaching.

Q. You're welcome. Typically, when I'm discussing education policy and, specifically, funding with my colleagues, I'm pretty much in the minority with a conservative view. What can I tell my colleagues that the Bush administration is pro-education?

The President. Sure. You can tell them we've increased Title I—elementary and secondary education spending since I've been in office, from 2001 to today, by over 47 percent. That's a healthy increase in spending. On the other hand, I believe that spending—the Federal Government ought not to try to run the schools. I believe the best spending decisions are made by State and local people.

I believe the ratio between the Federal Government and the State and local people is a good ratio, something about 94 to 6 or 93 to 7 percent—7 percent coming from the Federal Government. We're more than happy to encourage spending. I just want to make sure that the spending works.

And so you can tell the folks that our approach has changed, literally changed how people—what people—not what people can do with the money but what they must achieve with the money. You notice I used

the word “achieve.” In other words, we expect results. If you don’t measure, if you don’t get—if you don’t ask for results, it is likely you won’t get results or at least you won’t know. How do you know—tell your friends, how can you possibly know whether or not a child can read unless you’re willing to measure?

Secondly, tell your friends that when we find—in the No Child Left Behind Act, early on when we discover that a child doesn’t have the tools necessary to read, he or she gets extra help. Third, that if a school perpetually fails, parents get different options in order to make sure that people respond to the moms and dads and to the needs of the children.

We’ve got a really good record on public education. And the No Child Left Behind Act is a strong piece of legislation which I believe will make the public school systems work better, not worse.

What else? Yes, sir.

Support for the President

Q. I don’t have a question, sir. I just wanted to thank you. I served in the United States Air Force for 10 years. I just love the love that you have for our troops and admiration you have for our troops, and I salute you.

The President. Thank you, sir.

Q. —and the First Lady as well.

The President. Thank you. I appreciate that. Thanks for saying that.

I’m a fellow who knows a good exit line. [Laughter] We’re getting on the bus and heading up the road. I want to thank you all for coming. I hope you’ve enjoyed this as much as I have. I’m glad to get out of the Nation’s Capital and come and be with you all. I’ve really enjoyed our dialog and our discussion. I hope you can tell I have a reason why I want to be your President for 4 more years. I hope you can tell I’m counting on you to go to your neighbors and let them know I have a reason. And I hope you can tell I’m incredibly optimistic and hopeful about the future of this country, because I understand the strength of this country is the people who live in America.

May God bless you all, and may God continue to bless our country. Thanks for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 1:40 p.m. at Cabela’s Distribution Center. In his remarks, he referred to Richard N. Cabela, chairman and director, Cabela’s Inc., and his wife, Mary; Wisconsin State Representatives Stephen J. Freese and Gabe Loeffelholz; Mayor Jerry Wehrle of Lancaster, WI; senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi; Muqtada Al Sadr, Iraqi Shiite cleric whose militia engaged in an uprising in Iraq in early April; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady, who introduced the President. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Remarks in LaCrosse, Wisconsin

May 7, 2004

The President. Thank you all very much. Thanks for coming. It’s a great turnout. Laura and I are so honored so many came out to say hello here in the great State of Wisconsin. I’m glad to be back in LaCrosse. What a fine city, full of fine, fine people.

Listen, traveling your State on the bus is a fantastic experience, particularly for two people who grew up in the desert. [Laughter] As Laura said, people lined the road and were really friendly. We had a stop at the Kuhle family farm. That’s between Hazel Green and Cuba City. It gave us a chance to shake hands with some hard-working people just like you all. A guy asked me if I wanted to milk his cows. I said, “I think we better get back on the bus.” [Laughter] Had a little Culver’s ice cream on the way here too, I want you to know.

I came here to ask for your vote. I came here to tell you I’ve got a reason to be President for 4 more years. I want this country to be safer and stronger and better, and working together, we can make it that way.

I also came here to ask for your help. I want you to feel so inspired to put up the signs and knock on your neighbors’ doors and go to community centers and your houses of worship and encourage people to vote. Tell them to go to the polls, and tell them when you’re—when you’re telling them how to vote or suggesting to them how to vote—[laughter]—remind them that we have a positive vision, an optimistic vision, a hopeful

vision for every single American who lives in this country.

If you can't figure out what else to say, tell them they need to put me back in so that Laura can be the First Lady for 4 more years. I'm really proud of Laura. She's been a fantastic First Lady. She's a great wife and wonderful mom. She is—I'm a really lucky guy—[laughter]—and I think the people of America are lucky to have her as the First Lady.

I put together a fantastic team of people to serve this country, people from all walks of life, people from different backgrounds, people like Tommy Thompson of the State of Wisconsin. By the way, Tommy is doing a great job. He's got a tough job, but he's doing a great job. He helped us reform Medicare so we keep the promise to the seniors of America. Tommy—you trained him well here in Wisconsin.

I'm also running with a really fine man. Vice President Dick Cheney is a great Vice President.

I want to thank Dan Kapanke, the—one of the co-owners of the baseball team that plays here. I appreciate you opening up your field. It's nice to be here in "the Lumber Yard." It's a beautiful stadium. You know I'm a baseball fan. I love baseball. It's a perfect setting for us to talk about how to make sure our country is the best it can possibly be. So thanks for opening up "the Lumber Yard" to a bunch of tall timber. [Laughter]

I want to thank Congressman Mark Green and Congressman Paul Ryan, two fine Members of the United States House of Representatives.

I know the State treasurer Jack Voight is with us today, and I'm proud that the treasurer has come. I appreciate Mary Panzer and John Gard, two members of the statehouse who have joined us today, the leader in the senate and the speaker. And I want to thank all the members of the statehouse who are here. I particularly want to thank State Senator Dale Schultz, the next Congressman from this district.

We've even got them coming in from Milwaukee today. Scott Walker, who is the Milwaukee County Executive, has joined us. And I'm proud that Scott is here. Thank you for coming, Scott.

And I want to thank Rick Gruber, the party chairman for the State.

I want to thank all the grassroots activists who are here, people who do the hard work at turning out the vote.

I appreciate my friend Larry Gatlin, who is here today. Larry is a great friend of Laura of me. Have you sung yet? Good. Gatlin and I both grew up in west Texas, so when he sees trees and water, he's somewhat taken aback. [Laughter]

I want to thank all the military personnel who are with us today. Thank you for serving this country.

Audience members. U.S.A.! U.S.A.! U.S.A.!

The President. When you're out rounding up the vote, remind the people that you talk to that this administration and our country has faced serious challenges in the last 3 years, and we have given serious answers. We came to office with a stock market in decline and an economy headed into a recession, but we acted. We delivered historic tax relief, and now our economy is the fastest growing of any major industrialized nation.

We uncovered corporate crimes that cost people their jobs and their savings. We passed strong corporate reforms. Wrongdoers are being brought to account. And we have made it clear we will not tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America.

We saw war and grief arrive on a quiet September morning. We pursued the terrorist enemy across the world. We've captured or killed many key leaders of the Al Qaida network. And the rest will learn this about America: There is no cave or hole deep enough to hide from American justice.

When Dick Cheney and I came to Washington, we found a military that was underfunded and underappreciated, so we gave our military the resources and respect they deserve. And today, no one can question the skill and the strength and the spirit of the United States military.

We confronted the dangers of state-sponsored terror and the spread of weapons of mass destruction, so we ended two of the most violent and dangerous regimes on Earth. We have liberated over 50 million people. Once again, America is proud to stand against tyranny and to set nations free.

It is the President's job to confront problems, not to pass them on to future Presidents and future generations. The President needs to speak clearly, mean what he says, to step up and make the hard decisions. And that is how I will continue to lead our country. Great events will turn on this election. The man who sits in the Oval Office will set the course of the war on terror and the direction of our economy. The security and prosperity of America are at stake.

We've got a tough race ahead of us, and that's why I'm glad so many came out. That's why I'm glad you gave me a chance to ask for your help. It's going to be a hard campaign, and I'm looking forward to it. I'm looking forward to the challenge. I'm looking forward to the opportunity to do what we have done today and explain to the American people why I'm running and what I intend to do. Yes, we've done a lot in the past, but there is more to do to make this country a better place and a safer place and a stronger place.

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

The President. We should not take my opponent lightly. He is an experienced United States Senator. He has built up quite a record. In fact, he's been in Washington long enough to take both sides on just about every issue. [Laughter] He voted for the PATRIOT Act, for NAFTA, for No Child Left Behind, and for the use of force of Iraq. Now he opposes the PATRIOT Act, NAFTA, No Child Left Behind, and the liberation of Iraq. His positions on these issues remind me of a saying we have in Texas: If you don't like the weather, just wait a few minutes and it will change.

Now, we're both going to spend a lot of time in this State. I've been here today picking up the endorsements of the hard-working people of Wisconsin. I've been here—out there talking to as many people as I can to let them know I have a desire to serve this country for 4 more years. As you might remember, he claims to have picked up some important endorsements among foreign leaders. The problem is, he won't give us their names. [Laughter]

Now, he did say the other day on national TV, "What I said is true. I mean, you can

go to New York City, and you can be in a restaurant, and you can meet a foreign leader." [Laughter] I think this whole thing is a case of mistaken identity. [Laughter] I mean, just because somebody has an accent and a suit and a nice table at a New York restaurant doesn't make him a foreign leader.

But no matter who these mystery people are, they're not going to decide the election. The American people will be deciding this election, and there will be a clear choice—a clear choice, the choice between keeping the tax relief that is moving this economy forward or putting the burden of higher taxes back on the American people. It is a choice between an America that leads the world with strength and confidence or an America that is uncertain in the face of danger.

The other side hasn't offered much in the way of strategies and plans to win the war on terror or to expand prosperity throughout our country. As a matter of fact, all we hear is bitterness and old partisan anger. But they're going to find out right quick that anger is not an agenda for the future of America. I look forward to taking on the big issues, the issues that matter, with optimism and resolve and determination. And I will make it clear that I stand ready to lead this country for 4 more years.

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

The President. A big issue for every family in America is the Federal tax burden—the largest tax relief since Ronald Reagan was the President. We have left more money in the hands that earned it. By spending and investing and to—helping to create new jobs, the American people have used their money far better than the Federal Government would have.

This economy of ours is strong, and it is getting stronger. The economy grew at a rate of 4.2 percent in the first quarter. Economic growth over the past three quarters has been the fastest in nearly two decades. Manufacturing activity is increasing. Business investment is rising. Disposable income is up. Inflation is low. Mortgage rates are low. Homeownership rate amongst Americans is the highest ever. This farm economy is strong.

America has had 4 straight years of rising exports. Last year, we had the highest farm income on record.

This morning, we got some more good news. Last month, America added 288,000 new jobs. Our people are going back to work. We've added 1.1 million jobs since last August. The unemployment rate in this State is 5.1 percent, down from 5.8 percent last summer. The tax relief we passed is working.

There is a difference of opinion about tax relief in this campaign. When you're out garnering the vote, remind people about the stands that I have taken and the stands my opponent has taken. See, on every one of the tax relief plans we passed the last 3 years, he voted against them. He voted against increasing the child credit, for reducing the marriage penalty, for creating a 10-percent lower bracket, for business investment breaks to small businesses.

And also remind them that when it comes to tax increases, it's been a lot easier to get a yes vote out of him. These are the facts. Since he's been representing the people of Massachusetts, he voted for taxes 350 times. He's not afraid to raise the taxes on the people. And that matters because, in a campaign, the tendency is for people to make promises. We're counting up the promises. He has so far promised \$1.9 trillion of spending, and we're just getting started. And there's 6 months more to go. [Laughter]

And the question you've got to ask of the Senator is, "How are you going to pay for it?" He said, "by taxing the rich." But the problem is, you can't raise enough money by taxing the rich to pay for \$1.9 trillion of new money. So he has a tax gap, and given his record, you know who's going to have to pay that tax gap. That's you, but we're not going to let him have the chance to do so.

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

The President. Raising taxes on the American people would wreck this economic growth and destroy job creation. No, what we need to do is to make sure this administration stays in office so we can keep taxes low and not raise taxes on the hard-working people of this country.

And there's more we've got to do. I'll continue to bring fiscal discipline to Washington,

DC, by reminding the people over there whose money they spend. In Washington, we don't spend the Government's money. We spend your money, and we have an obligation to be wise about how we spend your money.

In order to make sure this economy continues to grow, we need an energy policy in America. We need a policy that encourages conservation. But we need a policy, also, that encourages alternative sources of energy. We ought to be using more corn and soybean to produce ethanol and biodiesel. We need clean coal technology. We ought to be spreading safe nuclear power. We ought to be exploring for natural gas in environmentally friendly ways. We need an energy policy to become less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

We need association health care plans and tax-free health savings accounts to help control the cost of medicine so people will be able to find work. We need medical liability reform in Washington, DC, so that the frivolous lawsuits don't keep running up the cost of medicine and driving docs out of business.

We need to be confident when it comes to trade policy. Listen, other Presidents before me have opened up U.S. markets for the good of consumers. When you get more products coming into America, consumers get better choices at better prices and better quality. What we need to do is reject economic isolationism and say to other nations, "Treat us the way we treat you. Open up your markets." Create a level playing field for America's workers and farmers and manufacturers, and we can compete with anybody, anyplace, anywhere on the face of the Earth.

No, I'm running because I want to make sure this economic growth continues. I'm running to make sure America is the greatest economy on the face of the Earth. I'm running because I want our people with good, solid jobs. I'm running to promote a pro-entrepreneur, pro-small-business, pro-growth economic agenda.

America—our future, the future of this country also depends on our leadership in the world. The momentum of freedom in our time is strong, but we still face serious dangers. We're still at war. Al Qaida is wounded but not broken. Terrorists are testing our will

in Afghanistan and Iraq. Regimes in North Korea and Iran are challenging the peace. If America shows weakness and uncertainty in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This will not happen on my watch.

This Nation is strong and confident in the cause of freedom. And today, nobody, no one, friend or enemy, doubts the word of the United States of America. America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Afghanistan. The Taliban chose defiance, and the Taliban are no longer in power. America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Iraq. The dictator chose defiance, and today, the dictator sits in a prison cell.

September the 11th, 2001, taught a lesson I will never forget and the country must never forget. America must confront threats before they fully materialize. In Iraq, my administration looked at the intelligence, and we saw a threat. I want to remind you that the United States Congress looked at the intelligence, and they saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence, and it saw a threat.

In 2002, the U.N. Security Council yet again demanded a full accounting of Saddam Hussein's weapons programs, and the reason why they did, again—because they remembered the history. Not only did they see a threat, they remembered the actions he had taken. He had attacked countries in his neighborhood. He had used weapons of mass destruction against people in other countries as well as people in his own country. He had ties to terrorism. He paid suiciders to go in and kill innocent Israelis. No, we remembered the nature of the man. Saddam Hussein, as he had for over a decade, refused to comply with the demands of the free world. And so I had a choice to make: Either trust the word of a madman, or defend America. And given that choice, I will defend America every time.

My opponent admits that Saddam Hussein was a threat. He just didn't support my decision to remove Saddam from power. Maybe he was hoping Saddam would lose the next Iraqi election. [Laughter] We showed the dictator and a watching world that America means what it says. And that's really important to keep the peace. Because our coalition

acted, Saddam's torture chambers are closed. Because we acted, Iraq's weapons programs are ended forever. Because we acted, nations like Libya have gotten the message and have voluntarily disarmed. Because we acted, an example of democracy is rising in the heart of the Middle East. Because we acted, the world is more free. Because we acted, America is more secure.

It's been tough days in Iraq for the American people, especially those families with soldiers overseas and those families of a loved one who has sacrificed for our freedom and security—tough work. And there's a reason why. There are foreign fighters and remnants of the old tyrant who can't stand the thought of freedom taking hold in Iraq. That's what we're seeing. Freedom scares terrorists. Freedom scares people who hate. Freedom scares people with no conscience.

What they're trying to do is they're trying to shake our will. They want us to leave. They want us to show weakness. They do not understand America, and they do not understand this President. No thug or assassin will intimidate America. We will finish the work that we have begun, for our own security. We will finish the work we have begun, for peace and freedom. Free societies do not attack their neighbors. Free societies do not breed hate. Free societies provide hope, so that moms and dads can raise their children in a peaceful world, so their children can aspire what we want our children to aspire to, a good education and a hopeful life.

No, these are historic times. These are times that require strong will and strong determination. These are times in which we could literally change the world by the spread of 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. We will finish what we have begun, and we will win this essential victory in the war on terror.

On national security, Americans have the clearest possible choice. My opponent says he approves of bold action in the world but only if other countries do not object. Now, I'm for working with other countries. I've put together coalitions to fight the war on terror—the coalition in Afghanistan. There's over 30 nations working with us in Iraq right

now, because they understand what I understand: A free Iraq will make the world more secure; a free Iraq will change the Middle East for the better. But let me tell you this as clearly as I can. I will never turn over America's national security decisions to leaders of other countries.

And we have a difference of opinion about whether the war on terror is really a war at all. My opponent says the war on terror is far less of a military operation and far more of an intelligence-gathering, law enforcement operation. I disagree—I disagree. Our Nation followed this approach after the World Trade Center was bombed in 1993. The matter was handled in the courts and thought by some to be settled, but the terrorists were still training in Afghanistan. They were still plotting in other nations. They were still drawing up more ambitious plans.

After the carnage and chaos of September the 11th, it is not enough to serve our enemies with legal papers. With those attacks, the terrorists and their supporters declared war on the United States of America, and war is what they got.

And winning the war on terror requires that we use all our assets, including a fantastic military. And as we use that military, our troops must be given the best equipment in the world. That is why I went to Congress and asked for an \$87 billion appropriation last fall to help our troops. I want to thank the two Congressmen for supporting that supplemental. But my opponent chose to vote "no," and here's what he said. He said, "I actually did vote for the 87 billion, before I voted against it." [Laughter]

The American President must speak clearly. The American President must mean what he says. And when I say the troops will get the support they need, I mean that the troops will get the support they need to win this war on terror.

Our men and women in the military are taking great risks, and they're doing great work. Like you, I was disgusted about the pictures I saw on TV, about the humiliation given to the prisoners in Iraq. No American can stand for that. That doesn't reflect us, nor does it reflect the character and the decency and the honor of the men and women who wear the uniform of the United States

of America. I have seen their decency, and I have seen their unselfish courage. And I assure you, ladies and gentlemen, the cause of freedom is in really good hands.

This Nation is prosperous and strong. Yet, we need to remember that our greatest strength is in the hearts and souls of our fellow citizens. We're strong because of the values we try to live by, courage and compassion, reverence and integrity. We're strong because of the institutions that help give us direction and purpose, families and schools and our religious congregations. These values and institutions are fundamental to our lives, and they deserve the respect of the Government.

We stand for the fair treatment of faith-based groups, so they can receive Federal support for their works of compassion and healing. We will not stand for Government discrimination against people of faith.

We stand for welfare reforms that require work and strengthen marriage, which have helped millions of Americans find independence and dignity. We will not stand for any attempt to weaken those reforms and to send people back into lives of dependence.

We stand for a culture of life in which every person counts and every person matters. We will not stand for the treatment of any life as a commodity to be experimented upon or exploited or cloned.

We stand for the confirmation of judges who strictly and faithfully interpret the law. We will not stand for judges who undermine democracy by legislating from the bench or judges who try to remake the values of America by court order.

We stand for a culture of responsibility in America. The culture of this country is changing from one that has said "If it feels good, just go ahead and do it," and "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each of us understands we are responsible for the decisions we make in life.

If you're a mom or a dad—if you're lucky enough to be a mom or a dad, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart. If you're worried about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you're responsible for doing something

about it. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you are responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And in this new responsibility society, each of us—each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourselves.

For all Americans, these years in our history will always stand apart. There are quiet times in the life of a nation when little is expected of its leaders. This isn't one of those times. You and I are living in a period when the stakes are high, the challenges are difficult, a time when firm, firm resolve is needed.

None of us will ever forget that week when one era ended and another began. On September the 14th, 2001, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers. I'll never forget that day. There were policemen and firefighters shouting, "Whatever it takes, Mr. President. Whatever it takes." A guy in a hardhat pointed at me and said, "Do not let me down." As we all did that day, these men and women searching through the rubble took it personally. I took it personally. I have a responsibility that goes on. I will never relent in bringing justice to our enemies. I will defend the security of America, whatever it takes.

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

The President. In these times, I've also been witness to the character of this Nation. Not so long ago, some had their doubts about the American character, our capacity to meet a serious challenge or a willingness to serve a cause greater than self-interest. Americans have given their answer. I have seen the unselfish courage of our troops. I have seen the heroism of Americans in the face of danger. I've seen the spirit of service and love and compassion renewed in our country. And we've all seen our Nation unite in common purpose when it mattered most.

We will need all of these qualities for the work ahead. See, we've got work to do. We've got a job. We must win the war on terror, and the world is counting on America to continue to lead the cause of freedom and peace.

We have work to do. We must spread opportunity to every part of the country. We must work together over the next 4 years to

make America a safer place, a stronger place, and a better place for every citizen.

This is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it, and we know that for our great country, the best days lie ahead.

May God bless you all, and may God continue to bless our country. Thank you for coming. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:25 p.m. at Copeland Park. In his remarks, he referred to Dan Kapanke, owner, Lacrosse Loggers baseball team and candidate for Wisconsin State Senate; State Senator Mary Panzer and State Representative John Gard of Wisconsin; country music entertainer Larry Gatlin; Dale W. Schultz, candidate for Congress in Wisconsin's 3d Congressional District; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Proclamation 7781—Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month, 2004

May 7, 2004

*By the President of the United States
of America*

A Proclamation

During Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month, we honor the accomplishments of Asian/Pacific Americans and the many ways they have enriched our society and shaped the character of our Nation through their diverse languages, cultures, and religious beliefs.

Today, Asian/Pacific Americans are leaders in public service, business, government, science, law, education, athletics, the arts, and many other areas. Their love of family, community, and hard work has helped to uphold our Nation for many generations. Asian/Pacific American entrepreneurs are helping to strengthen our economy and our communities through their hard work and ingenuity, and they inspire a new generation of American innovation through their example.

Throughout our history, Asian/Pacific Americans have been patriots, answering the call to defend our Nation and to protect the blessings of liberty and democracy. Today, in the war on terror, Asian/Pacific Americans serve proudly as they carry on our Nation's noble tradition of advancing the cause of

freedom around the world. We are grateful for the sacrifice of our men and women in uniform and those who love and support them as we fight to protect our homeland and make the world safe for democracy.

Today, the more than 13 million Americans of Asian or Pacific Island heritage contribute to the vitality, success, and prosperity of our Nation. To honor the achievements and contributions of Asian/Pacific Americans, the Congress by Public Law 102-450 as amended, has designated the month of May each year as "Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month."

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim May 2004 as Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month. I call upon the people of the United States to reflect upon the history of Asian/Pacific Americans and their many contributions to our Nation.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this seventh day of May, in the year of our Lord two thousand four, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-eighth.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., May 11, 2004]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on May 12. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Proclamation 7782—National Physical Fitness and Sports Month, 2004

May 7, 2004

*By the President of the United States
of America*

A Proclamation

Physical fitness is an integral part of a healthy life and a healthy America. National Physical Fitness and Sports Month provides an opportunity for all Americans to learn more about the benefits of exercise and sports and to make being physically active part of their everyday lives.

Regular physical activity builds strength and aerobic fitness, provides motivation, promotes relaxation, and facilitates sleep for people of all ages and abilities. Regular exercise—in some cases, simply walking for half an hour—can help reduce the risk of many serious health problems, such as heart disease and diabetes. By participating in sports, individuals also learn teamwork, discipline, and how to accept victory and defeat with grace. These important lessons help build good character and teach strong values.

My Administration has recommended a few simple steps to achieve better health and fitness. Our HealthierUS Initiative promotes daily physical activity, healthy diets, and preventative screenings. It also encourages people to avoid tobacco and drugs, and to make responsible choices about alcohol. Across our country, people are making physical activity part of their daily lives by participating in the President's Challenge, a fitness program that helps them track weekly fitness activities and rewards them for reaching defined fitness goals.

As we observe National Physical Fitness and Sports Month, I urge adults and children to participate in regular physical activity. I encourage parents to make family time active, and I call on Americans to help motivate their friends to have an active lifestyle. By exercising regularly and participating in sports, we can improve our health, set a positive example for our children, and help build a stronger future for our country.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim May 2004 as National Physical Fitness and Sports Month. I call upon the people of the United States to recognize the importance of daily physical activity and sports for all our citizens, and to make fitness a part of daily life. I also call on all Americans to celebrate this month with appropriate ceremonies, activities, and programs.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this seventh day of May, in the year of our Lord two thousand four, and of the

Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-eighth.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., May 11, 2004]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on May 12. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Proclamation 7783—Mother’s Day, 2004

May 7, 2004

*By the President of the United States
of America*

A Proclamation

President Theodore Roosevelt once said, “The mother is the one supreme asset of national life; she is more important by far than the successful statesman, or business man, or artist, or scientist.” Today, mothers continue to be an important part of our national character. On Mother’s Day, we honor the women whose steadfast love and wisdom have made America a better place.

During the Civil War, Julia Ward Howe, author of “The Battle Hymn of the Republic,” proposed renaming July 4 as Mother’s Day and a day dedicated to peace. Anna Reeves Jarvis also began working for a similar holiday and sponsored a Mother’s Friendship Day in her hometown to reunite families divided by the war. It was not until 2 years after her mother’s death that her daughter, Anna M. Jarvis, started the campaign for the observance of Mother’s Day in the United States. By 1911, Mother’s Day was observed in nearly every State of the Union, and in 1914, responding to a joint resolution of the Congress, President Woodrow Wilson officially designated Mother’s Day a national observance.

Motherhood is a rewarding and often difficult job. A mother is a child’s first teacher and affects a child’s life like few others can. Effective mothers can inspire their sons and

daughters to love themselves and others, work hard, make healthy choices, serve causes greater than self, and achieve their dreams. Mothers who protect, teach, and nurture their children with all their hearts strengthen their families and help build a better future for our country.

This Mother’s Day, we express our heartfelt thanks to our mothers for their unconditional love and guidance. We take time to recognize the many mothers who are supporting their brave sons and daughters in the Armed Forces, and the many others who are themselves serving proudly in defense of America’s freedom and security. The service and sacrifice of these women reflect the best of our Nation. They and their loved ones are in our thoughts and prayers.

The Congress, by a joint resolution approved May 8, 1914, as amended (38 Stat. 770), has designated the second Sunday in May each year as “Mother’s Day” and has requested the President to call for its appropriate observance. In honor of all of our Nation’s mothers, I am pleased to do so.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim May 9, 2004, as Mother’s Day. I commend mothers for the important contributions they make to our society and encourage all Americans to express their love, gratitude, and respect for mothers, and to honor their mothers on this day and throughout the year.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this seventh day of May, in the year of our Lord two thousand four, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-eighth.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., May 11, 2004]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on May 12. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Proclamation 7784—Peace Officers Memorial Day and Police Week, 2004

May 7, 2004

By the President of the United States
of America

A Proclamation

Law enforcement officers are among America's greatest heroes. Every day, these men and women protect our families, homes, businesses, and communities.

Our dedicated peace officers put themselves at great risk while working tirelessly on the front lines in the fight against crime, violence, and terrorism. According to the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund, last year, 145 law enforcement officers made the ultimate sacrifice and gave their lives in the line of duty, while thousands of others were injured protecting our citizens from harm. On Peace Officers Memorial Day and throughout Police Week, we honor the memory of the fallen and recognize those who devote their lives to enforcing our laws, bringing criminals to justice, and making America safer and better.

Over the past year, many in our law enforcement community have been activated as Reservists or members of the National Guard. We are grateful to these officers and all our military personnel for answering the call to service, for their commitment to duty, and for the sacrifices they are making in defense of freedom.

By a joint resolution approved October 1, 1962, as amended, (76 Stat. 676), the Congress has authorized and requested the President to designate May 15 of each year as "Peace Officers Memorial Day" and the week in which it falls as "Police Week."

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim May 15, 2004, as Peace Officers Memorial Day and May 9 through May 15, 2004, as Police Week. I call on all Americans to observe these events with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this seventh day of May, in the year of our Lord two thousand four, and of the

Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-eighth.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., May 12, 2004]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on May 13. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

The President's Radio Address

May 8, 2004

Good morning. In recent days, America and the world have learned of shocking conduct in Iraqi prisons by a small number of American service men and women. These individuals had been given the responsibility of overseeing Iraqis in American custody and doing so in a decent and humane manner consistent with U.S. law and the Geneva Conventions. Instead we have seen shameful images of prisoners being subjected to abuse and humiliation. Such practices do not reflect our values. They are a stain on our country's honor and reputation.

Shortly after reports of abuse became known to our military, an investigation was launched. Today, several formal investigations, led by senior military officials, are underway. Some soldiers have already been charged with crimes. We will learn all the facts and determine the full extent of these abuses. Those involved will be identified. They will answer for their actions. All prison operations in Iraq will be thoroughly reviewed to make certain that similar disgraceful incidents are never repeated.

What took place in that Iraqi prison was the wrongdoing of a few and does not reflect the character of the more than 200,000 military personnel who have served in Iraq since the beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom. America is a compassionate country that believes in justice and in freedom. Americans believe in the worth and rights and dignity of every person.

Our country has sent troops into Iraq to liberate that country, return sovereignty to the Iraqi people, and make America and the world more secure. In this cause, our troops

perform a thousand acts of kindness, decency, and courage every day. More than 700 Americans have given their lives. The brave and honorable soldiers, sailors, airmen, coast guardsmen, and marines who are serving and sacrificing in Iraq, not the few who have let us down, show the true character of America. The men and women of our military have my complete confidence as they carry on with their mission.

This has been a difficult few weeks. Yet our forces will stay on the offensive, finding and confronting the killers and terrorists who are trying to undermine the progress of democracy in Iraq. To address the violence in Fallujah, our marines are working with Iraqis to conduct operations in and around the city. They are using targeted force to strike former Ba'athists and other militants, surrounding the city to prevent the escape of enemy fighters, and taking every precaution to avoid hurting the innocent.

In the city of Najaf, an illegal militia is attempting to incite violence and seize control. The 1st Armored Division is steadily and systematically defeating these enemy forces while seeking to protect the people and the holy sites of that city. Elements of this militia have been ejected from the Najaf Governor's office, which they had been occupying.

The vast majority of Iraqi people want a free society, and next month they will take another historic step forward when they regain sovereignty. On June 30th, a sovereign Iraqi interim government will assume authority, and Iraqis will take over the functions of their state, from basic services to law enforcement to diplomacy. On that day, the Coalition Provisional Authority will cease to exist, and relations with a new Iraqi Government will be conducted through our new embassy.

Our mission in Iraq will continue on July 1st and beyond. We have no intention of leaving that nation at the mercy of thugs and murderers. We're determined to help build a free and stable Iraq, a nation at peace with its neighbors and with the world.

Our Nation is grateful to the men and women of our military and to their families who face hardship and long separation. Our people in uniform are the best of America.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:24 a.m. on May 7 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on May 8. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 7 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks at a Ceremony Honoring the Millennium Challenge Account Nations

May 10, 2004

Thank you all for coming. Please be seated. Welcome. Thanks for coming to the White House.

Two years ago, I announced a new and hopeful approach in America's aid to developing nations. Under this approach, America has pledged to increase development assistance by 50 percent over 3 years. To make sure that governments make the right choices for their people, we link new aid to clear standards of economic, political, and social reform. We invited governments in developing nations to meet those standards so that they may truly serve their people.

America formed the Millennium Challenge Corporation to oversee this new program. Last week, the first group of Millennium Challenge Account nations was selected. I congratulate representatives with us today from Armenia, Benin, Bolivia, Cape Verde, Georgia, Ghana, Honduras, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mali, Mongolia, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Senegal, Sri Lanka, and Vanuatu. You have chosen the path of reform, and your people and your nations are better off as a result of the decisions your governments have made.

I want to thank the Secretary of State for leading this effort. He is the chairman of the board of the new Corporation. I appreciate other board members who are with us: Secretary John Snow, the Secretary of the Treasury; Ambassador Bob Zoellick, the United States Trade Representative; Andrew Natsios, the Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development; and Paul Applegarth, who is the CEO of the Millennium Challenge Corporation.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for taking on this important assignment.

I want to welcome the ambassadors and representatives from the 16 Millennium Challenge Account nations. We are glad you're here. Congratulations.

I want to thank the Members of Congress who are here. Two members have come today, one from the Senate and one from the House, who have been very instrumental in making sure the Millennium Challenge Account passed through both bodies. First, Senator Dick Lugar, who is the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Mr. Chairman, Senator Lugar is a clear visionary when it comes to U.S. aid. I appreciate you being here, Senator. Thank you for coming—as well as Congressman Tom Lantos, the ranking member. I see you brought Annette with you. Thank you for doing so. We're proud you both are here. Congressman Lantos, do me a favor. When you see Jim Kolbe, who is not with us today, thank him for working so hard to make sure that the House appropriations process honored our request for the Millennium Challenge Account. But at any rate, I'm glad you're here. You guys are great leaders for—to help America spread our vision of freedom and peace and decency for every human being.

In many nations, poverty remains chronic and desperate. Half the world's people still live on less than \$2 a day. This divide between wealth and poverty, between opportunity and misery, is far more than a challenge to our compassion. Persistent poverty and oppression can spread despair across an entire nation, and they can turn nations of great potential into the recruiting grounds of terrorists. The powerful combination of trade and open markets and good government is history's proven method to defeat poverty on a large scale, to vastly improve health and education, to build a modern infrastructure while safeguarding the environment, and to spread the habits of liberty and enterprise.

The Millennium Challenge Account encourages all nations to embrace political and economic reform. The United States has pledged to increase its core development assistance by half, adding \$5 billion annually by 2006. To be eligible for this new money, nations must root out corruption, respect

human rights, and adhere to the rule of law. They must invest in their people by improving their health care systems and their schools. They must unleash the energy and creativity necessary for economic growth by opening up their markets, removing barriers to entrepreneurship, and reducing excessive bureaucracy and regulation.

The 16 nations represented here today have done all this and more. Each has worked hard to be here today, and their efforts are already yielding results. For example, Madagascar is aggressively fighting corruption. The Ministry of Justice has suspended a dozen magistrates on suspicion of corrupt activity. The Government is also implementing an ambitious program of judicial reform. Senegal, Africa's longest standing democracy, has also enacted new anticorruption laws, and is implementing new measures to fight money-laundering. Honduras has made the improvement of education and health services a top priority. Its immunization rate of 96 percent is among the highest of all eligible countries.

The new Government of Georgia has doubled its investment in health care and raised teacher salaries by two-thirds. Mozambique has curbed Government spending and lowered tariffs. These and other reforms have resulted in double-digit growth rates over the last decade. Since launching its program of economic reform in 2002, Sri Lanka has reduced its budget deficit by a third and cut inflation by half. Other nations represented here can point with pride to similar examples of progress.

Yet funding is not guaranteed for any selected country. To be awarded a grant, nations must develop proposals explaining how they will further address the needs of their people and increase economic growth, proposals that set clear goals and measurable benchmarks.

The countries selected today represent a small fraction of those struggling to emerge from poverty and establish reform. I urge all nations of the world to follow the progressive standards of governing justly, investing in people, and encouraging economic freedom.

Reform can bring more aid from America, and it will also bring more investment and more trade, lessening the need for aid over

time. Reform will be repaid many times over in the relief of poverty and rising national wealth and stability for their countries.

The 16 chosen in this round are showing the way, are showing what is possible, are serving as a bright light in the developing world. You have taken the first courageous steps toward greater independence and greater wealth and greater hopes for the people you serve.

I want to thank you all for being here. I congratulate you on your work. And may God bless your countries and the people in the countries. Thank you for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:35 a.m. in the East Room at the White House.

Remarks Following a Meeting With the National Security Team and Military Leaders in Arlington, Virginia

May 10, 2004

Mr. Secretary, thank you for your hospitality, and thank you for your leadership. You are courageously leading our Nation in the war against terror. You're doing a superb job. You are a strong Secretary of Defense, and our Nation owes you a debt of gratitude.

I've just completed a meeting here at the Pentagon with members of my national security team as well as a meeting with generals on the ground in Iraq. We discussed the needs of our military personnel, the status of current operations in Iraq, and the progress of that nation towards security and sovereignty.

The United States has a vital national interest in the success of free institutions in Iraq as the alternative to tyranny and terrorist violence in the Middle East. As we carry out this mission, we are confronting problems squarely, and we are making changes as needed.

Our priorities, however, remain the same, the protection of our country, the security of our troops, and the spread of freedom throughout the world. Like other generations of Americans, we have accepted a difficult and historic task.

We have made clear commitments before the world, and America will keep those commitments. First, we will take every necessary measure to assure the safety of American and coalition personnel and the security of Iraqi citizens. We're on the offensive against the killers and terrorists in that country, and we will stay on the offensive. In and around Fallujah, U.S. marines are maintaining pressure on Saddam loyalists and foreign fighters and other militants. We're keeping that pressure on to ensure that Fallujah ceases to be an enemy sanctuary. In northern sectors of the city, elements of the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force are prepared to strike at terrorist fighters and prevent a resurgence of violence and chaos. South of the city, the marines are disrupting enemy attacks on our supply routes and routing out anticoalition fighters.

In the towns of Ramadi and Husabayah and Karmah, marines are on the offensive, conducting hundreds of patrols and raids every day. The enemy in Fallujah is hiding behind an innocent civilian population and calculating that our coalition's use of force will alienate ordinary Iraqis. Yet, every day our troops are responding with precision and discipline and restraint. We're taking every precaution to avoid hurting the innocent as we deliver justice to the guilty.

We're helping to build Iraqi forces that can take responsibility for security, and our forces are also helping to ensure the delivery of humanitarian supplies to families that suffer as a result of the chaos in certain communities created by the terrorists and those who want to halt the advance of freedom. In Najaf, a major Shi'a population center and a holy site, our military is systematically dismantling an illegal militia that has attempted to incite violence and seize control. Soldiers from the 2nd Light Cavalry Regiment are conducting reconnaissance to learn the precise strength and location of enemy forces. The 1st Armored Division is steadily defeating these enemy forces while seeking to protect the people and holy sites of that city.

Elements of this militia have been ejected from the Najaf Governor's office, and a legitimate Governor has been appointed. The people of Najaf and Shi'a leaders oppose the

occupation by this illegal militia and are putting pressure on the militia to withdraw. We're encouraged to see more Iraqis take responsibility for resolving the standoff in Najaf.

In all these ongoing operations, our troops continue to face serious danger, and this Government is giving them every means of protecting themselves and every means necessary to gain victory. We're fielding the most technologically advanced military forces ever assembled, forces that are agile and flexible, able to strike in darkness and in light.

Supplying and protecting our forces in Iraq is a long-term responsibility, so I've asked Congress to provide an additional \$25 billion for a contingency reserve fund that can be used for ongoing operations in Iraq. I have pledged, as has the Secretary of Defense, to give our troops everything that is necessary to complete their mission with the utmost safety, and I urge Congress to join me in fulfilling this important commitment.

Our military, from this building to the streets of Fallujah, is performing with exceptional skill and courage. They and their families are making tremendous sacrifices for the security of our Nation and for the freedom of others. And all the hardships and sacrifices are not behind us. Our Nation is caring for the wounded and grieving for the lost, praying for families who live in sorrow. We will always remember the ones who have died, and we will honor their sacrifice by completing the mission.

Our second great commitment in Iraq is to transfer sovereignty to an Iraqi Government as quickly as possible. Decades of oppression destroyed every free institution in Iraq but not the desire to live in freedom. Like any proud country, the Iraqi people want their independence. The Iraqi people need to know that our coalition is fully committed to their independence, and we're fully committed to their national dignity. This is a reason the June 30th transfer of sovereignty is vital. The Iraqi people and men and women across the Middle East are watching closely, and they will see America keep its word.

The United Nations special envoy, Mr. Brahimi, is now back in Iraq, consulting with diverse groups of Iraqis. In the next few

weeks, important decisions will be made on the makeup of the interim government. As of June 30th, Iraq's interim government will assume duties now performed by the coalition such as providing water and electricity and health care and education. A key strategic goal of our coalition is to help build a new Iraqi army and civil defense corps and police force and facilities protection service and a border guard capable of defending and securing the country.

Major General Dave Petraeus, who commanded the 101st Airborne in Iraq, has returned to oversee the training and equipping of these all-Iraqi forces. Once constituted, they will protect a free Iraq from external aggression and internal subversion. Yet, the vital mission of our military in helping to provide security will continue on July 1st and beyond. Having brought freedom to Iraq, America will make sure that freedom succeeds in Iraq, a nation we will be proud to call a friend and partner in the pursuit of peace.

Third, because America is committed to the equality and dignity of all people, there will be a full accounting for the cruel and disgraceful abuse of Iraqi detainees. The conduct that has come to light is an insult to the Iraqi people and an affront to the most basic standards of morality and decency. One basic difference between democracies and dictatorships is that free countries confront such abuses openly and directly.

In January, shortly after reports of abuse became known to our military, an investigation was launched. Today, several formal investigations led by senior military officials are underway. Secretary Rumsfeld has appointed several former senior officials to review the investigations of these abuses. Some soldiers have already been charged, and those involved will answer for their conduct in an orderly and transparent process. We will honor rule of law. All prison operations in Iraq will be thoroughly reviewed to make certain that such offenses are not repeated.

Those responsible for these abuses have caused harm that goes well beyond the walls of a prison. It has given some an excuse to question our cause and to cast doubt on our

motives. Yet, who can doubt that Iraq is better for being free from one of the most bloodiest tyrants the world has ever known? Millions of Iraqis are grateful for the chance they have been given to live in freedom, a chance made possible by the courage and sacrifice of the United States military.

We have great respect for the people of Iraq and for all Arab peoples, respect for their culture and for their history and for the contribution they can make to the world. We believe that democracy will allow these gifts to flourish, that freedom is the answer to hopelessness and terror, that a free Iraq will lead the way to a new and better Middle East, and that a free Iraq will make our country more secure.

I understand the difficulty of the mission of our men and women in uniform. They're facing an enemy in sand and heat and blasting winds, often unable to tell friend from foe. I know how painful it is to see a small number dishonor the honorable cause in which so many are sacrificing. What took place in the Iraqi prison does not reflect the character of the more than 200,000 military personnel who have served in Iraq since the beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

All Americans know the goodness and the character of the United States Armed Forces. No military in the history of the world has fought so hard and so often for the freedom of others. Today, our soldiers and sailors and airmen and marines are keeping terrorists across the world on the run. They're helping the people of Afghanistan and Iraq build democratic societies. They're defending America with unselfish courage. And these achievements have brought pride and credit to this Nation.

I want our men and women in uniform to know that America is proud of you and that I'm honored to be your Commander in Chief.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:55 a.m. at the Pentagon. In his remarks, he referred to former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; Adnan al-Zurufi, Governor of the Najaf province in Iraq; and Lakhdar Brahimi, Special Adviser to the U.N. Secretary-General.

Interview With American Forces Radio and Television Service

May 10, 2004

Pentagon Meeting

Q. Thanks for doing this, sir. Let's start with why you're at the Pentagon. You just met with your national security team and some top military officials, and you talked about the progress we've made in Iraq. Can you outline that for me, please?

The President. Sure. First, we got rid of Saddam Hussein. That in itself was tremendous progress for the people of Iraq. He was a tyrant. We discovered mass graves, torture rooms. I mean, this is a fellow who, you know, if you didn't agree with him politically, your life was in jeopardy. And as a result of getting rid of Saddam Hussein, the people of Iraq now have a chance to live in freedom.

Secondly, we have been on the offense against foreign fighters and former Saddam loyalists and the illegal militias that really are doing everything they can to stop freedom. These people can't stand the thought of a free society. A free society will be a defeat to their ideologies or way of thinking or their desires. And our military has performed brilliantly, and I got a briefing on the progress being made around parts of Iraq.

Thirdly, we're making progress in heading toward a transfer date of sovereignty. What that means is that at some point in time—not "some point"—on June 30th, a new Government will be stood up and they will be, then, responsible for making decisions that will benefit the Iraqi people. Of course, we will stay to help make sure the security situation will then be such that then they'll be able to have free elections.

One of the things we got briefed on today from General Abizaid and General Petraeus is that we are continuing to work with the Iraqis to develop a security—Iraqi security force, different elements of a security force, to fight off these terrorists and criminals, for that matter, and people coming into the country illegally—or people trying to blow up infrastructure. And that's been steady. Progress is steady. You've just got to understand, these people have come from a world in which a tyrant really ruled their life. And

so they're beginning to develop the habits and the confidence that free people will have.

What's very important—there's two things that are important: One, our troops have got to know we're doing the right thing, and by sacrificing the way they are in Iraq, they're really making this country more secure and free; and secondly, the Iraqi people must know that I will not back off in the face of these terrorist attacks. I will remain steadfast and strong in the mission, because it's the right thing to do.

President's Reaction to Prisoner Abuse

Q. Let's talk about that mission for just a second. Some things have started to overshadow our mission there, some of the real disturbing photos that we've seen. How do we set that aside and continue what we need to do?

The President. Well, I think there will be a focus here in America on pictures and, you know, what you've seen. And the way you handle that is you just tell the truth, which stands in stark contrast to societies run by tyrants. Look, the world will see that the American people are disgusted by the behavior of a very few people. The troops need to hear from me that I understand that those over there in the Iraqi theater are good, decent, honorable citizens who are not only fighting the bad guys but are making life better for the innocent people of Iraq. And there's thousands of acts of kindness that take place every day, and I know it.

The world will also see that we handled the situation in a way that is open and transparent. In other words, people will be able to see the process and that justice will be done. It is very essential that as we—that as justice is done, that we honor the presumption of innocence and the rule of law. There are certain standards of law that free societies adhere to, but we will get to the bottom of this.

In the meantime, as I mentioned today to some people here in the Pentagon, we stay focused on the mission. We must not be diverted. We will find the truth. We'll make sure the truth comes out, and we'll make sure the system works well. But we must not lose our focus. And I told that to General Abizaid as well. We must stay—we must stay totally

focused on what's taking place in Iraq, because a free Iraq is in this Nation's long-term interest.

See, free societies are peaceful societies. And we're in a part of the world right now where there hasn't been much freedom, and as a result, people lose a sense of hope, and they become violent, and they fall prey to false ideologies that then encourage killing of innocent life. And the long-term security of this Nation depends on our ability to stay focused on the mission in Iraq, because a free Iraq will be a major change agent in the Middle East.

Q. Sir, you touched on it a little bit. You and I both know that that's a small part of the military, a very small part, and the rest of us aren't representative of that.

The President. Right.

Q. You're our Commander in Chief. Now is your opportunity to talk to the rest of us. What would you like to say to the rest of us regarding—

The President. Sergeant Lehman, I'll tell you, the actions of a few will not be allowed to stain the honor of the mighty United States military. Not only do I know how hard our troops are fighting in Iraq and how brave our troops are; I also know how decent and compassionate our troops are. I hear stories all the time of people working with orphans or people helping schools be formed or people working to provide medical care for people.

I mean, people in Iraq who have interface with our troops, the innocent Iraqis who have, know how decent and compassionate these folks are. We've sent the finest from our country overseas, and I want our troops to know that. And the American people know that; that's what's important. Our troops need to know the American people stand squarely behind them.

Military Appreciation Month

Q. May is Military Appreciation Month. What can the United States and its citizens do to help show our troops their appreciation?

The President. Make sure your pay is good, make sure that the base housing works well, make sure that when a troop gets wounded overseas that they get the best care

at Walter Reed or Bethesda in a quick period of time, make sure you get the best equipment possible, make sure that there's a firm financial commitment behind the men and women who wear our uniform as well as to thank a member or the military.

In my State of the Union, I read a letter from a little girl that I thought was a very touching letter, where she was writing about the need to thank somebody in uniform. Well, that's what Americans can do. I'm telling you, I've been out there. I get out of Washington, and I see the people, and I hear the—in every speech I give I praise the United States military—speeches I've been giving recently, like last week, I praised the United States military for courage and strength and sacrifice. And the response is overwhelming. The American people believe in our military personnel, and our troops need to know that.

President's Visits With Wounded Troops

Q. When you've gotten out, you've had a chance to visit some of our forward-deployed troops. You've been to Walter Reed—

The President. Right.

Q. —and you've visited some of those who have come back. What strikes you about the military members that you talk to?

The President. I think that—a couple of things. One, the wounded want to get back in their unit, which is remarkable to hear. You walk in, a fellow has been—I remember going to Fort Hood over Easter. And Laura and I went in a fellow's room, and they had been in a fight in Sadr City. And he said, "Look, I just want to get out of here and get back to my unit." I meet people who understand the mission and who believe that what we're doing is the right thing, because they see on the ground the realities on the ground, and they see progress that is being made. Sure, there's a lot of tough fighting, but in parts of the country, a civil society is beginning to grow and develop.

I had—one of the most poignant meetings came with a young guy I met who had lost his leg in Afghanistan, and I went in there—part of my mission is to tell him, we care for you a lot, and just let him know that the Commander in Chief appreciates their sacrifice. And he lost his leg, and I told him,

I said, "When you get out of here, you're going to get the best prosthesis possible, and then you're going to come to the White House and run with me." The guy had kind of a glazed look, you know, "Sure, another political promise that won't be met."

And sure enough, he got rehab. I kept checking on him through a colonel I knew who was in charge of physical therapy at Walter Reed, and she one day came in and said, "Well, Mr. President, he's ready to run." I said, "I'm not so sure I am. I hurt my knee." [Laughter] Anyway, we go over to the South Lawn of the White House, and he came up from Louisiana, and it was a touching moment for me. It just—it reminded me of how courageous our people are. This kid came out of the bed rehabbed, and he was running with the President—outran me too, I want to tell you.

Families of the Military

Q. That was my next question. [Laughter] It's hard to talk about the sacrifices of military members without talking about their families as well. What would you like to say about that?

The President. Well, obviously the first families that I want to talk about are those who have lost a loved one. I think it's very important for them to know the United States Government, along with our military, will complete the mission. In other words, I've assured people that they will not have died in vain. And the mission is a free Iraq. A free Iraq is in our Nation's interest because it will help us become more secure. But a free Iraq will also be a part of an historic opportunity to change the world to be more peaceful.

Secondly, I know there's a lot of loved ones who are, obviously, worried. And my message to them is, we're making sure they get everything they need, and that the—we spent time today talking about troop protection. These generals understand the need for troop protection. These are capable guys that are smart, that know what they're doing, and they care as much as anybody cares to make sure our troops have the best and that they're well protected.

Third, my message to the families is, is that there's a lot of people praying for you and

for your loved ones. And I hope it sustains them during these lonely moments, to be held up in prayer by fellow citizens. There's a lot of prayer warriors across America who pray daily for the safety of the troops and for the peace of mind for the families.

Q. Do you think that families understand the mission just as much as the military members?

The President. I do—I do. I think they hear from their loved ones. The first mission is to make sure that we never forget the lessons of September the 11th. We're at war. I think most family members understand we're at war. Family members understand their loved one volunteered for the mission. Not one person in combat today that didn't say, "I want to defend my country, voluntarily. I'll go into the theater. If sent, I'll go." And family members understand that.

There's obviously—look, there's apprehension and nervousness. And one of the things that we must do is make, as best as possible, certain the tours of duty so there's not anxiety amongst family members. However, when General Abizaid says he needs to slow down the rotation in order for there to be more troops on the ground, he'll get that from me and from the Secretary of Defense because we support our generals on the ground, which means we support our troops on the ground, so they can have what is necessary to win this—win this war. And we're going to win it, see? That's what people have got to understand. It's tough at times, but we're winning. And what matters is determination and will and steadfast leadership from the United States.

And you know, the Iraqis are sitting there watching this election process of ours. It's an important process, obviously. Democracy is essential, in my judgment, for a peaceful world, and we're the leading democracy on the face of the Earth.

But as they watch this, they're wondering whether or not I've got what it takes to stand up to the political pressures and do what I think is right, which is follow through with our strategy to win this war and make sure they're free. They've got to hear this, and our troops must hear this. I don't care what the politics are like in America. We're doing the right thing, and we will—we will finish

the task, because I understand how important the task is for the future of this country.

Changing Situation in Iraq

Q. We've talked about the progress toward that task, and things have changed a little bit because they've been making progress on their own, politically, and some of the volatility that has surfaced. How has our mission changed toward that task recently?

The President. Remember, things have changed on the ground too, because we're bringing people to justice. I mean, our troops are successful. They're running raids in different cities when they find people showing up who wants to—who want to stop progress. The people in the military watching this need to know that we're on the offense. And one of the reasons why things have quieted down recently is there's fewer of them to make noise, fewer of the enemy to make noise.

But what is changing is the fact that we're heading toward a moment of transfer of sovereignty. And the Iraqis are going to have to then be responsible, at some point in time, and the transfer of sovereignty is that point in time—that they are going to have to say, "Now is the time to clean up this mess, and oh, by the way, we'd like some help." And up to now, it's been a—they've been very dependent on us. But that is beginning to change. And that's what you're beginning to see, change on the ground. That's why General Petraeus' mission is so important, to be able to provide training for these troops and to make sure there's a command structure so that Iraqi citizens are responding to Iraqi commands and needs.

And we'll have a role, don't get me wrong. I mean, we will be there after the transfer of sovereignty, because there's still going to be need for us to help protect—protect infrastructure, protect these killers [sic]. The other thing that—this is an enemy that is resourceful, and they're coldblooded. They don't care who they kill. We do. We care a lot about human life, but they don't. And they will destroy women and children in order to create fear. And the presence of our great military will help alleviate any fear that they may try to cause.

Terrorist Attacks

Q. We still hear about terrorist attacks, not only there but other parts of the world. What message do you have for the people who are perhaps still afraid of terrorist attacks?

The President. We're vulnerable, because, again, we're facing an enemy that doesn't mind walking into a subway in Madrid and putting bombs on trains where innocent commuters are sitting. And therefore, so long as they're out there, we're vulnerable. We have to be correct 100 percent of time in protecting America, and they've got to be right one time about hurting us. And so the citizens need to know we're doing everything we can to better share intelligence and safeguard our ports and borders and make sure people take their shoes off when they get on the airplanes and everything we can to secure the country.

But they also need to know, at least in my judgment, the best way to protect the homeland is to stay on the offense, give our military every tool we need, give our intelligence service the tools necessary to find these people and to get them and to stay after them and not relent and not yield. There's pressures in the world of people—the natural tendency for people is to say, "Oh, let's lay down our arms."

But you can't negotiate with these people. There are no negotiations that are to be had. Therapy won't work. The only way to deal with them is to stay on the offense, and that's precisely what the Government will do so long as I am the Commander in Chief, because our most solemn duty and the solemn duty of people who wear the uniform of the United States is to protect the American people from harm. And I can't tell you how much I appreciate the sacrifice of those who are willing to do so.

President's Thanks to the Troops

Q. Please, just, sir, one final word for the military members that you're talking to out there.

The President. My final word is, I'm proud of our United States military, and it is a high honor to be the Commander in Chief of such a fine group of men and women.

Q. Thanks so much for joining us, sir.

The President. You bet.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 12:10 p.m. at the Pentagon for later broadcast. In his remarks, the President referred to former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; Gen. John P. Abizaid, USA, combatant commander, U.S. Central Command; Maj. Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, incoming chief, Office of Security Transition-Iraq. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Remarks Honoring the 2004 Super Bowl Champion New England Patriots

May 10, 2004

The President. Thank you all for coming. Please be seated. Welcome back. The mighty New England Pats have returned, just like he told me they would. It's such an honor to welcome the team back here. I'm especially glad to see Tom Brady. I'm trying to figure out what it's like to be around a real celebrity. [Laughter]

Bob Kraft is a owner who knows how to win. And congratulations on winning the Super Bowl. What I appreciate is the fact that in the contracts you sign with the players that you include a commitment to participate in at least 10 public service events each year. I appreciate the commitment. I also appreciate the players' commitment as well.

You've got a great head coach, obviously. You can't win Super Bowls 66 percent of the time in a 3-year period unless you've got a great coach. Congratulations.

I want to congratulate all the players who are here. For those of you who weren't here 2 years ago, this is a pretty cool place to come. I want to congratulate the people who work to make a team go well, the trainers and the person—the equipment personnel, the people who never get the—who never get heralded. I understand it's—the players, obviously, are the ones that make it happen, but there are a lot of people behind the scenes that have worked long and hard to support these guys. And I want to congratulate you as well.

I appreciate Sununu, the Senator from New Hampshire. He's a huge fan of the team, as is Ed Markey and Jim McGovern,

people from the mighty Massachusetts delegation. We're proud you're here. Thanks for coming. Andy Card, the Chief of Staff here at the White House, is a longtime Patriots fan. He's constantly reminding me how great the Pats are, on a Sunday by Sunday basis. And Andrew Natsios as well is a Pats fan. Obviously, we've got quite a few here. If the Rose Garden were bigger, there would be a lot more people here, I assume. Welcome. I'm glad you're here.

The thing—a couple of things impressed me. One, you never lost a home game. That's really good marketing. [Laughter] That's a smart way to do it, to fill up your stadium and have your fans go home happy every game. I watched some of your games. I appreciate the dramatic comebacks that you were capable of making. I like it when a kicker ends up winning the game. You like it when the kicker ends up winning the game. I know Adam is with us today. I am really impressed at how cool you are under fire, and how—like, I need a few suggestions before a press conference, if you don't mind.

I also appreciate so very much the coach. I don't know what it's like in the locker room, but I remember when you were here last year—or 2 years ago—and you said you were going to say a few words and you said like four words. [Laughter]

Coach Belichick. I got carried away.

The President. Yes, right. You got carried away. [Laughter]

Here's what I like about this team: They had a thousand hours of volunteer service to communities in Massachusetts and New England. That's a lot of hours for people who are spending a lot time practicing and reading playbooks. That is an unbelievably important example for champions to set for others. I know you supported the Boys and Girls Club and the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, the Massachusetts 9/11 Fund, the R.O.S.E. Fund to end domestic violence. I really want to thank you for that. Listen, it's one thing to be a champ on the field, and obviously, that's what every player strives for. But to be able to be a complete person like you have been is really important, and you set such a good example of what it means to serve something greater than yourself.

I know there's a lot of fans that come to your game. You also know there are fans that are rooting for you who wear the uniform of the United States military—a lot of Pats fans out there who are scattered around the world, doing everything they can to defend us and to protect us. They are cheering in places like Afghanistan and in Iraq and in other countries. It is—I can't tell you how important it is for them to see the action from home, to see the great players performing on the field of play. It's also important for them to know that our players care for them a lot, that they understand that we're grateful for their service and grateful to their families as well for the sacrifices they're making.

We have got some unbelievable troops, fantastic men and women who understand that they're serving something important, and that is security for our country and peace and freedom around the world. And the fact that players are willing to serve their communities reinforces that service of our troops.

So thanks for what you do. Congratulations for getting back here to the Rose Garden. My hope, of course, is that I'm back here again to see you next year. [Laughter] Your hope is that you come back.

Welcome back. Congratulations.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:32 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Tom Brady, quarterback, Robert Kraft, chairman and owner, Bill Belichick, head coach, and Adam Vinatieri, kicker, New England Patriots.

Remarks at Butterfield Junior High School in Van Buren, Arkansas

May 11, 2004

Thank you all very much. Thanks for coming. I appreciate it. Go ahead and be seated. Thanks for coming. Todd, thanks for having us. [Laughter] That story he told reminds me of the time when I had just got elected Governor of Texas, and a friend of mine said, "Why don't you call old Bascom Bentley on the phone?" He's an east Texas guy, and he said, "Why don't you call Bascom Bentley on the phone and just wish him the best." So I picked up the phone and dialed old Judge Bentley. He's one of these east Texas

judges. You probably know the kind I'm talking about here in Arkansas. [Laughter] I said, "Judge, this is George W. Bush calling." He said, "Come on, Cliff, quit pulling my leg." [Laughter]

So, Todd, I understand how those phone calls can go. [Laughter] But we are serious about coming here because Butterfield Junior High is a place of academic achievement. That's why I'm here. It's a place—I'm here to congratulate this school and to hold you up as an example to the country. You're raising the bar. You see, this is a school that expects the best for every student. You're reaching for high standards, and more importantly, you're making progress toward meeting those standards. You're doing your job.

I know the school year ends on May 27th. And I bet some of the students are kind of looking forward to that date. [Laughter] As a matter of fact, I remember the feeling, myself, but summer vacation has got to feel better for you after a year of accomplishment. And this past year, students at Butterfield have accomplished a lot.

Not only am I here to hold up the school and talk about setting high standards and making sure people achieve those standards, I'm here also to thank the teachers and the staff members and the parents, who believe in the potential of every young person and are willing to work hard to make sure every young person achieves that potential.

Not only do we want to thank Todd for being a principal; it turns out that really good schools have got really good principals, people that are smart and capable and who believe the best. But really good principals also have got hard-working staffs, and I know how hard it is to welcome a President. I mean just take a look at those light fixtures—I don't—I'm not sure if that's a permanent part—[laughter]—of the gymnasium. But for all those who put on this event and put up with my entourage, I thank you for letting me come by.

I appreciate your Governor showing up. He's a good friend of mine. He's an excellent person—Mike Huckabee is with us today, in case you don't recognize him. [Laughter] I'm proud of Mike. He said, "Look, I'm going to set an example by taking care of my own body before I ask others to do the same."

He's exercising, and he's eating smart, and his health is a lot better for it.

I appreciate Lieutenant Governor Win Rockefeller joining us as well. Thank you, Governor.

I'm proud to be able to work with a really fine Member of Congress from this district, in John Boozman. Where are you, John? Yes, thank you. Yes, there he is. I know Cathy and Kristen and Lauren are here as well, his wife, Cathy, and two daughters. I'm glad you all are here. The only problem I've got with Boozman is he keeps talking about the Arkansas-Texas game. [Laughter] I know it. I shouldn't have brought it up. [Laughter]

I appreciate Dr. Merle Dickerson, who is the superintendent of the Van Buren School District. Merle, thank you for your hospitality. Thank you for your leadership. I appreciate so very much—I know the importance of a good school superintendent. See, when it came time to name the Secretary of Education, I picked a superintendent in Rod Paige. He was the superintendent of the Houston Independent School District. I saw him in action in implementing policies that raise standards and encourage the best for every student. So I know the importance of a good superintendent, and I appreciate you, Merle.

Ray Simon is with us today. Where are you, Ray? Oh, there you go—blending in nicely. Ray is the Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education. He's the former director of the Arkansas Department of Education. He works for Rod Paige. In other words, what I'm telling you is we pick good people to staff the Federal offices, people who understand the principles of the No Child Left Behind Act, which I'm about to describe to you.

I appreciate Ken James, the director of the Arkansas Department of Education. Thank you for coming, Ken.

Mayor John Riggs is with us. Where are you, Mr. Mayor? Mr. Mayor, I'm glad you're here. People give me advice all the time, so sometimes I like to give people advice. And Mr. Mayor, my only advice to you is, fill the potholes. [Laughter]

I want to thank the Junior High Trailblazers for hosting me today. I appreciate the students letting us come on your campus. I

hope you don't mind having the classes cancelled for a while today. [Laughter]

I also met Alyse Eady today. Where are you, Alyse? There she is. Alyse, thanks for coming. Let me tell you about Alyse. She's a sophomore at Southside High, and she is a tutor at the Boys and Girls Club. The reason I bring up Alyse is because I want to remind everybody here what the strength of this country is.

Now, a lot of people talk about the military being the strength of this country, and I see we've got some fine troops here. Thanks for coming. And the military is an important part of our strength. As a matter of fact, we're counting on the military in theaters overseas to make us more secure. We're counting on brave men and women to help spread freedom in parts of the world that desperately need freedom. We're counting on our military to make America more secure by spreading peace.

And that's what you're seeing right now. On your TV screens, you're seeing tough work, because there are people who can't stand the thought of free societies springing up in the middle—in the midst of hatred and violence in the Middle East. But our troops are making sacrifices for our short-term and long-term security. A peaceful Iraq, a free Iraq, which is going to happen, will make America more secure.

Part of our strength is the military. I intend to keep the military strong. Our men and women are going to have what it needs to keep the peace. Part of a strong America is a prosperous America. That's part of our strength. It's not the strength. It's part of the reason we're strong, and we'll keep our prosperity strong. But the real strength of America is in the hearts and souls of our citizens, and that's important for our country to understand.

No, the true strength of this country happens when people hear the universal call to love a neighbor just like they'd like to be loved themselves. And here is a tenth grader in high school who's heard that call, has taken time out of her life to mentor and tutor children who may not have as much love in their life as she has had because of her mom and dad, Lewis and Lady.

My call to the citizens of this country, whether they be in Fort Smith, Arkansas, or Van Buren, Arkansas, or anywhere else in the country, is to take time out of your life and follow your heart and help somebody who hurts, feed the hungry, provide shelter for the homeless, surround somebody with love who wonders whether or not their future is bright. No, the strength of this country, as witnessed by this young soldier in the army of compassion, is the heart and soul of the American people.

And another part of the strength of America is the fact we've got a lot of teachers who care deeply about the students. The students—it's probably going to take the students a little while to appreciate the teachers. [Laughter] But I think when you look back, you're going to find out these people are some of the most important people you'll ever have in your life. And I'm not saying that just because I married a teacher. [Laughter] By the way, Laura is doing fabulous. She's a—[applause].

The teachers here need to know that our Nation appreciates every man and woman who devotes a lifetime to building knowledge and character of the young people of this country. Teaching is one of the great callings, one of the most noble professions, and America deeply appreciates the service of America's teachers. For those of you who are a teacher at this school, thank you for what you do.

I'm here today to talk about making sure our schools work. A little over 2 years ago, I signed into law an historic, bipartisan act of Congress called the No Child Left Behind Act. And the theory of this law was straightforward, and here's what it said. It said the Federal Government is spending more money on education, but for the first time, we're asking for results. That's a change. In the past, we used to send checks from Washington. And by the way, Washington should not be primary funder of schools in America. That's up to the States and the local people.

But we had targeted money, particularly for poorer students. And we helped to send the checks, and we just hoped something good happened. That was the old way, "Here's your money, and maybe something positive will happen." Now we're sending the

checks, and we're asking the question, "Are the children learning to read and write and add and subtract?" That's not that tough a question, is it? It seems like it makes sense for taxpayers' money—in return for taxpayers' money, to determine whether or not we're meeting some basic goals. If you don't ask the question, you never find out the answer. If you don't say, "We're sending you more money. Now please show us whether or not a child can read." If you don't ask, you'll never know until it's too late—until it's too late.

As well we better figure out who needs help early, before it's too late. I mean, one of the reasons you ask the question, "Can you read or write and add and subtract," is you want to diagnose early. You can't solve a problem unless you diagnose it. The importance of the No Child Left Behind Act is to find out who needs help.

And so we've left behind an old attitude. See, I think some schools—there was this attitude that certain students can't learn. And so this—"Might as well shuffle them on from grade to grade." It's easy to shuffle the so-called—what they call hard-to-educate students through the system. It's easy to quit on families who might live in inner-cities or rural areas. It's easy to quit on kids whose parents don't speak English as a first language. It's easy, but it is not fair. And that's not how we do things in the United States of America.

I believe every child can learn. That's what I believe, and so do the people here at this school. So we've raised the standards for every public school. We're challenging what I call the soft bigotry of low expectations. We're—we require testing in the basics and holding schools accountable for results. An accountability system is how you determine whether or not what you're doing in the classrooms is working.

Under the new law, when children are falling behind, the schools that need the most attention get extra help, extra money so the children can catch up. Let me repeat what I just said. Under the new law, when we discover that children are falling behind, that are not meeting standards, those schools get extra help, extra money to make sure that people are brought up to the standards.

Schools will have time to improve. They will be able to use the accountability system to determine if they have the right curricula. Sometimes schools use the wrong curriculum. Sometimes they think this kind of reading program works, when, in fact, it doesn't. And they must have time to adjust, but at some point, there has to be an end to mediocrity.

The attitude in this bill says no child should be trapped in a school that does not teach and will not change. In other words, there is time to change. There is time to change, but if you refuse to change, and somebody is still trapped in the school that is not meeting standards, then something has to happen. Parents need options to help their child. Federal dollars will follow the child.

For example, if a school—a child is trapped in a school for several years that is—that's not meeting standards, the Federal Government will pay for after-school tutoring, and the parent can choose all kind of tutoring options, whether they be public or private. One parent—a parent can send the school—a child to a different public school. In other words, when—there has to be accountability in order for a—I mean, there has to be a consequence in order for an accountability system to work. When schools do not improve year after year, without consequences, we will not see change. That's just a fact of life.

And so the new law says, "You've got time to meet the standards, which we have raised. You've got time to improve." But because there's now consequences, parents will have more say in their child's education, and that's important, because we want parents to be at the center of the education system in America. We want our parents more involved.

There's no better way to get parents involved than by publishing test results for each school. Think about this. First of all, under the old system, a lot of parents believed their local schools were doing just fine because that's what they were told. "Oh, don't worry, Johnny is doing just fine, and our school is too." But they never measured. And sometimes, that wasn't the case. Now parents don't have to take anybody's word for it. They

can see the results themselves. An accountability system says, "We'll measure, but we're going to post the results for everybody to see." If they see excellence, just like at this school, it will give them solid ground to thank the teachers and the principals for doing the job we expect. But if they see failure, like any good parent, they're going to want to know why. "Why can't my school be like Butterfield? What is it about our school that doesn't match the performance of Butterfield Junior High?" In other words, an accountability system, if properly used, will help people achieve a greater standard and will encourage more parental involvement.

Now, let me make sure you understand one thing: I strongly believe in local control of schools. I believe firmly—there is a difference between asking the question about whether or not a child is learning and insisting that teachers and principals are free to teach the way they see fit. Superintendents and school boards are free to make change where they see change is necessary.

The No Child Left Behind Act raises expectations but leaves control where it belongs, at the local level. See, you can't provide people excuses. There's no better excuse than saying, "I would have done it this way, but the Federal Government told me to do it this way." I fully understand that. In order to make sure that there is an accountability system that works, you not only measure, but you then say to people, "It's up to you to chart the path to excellence." You don't want Federal bureaucrats who you've never seen in Crawford County, Arkansas, making the decision for the classrooms in county—Crawford County, Arkansas. You need local control of schools so people who are making those decisions are accountable to the parents and the local citizens.

For more than 2 years, we've been putting the new reforms into action. All 50 States, plus the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, have now drawn up plans to measure performance in every school. Notice—they drew up the plans. See, the State of Arkansas drew up its accountability plans. People in Puerto Rico decided the accountability system to use. This isn't a Federal test. The local people, the State people made the decision

as to how to measure, and every State is reporting the information to the parents.

And we're seeing progress. Let me tell you the facts. The test scores for fourth grade math around the Nation went up 9 points between the years 2000 and 2003. See, I'm able to tell you that because we measure. If we hadn't measured, I couldn't tell you that. Eighth graders improved by 5 points in the same period. In other words, math scores are beginning to go up—still too low, but they're heading toward higher standards. Reading scores for fourth graders increased in the vast majority of States that tested between 1998 and 2003, including the State of Arkansas. See, your reading scores are going up here.

I'll never forget the day a woman looked at me—she's an African American friend of mine—and she said, "You've got to understand something, Governor Bush"—at the time—"reading is the new civil right." See, if you can't read, you can't realize the great promise of America. That's why we want every child reading. The good news is the reading scores are going up.

Since 2000, average math scores in Arkansas went up 13 points in fourth grade, and 9 points in eighth grade. By the way, that's higher than the national average.

Things are happening in the country. When you raise the bar and you hold people to account, it's amazing the results you can get. And that's incredibly positive. Here at Butterfield Junior High, you have every reason to be proud. In 2003, this school met the adequate yearly progress standard expected under No Child Left Behind. In other words, the State put out a set of criterion and measurement standards, and you met it, right here at this school.

Let me tell you what Traci Sellers said. Is Traci here, by the way? Probably not. Traci—I'm about to quote you. [Laughter] She's an English teacher. She said, "The No Child Left Behind makes us aware of what we're doing and how we can improve. It encourages us as teachers to go that extra step, so that every child can succeed." I appreciate your attitude. I appreciate your hope.

Think about what she said: "It makes us aware of what we're doing." In other words, are we doing the right thing? Are we meeting

expectations? "Am I doing my job?" she says, "and the accountability system helps me understand whether I am or not." She said, "How can I improve?" What a fantastic attitude. Here's a teacher who loves her children, says, "I want to make sure I'm doing the job, and if not, I want to figure out how to do the job better."

That's why you have an accountability system. It says—it encourages us. In other words, instead of being discouraged by the system, it encourages. That's not the way everybody feels in America. There are people that don't like to change, and there are some complaints that I'd like to address today. Let me first by telling you, I think it's easier to make excuses sometimes than needed improvements. That's just human nature, isn't it? But the problem is we don't need people making excuses for educational failures in America. We need change.

When it comes to testing, I've heard every excuse in the book. I bet the Governor has too. See, we put strong accountability measures in when I was the Governor of Texas, and I went around the State explaining it. And then the No Child Left Behind brought an avalanche of complaints as well. Some object to regular testing because they believe schools will just teach the test; that's what you hear. I'm sure you've heard it. Well, think about that for a minute. If a test measures basic knowledge, the basics in math or reading, then teaching the test means you're teaching a child the basic knowledge of reading and math.

In other words, for a child to pass a reading test, you had better understand how to read. And therefore, in order to help the child pass the test, they've got to know how to read in the first place. And the reading accountability systems help people determine whether or not the child has got the basic tools necessary to be a good reader. That's what we're talking about here.

The whole point is this: It is not enough to hope that students are learning. I mean, that's just, to me, an excuse why not to measure. We need to know the ones who are learning and the ones who are not learning. Some believe that the standards of No Child Left Behind are too high. They say that if you raise expectations, all you're doing is set-

ting up children to fail. Yet this law requires students to perform at grade level, which doesn't seem like it's too high a bar to cross.

I mean, we're asking children to read at third grade level if you're in the third grade. Why is that raising expectations too high? I mean, my goodness, that's what society should expect. If you want the kids to learn to read at grade level, then you better insist they learn to read at grade level. That's the standard that is important, and it's the standard that we must hold true to if we want to make sure every child has a chance to succeed in our great country.

Teachers and parents here today know this when it comes to standards: If you expect nothing from a child, if you expect low—if you have low standards for every child, don't be surprised at what you get. That's a fact of life. When you have high expectations, children have a way of rising to meet those expectations. High standards do not set children on a path to failure; high standards set our children on the path to success.

Other critics say it is unfair to measure the performance of minority groups and unfair to require schools to improve the scores amongst all groups. That's a complaint you hear. These critics say we shouldn't fault a whole school just because some African American or Spanish students are not progressing. They're missing the higher—the people who say that missed the entire purpose of the law, and that is to make sure that no child of any background is left behind, see. That's the purpose of this law.

The reason we measure success and problems group by group—that's what's called disaggregating data. In other words, we want to know—we don't want to look at the school as a whole; we want to look at the people in the school. And that's the difference. We want to look at the data based upon individuals. We want to know student performance. See, you've got to make sure the schools are serving every student. So in other words, when you look at the school as a whole, you don't know whether or not certain children are being left behind. You don't know whether certain children need extra help.

And there's an achievement gap here in America today that we've got to close. There's an achievement gap between the test

scores of white and minority students. Nationally, on reading tests, black and Hispanic fourth graders score at least 26 percentage points lower than white students in the same grade. We've got to do something about that. If we want this country to be a hopeful country for every citizen, if we want to make sure every person can realize the American Dream, we've got to close this gap. And what the accountability system—they'll help us close that gap by determining who needs help. No, we want America to be promising for every single child of every background so that not one single child in America is left behind.

Another claim is that under the new law, we're punishing schools that are not making progress. See, sometimes when you change, people are quick to criticize. And one of the complaints is that schools get punished that aren't making progress, but people who make that claim ought to read the law. The truth is, the lowest performing schools are getting extra money to improve. That's what the—that's the truth.

In 2003, we spent \$234 million to assist underperforming schools to make sure people aren't left behind. In other words, we said, "Here's a problem, and here's some extra money to help you fix it." In 2004, we'll at least double that amount. In other words, the Federal Government is saying, "Measure, and, oh, by the way, when we find mediocrity, we'll help, but the local people have got to change. You've got to change what you're doing in order to make sure that children can learn." We expect schools to do their job, and we're helping them do their job.

We also understand it can take some time to get there. Some say the No Child Left Behind Act doesn't provide enough money to meet our goals. First, let me tell you again what I said. It's the primary responsibility of the State and local governments to fund schools, not the Federal Government. But the additional testing required by the law—in other words, the Federal Government did say, "Okay, you've got to test in return for money." We're helping to pay for the tests. People say, "Well, it's an unfunded mandate to put accountability systems in place." No,

the accountability systems are largely funded by the Federal Government.

Second, if my 2005 budget is enacted, Federal spending on elementary and high school education will have increased by 49 percent since 2001. In Arkansas, that's an extra \$112 million Federal dollars for your public schools compared to 2001.

Nationwide, since 2001, we've already increased funding for low-income schools under Title I—that's the money for the poorest of students—by 41 percent. That will rise to 52 percent if Congress approves my budget, which would mean an additional \$37 million to help people in this State.

In other words, we're doing our duty. We understand that people need extra help when it comes time to addressing problems early, before they're too late. And the Federal Government is responding. And I also want to remind you that we've done another thing—and Laura is very much involved with this—we've kicked off a major initiative to make sure our children can read at grade level by the third grade. We have quadrupled Federal funding since 2001 for America's reading programs—by the way, making sure that when we fund programs, that they use scientifically based programs, reading—not programs that sound like they might work but programs which actually do work in teaching the children of America how to read.

This No Child Left Behind Act is a good law. It's a good, solid law. But I understand some adjustments need to be made, even in the best laws. So we've listened to schools and teachers, and we're responding in practical ways. We're making sure that the progress of special ed students is judged by standards appropriate to their development. In other words, as you measure a special ed student, there must be some flexibility in the measurement standards. And we know that.

We're giving schools more time to bring students who don't speak English as a first language into the accountability system. If a fellow shows up at school and can't speak Spanish—I mean English—and only speaks Spanish, they need some time to learn the language before they become a part of the accountability system. They don't need a lifetime of learning, but there needs to be some flexibility in the accountability systems.

We're giving schools in rural areas more latitude in meeting teacher qualification standards. In other words, we're flexible in the application of the law. Yet I will never compromise on this goal: Every child can learn the basics, and every school must teach the basics.

A lot of the No Child Left Behind Act is—focuses on early grades, and that's good. In other words, my attitude is, and I think the attitude of the experts is, when we get it right early in the grades and stay focused, we're going to have a bunch of kids getting into high school who are literate, smart, and capable.

But right now we've got some people that need help when it comes to reading. I mean, there have been some kids that have been shuffled through that are now in high school, and they're struggling to learn how to read. And we'd better get it right now, before they get out. And so I'm asking Congress to pass a \$100 million Striving Reading Initiative, intensive intervention in children's lives who cannot read, before they get out of high school. It's an essential part—I mean, that's the minimum we can do. That's the basic part of making sure that a child has hope.

We'll use resources to help the school districts to train teachers so they can get the right kind of help and use a curriculum that works. I mean, there are good curriculum that can work. The school districts need the help of implementing those curriculum, and that's what this money will be for.

I also proposed a \$120 million increase for the Mathematics and Science Partnership program. In other words, we want to make sure kids can read; we also want to make sure they can do math and science. But we've got some new jobs that are being created that require new skill sets, and it's not good enough to shuffle kids out of the schools that don't know anything about math and science. And so the creation of these partnerships will help school districts set up effective math and science programs.

I believe that in every school, we ought to continue to raise the bar, and one way to do so is to make sure that the advanced placement programs are vibrant and active across our country. Right here at Butterfield, you offer pre-8 AP courses, which is good—

preparing these children to take advanced placement. Advanced placement means you're raising the bar as high as you can possibly go.

I've proposed increasing money from the Federal Government, double the current amount we spend, for teacher training, to help good-hearted teachers become AP teachers.

And I fully recognize as well there are some low-income students. When they go home and say, "Look, I'm getting ready to take the AP exam," and the mother or father will say, "How much does it cost," and they lay out the cost of the AP exam, the mother or dad says, "No, I think we'll use the money for something else," see. So the child prepares to take the AP, and then Mom or Dad look at the fund—look at the cost, and they say, "No, we'd like for you to take the AP exam, but we need this money for rent or food." The Federal Government ought to help low-income students pay for the fee so they can take the AP exam. We want to be raising the bar for every student, and the entry fee should not be an excuse.

One of the things we need to do is encourage math and science professionals from the private sector to teach part-time in our high schools. And so we've got what's called the Adjunct Teacher Corps, which is a neat program, when you think about it. Got somebody here in Fort Smith, Arkansas, who's an engineer. They may have—he or she may have worked for a while, and they may be retired, and the school district—I don't know if the high school principal is looking for a science teacher or not; he may be. But it makes sense to have—to encourage citizens to get back in the classroom as a second career, to lend their talents.

You've got what you call a State Scholars program here in Arkansas. Governor, thanks for implementing it. It's an initiative that we announced here 2 years ago, which brings businesses and college officials in the middle schools and high schools to encourage students to take a more demanding coursework load. In other words, when you get—people can get inspired to take tougher courses, we ought to try to do so. The program is raising the completion rates in algebra II and chemistry and physics among Arkansas high school

students. In other words, you've got more students now taking algebra II and chemistry and physics, and that's going to benefit your State.

See, when you've got people with those skills getting out of high school, and somebody is looking to put a business here, they can say, "Look at this. Look at the base of knowledge amongst people that we can employ in this State." People are likely to bring work here if the potential workforce has got the basics in math and science. And that's what you're doing. I want to expand the State Scholars program nationwide, just like we've done here in Arkansas. It's effective. It works.

And there ought to be incentives to encourage students, and one way to do so is to give those students who finish a State Scholars program a boost in their Pell grant scholarship. In other words, we're saying to kids in high school, "Reach higher. Here's some people to help you reach higher, some local college folks or businesspeople. And by the way, when you take a tougher course load and pass, you get additional scholarship money from the Pell grant." We've expanded Pell grants. I want to enrich them to encourage students to reach for the stars. So I've sent a proposal to Congress where they would receive an additional \$1,000 during each of their first 2 years of college. This will help 4,000 Arkansas seniors a year. This will provide an incentive for people to say, "I want to do a better job in high school."

What I'm here to tell you is, I understand that public education is essential to the future of this country. It's essential we get it right. I'm here at Butterfield because I understand a good school is the gateway to hope. And we want that gate open all across America.

After decades of missed opportunities, after missing chances to make sure every child has got the basics to succeed, we finally reformed the public schools of America. It took a lot of work. It took a lot of work to convince people that change is needed. But Congress listened; we passed a bill. Let me tell you something, when you get a "yes" vote from both Senators of Arkansas and both Senators from Texas and both Senators from

Massachusetts, you've got yourself a bipartisan piece of legislation.

And we're not backing down, see. I don't care how much pressure they try to put on the process. I'm not changing my mind about high standards and the need for accountability, because I know the promise it holds out for the—[applause].

We're not going back to those days where we just kind of hope something happens. We're not going back to the days where kids just got moved through, and they weren't sure whether or not they could read, and at the end of the system, they said, "Oops, they can't read." Those day were too pessimistic for me, and they don't represent the great values of the United States of America. See, we believe in the dignity of every human being. We believe in the worth of every child. We're optimistic people. We believe in raising the standards. We believe in giving schools the resources and flexibility they need. We have begun a new era in public education for the good of the United States of America.

I better quit before some of us fall out. [Laughter] I know it. When you get the President, and he blows a lot of hot air —[laughter]—but I do want to thank you for your hospitality. I want to thank the people of this good school for believing in the best, for having such a clear vision about what's possible, about believing in the worth of every child. I want to thank the teachers. I appreciate your love and compassion. I want to thank you for never settling for mediocrity, for always aiming high.

I want to thank the citizens who are here, the moms and dads. By the way, a child's first teacher is a mother or a father. That's the first teacher a child has. I like to remind people that we need to promote a culture of personal responsibility in America that starts with moms and dads who understand they're responsible for loving their child with all their heart. And by the way, a part of that personal responsibility society is one that says if you've got a problem with the school in the community in which you live, you do something about it. See? You don't rely on some faraway Government to take care of it. Do something about it.

Part of this responsibility era says if you're a CEO in corporate America, you're responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And finally, a responsibility society is one in which each of us loves our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourselves.

It's such an honor to be here at Butterfield, in Van Buren, Arkansas. I'm proud to be here. Thanks for coming out to say hello. May God bless you all, and may God continue to bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:45 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Todd Marshell, principal, Butterfield Junior High School; and Gov. Mike Huckabee and Lt. Gov. Win Rockefeller of Arkansas.

Statement on Signing the Executive Order Blocking Property of Certain Persons and Prohibiting the Export of Certain Goods to Syria

May 11, 2004

Today I have signed an Executive order implementing sanctions on Syria pursuant to the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act of 2003. These sanctions will significantly reduce the level of trade and commercial activity between our two countries and, in particular, target entities and officials in or closely associated with the Syrian Government who have engaged in actions of concern specified in the act.

Since 1979, the United States has designated Syria a state sponsor of terrorism due to its support for groups such as Hizballah and Palestinian terrorist organizations. In 2003, Congress passed the SAA because of Syria's continued support for terrorism, pursuit of weapons of mass destruction, occupation of Lebanon, and actions undermining U.S. and international efforts with respect to Iraq. Based on Syria's failure to take significant, concrete steps to address the concerns we have raised, I have determined that further economic sanctions be imposed.

The Syrian Government must understand that its conduct alone will determine the duration of the sanctions and the extent to which additional sanctions may be imposed

should the Syrian Government fail to adopt a more constructive approach to relations with its neighbors, weapons of mass destruction, and terrorism.

If the Syrian Government demonstrates a genuine intention to seek true peace by confronting terror and violence, ending its pursuit and development of weapons of mass destruction, and respecting the sovereignty and independence of Lebanon, the United States will respond positively.

Similarly, I urge the Syrian Government to offer its full support to the goal of a stable and sovereign Iraq, beginning with redoubled efforts along the border to prevent the movement of foreign fighters into Iraq. The Syrian Government has taken some steps in this regard but must do more, given that individuals bent on sowing terror continue to cross into Iraq from Syria. Additionally, it is time for the Syrian Government to comply with its obligations under U.N. Security Council Resolution 1483 and immediately transfer assets belonging to the former Iraqi regime to the Development Fund for Iraq.

This is a momentous time in the Middle East. I call upon the Syrian Government to join the ranks of those nations that have committed themselves to political and economic reform, a decision that would benefit—first and foremost—the people of Syria. I sincerely hope that the Syrian Government will conclude that its interests are best served by joining efforts to build a Middle East that is stable, secure, and free from terror and violence.

Executive Order 13338—Blocking Property of Certain Persons and Prohibiting the Export of Certain Goods to Syria

May 11, 2004

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, including the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1701 *et seq.*) (IEEPA), the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1601 *et seq.*) (NEA), the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act of

2003, Public Law 108–175 (SAA), and section 301 of title 3, United States Code,

I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, hereby determine that the actions of the Government of Syria in supporting terrorism, continuing its occupation of Lebanon, pursuing weapons of mass destruction and missile programs, and undermining United States and international efforts with respect to the stabilization and reconstruction of Iraq constitute an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States and hereby declare a national emergency to deal with that threat. To address that threat, and to implement the SAA, I hereby order the following:

Section 1. (a) The Secretary of State shall not permit the exportation or reexportation to Syria of any item on the United States Munitions List (22 C.F.R. part 121).

(b) Except to the extent provided in regulations, orders, directives, or licenses that may be issued pursuant to the provisions of this order in a manner consistent with the SAA, and notwithstanding any license, permit, or authorization granted prior to the effective date of this order, (i) the Secretary of Commerce shall not permit the exportation or reexportation to Syria of any item on the Commerce Control List (15 C.F.R. part 774); and (ii) with the exception of food and medicine, the Secretary of Commerce shall not permit the exportation or reexportation to Syria of any product of the United States not included in section 1(b)(i) of this order.

(c) No other agency of the United States Government shall permit the exportation or reexportation to Syria of any product of the United States, except to the extent provided in regulations, orders, directives, or licenses that may be issued pursuant to this order in a manner consistent with the SAA, and notwithstanding any license, permit, or authorization granted prior to the effective date of this order.

Sec. 2. The Secretary of Transportation shall not permit any air carrier owned or controlled by Syria to provide foreign air transportation as defined in 49 U.S.C. 40102(a)(23), except that he may, to the extent consistent with Department of Trans-

portation regulations, permit such carriers to charter aircraft to the Government of Syria for the transport of Syrian government officials to and from the United States on official Syrian government business. In addition, the Secretary of Transportation shall prohibit all takeoffs and landings in the United States, other than those associated with an emergency, by any such air carrier when engaged in scheduled international air services.

Sec. 3. (a) Except to the extent provided in section 203(b)(1), (3), and (4) of the IEEPA (50 U.S.C. 1702(b)(1), (3), and (4)), and the Trade Sanctions Reform and Export Enhancement Act of 2000 (title IX, Public Law 106–387) (TSRA), or regulations, orders, directives, or licenses that may be issued pursuant to this order, and notwithstanding any contract entered into or any license or permit granted prior to the effective date of this order, all property and interests in property of the following persons, that are in the United States, that hereafter come within the United States, or that are or hereafter come within the possession or control of United States persons, including their overseas branches, are blocked and may not be transferred, paid, exported, withdrawn, or otherwise dealt in: persons who are determined by the Secretary of the Treasury, in consultation with the Secretary of State,

- (i) to be or to have been directing or otherwise significantly contributing to the Government of Syria's provision of safe haven to or other support for any person whose property or interests in property are blocked under United States law for terrorism-related reasons, including, but not limited to, Hamas, Hezbollah, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command, and any persons designated pursuant to Executive Order 13224 of September 23, 2001;
- (ii) to be or to have been directing or otherwise significantly contributing to the Government of Syria's military or security presence in Lebanon;
- (iii) to be or to have been directing or otherwise significantly contributing to

- the Government of Syria's pursuit of the development and production of chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons and medium- and long-range surface-to-surface missiles;
- (iv) to be or to have been directing or otherwise significantly contributing to any steps taken by the Government of Syria to undermine United States and international efforts with respect to the stabilization and reconstruction of Iraq; or
- (v) to be owned or controlled by, or acting or purporting to act for or on behalf of, directly or indirectly, any person whose property or interests in property are blocked pursuant to this order.
- (b) The prohibitions in paragraph (a) of this section include, but are not limited to,
- (i) the making of any contribution of funds, goods, or services by, to, or for the benefit of any person whose property or interests in property are blocked pursuant to this order; and
- (ii) the receipt of any contribution or provision of funds, goods, or services from any such person.
- Sec. 4.** (a) Any transaction by a United States person or within the United States that evades or avoids, has the purpose of evading or avoiding, or attempts to violate any of the prohibitions set forth in this order is prohibited.
- (b) Any conspiracy formed to violate the prohibitions set forth in this order is prohibited.
- Sec. 5.** I hereby determine that the making of donations of the type of articles specified in section 203(b)(2) of the IEEPA (50 U.S.C. 1702(b)(2)) would seriously impair the ability to deal with the national emergency declared in this order, and hereby prohibit, (i) the exportation or reexportation of such donated articles to Syria as provided in section 1(b) of this order; and (ii) the making of such donations by, to, or for the benefit of any person whose property and interests in property are blocked pursuant to section 3 of this order.
- Sec. 6.** For purposes of this order:
- (a) the term "person" means an individual or entity;
- (b) the term "entity" means a partnership, association, trust, joint venture, corporation, group, subgroup, or other organization;
- (c) the term "United States person" means any United States citizen, permanent resident alien, entity organized under the laws of the United States or any jurisdiction within the United States (including foreign branches), or any person in the United States;
- (d) the term "Government of Syria" means the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, its agencies, instrumentalities, and controlled entities; and
- (e) the term "product of the United States" means: for the purposes of subsection 1(b), any item subject to the Export Administration Regulations (15 C.F.R. parts 730–774); and for the purposes of subsection 1(c), any item subject to the export licensing jurisdiction of any other United States Government agency.
- Sec. 7.** With respect to the prohibitions contained in section 1 of this order, consistent with subsection 5(b) of the SAA, I hereby determine that it is in the national security interest of the United States to waive, and hereby waive application of subsection 5(a)(1) and subsection 5(a)(2)(A) of the SAA so as to permit the exportation or reexportation of certain items as specified in the Department of Commerce's General Order No. 2 to Supplement No. 1, 15 C.F.R. part 736, as issued consistent with this order and as may be amended pursuant to the provisions of this order and in a manner consistent with the SAA. This waiver is made pursuant to the SAA only to the extent that regulation of such exports or reexports would not otherwise fall within my constitutional authority to conduct the Nation's foreign affairs and protect national security.
- Sec. 8.** With respect to the prohibitions contained in section 2 of this order, consistent with subsection 5(b) of the SAA, I hereby determine that it is in the national security interest of the United States to waive, and hereby waive, application of subsection 5(a)(2)(D) of the SAA insofar as it pertains to: aircraft of any air carrier owned or controlled by Syria chartered by the Syrian government for the transport of Syrian government officials to and from the United

States on official Syrian government business, to the extent consistent with Department of Transportation regulations; takeoffs or landings for non-traffic stops of aircraft of any such air carrier that is not engaged in scheduled international air services; takeoffs and landings associated with an emergency; and overflights of United States territory.

Sec. 9. I hereby direct the Secretary of State to take such actions, including the promulgation of rules and regulations, as may be necessary to carry out subsection 1(a) of this order. I hereby direct the Secretary of Commerce, in consultation with the Secretary of State, to take such actions, including the promulgation of rules and regulations, as may be necessary to carry out subsection 1(b) of this order. I direct the Secretary of Transportation, in consultation with the Secretary of State, to take such actions, including the promulgation of rules and regulations, as may be necessary to carry out section 2 of this order. The Secretary of the Treasury, in consultation with the Secretary of State, is hereby authorized to take such actions, including the promulgation of rules and regulations, and to employ all powers granted to the President by the IEEPA as may be necessary to carry out sections 3, 4, and 5 of this order. The Secretaries of State, Commerce, Transportation, and the Treasury may redelegate any of these functions to other officers and agencies of the United States Government consistent with applicable law. The Secretary of State, in consultation with the Secretaries of Commerce, Transportation, and the Treasury, as appropriate, is authorized to exercise the functions and authorities conferred upon the President in subsection 5(b) of the SAA and to redelegate these functions and authorities consistent with applicable law. All agencies of the United States Government are hereby directed to take all appropriate measures within their authority to carry out the provisions of this order and, where appropriate, to advise the Secretaries of State, Commerce, Transportation, and the Treasury in a timely manner of the measures taken.

Sec. 10. This order is not intended to create, and does not create, any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law

or in equity by any party against the United States, its departments, agencies, instrumentalities, or entities, its officers or employees, or any other person.

Sec. 11. For those persons whose property or interests in property are blocked pursuant to section 3 of this order who might have a constitutional presence in the United States, I find that because of the ability to transfer funds or assets instantaneously, prior notice to such persons of measures to be taken pursuant to this order would render these measures ineffectual. I therefore determine that for these measures to be effective in addressing the national emergency declared in this order, there need be no prior notice of a listing or determination made pursuant to this order.

Sec. 12. The Secretary of the Treasury, in consultation with the Secretary of State, is authorized to submit the recurring and final reports to the Congress on the national emergency declared in this order, consistent with section 401(c) of the NEA, 50 U.S.C. 1641(c), and section 204(c) of the IEEPA, 50 U.S.C. 1703(c).

Sec. 13. (a) This order is effective at 12:01 eastern daylight time on May 12, 2004.

(b) This order shall be transmitted to the Congress and published in the *Federal Register*.

George W. Bush

The White House,
May 11, 2004.

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 9:07 a.m., May 12, 2004]

NOTE: This Executive order was published in the *Federal Register* on May 13.

**Message to the Congress Reporting
on the Issuance of the Executive
Order Blocking Property of Certain
Persons and Prohibiting the Export
of Certain Goods to Syria**

May 11, 2004

To the Congress of the United States:

Consistent with subsection 204(b) of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, 50 U.S.C. 1703(b) (IEEPA), and section

301 of the National Emergencies Act, 50 U.S.C. 1631, I hereby report that I have issued an Executive Order (order) in which I declared a national emergency with respect to the threat constituted by certain actions of the Government of Syria. Further, in accordance with subsection 5(b) of the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act of 2003 (SAA), Public Law 108–175, this message also constitutes the report on my exercise of the waiver authority pursuant to that statute.

On December 12, 2003, I signed into law the SAA in order to strengthen the ability of the United States to effectively confront the threat to U.S. national security posed by Syria's support for terrorism, its military presence in Lebanon, its pursuit of weapons of mass destruction, and its actions to undermine U.S. and international efforts with respect to the stabilization and reconstruction of Iraq. These policies by the Government of Syria directly threaten regional stability and undermine the U.S. goal of a comprehensive Middle East peace. Despite many months of diplomatic efforts to convince the Government of Syria to change its behavior, Syria has not taken significant, concrete steps to address the full range of U.S. concerns, which were clearly conveyed by Secretary of State Powell to Syrian President Asad in May 2003. I find the actions, policies, and circumstances described above sufficiently grave to constitute a threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States, and thus have declared a national emergency to address that threat.

In implementation of subsection 5(a) of the SAA, in the order I directed that action be taken to prohibit the export to Syria of products of the United States other than food and medicine, including but not limited to items on the United States Munitions List or Commerce Control List, and I prohibited commercial air services between Syria and the United States by aircraft of any air carrier owned or controlled by Syria, as well as certain non-traffic stops by such aircraft.

It is important to the national security interests of the United States, however, that certain discrete categories of exports con-

tinue in order to support activities of the United States Government and United Nations agencies, to facilitate travel by United States persons, for certain humanitarian purposes, to help maintain aviation safety, and to promote the exchange of information. Also, it is important to U.S. national security interests that aviation-related sanctions take into account humanitarian and diplomatic concerns as well as the international obligations of the United States.

Accordingly, I have waived the application of subsections 5(a)(1) and 5(a)(2)(A) of the SAA to permit the export and reexport of: products in support of activities of the United States Government to the extent that such exports would not otherwise fall within my constitutional authority to conduct the Nation's foreign affairs and protect national security; medicines on the Commerce Control List and medical devices; aircraft parts and components for purposes of flight safety; exports and reexports consistent with the 5(a)(2)(D) waiver outlined below; information and informational materials, as well as telecommunications equipment and associated items to promote the free flow of information; certain software and technology; products in support of United Nations operations; and, certain exports and reexports of a temporary nature. These items are further identified in the Department of Commerce's General Order No. 2, as issued consistent with my order. I have also waived the application of subsection 5(a)(2)(D) to permit the following with respect to aircraft of any air carrier owned or controlled by Syria: takeoffs or landings of such aircraft when chartered by the Government of Syria to transport Syrian government officials to the United States on official Syrian government business; takeoffs or landings for non-traffic stops of such aircraft that are not engaged in scheduled international air services; takeoffs and landings associated with an emergency; and overflights of U.S. territory.

George W. Bush

The White House,
May 11, 2004.

Remarks on Departure for Bethesda, Maryland

May 12, 2004

Execution of Nicholas Berg

I want to express my condolences to the family and friends of Nicholas Berg. Nicholas Berg was an innocent civilian who was in Iraq to help build a free Iraq. There is no justification for the brutal execution of Nicholas Berg—no justification whatsoever.

The actions of the terrorists who executed this man remind us of the nature of the few people who want to stop the advance of freedom in Iraq. Their intention is to shake our will. Their intention is to shake our confidence. Yet, by their actions, they remind us of how desperately parts of the world need free societies and peaceful societies, and we will complete our mission. We will complete our task.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to American hostage Nicholas Berg, who was killed in Iraq in early May by senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi.

Remarks in a Discussion at the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Maryland

May 12, 2004

The President. Thanks, Reid. Thank you all for coming. What he forgot to tell you is, I've known Reid for a long time. See, when I was the Governor of Texas, I was worried that we weren't using a curriculum, a reading curriculum that would work. So I said to Margaret Spellings, who is my Domestic Policy Adviser here in Washington, I said, "Who's the best in the country about figuring out how to teach children how to read?" And they said, "Reid Lyon." I said, "Okay, get him up here," or "Get him down here," in this case. He was here in Washington. He came down, and we've had a great relationship ever since.

Today we're going to talk about reading and that reading is more of a science than people think. And the reason we're here at the National Institutes of Health is because

this facility uses Federal taxpayers' money to research, to figure out how to solve problems. We've got a problem in America. And the problem is, not every child can read at grade level, so we're here to discuss a strategy to insist that every child does read at grade level. To me, it's a national—we have an obligation nationally to make sure of this.

I'll never forget the reading czarina of Houston Independent School District—and by the way, Secretary of Education Rod Paige was the superintendent of the Houston Independent School District at the time. He had hired this lady to help teach every child to read. She said, "Governor, I want to tell you, reading is the new civil right." That's what I think. I think if you cannot read in the 21st century, you don't have a chance to succeed. And we believe every child can read.

Mr. Secretary, thanks for coming. Rod Paige is a fellow who was on the frontlines of education there as the superintendent in Harris County District. And I asked him to come up and be the Secretary of Education, Reid, because he understands the correct attitude about making sure public schools work. It's really embodied in the No Child Left Behind Act.

Let me go through real quick what that act says. It says, first of all, "We believe every child can learn." In other words, we need to raise the bar and raise the standards. It's what I call challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations. It means basically that when you walk into a classroom full of the so-called hard to educate, you don't quit. That's what it means.

Secondly, it says that in return for increased Federal spending—which we've increased Federal spending quite a bit here in Washington, DC—that we expect results. In other words, the cornerstone of making sure every child can learn to read is you've got to measure to determine where they are. And if not, if you're finding children can't read at early ages, correct it early, before it's too late. And we're going to talk about that here.

Thirdly, it says that there must be consequences for schools that won't teach and won't change. In other words, something has to happen other than just posting scores to get parental involvement. What we now have

got is a system where, after a period of time, if the schools won't teach a child to read, Federal money follows the child so the child can get tutoring, for example, or the child can go to a different public school.

Finally, the cornerstone of good education policy is local control of schools. We're going to hear from some folks from Alabama and Arizona who are great teachers, who understand it is really important for there to be the ability for people to make decisions, to align authority and response at the local level.

Governor Ehrlich is with us. I'm sure he's glad to hear that the Federal Government isn't going to run the schools in the State of Maryland. He's plenty capable of doing it, along with the people he's picked to run the schools and be responsible for public policy, like the Lieutenant Governor, Mike Steele, and Nancy Grasmick, who's the head of the education department in Maryland. I want to thank you all for coming, Governor. I appreciate you taking your time for being here.

I also want to thank Elias Zerhouni, who's in charge of NIH. Elias, I'm proud of the job you're doing. You've got a tough job, and I picked a good man to do it, and I really appreciate you being here. I'm glad Claude Allen is here as well. He's the Deputy Secretary of Health and Human Services. You're doing a fine job too, Claude. I'm proud you guys are here. Thanks for coming.

I'm going to turn this over to Reid here in a second. But if the goal is to have children reading at grade level by the third grade, which is a goal we have set—and by the way, some people have been criticizing the No Child Left Behind Act because they say the standards are too high. I don't think that's too high a standard, to expect a child to read at third grade when they're in the third grade. As a matter of fact, you know, I think it is perfectly reasonable to ask school districts to at least accomplish that. But to do it, we've got to advance a—help advance a strategy. I think it is a proper role for the Federal Government to help school districts implement reading strategies that work.

And Reid Lyon has been very much involved in figuring out what works. And you'll hear him talk about phonemic awareness and phonics and fluency. I'm going to let him de-

scribe what all those words mean. But really what they mean is there's a way to figure out whether or not the curriculum being used at the local level can be effective, that's what he's saying.

And so we put forth a Reading First Initiative across the country. And part of it, obviously, requires Federal commitment, Federal dollars. We've got \$1.8 billion now we're spending on Reading First programs. We intend to spend 5 billion over a 5-year period of time.

So far, we're making good progress. In 2002, all 50 States are participating in the grantmaking process. In other words, they've developed curriculums screened by people like Reid who say, "Gosh, this will work." In other words, we don't want to spend money unless people are using curriculum that works. There's no need to throw good money into programs that won't work. We've tried that before.

And so the grant programs seem like they're going well. The screening process is going well. There are 1,000 districts that now get Reading First grants. There are 3,600 schools getting Reading First grants. There's been 73,000 teachers trained in the curriculum that works. Part of making sure that a Reading First program works, part of making sure that children can read at the grade level by the third grade is to make sure you've got teachers who can teach by the third grade—teachers who can teach curriculum to make sure children can read by the third grade. One-point-two million students are being affected.

By the way, Ralph Regula is with us today as well. I just saw Ralph sneak in here. Mr. Chairman, thanks for coming. He's a strong advocate of the Reading First program. He's a United States Congressman from the State of Ohio. The fact you're here, Mr. Chairman, says a lot about your interest. You're probably wondering when I'm going to stop talking. You know how we are when we get a mike.

As well I just want you to know—and we've discussed some of this today—we've got a early Reading First program, which really starts in the pre-K period as well as—and you're going to hear an interesting program called Striving Readers Initiative. This basically says that if you don't hold people

to account early in the system, it is likely people are going to get shuffled through the schools without being able to read, see. And we're beginning to find out that's the truth, and we're finding people in junior high and high school who can't read. We need intensive intervention programs. At the very minimum, when a kid gets out of high school, they ought to be able to read, see. And you'll hear an interesting program developed by this good man to my left here, about how to be successful.

What we're talking about is making sure we meet an obligation in our country to give people the chance to succeed in this great country, and I'm telling you we can do it. I have seen incredible progress. We test for a reason, because we want to know, and the reading scores are beginning to go up. And I believe it has a lot to do with the research that Reid Lyon has done here at the NIH facilities here. I believe that when you can figure out the key to reading and convince people to use the proper strategy, every child can learn to read. I refuse to accept anything less than that. I refuse to lower the bar for kids.

And so, therefore, my job as your President is to continue to challenge and push and insist on high standards. And we're making progress. Reid, I'm really proud of the work you do. He's about to tell us—what do you do—[laughter]—and how do you do it?

[Dr. G. Reid Lyon, Chief, Child Development and Behavior Branch, National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, made brief remarks.]

The President. You know, people are going to say, "Well, that sounds good. How do you know it works?" And as you know, I'm a how-do-you-know-it-works kind of guy. Reid mentioned there is a debate. Governors are very familiar with the reading curriculum debate, and there are some very strong opinions about what might work, what might not work. I'm the kind of fellow that says, "You ought to be able to figure it out pretty clearly."

Why are you so certain that your attitude is the right attitude?

[Dr. Lyon made further remarks.]

The President. Good. Well, I—anyway. This is based upon science, is what I'm telling you, see. And if you've got something that works, then it makes sense to spread the news. So that's what we're talking about here: How do we make sure the research that has been done here in Washington is shared around the country?

We've got another expert here in reading, the professor and director of the Center of Research of Learning at the University of Kansas—Don Deshler is with us. I first learned of Don when Laura, who is very much involved with reading—she was a school librarian. She loves to read. She believes every child can read. She believes every child must read, and she also understands that there is some need for some serious intervention programs in certain schools. So she met Don in Florida, and she came back and she said, "You're not going to believe this guy. He's got a fabulous program." I said, "Okay, we'll put him on the stage and see if he can explain it." [Laughter]

Tell us what you do.

[Dr. Donald D. Deshler, professor and director of the Center for Research on Learning, University of Kansas, made brief remarks.]

The President. I was going to say, so what do you have to do to get the Michigan school to—did you design a curriculum? Did you have teacher training? What was it?

[Dr. Deshler made further remarks.]

The President. Yes, thanks. Gosh, glad you came. [Laughter] Glad Laura told me about you. [Laughter] I love your attitude. What he's talking about, this initiative, the Intervention Initiative, to make sure junior high students and high school students at least have the capacity to read, is something I've sent up to Congress, Mr. Chairman. We need to get it funded. He's got a program that works. The role of the Federal Government is to fund the capacity for districts to take the program, implement it, and make it happen.

I agree with you that because of the reforms that are now in place, high schools are going to start seeing a more literate population. The problem is, we've got a gap, and we've got to make sure that we do everything

we can to intervene and help those kids. If you can't read, it doesn't matter. That's just as simple as that. I mean, I know that doesn't sound very nuanced or sophisticated, but it's true. It's the absolute truth.

And we're here talking about making sure everybody can. Governor, I want you to pay attention to this program because I bet you there's some schools in the State of Maryland that could use a little intervention, particularly at the junior high and high school level. This works. And this good man here has taken a scientific approach to developing a curriculum, which is relatively easy to implement, I would guess. I mean, it doesn't—

Dr. Deshler. Well, I—good teaching, I believe, is a challenge, and it requires hard work. But if we follow known principles of instruction, the payoff is enormous.

The President. Yes. The—I'm glad you brought up Michigan, because Faith Stevens is with us. She is the Reading First Coordinator for the whole State, right? That's a big job. I'm really glad you're here. How's it going? Are you implementing the Reading First Initiative?

[*Faith Stevens, Reading First coordinator, Michigan Department of Education, Lansing, MI, made brief remarks.*]

The President. Great job. Thank you. You know, one of the interesting comments I've heard, and I'm confident others who are involved with public policy when it comes to education have heard, they say, you know, "All you're doing is teaching the test. Don't test, because all you're doing is teaching the test." Listen, if you teach a child how to read, they will pass a reading test.

I've heard every excuse in the book why not to measure. But if you can't measure, how do you know? And you heard the great deal of satisfaction from that teacher as a result of correctly utilizing an accountability system to make sure that she was doing the right thing, that she was able to impart her love. And the joy as a result of teaching a child to read was evident in her statement. As a matter of fact, tell her, "Thanks for teaching." Tell her, "Thanks for being also agile enough of mind to be willing to change, if change is needed." We can't be risk-ad-

verse when it comes to making sure every child learns to read.

Speaking about teachers, we've got Janice Kantor with us. She came all the way from Phoenix, Arizona, for which we are grateful. Welcome. She is a Reading First literacy coach. It's kind of an interesting title, isn't it? When I went to Sam Houston Elementary School in Midland, I don't remember any literacy coaches. [Laughter] I remember a football coach. [Laughter] But I think it's a really interesting evolution that we've got literacy coaches, which should say to people that reading is more important than athletics. They're both important, but we better make sure they read.

So what does a literacy coach do?

[*Janice Kantor, Reading First literacy coach, Westwind Primary School, Phoenix, AZ, made brief remarks.*]

The President. Fabulous. Thanks for coming. Pretty strong spirit, isn't it? I really appreciate that. Thank you for being here. You know, I think one of the things we have to address is why teacher colleges aren't teaching reading teachers how to teach in the first place, so you don't need to retrain.

Maybe that's another project for you, Reid. [Laughter] Maybe it's my project. But thank you for retraining teachers. Listen, teachers are a really loving people, and they care deeply about their profession and their desire to pass on knowledge, and sometimes they just don't have the skills to be able to do so. It's got to be frustrating. It wasn't frustrating if you didn't measure, because you didn't know. But then when you start using the accountability system that all of a sudden points out that, oops, maybe I ought to get a—find a new skill so I can do my job.

We've got Cynthia Henderson with us from Montgomery, Alabama. I'm really glad you're here. Cynthia is a kindergarten teacher. And she went through the Reading First training program, and why don't you tell us what that was like. As I understand, it was slightly intimidating to begin with. Is that an accurate assessment?

[*Cynthia Henderson, kindergarten teacher, Floyd Elementary School, Montgomery, AL, made brief remarks.*]

The President. Yes, benchmark means—explain to—benchmark means they met expectations.

Ms. Henderson. They met every expectation for the entire year.

The President. And so what she's saying is she just kind of sent these little fellows and little ladies off to a glorious future because they've got the foundations for reading.

Ms. Henderson. And you know, because I work at a school that, where most of the children that are enrolled there are either on poverty level or below poverty level, it means so much to me because some of them are going to be the first ones in their families to even attend college.

The President. There you go.

Ms. Henderson. It is so exciting that they're so excited about reading. And I think it's all about changing a school, that changes a community, that changes a whole city, that changes a State, that changes a whole nation of readers.

The President. There you go. I agree. One of the things that's very important in the measurement system is to do what I call "disaggregate the data." Some districts didn't like measuring specific groups of people because you could pass the standards if you put every—lumped everybody together. But that didn't tell the whole truth about who was learning and who wasn't learning.

And so as part of the new accountability system, the No Child Left Behind Act, we break out based upon race. It's really essential we do that. It's really important. If you don't do that, you're likely to leave people behind. And that's not right. There's a learning—there's an achievement gap in America that will be closed. It must be closed, and will be closed. It won't be closed unless you're honest about the achievement gap, unless you're able to see clearly who needs help and who doesn't need help.

What you've heard here, teachers and coaches and implementers who understand that the accountability system must be used as a tool to make sure that the curriculum being used, the techniques being used, the strategy being used, works. That's what you're hearing.

If you heard—they said, "We look at the test results per child." Inside the classroom,

that's good, but schools and districts need to look at the test results per child as well and not try to gloss over the reality in certain school districts by lumping everybody together. This act is called the No Child Left Behind Act because we want to make sure no child is left behind, not it's okay that some get left behind. That's not the spirit of the law.

I hope you've enjoyed this as much as I have. This is a—again, we came here because the discussions we were having were based upon sound science, not guesswork. And like you, sir, I am incredibly optimistic that we're getting it right here in America. We're getting it right because smart people have help. Policymakers understand what works. We're getting it right because people are continuing to devise strategies to help children who need continued help. We're getting it right because we're providing resources to make sure teachers get retrained with curriculum that works. We're getting it right because we've got fabulous teachers in the classroom—coaches and teachers, I might want you to know—whose spirit can lift the room here at the NIH with just a few words.

And listen, we will meet the goal here. We have an obligation to meet the goal to make sure every child can read at grade level, starting by the third grade. And there's no doubt in my mind this country will do it. We're on track, and I want to appreciate those who put us on track and who keep us on track for being here today.

God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:27 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Phyllis C. Hunter, former manager, Reading Department, Houston Independent School District; and Gov. Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr., and Lt. Gov. Michael S. Steele of Maryland.

Statement on the Panama-United States Proliferation Security Initiative Ship-Boarding Agreement

May 12, 2004

The United States welcomes Panama's signing today of a ship-boarding agreement that supports the efforts of the Proliferation

Security Initiative (PSI) to stop the trade in deadly weapons and materials.

The agreement establishes streamlined procedures for American officials to request and board ships registered to Panama if those ships are suspected of carrying weapons of mass destruction, their delivery systems, or related materials. More ships sail under the Panamanian flag than that of any other nation. This agreement sends a strong signal to proliferators that the free nations of the world are determined to protect their people and preserve the peace.

This is the second bilateral ship-boarding agreement signed to support PSI. The United States and the Government of Liberia signed a similar agreement on February 11, 2004. Together, Panama and Liberia account for roughly 30 percent of the world's commercial shipping tonnage. We welcome this historic decision by the Government of Panama. And we urge other nations with large commercial shipping registries to follow the lead of Panama and Liberia to make a stand against proliferation.

Letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives Transmitting a Budget Amendment To Establish a Contingent Emergency Reserve Fund To Support Operations in Iraq and Afghanistan

May 12, 2004

Dear Mr. Speaker:

I ask the Congress to consider the enclosed FY 2005 budget amendment to establish a \$25 billion contingent emergency reserve fund to support operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Although we do not know the precise costs for operations next year, developments on the ground in Iraq indicate the need to plan for contingencies. We plan to pursue a full FY 2005 supplemental request when we can better estimate precise costs. In the meantime, this reserve fund will ensure that our men and women in uniform continue to have the resources they need when they need them.

I have pledged to our troops that they will have all the resources they need to accom-

plish this vital mission, and I urge the Congress to approve this reserve fund.

The details of this proposal are set forth in the enclosed letter from the Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

Sincerely,

George W. Bush

Remarks in a Discussion at Parkersburg South High School in Parkersburg, West Virginia

May 13, 2004

The President. Thank you all very much. Thanks for coming. Please be seated. First, thanks for the invite. You all got the best seat in the house. At least you got the best view of me. [Laughter] I really want to thank you all for coming. I want to thank our panelists for being here, because we're about to have a discussion on how to make sure every person in America can realize their dreams. That's what we're here to talk about: Dreams and how they can be realized; how to make sure the education system works the way every mom and dad, every teacher, every principal, every concerned citizen wants it to work.

And this is the perfect place to come and have a discussion about education, because Parkersburg South is educating the kids. They're doing a fine job here. Tom, I want to thank you. I've spent a lot of time at schools, and there's always a common denominator in excellent schools, and that is you've got a good principal, see—somebody who listens to the teachers, somebody who interfaces with the parents, but somebody who sets high standards, somebody who believes in the best for every child. And I appreciate you taking on a tough job, and I appreciate you doing it well.

I want to thank Bill Niday as well. He's the superintendent here in Wood County. I know something about superintendents, and I know how important they are for education. See, I picked a superintendent of schools to run the Department of Education, the superintendent from Harris County, which is Houston, Texas. I mean, the superintendent is on the frontline of education. They're involved with all aspects of local education. So

I picked a man who understands how it works. And the reason I brought a superintendent in from Texas to Washington, because I believe in local control of schools. I want the people at the local level running the schools.

I appreciate Barbara Fish, from the State board here in West Virginia, for coming. Where are you, Barbara? Thank you for coming. I'm honored you are here. I appreciate what you said. Barbara said to me—I'm going to talk a little bit about No Child Left Behind here in a second. She said, "I love the spirit of No Child Left Behind." See, I love the spirit of Barbara, who understands that by setting high standards and measuring and making sure curriculum works and making sure your dollars are well spent, that we can make sure no child is left behind in America. So thank you for your vision, and thank you for your care.

They're telling me Jimmy Colombo is here, the mayor. Where are you, Mr. Mayor? There you are. I appreciate you coming. Who you got with you? There he is. We'll try to get you a better seat next time, Mayor. [Laughter] But thank you for being here. I'm proud you're here. I really appreciate so many of the citizens of this good city coming out and waving, and it means a lot to me. And Mayor, the fact that you're here means a lot too. I appreciate you serving your community. Just make sure you fill the potholes. [Laughter]

I appreciate the Patriots. All of the Patriots are here. Thank you for hosting us. I want to congratulate the seniors who are getting ready to graduate. Make sure you don't take the foot off the gas pedal too soon—isn't that right? Keep studying until the final bell rings. But good luck to you.

Today I had the honor of meeting Heather Stout. She came out to the airport. She's a sophomore at West Virginia University in Parkersburg. I'll tell you why I mention her. Where are you, Heather? She's somewhere. Oh, there you are, right there. I'm sorry. I beg your pardon. You know what? The reason I bring her up is she's a tutor. She is a math tutor for fourth grade students. Here's a person going to college who has taken time out of her life to help children learn math.

Listen, we talk a lot about the strength of our country, and I'm going to spend a little time talking about the strength of our—a lot of the strengths of the country. But the true strength of this country is the hearts and souls of the American people. That's the strength of America. We're strong because there are good people willing to teach. We're strong because there are good citizens willing to love a neighbor just like they'd like to be loved themselves. See, there are people who hurt in our country, but that hurt can change as a result of a loving citizen saying, "What can I do to help?" See, societies change one heart, one soul, one conscience at a time. That's how societies change, and that happens when people like Heather, and I'm sure people here in this crowd, are willing to take a little time to love and spread compassion.

The reason I mention Heather is because I want people in this good part of the country to do everything they can to help the lonely, to feed the hungry, to find shelter for those who are looking for a place to stay. Heather, thanks for the example you've set. Thanks for having such a good heart, and thanks for following your heart.

One of the things that I'm so proud of is the United States military. I'm proud—[applause]—thank you all for coming. Thank you all. Corporal Ferguson, where's—there he is. Lance Corporal Ferguson—excuse me. He just came back from Iraq. He was one of over 200,000 men and women who have served this Nation. And the reason I bring him up—I want to say a couple of things—thank you, go ahead and be seated. I appreciate you being here. Thank you for your service. And that's Joe Ellison—yes, Lance Corporal Ellison is with him too. I didn't mean to leave you out, but thank you for your service too.

Let me say a couple of things that you need to know. First, our men and women are serving in historic times. We have a duty never to forget the lessons of September the 11th, 2001, and when we see a gathering threat—when we see threats, we can no longer hope they go away. We can't hope for the best. We've got to take action. Now, action doesn't necessarily mean use of the military. Action can mean using diplomatic pressure, all kinds of pressures. But the

enemy declared war on us. And we must be strong, and we must be diligent, and we must be focused. We must do everything we can to protect our homeland. We've got brave soldiers doing just that.

And we're being tested, see. We're being tested because there are people who cannot stand the thought of free societies growing up in a part of the world that is used to hatred and tyranny. We're being tested because there are coldblooded killers that cannot stand the thought of freedom becoming the norm.

And yet, we know something here in America. We know the power of free societies. See, freedom equals peace. Free societies will be peaceful societies. And we also know that freedom is not America's gift to the world. Freedom is the almighty God's gift to each man and woman in this world.

I want these marines to know that they are serving in historic times. The world is changing for the better. The world will be more free and more peaceful, thanks to the United States of America and our military. These are historic times.

I'll tell you an interesting story to try and put it in perspective. I was having dinner with Prime Minister Koizumi in Tokyo. Laura was with me, by the way. She's doing a great job, fabulous person. And here I was, talking to the Prime Minister of a former enemy. My dad, like many of your relatives, fought in the Pacific in World War II, and here I was, talking to the Prime Minister of the country against whom we used to fight, a country that had attacked us. And we were talking about how to keep the peace. We were strategizing about how to make sure the Korean Peninsula is nuclear-weapon-free.

It was a very interesting conversation. First of all, I like the guy a lot. And secondly, it was a positive conversation, an important conversation, to help keep the peace. Had we not gotten the peace right after World War II, it might have been that I wouldn't be having the conversation with Prime Minister Koizumi. As well during the conversation, I thought about what it would be like for a future American President to be talking to a duly elected leader of Iraq, a free Iraq, a peaceful Iraq, a democratic Iraq, about how

to deal with problems future generations will face.

No, these are historic times. We're being tested. People are testing our mettle. And I will not yield to the whims of the few. [Applause] Thank you all. I won't yield because I believe so strongly in what we're doing, and I have faith in the power of freedom to spread its wings in parts of the world that desperately need freedom.

I want to say one other thing about our troops. Like you, I have been disgraced about what I've seen on TV, what took place in the prison. But the actions of a few do not reflect on the fantastic character of the over 200,000 men and women who have served our Nation.

One other thing before we talk about education: It is really important for this country to be wise about how we use our natural resources. And I have asked the Congress to pass a national energy policy so we become less dependent on foreign sources of energy. I've asked the Congress to quit playing politics and get a bill out of the United States Senate to my desk that includes the use of clean coal technologies to make sure we are less dependent. I mean, we're seeing what it means to be hooked on foreign sources of energy right now. And like you, I'm unhappy about it. But I got a plan, if we can just get some cooperation, so we can make sure we got more supply here at home. That's the way you relieve the pressure from foreign sources—you use what you have in a smart way. And we can do this in this country. We can be wise about how we use our resources, so that the people benefit.

And you got a lot of coal here, and it's an important part of our country's energy mix. And we can use technologies to make sure that coal does what we want it to do, which is to power electricity so people can have reliable sources of electricity for their homes and their businesses.

One of the things we're here to talk about today is how to make sure the workforce is educated. But we'd better make sure we've got an educated energy policy too, so that we can have a workforce that expands.

Now, the best way to make sure we got a workforce that's educated is to start early,

before it's too late. The No Child Left Behind Act changed the attitude about monies being spent out of Washington. Listen, we've increased the budgets out of Washington by 49 percent since 2001. That is a healthy increase.

Two things I want to say about that: First of all, it's not the Federal responsibility to fund schools. It's State and local responsibility to fund. You don't want the Federal Government running the school system here. But we can help. We can help with Title I students. We can help with Reading First programs. There are ways for the Federal Government to help, and we are.

Make no mistake about it, we're increasing the budgets at the Federal level, but for the first time we have said, "Since we're spending more money, why don't you show us whether or not the children are learning to read, write, and add and subtract. Why don't you use an accountability system to let everybody know that we're succeeding." And that's what's changed. And this high school right here is using the accountability system, and the students at this school are meeting the accountability standards.

See, we're setting higher standards. And by the way, if you set low standards, guess what you're going get? You're going to get lousy results. If you have the attitude that certain children can't learn to read and write and add and subtract, sure enough, certain children won't learn to read and write and add and subtract. So we're raising that bar. We're providing extra money. We're holding people accountable, and we're making sure there's local control of schools. See, the people of Parkersburg can run the schools better than people in Washington, DC, can. That's for certain.

And we're making progress. The reading scores in West Virginia are up. That's really good news. It means the teachers are doing what we expect, and they're working hard, by the way. Being a teacher is a difficult profession, and we need to praise our teachers and thank our teachers.

The test scores are up. That must make everybody feel better. It should. And the reason I can say that is because we're measuring. See, if you don't measure, you say, "I think the test scores are up," or "Maybe the test

scores are up." You don't know unless you measure. We're measuring, and the results are good.

But let me tell you a statistic that troubles me: 68 of 100 ninth graders nationwide, only 68 will go to college. We ought to have a goal that says every child, every high school student, finishes high school and is capable of finding a job or capable of going on to college. That ought to be the goal.

And so what we're going to talk about today is not how to make sure elementary school children can read but to make sure that the high school programs raise the bar, intervene when necessary, make sure that money is spent wisely, so that we're educating children that have got the capacity to take over the jobs of the 21st century. And there's some practical things we can do.

First, there needs to be intervention programs for junior high and high school kids who have been shuffled through without the capacity to read. And we've got a program called Striving Readers Initiative, which is an intervention program based on a curriculum designed out of the University of Kansas, by the way, and it works. And I would urge the good folks of the—the planners here in West Virginia to access the Federal monies that I'm asking Congress to spend on making sure that at the very minimum, a kid has got the capacity to read before they get out of high school.

See, if you can't read, these jobs of the 21st century are going to go begging. If you don't have the capacity to at least read, it's going to be impossible for you—not totally impossible, nearly impossible to get the high-paying, high-productivity jobs that are now being created in America.

Secondly, we need to make sure we get more math and science graduates. It's really important that we emphasize math—besides literacy, math and science—and we're going to talk a little bit about that here in a minute—because math and science programs will be necessary to make sure the skill level is good enough for these new jobs that are being created, that people will be able to fill those jobs as well. And so I've got a plan that provides Federal grants to develop teaching programs, in other words, help

schools develop effective math teaching programs.

Thirdly, we need an adjunct teacher program to encourage professionals and experts from math and sciences to teach—in other words, once somebody has finished their career or maybe is looking for a career adjustment, to allow them and encourage them to get in the classroom to spread their skills. We need engineers teaching in high schools. We need scientists teaching in high schools. We need people who have been in the military that have had some engineering experience to come out and teach in high schools. And we—I'm asking Congress to pass a \$40 million program to encourage the recruitment and training of such teachers.

As well we need to be raising that bar. We're going to talk about advanced placement here in a minute. Advanced placement programs are essential programs for challenging every child. In other words, we need to keep raising the standards. We've got to constantly strive to set big goals so people are reaching for those goals and helping schools make sure that the programs work.

Advanced placement is—I love the program. We're about to talk to an advanced placement teacher who I suspect loves it as well, but there are some difficulties. I think the Federal Government should be spending money to help train teachers to teach advanced placement. See, a lot of school districts say, "Well, I'm interested, but it just doesn't meet our needs right now." Well, it should meet the needs, and therefore, there's Federal money available for teacher training.

And one other aspect: It costs \$80 to take a advanced placement test. Now, that's high for a lot of families. Low-income families will say, you know, "I'd rather spend my 80 somewhere else than taking a test," and there's a lot of missed opportunity. I think the Federal Government ought to help low-income students pay for the fee to take the AP test.

I'm getting there. Our panelists are about to fall out, wondering—all right. As the old guy said, "You're just not a potted plant."

[Laughter]

I think we ought to enhance Pell grants for students who take rigorous academic courses. Or as I say, if you're taking a rigorous course load in high school and you

qualify for Pell grants, you ought to get an extra \$1,000 on your Pell grant. We're spending money at the Pell grant, and Pell grants are good things. We ought to use the Pell grant system to encourage people to keep raising their sights.

We're going to talk about ways to make sure the Perkins Act, which is the vocational training act, work better. I mean, this act was passed in 1917. We're spending a billion dollars a year. The attitude has got to change from 1917. It kind of—it has some, but as a part of the vocational training courses, there need to be a rigorous focus on English and math and science. We've got to make sure the children have got, oh, yes, the skills that may be taught at the Perkins programs, but they need the basics too. And so in order to make sure the high school programs work all the way around, we need to reform the Perkins program.

We're going to talk about the community college system. I'm a big believer in the community college system. Community college systems are ways to help high school students achieve big goals, and we're going to talk about that. The community college systems are also important to taking older folks that have been in one field and training them for another field.

And we've spent a lot of money at the Federal level to make sure that we're able to match skills with jobs available. I mean, I think—one of the stories I tell is I went to the Mesa Community College in Arizona, and I met a woman who had been a graphic design artist for over a decade. And she then went back to the community college, got help from the Federal Government, and got her associate degree. And in her entry-level job in a high-tech field, she made more in her first year than she had made in her last year. In other words, education will not only help somebody become employable; education will help somebody become more productive, which means higher, higher wages, better job, better availability for work. And that's what we're going to talk about.

So here we go. Big Tom, are you ready?

Thomas Eschbacher. I'm ready to go.
[Laughter]

The President. He has got a program here called High Schools That Work, and we're

going to spend some time talking about that. It is a way to introduce a rigorous course schedule into the high school curriculum to challenge people. You may want to talk about that, and you may want to not talk about that, but let her go.

[*Mr. Eschbacher, principal, Parkersburg South High School, made brief remarks.*]

The President. Good job. That's why you're no longer the band director. [Laughter]

Mr. Eschbacher. I was pretty good at that too, though.

The President. What were you, tuba?

Mr. Eschbacher. I'm a sax player.

The President. Sax player, right.

Dr. Becky Daniel is with us. She is an AP English teacher. First, Becky has been teaching for 29 years, which is a great credit to you, to be in the classroom for that long. You might want to tell people about the advanced placement program—I suspect some people don't even know what we're talking about—why it's important, how you got into it. Let her go. Thanks for coming.

[*Dr. Rebecca Daniel, English teacher, Parkersburg South High School, made brief remarks.*]

The President. Good job, Becky. Thank you. I love her spirit. See, I like teachers that challenge the soft bigotry of low expectations. In other words, she's saying, "I'm going to keep raising that bar. I'm going to keep challenging." And it must make you feel great to see people achieve what you want them to do. Yes, it's got to.

And I agree with you, I think we need to make sure AP is available for all kids. Part of it is the teacher training; part of it is the fee. I mean, I'm sure you've run into kids who say, "My mother and daddy don't want to spend the money on the fee." And that's not a good enough excuse. We've got to encourage—by the way, AP—listen to what she said—if you pass the AP, you get through college faster. And that takes a lot of the financial pressure off. I mean, it's not only good in terms of your brain; it's good in terms of your wallet. And so, thanks for doing what you're doing, Becky. I appreciate your spirit.

We've got another teacher with us today. Dave is with us. He is a physics teacher. Here's a guy who was trained to be a chemical engineer? Yes. Then he decided to be a teacher—and both of them noble professions, but here he is now, imparting knowledge. He turned down what I bet was a pretty good career in this part of the world. He said, "I want to teach," and he's a physics teacher.

Tell us what you're seeing. Tell us what you're hearing about sciences. It's essential that people take science in high school. This job base of ours is changing. It's in transition. We're creating new jobs all across the country, and people are going to have to be prepared to succeed in these jobs. These aren't the jobs like we've had in the past. These are better paying jobs, steady work, but require the use of your brain. And part of that base, to be ready for these new jobs, is a science base.

And that's why we have Dave here. Thanks for coming.

[*David Foggin, physics teacher, Parkersburg South High School, made brief remarks.*]

The President. So, are kids interested? I mean, how do we—are people interested in sciences and math now, do you find?

Mr. Foggin. What I like to do—and Tom can probably attest to this—"All in the name of science," he says—I'll take kids in the hallway, and we'll push them on scooters and talk about force and acceleration. We'll go to the gym and throw medicine balls in the air and talk about potential energy and kinetic energy. We swing on ropes and talk about pendulums and harmonic motion. I try to make things active and fun and keep science fun, and sometimes you don't even realize you're learning.

The President. Yes, practical—with a practical application.

Mr. Foggin. Yes, a lot of hands on.

The President. One of the things he's talking about is going to businesses—we call them State Scholar programs. We're going to talk about how to get other businesses involved here in a minute. But what businesses are interested in is they want a high school to be ready to—be capable of training people so they can hire them. That's what they want,

and so we've got what's called State Scholar programs, which is a collaborative effort between high schools and school districts and businesses to encourage rigorous curriculum that matters. That's kind of what you were doing when you went to the plant. You had business executives say, let us help figure out—

Mr. Foggin. We met with employers all around this area and asked them, "What do you want from employees? Let's see some of your employees." And we spent about a week with them to see exactly what it is they do, what skills they need, and then we all got back together at the end and said, "Hey, everything we saw was"—

The President. See, that's a smart way to run a high school. It's a practical way to run a high school. It says, "Look, we're going to make sure that kids who come out of here not only can read and write, but they're going to have the basis so they can become employees." As this job base expands—and it's expanding—as new jobs are being created, we've got to get it right here in high school.

It starts with making sure kids can read early. I mean—and that's what's happening. It will help when we have intervention programs all around the country to make sure that the literacy levels are high enough to become—so people can at least fill out the forms when it comes to finding work. But we need to make sure we stay focused on math and science.

And that's why I'm so—I appreciate Dave being here. Thanks for what you do. I love both your spirits, and thanks for teaching. Appreciate you coming.

We've got a man from Atlanta, Georgia, right here sitting next to the President. Gene Bottoms—he is the senior Vice President of what's called the Southern Regional Education Board. It is a—well, he can tell you what it is. But he is involved with working with school districts around the country to encourage them to put in place rigorous academic programs. Is that an accurate description?

Gene Bottoms. That's a big part of it.

The President. All right. Well, tell them what you do.

[James E. "Gene" Bottoms, senior vice president, Southern Regional Education Board, made brief remarks.]

The President. Nationally, only 68 percent of the children who start from the ninth grade will graduate from high school on time. In other words, West Virginia is doing really well.

[*Mr. Bottoms made further remarks.*]

The President. Thanks for coming. Good job.

We've got Joe Badgley with us. He is the Dean of Academic Affairs. You still the interim president?

Joe Badgley. Yes, sir.

The President. You're still the interim president, although he named his successor yesterday, or today?

Dr. Badgley. My successor was named yesterday.

The President. Yes, we've got you coming and going. Anyway—[laughter]—thanks for coming. He is at West Virginia University at Parkersburg. And tell us about the program you've got here. Just let us—let her go.

[*Dr. Joseph L. Badgley, interim president, West Virginia University at Parkersburg, made brief remarks.*]

The President. So what does that mean for a mom or a dad, or what does it mean for the student when that happens?

Dr. Badgley. Well, one of the great things about the program is that many of the high schools choose to give graduation credit so that the students are earning credits toward graduation from high school at the same time they're earning college credit, which is why the program is often referred to as dual credit. And it's important to note that those courses are delivered at deeply discounted tuition rates, which means that students can graduate from high school with as much as a semester of college work completed at a substantial savings to themselves and to their families.

The President. Yes, that's a really smart idea. And how hard is it for the high school students? I mean, if somebody is sitting out there listening who says, "Gosh, I may want to get my child, who's a sophomore in high school, to think about this," is it a steep hill

to climb, or is it—obviously, if 900 kids are going, they've had pretty good success passing the courses.

Dr. Badgley. It's a very popular program, and the students—the program is open to high school juniors and seniors who have a 2.8 grade point average and the recommendation of their principal or their counselor to participate in the program.

The President. Yes, that's neat. What are you doing for worker training? Can you share some of the ideas with the citizens here in this community about why you're important and useful and necessary?

[*Dr. Badgley made further remarks.*]

The President. Yes. See, I like to tell people the community college systems are available, affordable, and they're flexible. In other words, they're able to change their curriculum in order to meet the needs of the job requirements or the job needs here. And it's a really good asset. And the thing that's so impressive about the utilization of this good asset is they hooked up with a high school—high schools here. So people have got all kinds of opportunities.

Listen, I hope you're as optimistic about the future of the country as I am. You just heard some, I think, incredibly positive news about your community. You've got people who are raising the bar, people who are making sure that the course load is relevant to the jobs of the 21st century, people who are using the asset base, the education asset base, in a wise way to make sure that every child has got an opportunity to realize the great promise of the country.

We live in the most fabulous nation on the face of the Earth, and one of the reasons why is because we're a nation that believes in the worth of every person, regardless of their background. We're a nation that believes in the potential of every person. We want every child to learn to read, write, and add and subtract. We want every child to have the curriculum necessary to be able to realize his or her dreams. That's what we want in America.

We're also a great nation because we've got fantastic values. And one of the values we hold dear is the value of freedom. We

love our freedom. We understand our freedom. We will never relinquish our freedom.

Thank you all for coming. May God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:58 p.m. in the school's gymnasium. In his remarks, he referred to Lance Cpl. Stephen Ferguson, USMC; and Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan.

Statement on Senate Passage of the Proposed "Individuals With Disabilities Education Improvement Act"

May 13, 2004

I am pleased that the Senate passed the "Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act," which would continue to build on the great progress we have made in helping children with disabilities achieve their full potential. By working together to open doors for citizens with disabilities, we can help fulfill the promise of our great Nation.

This legislation will further promote educational opportunities for children with disabilities. I am committed to working together with students, parents, teachers, schools, and communities to ensure that all children are given every chance to learn and to reach their full potential, including children with disabilities.

I urge the House and Senate to meet in a timely manner in order to reach agreement on a final legislative package that I can sign into law this year.

Executive Order 13339—Increasing Economic Opportunity and Business Participation of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders

May 13, 2004

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, and for the purpose of providing equal economic opportunities for full participation of Asian American and Pacific Islander businesses in our free market economy where they may be underserved and thus improving the quality of life

for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, it is hereby ordered as follows:

Section 1. (a) There is established in the Department of Commerce the President's Advisory Commission on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (Commission). The Commission shall consist of not more than 15 members appointed by the President, one of whom shall be designated by the President as Chair. The Commission shall include members who: (i) have a history of involvement with the Asian American and Pacific Islander communities; (ii) are from the business enterprise sector; (iii) are from civic associations representing one or more of the diverse Asian American and Pacific Islander communities; (iv) are from the fields of economic, social, and community development; or (v) have such other experience as the President deems appropriate.

(b) The Secretary of Commerce (Secretary) shall designate an Executive Director for the Commission.

Sec. 2. The Commission shall provide advice to the President, through the Secretary, on:

(a) the development, monitoring, and coordination of executive branch efforts to improve the economic and community development of Asian American and Pacific Islander businesses through ensuring equal opportunity to participate in Federal programs, and public-sector, private-sector partnerships, and through the collection of data related to Asian American and Pacific Islander businesses; and

(b) ways to increase the business diversification of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, including ways to foster research and data on Asian American and Pacific Islander businesses including their level of participation in the national economy and their economic and community development.

Sec. 3. (a) The Secretary shall establish within the Department of Commerce an office known as the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (Office). The Office shall provide support for the Commission and the interagency working group created in section 3(b) of this order.

(b) The Secretary shall also create an interagency working group (Working Group)

whose activities shall be coordinated by the Department of Commerce. The Secretary shall designate the executive departments and agencies that shall serve on the Working Group (executive departments and agencies) and the heads of those departments and agencies shall select the officials that shall serve as their respective representatives on the Working Group. The Executive Director of the Commission shall also serve as the Director of the Office and the Working Group, and shall report to the Secretary or the Secretary's designee. The Director of the Working Group shall advise the Secretary or the Secretary's designee on efforts by the Federal Government to improve access to economic opportunities, through equal access to such opportunities, for Asian American and Pacific Islander businesses where they may be underserved and thus to improve the quality of life of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

Sec. 4. The head of each executive department and agency on the Working Group shall designate a senior Federal official responsible for management or program administration to report directly to the agency head on activities implementing this order and to serve as a liaison to, and representative on, the Working Group. The Secretary may designate additional Federal officials, with the concurrence of the head of the designated executive department or agency, to carry out functions of the Working Group. To the extent permitted by law and to the extent practicable, each designated executive department and agency shall provide appropriate information requested by the Working Group, including data relating to the eligibility for and participation of Asian American and Pacific Islander businesses in Federal programs. Where adequate data are not available, the Working Group shall suggest the means of collecting such data.

Sec. 5. Each designated executive department and agency shall prepare a plan for, and shall document, its efforts to support economic opportunities for Asian American and Pacific Islander businesses. This plan shall address, among other things, executive branch efforts to:

- (a) increase participation in Federal programs for Asian American and Pacific Islander businesses through equal access to such programs;
- (b) ensure nondiscrimination in Federal contracts and procurement opportunities;
- (c) provide equal opportunity for public-sector, private-sector partnerships for the community and economic development of Asian American and Pacific Islander businesses; and
- (d) foster research and data collection on Asian American and Pacific Islander businesses. Each plan shall be submitted through the working group and the Commission to the Secretary at a date to be established by the Secretary.

Sec. 6. The Secretary shall review the plans of the designated executive departments and agencies and develop for submission to the President for his approval an integrated Federal plan (Federal Plan) to increase the participation of Asian American and Pacific Islander businesses in executive branch programs through equal access to such programs where such organizations may be underserved. Actions described in the Federal Plan shall address improving access by Asian American and Pacific Islander businesses to Federal programs and fostering advances in relevant research and data as it pertains to community economic development. The Secretary shall disseminate the Federal Plan, to the extent the Plan is approved by the President, to appropriate members of the executive branch. The findings and recommendations in the Federal Plan shall be followed by the designated executive departments and agencies in their policies and activities, to the extent permitted by law and as practicable.

Sec. 7. Insofar as the Federal Advisory Committee Act, as amended (5 U.S.C. App.) (the "Act"), may apply to the administration of any portion of this order, any functions of the President under the Act, except that of reporting to the Congress, shall be performed by the Secretary in accordance with the guidelines issued by the Administrator of General Services.

Sec. 8. Members of the Commission shall serve without compensation, but shall be allowed travel expenses, including *per diem* in lieu of subsistence, as authorized by law for persons serving intermittently in the Government service (5 U.S.C. 5701–5707). To the extent permitted by law and appropriations, and where practicable, executive departments and agencies shall, upon request by the Secretary, provide assistance to the Commission and to the Working Group, and the Department of Commerce shall provide administrative support and funding for the Commission.

Sec. 9. The Commission shall terminate 2 years from the date of this order, unless renewed by the President.

Sec. 10. For the purposes of this order, the term: (a) "Asian" includes persons having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent; and the term (b) "Pacific Islander" includes persons having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands.

Sec. 11. The Secretary of Commerce shall consult the Attorney General as appropriate on the implementation of this order to ensure that such implementation affords the equal protection of the laws required by the due process clause of the Fifth Amendment to the Constitution.

Sec. 12. This order is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity, by a party against the United States, its departments, agencies, entities, officers, employees or agents, or any other person.

George W. Bush

The White House,
May 13, 2004.

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register,
10:17 a.m., May 14, 2004]

NOTE: This Executive order was published in the *Federal Register* on May 17.

Remarks to the American Conservative Union 40th Anniversary Gala

May 13, 2004

Thank you all very much. Thanks a lot. I'm honored to join you here for the 40th anniversary of the American Conservative Union. I bring greetings from the A team in my family: Laura Bush. I am a—you got stuck with the junior varsity. [Laughter] I'm a lucky man to be married to Laura. She is a fabulous person, great mom, great wife, and I think she deserves 4 more years as the First Lady.

I just left a meeting with our fabulous Vice President, and he sends his best. He's still pretty proud of his last year in the House, when he received a 100-percent rating from the ACU. He didn't mention that one when you gave him a 90. [Laughter] The ACU doesn't rate Presidents, but a President can rate you. This is a fine group of decent citizens, principled citizens, and tonight I am proud to stand with the ACU.

And I appreciate my friend David Keene, the chairman. This is his 20th anniversary. He is the longest serving chairman in ACU history. As one of his predecessors said about David's long tenure, "So long as it's not a paying job, he won't have any competition." [Laughter]

I met David's daughter, Private 1st Class Lisa Keene. And I'm proud that she is volunteering in the United States Army, but not nearly as proud as her dad.

I appreciate being up here with some fine Members of Congress. Senator Mitch McConnell, the dinner cochair, good to see you, Mitch. Thank you. I see Senator Jim Bunning is here today. Thank you for cochairing this as well. I'm pulling for you in the reelection. I know Chris Cox is here as well. Congressman Cox is a fine Member of the Congress and a good friend. And of course, former ACU chairman—I don't think he was the guy that gave me that quote, by the way—and that would be Congressman Phil Crane. Appreciate you being here. I see other Members of the Senate and the House who are here. Thanks for coming; good to see you all.

I know members of my administration are here. I see Kay James, who's the Director of the Office of Personnel Management. I appreciate you being here, Kay. John Bolton, the Under Secretary of State of Arms Control and International Security—[applause]. I told you we were going to get out of the ABM Treaty—[laughter]—and we did. And I want to thank you for your help.

I appreciate being here with a member of the ex-Governors club—I'm a member too—[laughter]—in my friend Jim Gilmore. Good to see you, Jimmy. Thanks for being here.

I like to be around celebrities. You know, I don't get out much. [Laughter] So it's good to rub elbows with Snow. [Laughter] And I appreciate the president of Catholic University, Father David O'Connell, for coming as well. I'm honored you're here.

Some here tonight were there for that first meeting of the ACU in the fall of 1964. Back then, as David mentioned, you weren't feeling too good about the President from Texas. As a matter of fact, you stood behind a good man from Arizona, Barry Goldwater. You knew that the principles he represented, freedom and limited Government and national strength, would eventually carry the day, and you were right. And that day came when President Ronald Reagan—I might add, supported by a great Vice President—[laughter]—came to Washington, DC. President Reagan taught America the power of an optimistic spirit. He also understood the power of ideas to transform our country and to change the world.

The conservative movement has become the dominant intellectual force in American politics, on the strength of writers and thinkers like Whittaker Chambers and Bill Buckley and Russell Kirk. The movement has inspired many hundreds of fine Americans to run for office and to serve in government. It's easy to understand why. On the fundamental issues of our time, conservatives have been right. Conservatives were right that the cold war was a contest of good and evil. And behind the Iron Curtain, people did not want containment; they awaited for liberation. Conservatives were right that the free enterprise system is the path to prosperity and that

free enterprise is the economic system consistent with human freedom and human dignity. Conservatives were right that a free society is sustained by the character of its people, which means we must honor the moral and religious heritage of our great Nation.

These convictions, once defended by a few, are now broadly shared by Americans. And I am proud to advance these convictions and these principles as I stand for reelection in 2004.

I'm looking forward to the campaign. I'm looking forward to taking our message to the American people. And it's going to be a tough campaign. I need your help. I'm running for a reason. You're about to hear why. I've got a purpose to be your President for 4 more years. I'm running against a person who has got a lot of experience. He just shares a different philosophy from us.

When the nonpartisan National Journal did his ratings, they found that my opponent had the most liberal record of all 100 United States Senators. That's a heck of a feat. [Laughter] It isn't very easy to make Ted Kennedy the conservative Senator from Massachusetts.

My opponent has earned more than Senator Kennedy's endorsement. You may have heard he claims to have picked up some endorsement from foreign leaders as well. [Laughter] He just won't give us their names. He did drop a hint the other day on national TV when he was asked about the leaders. "What I said is true," is what he said—he, my opponent. "What I said is true. I mean, you can go to New York City, and you can be in a restaurant, and you can meet a foreign leader." [Laughter] I've got a hunch this whole thing might be a case of mistaken identity. [Laughter] Just because somebody has an accent—[laughter]—a nice suit, and a good table at a fancy restaurant doesn't make him a foreign leader. [Laughter]

Whoever these mystery men are, they're not going to be deciding the election. The American people will be deciding this election. And great events will turn on this election. The man who sits in the Oval Office will set the course of the war on terror and the direction of our economy. The security and prosperity of America are at stake. The voters this year are going to have a clear

choice. It's an unmistakable choice between keeping the tax relief that is moving our economy forward or putting the burden of higher taxes back on the American people. It is a choice between an America that leads the world with strength and confidence or an America that is uncertain in the face of danger.

The other side hasn't offered much yet in the way of clear strategies to win the war or to expand our economy. Thus far, all we've heard is old bitterness and outbursts, instead of calm debate. They will learn that anger is not an agenda for America's future.

I look forward to taking on the big issues, setting big goals, with optimism and resolve and determination, and I will make it clear to the American people, I stand ready to lead this Nation for 4 more years.

A big issue for every family in America is the Federal tax burden. With the largest tax relief since Ronald Reagan was President, we've left more money in the hands that earned it. By spending and investing and helping create new jobs, the American people have used their money far better than the Federal Government would have.

This economy is strong, and it is getting stronger. Last month, America added 288,000 new jobs. Manufacturing jobs have increased for 3 straight months. Since August, our economy has added more than 1.1 million new jobs. In the first quarter of 2004, the economy grew at a strong rate of 4.2 percent, and over the past year, economic growth has been the fastest in nearly two decades. Business investment is up. Inflation is low. Mortgage and interest rates are near historic lows. The homeownership rate in America is the highest ever. America's economy is the fastest growing of any major industrialized nation. The tax relief we passed is working.

There's a difference of taxes in this campaign. My opponent has a different view. When we passed an increase in the child credit to help families, he voted "no." When we reduced the marriage penalty, he voted against it. When we created a lower 10-percent bracket for working families, he voted "no." When we reduced taxes on dividends that helps our senior citizens, he said "no." When we gave small businesses tax incentive

to expand and hire, he voted against it. When we phased out the death tax, he voted "no." I think we got a trend here. [Laughter]

It's easier to get a "yes" vote out of him when it comes to raising taxes. That's his record. Senator Kerry has voted over 350 times for higher taxes on the American people. He supported higher gas taxes 11 times and once favored a tax increase of 50 cents a gallon. That would cost you another \$5 or more every time you fill up your tank. With that kind of money, you'd think he'd throw in a free car wash. [Laughter]

My opponent has proposed a lot of new spending, and we're counting. At last count, he's proposed \$1.9 trillion of new spending, and the election is 6 months away. [Laughter] He's going to have to pay for that somehow. Of course, you've heard the old, tired rhetoric of how he's going to pay for it. He's going to tax the rich, but there's not enough money to pay for all those new programs by taxing the rich. He's got what we call a tax gap. That gap needs a lot of money to pay for all his promises. And given his record, there's no doubt where that money is going to come from. It's going to come from the working people in America. The good news is, we're not going to give him the chance.

The American people know what you and I know, that higher taxes would undermine growth and destroy jobs, just as this economy is getting stronger. No, I have a better idea. We should keep taxes low. We will not raise taxes on the American people.

We must do more to keep this economy growing and make sure America is the best place to do business in the world. We need to maintain spending discipline in our Nation's Capital. I look forward to working with Members of the United States Congress to do just that. We have a plan to protect small-business owners and employees from frivolous and needless lawsuits. We need tort reform out of the United States Congress.

I've developed plans and a strategy to help control the cost of health care by giving people better access through association health care plans and tax-free health savings accounts. And for the sake of affordability and availability of good medicine, we need to pass medical liability reform out of the United States Senate.

As we are learning at our gas pumps, this country needs an energy plan. We need an energy strategy, one that encourages conservation, one that develops alternative uses for energy, one that modernizes the electricity grid. But we need to make sure we use our coal resources, our natural gas resources, our nuclear resources. We need to become less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

In order to make sure we grow our economy, we need to reject economic isolationism. We've opened our markets, for the sake of consumers, to other countries. Rather than walling ourselves off and stopping the creation of new jobs, we need to get other countries to open up their markets for us. When you're good at something, we ought to promote it. We're good at manufacturing things. We're good at growing things. Our technology sector is the best in the world. We need to be opening up markets so people can find jobs here in America.

What I'm telling you is, if you're interested in job creation in America, you need to re-elect a President who's pro-growth, pro-entrepreneur, and pro-small-business, and that's George W. Bush.

I'll tell you something else we understand loud and clear, and that is a hopeful society is one that encourages ownership. We want more people owning their own home. There's a homeownership gap in America. Not enough minorities own their own home. We've got plans to make sure people from all walks of life have a chance to say, "This is my home. Welcome to my home." We want more people owning their own small business. We want people owning and managing their own health care plan. We want younger workers to own and manage their own retirement accounts. See, we understand, when people have assets to call their own, they gain independence and security and dignity. See, I believe in private property so much, I want every American to have some.

On issue after issue, the American people have a clear choice. My opponent is against personal retirement accounts, against giving patients more control over their medical decisions through health savings accounts, against providing parents more choices over

education for their children, against tax relief for all Americans. He seems to be against every idea that gives Americans more authority and more choices and more control over our own lives.

The other side will make a lot of promises over the next 6 months. The American people need to listen closely, because there is a theme. Every promise will increase the power of politicians and bureaucrats over your income, over your retirement, over your health care, over your children's education. It's the same old Washington mindset: They'll give the orders, and we'll pay the bills. I've got news for him. America has gone beyond that way of thinking, and we are not going back.

Our future also depends on America's leadership in the world. The momentum of freedom in our time is strong, but we still face serious dangers. Al Qaida is wounded but not broken. Terrorists are testing our will in Afghanistan and Iraq. Regimes in North Korea and Iran are challenging the peace. If America shows weakness and uncertainty in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This will not happen on my watch.

This Nation is strong and confident in the cause of freedom. We know that freedom is not America's gift to the world. Freedom is the Almighty's gift to every man and woman in this world.

Because of our principled stand and clear speaking, today, no friend or enemy doubts the word of the United States of America. America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Afghanistan. The Taliban chose defiance, and the Taliban is no longer in power. America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the dictator in Iraq. He chose defiance, and now he sits in a prison cell.

September the 11th, 2001, taught a lesson I will never forget and America must never forget. America must confront threats before they fully materialize. In Iraq, my administration looked at the intelligence, and we saw a threat. Members of the United States Congress from both political parties looked at the intelligence, and they saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence, and it saw a threat. As a matter of fact, the previous administration and

Congress looked at the intelligence and made regime change in Iraq the policy of the United States.

In 2002, the U.N. Security Council, yet again, demanded a full accounting of Saddam Hussein's weapons programs. They remembered what we remembered. They remembered he attacked countries in his neighborhood. They remembered that he paid suiciders to kill innocent Israelis. They remembered he had ties to terrorist organizations. They remembered that he used weapons of mass destruction against his own people. As he had for over a decade, Saddam Hussein refused to comply with the demands of the free world. So I had a choice to make: Either trust the word of a madman, or defend America. Given that choice, I will defend America every time. [Applause] Thank you.

My opponent admits that Saddam Hussein was a threat. He just didn't support my decision to remove Saddam from power. Maybe he was hoping Saddam would lose the next Iraqi election. [Laughter]

We showed the dictator and a watching world that America means what it says. Because our coalition acted, Saddam's torture chambers are closed. Because we acted, Iraq's weapons programs are ended forever. Because we acted, nations like Libya have gotten the message and have renounced their own weapons programs. Because we acted, an example of democracy is rising at the heart of the—at the very heart of the Middle East. Because we acted, the world is more free, and America is more secure.

We face challenges in Iraq, and there's a reason why. Illegal militias, remnants of the regime, and foreign terrorists are trying to take the power they can never gain by the ballot. They hate free societies. They can't stand the thought of freedom arising in a part of the world that they want to control. They know that a free Iraq will be a major defeat in the war on terror. They find little support amongst the Iraqi people. And they will find no success in their attempt to shake the will of the United States of America. They don't understand us in this country. We will never be intimidated by thugs and assassins.

We're on the offense in Iraq. We will defeat them there so we do not have to face

them in our own country. And we're not alone. Other nations are helping. They're helping because they understand the historic opportunity we have. They understand the stakes. They know that a free Iraq will be an agent for change in a part of the world that so desperately needs freedom and peace.

The Iraqi people want to run themselves. And so, on June 30th, a sovereign Iraqi interim Government will take office. And there will be tough times ahead. These are not easy tasks. They are essential tasks. And America will finish what we have begun, and we will win this essential victory in the war on terror.

On national security, Americans have a clear choice. My opponent says he approves of bold action in the world but only if other countries don't object. I'm for united action. I believe in building coalitions. We have built coalitions in Afghanistan. We have built coalitions in Iraq. We have built coalitions to stop the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, but I will never turn over America's national security decisions to leaders of other countries.

Some are skeptical that the war on terror is really a war at all. My opponent said, "The war on terror is far less of a military operation, and far more of an intelligence-gathering, law enforcement operation." I disagree. Our Nation followed this approach after the World Trade Center was bombed in 1993. The matter was handled in the courts and thought by some to be settled. And yet, the terrorists were still training in Afghanistan. They were still plotting in other nations. They were still drawing up more ambitious plans. After the chaos and carnage of September the 11th, it is not enough to serve our enemies with legal papers. With those attacks, the terrorists and their supporters declared war on the United States of America, and war is what they got.

Winning the war requires us to give our troops the best possible support. I want to thank the Members of Congress who are here for supporting the \$87 billion appropriations, called a supplemental, that I encouraged them to spend last fall. We owe it to our troops to support them. Not everybody voted for the \$87 billion, however. When asked why my opponent didn't vote for it, here is what he said, "I actually did vote for

the \$87 billion before I voted against it." [Laughter] The American President must speak clearly and mean what he says.

Our men and women in the military are taking great risks on our behalf. We've got a fantastic United States military. The conduct of a few inside an Iraqi prison was disgraceful. Their conduct does not represent the character of the men and women who wear our uniform, nor does it represent the character of the United States of America.

At bases across our country and the world, I've had the privilege of meeting with those who defend our country and sacrifice for our security. I've seen their great decency and unselfish courage, and I assure you, ladies and gentlemen, the cause of freedom is in really good hands.

This Nation is prosperous and strong, yet we need to remember that our greatest strength is in the hearts and souls of our citizens. We're strong because of the values we try to live by, courage and compassion, reverence and integrity. We're strong because of the institutions that help give us direction and purpose, our families, our schools, and our religious congregations. These values and institutions are fundamental to our lives, and they deserve the respect of our Government.

We stand for the fair treatment of faith-based groups so they can receive Federal support for their works of compassion and healing. We stand for welfare reforms that require work and strengthen marriage, which have helped millions of Americans find independence and dignity. We stand for a culture of life in which every person matters and every person counts. We stand for institutions like marriage and family, which are the foundations of our society.

And we stand for judges who strictly and faithfully interpret the law. I have nominated people from all walks of life to serve on our bench, highly qualified, decent Americans, men and women who will not undermine democracy by legislating from the bench. Yet, because a small group of United States Senators are willfully obstructing the process, many of my nominees have been forced to wait months, years, for an up-or-down vote. The needless delays in the system are harming the administration of justice, and they are deeply unfair to the nominees themselves. It

is time for liberal Senators to stop playing politics with American justice.

The culture of this country is changing. It is changing from one that has said, "If it feels good, do it," and "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each of us understands we are responsible for the decisions we make in life. If you are fortunate enough to be a mother or father, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart. If you're worried about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you're responsible for doing something about it. If you are a CEO in corporate America, you are responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And in the responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourselves.

For all Americans, these years in our history will always stand apart. There are quiet times in the life of a nation when little is expected of its leaders. These aren't one of those times. You and I are living in a period when the stakes are high, the challenges are difficult, a time when firm resolve is needed.

None of us will ever forget that week when one era ended and another began. On September the 14th, 2001, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers. It is a day that I will never forget. There were firefighters and policemen in the crowd shouting, "Whatever it takes." A guy in a hardhat looked at me and said, "Don't let me down." As we all did that day, these men and women searching through the rubble took it personally. I took it personally. I have a responsibility that goes on. I will never relent in bringing justice to our enemies. I will defend the security of America, whatever it takes.

In these times, I've also been witness to the character of this Nation. Not so long ago, some had their doubts about the American character, our capacity to meet serious challenges or to serve a cause greater than self-interest. But Americans have given their answer. I've seen the unselfish courage of our troops. I've seen the heroism of Americans in the face of danger. I've seen the spirit of service and compassion renewed in our country. And we've all seen our Nation unite in common purpose when it mattered most.

We will need all these qualities for the work ahead. We have a war to win, and the world is counting on us to lead the cause of freedom and peace. We have a duty to spread opportunity to every corner of this country. This is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it, and we know that for our blessed land, the best days lie ahead.

May God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:05 p.m. at the J.W. Marriott Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to former Gov. James S. Gilmore III of Virginia; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Remarks at a Victory 2004 Luncheon in Bridgeton, Missouri

May 14, 2004

The President. Thanks for coming. Please be seated. As Kimmy Brauer said, we have done extremely well with a few people. [Laughter] This is the way we like to do it in politics. I want to thank you all for your generosity. I want to thank you for helping to make sure that our ground game in the great State of Missouri is as good as it can possibly be.

We won the State in 2000, and there's no doubt in my mind we're going to carry it in 2004, and one of the reasons why is because of your generosity. And another reason why is because we're going to be really well-organized. And finally, a reason why is because our message is so positive and hopeful for all the citizens of this State. I mean, when the campaign is all said and done, people will realize we've got a plan to make the country safer and stronger and better.

I think there's a lot of reasons to put me back in office for 4 more years. But perhaps the most important reason to send me back up there is so that Laura can be the First Lady for 4 more years. She is really, really a great soul and a wonderful wife, a fantastic mother, and is really making a difference in a lot of people's lives. Both of us have come to realize that the President and the First Lady have got a fantastic opportunity to affect people's lives in positive ways.

I'm going to Concordia University Wisconsin after this, to give the graduation speech. My speech is on compassion. My

speech will be an attempt to remind the graduates that they can change our society with good hearts. And Laura and I have come to realize that by asking people to serve and by calling on people to teach children to read or, in her case, making sure that literacy is spread throughout the country through the library—a vibrant library system, for example, that we can make a positive difference. And she's making a heck of a good difference for the country, and I'm really proud of her. And she sends her love, by the way.

And the Vice President sends his best. We have got a great Vice President. He's a steady—as we say in west Texas, he's a steady hand. [Laughter] He's a good man, and I'm proud to serve with him, and I look forward to serving with him for 4 more years.

I also have got to tell you the Attorney General from the great State of Missouri is doing a fabulous job—John Ashcroft. I'm proud of his service.

And I appreciate Foxy and Marilyn. I call him "Foxy." I hope that's all right. Turn the cameras off. [Laughter] I appreciate Sam and Marilyn for their friendship, and I want to thank you for your help here.

I appreciate the Ambassador and Kimmy for opening up this garage. [Laughter] I'm glad you polished the vehicles for us today. [Laughter] But thanks for doing that.

I love being with my family, and as you've heard me say before, I lucked out when it came to uncles, particularly with Bucky Bush and Patty—thank you all for coming—and cousins, Scott and Lindsey, as well as George Walker is with us. I appreciate all of my family members for hanging in there with me.

I appreciate Ann Wagner, who is the co-chairman of the entire Republican Party, and she is doing a great job. My friend Mercer Reynolds is here. He is the national finance chairman of the Victory Committee. He was chairman of the Bush-Cheney Committee, and then we finished that task, and then we gave him another task. He did such a good job that we said, "Stay involved," and he is. Where are you, Merce? There you are, right there. Thanks for coming, great to see you.

And of course, I'm proud to be here with Rosemary's little boy, Jack. [Laughter] That would be Jack Oliver. He's doing a great job. And he's the national finance vice-chairman,

which means Mercer tells him what to do, and then he goes and does it—[laughter]—or he tells Mercer what to do. [Laughter]

I'm so honored members of the congressional delegation are here. I remember campaigning hard with Jim Talent, feeling very comfortable that he would make a great Senator, and he is making a great United States Senator. I'm proud you're here, Senator. Thanks for coming. And wife, Brenda, is with us here as well. Thank you, Brenda.

Todd Akin is the Congressman—are you the Congressman from this particular spot? You are? This is your district?

Representative Akin. Technically, the line was redrawn a little bit. We're just south, but we're very close. [Laughter]

The President. We're close to Congressman Akin's district. [Laughter] I appreciate you coming, Todd. You're doing a great job, and his wife, Lulli, is with us. Thanks for coming.

And finally, Kenny Hulshof is with us, along with Renee. Kenny, thanks for coming. I'm proud you're here. Thanks for coming to the big city.

Finally, Ann Dickinson is the national committeewoman, is with us. Ann, thanks for your leadership. It's important to point out the grassroots activists because they're the people who are going to turn out the vote. My job is to carry the message. Your job is to turn out the vote, and we're counting on you. As I said, we did a great job here in Missouri last time. There's no doubt in my mind we will carry this State again.

I intend to spend time here, working here. I have done so in the past. As you might remember, I fired a slider at them the other day at Busch Stadium. A little disappointed they jerked me out of the game early—[laughter]—but I enjoyed it. And I love coming to the State. I think as we campaign, it's important to spend a little time looking back—but not much. The only time a candidate should look backwards is to remind people about the seriousness of the intentions when you move forward. In other words, you look back to say to people, "I can handle challenges." On the other hand, you say that to say, "And here's what I intend to do." And since you've done what you said

you were going to do in the past, it adds credibility to the message.

And we've done some things in the past 3 years that I think it's important for you to remind your friends about. First, the President has got to put together an administration that can handle the good and the bad. In other words, the ability to react to the uncertain is an important part of the Presidency. I put together a fabulous team, really capable, honorable, decent people, people from all walks of life. We've got some of the—I think I've empowered more women than any President, at least empowered women in high positions than any President. That may be a somewhat of exaggeration, but I'm telling you, when you listen to the Condi Rices of the world or the Margaret Spellings of the world or the Harriet Miers of the world—these are all senior members of my team who give me good advice. And the team I brought together are there to serve the country first and only. And that's important for the American people to understand.

And thankfully, we had a good team, because we had to face some very difficult challenges. We faced a recession. When we came into office, the country was headed into recession, and the stock market had been declining since March of 2000. And so we acted. I mean, instead of kind of wringing our hands trying to figure out what to do, we acted. We went to the Congress, delivered historic tax relief. The recession was one of the shallowest in economic history, and as result of the tax relief, our economy is strong.

And then we found corporate crimes. And I know everybody here agrees with me that the actions of a few of the corporate citizens just needed to be taken care of in a firm way. And we passed laws—we worked with both Republicans and Democrats to pass corporate reforms, good, strong corporate reforms. The message is clear that we're not going to tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America.

The corporate decisionmaking that was not up to standards, up to high standards that we expect in America, affected us. It affected our economic growth, and it affected the country in a negative way. It just did. But

we're recovering from that period because we took action.

Obviously, September the 11th was a defining moment in this administration, just like it was a defining moment in the country. We saw war and grief arrive on one day, in one moment. And—but we took action. I realized we were at war. And we called countries together and put our own military in action and have taken down a lot of the Al Qaida network. And we're after them to this day, and we'll stay after them so long as I'm the President.

We confronted the dangers of state-sponsored terror. We saw threats to our national security, and as a result of the action we took, two of the most violent and dangerous regimes on the face of the Earth have been removed. Fifty million people have been liberated. I mean, this country is not only protecting ourselves, but we are proudly the armies of liberation, so people can live in freedom around the world.

When we got to Washington, the military was underfunded, and it wasn't—it was underappreciated. It was a problem that I recognized, and we acted again. We worked with Congress, and I want to thank the Members of Congress here who recognized the need for us to provide for defense budgets that would make sure our military had the resources they deserved and needed. And today, no one can doubt the skill or the strength or the spirit of the United States military.

So what I'm telling you is, is that we—I've made decisions. We've dealt with problems. I will argue the world is better off because of decisionmaking that I have made. But it's important for the American people to realize that whoever holds the Oval Office will deal with problems that we may never foresee. And you must be prepared to deal with those problems, and I have shown the American people I'm capable of dealing with them.

See, I believe the President's job is to confront problems, not to pass them on to future Presidents and future generations. That's the job of a leader. That's how I have led, and that's how I will continue to lead. Now, we've got a tough race, and it's an important race,

because the person who sits in the Oval Office will set the course of the war on terror and will make decisions about the direction of our economy. In other words, the way I like to put it is, the security and prosperity of America are at stake in this election.

And I'm running against a person who has been in Washington a long time, which means he's experienced. It also means he's taken positions on issues. He's been there long enough to take both sides of just about every issue—[laughter]—had there been a third side—[laughter]—kind of the ultimate triangulation. [Laughter] You know, I was—we had an interesting debate the other day—or not a debate, a discussion about the role of foreign leaders in the campaign. I don't know if you remember that. He claimed he had gotten some endorsements from foreign leaders. And he just wouldn't tell us who they were. Now, he was quoted about this on a TV show the other day or a news show, and here's what he said. He said, "You know, what I said is true. I mean, you can go to New York City, and you can be in a restaurant, and you can meet a foreign leader." [Laughter] I think this is a case of mistaken identity. [Laughter] I mean, just because somebody has an accent—[laughter]—or a nice suit or a fancy table does not make him a foreign leader. [Laughter]

The good news is, foreign leaders—or mistaken foreign leaders—won't be deciding the election. The people of this country will decide this election. I look forward to taking our message to the people. I've got a message that is confident and optimistic and positive, and that's what I'm going to be talking about. And there will be a clear choice. There will be a choice, for example, between keeping the tax relief that is working or taxing the American people. It will be a choice between an America that leads the world with strength and confidence or an America that is uncertain in the face of danger.

And this is a campaign that is going to require a—candidates to lay out the strategy to win the war on terror and a strategy to make sure our economy is the best place in the world to do business so people can find work. And yet, thus far in the debate, all we've heard is angry partisan rhetoric. And my opponent will find out that anger is not

an agenda for the future of the country. The American people want to know what you stand for, not what you stand against.

And so people learned what I stood for when it came time to dealing with an economy that was slowing down. See, I understand a big issue for every family is the Federal tax burden. And because we left more money in the hands that earned it, the economy is strong, and it's getting stronger. The way I like to put it is, by spending and investing and to—helping create new jobs, the American people have used their money far better than the Federal Government would have.

It's an important part of our philosophy to trust people with their own money. And the results are good, and they're getting better. I mean, last month, we created—America added 288,000 new jobs. These were jobs that were not—these jobs were created because the entrepreneurial spirit is strong. People have got confidence in the future. After all, manufacturing jobs, which had been declining, are now increasing.

The economy grew at 4.2 percent, and over the past year, economic growth has been the fastest in nearly two decades. That's strong growth. I'll tell you another statistic that I love is the fact that homeownership rates in America are the highest ever. It is a fantastic statistic, when you think about it. I mean, we want people owning their own home. We want people owning their own business. We want people owning their own—and managing their own retirement accounts. I mean, we want ownership that's good for the country.

The economy is strong. It is getting stronger. The tax relief we passed is working, and the fundamental question is, how are you going to keep the economy strong? What are you going to do about it? This is going to be a good debate for the country to hear, because the truth of the matter is, I'm running against a fellow who has got a record on taxes. First of all, he voted against every one of the tax decreases I proposed. He voted against raising the child credit, which helps families. He voted against lowering the marriage penalty. He voted against creating the new 10-percent tax rate. He voted against getting rid of the death tax. He voted against

small-business incentives. He has voted against every single tax decrease that helped the economy grow. Yet, when it came time to voting for taxes, he's got a record there too. He voted for increasing taxes 350 times as a United States Senator.

And here we are in the campaign, and we're beginning to tote up the amount of money he's promising the American people. See, it's easy to get in the campaign and say, "I promise you I'm going to spend money here, and I promise you I'm spending money there." We've submitted our budget. The Congress has got my budget. They've got my promises, which shows we can cut the deficit in half by 5 years. He hasn't submitted a budget yet, but we're helping him submit one because we're watching every promise. He's promised over \$1.9 trillion of new spending thus far. And we've got 6 months to go. [Laughter] We're just getting started.

And he says he's going to pay for it by taxing the rich. Now, we've heard that rhetoric before. You can't raise even close to \$1.9 trillion by taxing the rich. So I will continue to remind the people that there's a difference between what he has promised and what he can raise by taxing the rich—it's called a "tax gap." And given his record of voting for tax increases 350 times for the American people, he's going to fill the tax gap by taxing the working people of this country, and it's an issue.

The good news is, the American people understand that if we raise taxes now, it will wreck the economic growth and make it hard to find work. The good news is, he's not going to have a chance to raise taxes on the American people because we're not going to give him the chance.

I mentioned to you that the task of a President is to make sure that economic growth is vibrant and strong not only this year but in years to come. The role of our Government is to create an environment in which small businesses can grow to be big businesses, in which people feel comfortable risking capital. It's not—the role of the Government is not to create wealth but an environment in which people are comfortable about risking capital to realize their dreams.

And so I look forward to the debate about how to make sure that the economic growth

we have today is sustainable. One is, we've got to have fiscal discipline in Washington, and I look forward to working with the Members of Congress to see that that's the case. Secondly, we need tort reform. We need tort reform at the Federal level, and we need tort reform at the State levels as well. I have been pushing for tort reform in the Halls of Congress. I will continue to push for tort reform in the Halls of Congress. We need asbestos litigation reform. We need class action reform, and we need medical liability reform as part of a cost containment strategy for health care costs.

The practice of defensive medicine costs our Government billions of dollars a year. In other words, when you have frivolous and junk lawsuits, it causes people to say, "Gosh, in order not to get sued, I will have defensive medicine practices." It not only costs us billions of dollars at the Federal level and, therefore, the taxpayers billions of dollars; it makes it very difficult for small businesses to grow to be big businesses and large businesses to feel comfortable about hiring new people.

As well I appreciate Senator Talent leading the charge on association health care plans, which will enable small businesses to pool risk across jurisdictional boundaries to make sure that the small-business employee can have affordable health care. I'm also a strong proponent of what's called health savings accounts. I truly believe they're going to help change the marketplace for health care. On the one hand, they make sure that the patient-doctor relationship is the cornerstone of health care decisionmaking, not the Federal Government. On the other hand, it provides good incentive for people to reduce the cost of health care. So we've got a strategy to make sure that America is the best place in the world to do business by containing the cost of health care.

Listen, when you go to the gasoline pumps here in America, it makes you realize we need a—that Congress needs to implement the plan I submitted, an energy plan. We've laid out a strategy to make us less dependent on foreign sources of energy; yet it can't get out of the Congress. I'm not blaming the Members of Congress here or Senator Talent, but it's stuck. We need an energy bill

on my desk that will do a couple of things. We need to encourage conservation. We need alternative sources of energy.

Listen, I would love to be in a position to be able to say, "The corn harvest in Missouri is up and, therefore, we're less dependent on foreign sources of energy. Soybeans are plentiful this year. We're less dependent on foreign sources of energy because of biodiesel." And this is all very possible. In the meantime, while we wait for technologies to come on line that are cost effective, we need to use our coal resources wisely. Therefore, we need clean coal technology to be expanded. We need to be exploring for natural gas, which I'm confident we can do in our hemisphere, in our country in environmentally friendly ways.

It seems like to me we ought to be using technology to make sure that our nuclear power industry can build safe nuclear powerplants. But it makes sense to me to be expanding nuclear power, which is clean and reliable and doesn't—it makes us less dependent on foreign—what I'm telling you is, in order to be competitive, not only this year but for decades to come, the Congress needs to pass an energy bill, and this country needs to become less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

Finally, an issue is the trade issue. It's very important for the President to be confident about America's capacity and ability to compete overseas. The tendency is to isolate us from the world. When people say, "Oh, gosh, we've got—you know, trade is tough. Therefore, let's build up walls and barriers," that, to me, would make it very difficult for people to find good jobs. In order to expand the job base, we've got to be opening up markets rather than shutting down markets.

Listen, Presidents before me have made the decision to open up our country's markets to foreign goods because it's good for consumers. If you're an American consumer, you've got more to choose from; you're probably going to get a better product at a better price. If that's the case, why don't we get countries to treat us the same? That's the policy of this administration. We're vigorously opening up other markets so our Missouri farmers—and by the way, the farm economy is really strong right now. And one

of the reason why it's strong is because we're selling Missouri products overseas.

We've got to be confident in our ability to compete. We must not be pessimistic about our approach in the world. And so good trade policy, in my judgment, will mean good, high-paying jobs for America. What I'm telling you is, is that this campaign is going to be one that requires—will be competing visions about how to make sure that the job base is strong by making sure America is the best place in the world to do business.

The future also depends on our leadership in the world, and this is going to be an important part of the campaign, a discussion about how best America should lead. Al Qaida is wounded but not broken. And it's very important for the American people to know that. There are terrorists who test our will in Iraq and Afghanistan. There are regimes in North Korea and Iran that are challenging the peace. If this country shows weakness and uncertainty in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This isn't going to happen on my watch. The—I think the Nation is strong and confident in the cause of freedom, and I intend to keep it that way.

An essential part of the foreign policy of this country is that we understand that freedom is not America's gift to the world, that freedom is the Almighty God's gift to each man and woman in this world. And as a responsible citizen of the world, we have the responsibility to help people live free lives. I believe freedom changes the world. I know free societies are peaceful societies.

The other thing that's important is for the President to speak clearly and mean what he says. Today, nobody, friend or enemy, doubts the word of the United States of America. We gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Afghanistan. They defied the ultimatum, and now they're no longer in power. The world is better off for it. America is more secure, and as importantly, the people of Afghanistan are more free.

Remember what conditions were like prior to my decision. We had young girls in that country who had no education at all because the Taliban refused to let them go to school. It's hard for the American people to understand that people could be so barbaric in

their behavior, that this is the way these people were. And for the good of those young girls and for the good of people who have dreams and aspirations, just like we have dreams and aspirations in the country—in this country, the Taliban are gone.

And so are the training camps and safe havens. I laid out the Bush doctrine, which said, “If you harbor a terrorist, if you feed a terrorist, you’re just as guilty as the terrorist,” and we enforced that doctrine for the sake of peace and freedom.

We also gave an ultimatum to the dictator in Iraq. And he chose defiance. Of course, he had a chance to make the decision; the decision was his to make. And now, he sits in a prison cell. It is very important for the country never to forget the lessons of September the 11th: One, there’s an enemy which hates us that must be pursued at all costs. And two, that we must confront threats before they fully materialize. That’s what—one of the things that changed on September the 11th as far as policy goes. In the past, we could take a look and see a problem and maybe hope it would go away, because we were protected by oceans. Or it could be a problem, and maybe just—it wouldn’t affect us. It might affect somebody else but not America. That changed on that day.

In Iraq, we looked at intelligence and saw a threat. The Congress looked at the intelligence—both Republicans and Democrats in Congress looked at the intelligence; they saw the threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence; it saw a threat. And so, in 2002, the U.N. Security Council said, once again, to Saddam Hussein, “a full accounting of your weapons programs.”

The reason the world acted—because not only did we look at intelligence, we remembered the nature of the man. We knew that he had attacked his neighborhood. We knew had paid suiciders to go in and kill innocent Israelis. We knew he had terrorist ties. The person responsible for the Berg death, Zarqawi, was in and out of Baghdad prior to our arrival, for example. But we also remembered vividly the fact that he used weapons of mass destruction against his own people. We—it was just not the United States who remembered the fact. The United Na-

tions Security Council, in a 15-to-nothing vote, remembered that.

And so they said to Saddam Hussein, “Give us a full accounting of what you’ve got,” and he defied the world again. This wasn’t the first time that he defied the world. He had defied the world over and over. So I have a choice to make: Trust him, hope he changes his habits, or defend the country. Given that choice, I will defend America every time.

Because we acted, we showed a watching world that America means what it says. And I believe, therefore, the world will be more peaceful. Because we acted, Saddam’s torture chambers are closed. It’s important for the American people to remember that. Because we acted, the weapons programs—Iraq’s weapons programs are ended forever. That’s important for peace and stability in the Middle East. It’s important for our own security. Because we acted, countries like Libya got the message and have renounced their weapons programs. Because we acted, democracy is rising in the heart of the very Middle East. What I’m telling you is, because we acted, America is more secure and the world is more peaceful.

We have tough work in Iraq. And there’s a reason why. There are elements of Saddam’s crowd and foreign fighters who fear a free society. They can’t stand the thought of living in a—they can’t stand the thought of Iraq being free. It would dash their hopes. It would make it impossible for them to realize their grand ambition of dominating through hate and murder. They—and they’re tough fighters, but so are we. And so are a lot of Iraqis.

The Iraqi people want to be free. They’re glad to get rid of Saddam, and they obviously want to run their own country. If I were them, I would want to run my own country too. And that’s why June 30th transfer date is a solemn date. We will transfer sovereignty on June the 30th. We’ll help the Iraqis, of course. In the meantime, these killers are trying to shake our will. That’s what you’re seeing. They want us to be intimidated by their barbaric behavior. They want us to leave. They want us to break a promise. That’s just not the way I think, and it’s not the way

Americans think. We're not going to be intimidated by these thugs and assassins. We will follow our strategy of a free Iraq.

America will be more secure when Iraq is free. These are historic times. It's an historic opportunity. I tell the story about—to make my point there—about a dinner I had with Prime Minister Koizumi, the Prime Minister of Japan, who is a good friend and a good fellow. He and I were talking about how to keep the peace in the Far East, how to make sure that the Korean Peninsula is nuclear-weapons-free. It's an interesting conversation, isn't it, when you're talking about—when the President's father fought the Japanese as a young torpedo bomber, and here I am, talking to the leader of a former enemy about how to make the world more peaceful, what we can do together to help convince Kim Chong-il to get rid of his nuclear weapons program. And during that conversation I realized that someday an American President is going to be talking to a duly elected official from Iraq about how to deal with the threats of that moment, of that era.

These are historic times. Iraq will be free. The world will be different when Iraq is free. People say, "Can you win the war on terror?" Of course we can. We can win the war on terror by being strong and never yielding to the enemy. But we can also win the war on terror by spreading freedom. Free societies are peaceful societies. Free societies are societies that are able to defeat hopelessness and despair.

There's a difference in this election about decisionmaking when it comes to national security matters. I'm running against a fellow who said he approves of bold action in the world but only if other countries do not object. My opponent says that. I believe in united action. And we have put together strong coalitions for Afghanistan and Iraq—over 30 nations in Iraq right now. I will never turn over America's national security decisions to leaders of other countries.

An issue in this race will be an understanding of the nature of the war we face. My opponent said, "The war on terror is far less of a military operation and far more of an intelligence-gathering, law enforcement operation." That's his point of view. I disagree—I disagree. We followed that ap-

proach after the World Trade Center was bombed in 1993. That's how the world viewed the bombing, and the matter was handled in the courts and thought by some to be settled. However, the enemy was still planning and plotting. They were drawing up ambitious plans. After the chaos and carnage of September the 11th, it's not enough to serve enemies with legal papers.

The terrorists and their allies declared war on the country on September the 11th, 2001, and war is what they got. We will use every asset at our disposal—every asset—to defend the security of this country.

And that includes the United States military. We've got a great United States military. The conduct of a few inside the Iraqi prisons was disgraceful, and it does not represent the true character of the American military or the American people. I have had the honor of traveling to bases around the country. I have seen a lot of our troops. I have seen their great decency and their unselfish courage. And I assure you that the hands of—that the cause of freedom and our Nation's security is in really good hands.

Finally, it is very important for the President to understand that even though we're strong and prosperous—and I'll keep us strong, and I'll do everything I can to keep us prosperous—the strength of the country is in the hearts and souls of our citizens. It is very important for people to—a President to understand that Government can hand out money, but it can't cause people to love one another. And yet, many of the problems of society require love and compassion. I mean, amongst our plenty, there are people who are hurt—who hurt, who've got broken hearts, who are addicted to drugs or alcohol, who wonder whether or not anybody loves them at all. And the best way to solve those problems is to rally the spirit of this country and ask people to love their neighbor just like they'd like to be loved themselves, is to call upon people to serve their country by helping save lives with love.

No, the strength—if you understand the strength of the country is in the hearts and souls of the people, then you don't rely upon Government alone to help save lives. You rally the armies of compassion, which I have done and will continue to do as the President.

I think one of the biggest responsibilities of the Presidency is to capture the American spirit, capture that strength of the country, and ask it to serve.

Today in the speech I'm giving—my speech is on compassion, saying to young kids getting out of college, "Here's your chance to serve the country by saving one soul." See, societies change one heart, one soul at a time. And while one graduate can't do everything, one graduate can do something to be the person that makes a difference in somebody's life.

The country's culture is changing from one that has said, "If it feels good, do it," and "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to one in which each of us understands we are responsible for the decisions we make in life. I like to call it the responsibility era. See, if you are fortunate enough to be a mom or a dad, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart. It's your responsibility. If you're worried about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you're responsible for doing something about it.

Oftentimes, people say, "Oh, the Federal Government will fix it." No, you're responsible. If you're a corporate CEO, you're responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. It's part of the responsibility society. And as I mentioned, a responsible society is one in which each of us serves our country by loving our neighbor. And it's happening in the country.

You know, one of the things you see when you're the President, you see the character of America. And I'm constantly thrilled at the millions of acts of kindness that take place on a daily basis that changes the nature of the country and provides such hope.

I want to be your President. I'm here to thank you for your help. I have a reason to run. We have a war to win. We have a responsibility to spread peace and freedom around the world. I'm going to take this message to the American people across our great country. I'm going to take the message of a vision that says, "Everybody has a shot at the American Dream, not just some but every person," a vision that is strong on education, strong on economic opportunity, a vi-

sion that says the ownership society is the cornerstone of a hopeful America.

And finally, I look forward to being the President for 4 more years to continue to tap into the great strength of the country, and that is the—our fellow citizens, the hearts and souls of our citizens. I'm looking forward to this. I'm looking forward to the campaign. I look forward to all aspects of it, and I'm confident, with your help, I'm going to win.

Thank you for coming, and may God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:10 p.m. at the Hunter Engineering Training Company. In his remarks, he referred to Camilla "Kimmy" Brauer, wife of former U.S. Ambassador to Belgium Stephen Brauer; Sam Fox, Missouri State finance chair, Bush-Cheney '04, Inc., and his wife, Marilyn; Ann Dickinson, national committeewoman, Missouri Republican Party; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; American hostage Nicholas Berg, who was killed in Iraq in early May by senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi; Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan; and Chairman Kim Chong-il of North Korea.

Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.

May 8

In the morning, at Camp David, MD, the President had an intelligence briefing.

May 9

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Bush returned to Washington, DC.

May 10

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with President-elect Martin Torrijos of Panama to congratulate him on his May 2 election victory. He then had an intelligence briefing.

Later in the morning, the President traveled to Arlington, VA, where he had a military briefing at the Pentagon. Later, in Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld's office, he viewed photographs and still images concerning the treatment of Iraqi prisoners.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC. Later, in the Oval Office, he participated in a photo opportunity with 2004 Elliot Richardson Prize for Excellence in Public Service recipients Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor and Secretary of Transportation Norman Y. Mineta.

Later in the afternoon, in the Cabinet Room, the President met with Federal Executive agency heads.

The White House announced that the President will welcome President Jose Eduardo dos Santos of Angola to the White House on May 12.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Rome, Italy, on June 4 to meet with President Carlo Azeglio Ciampi and Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi of Italy, that he will also travel to the Vatican to meet with Pope John Paul II, and that he will then travel to Paris and Normandy, France, on June 5.

The White House announced that the President will travel to County Clare, Ireland, on June 25 to participate in the European Union-U.S. Summit, that he will then travel to Ankara, Turkey, on June 27 to meet with President Ahmet Necdet Sezer and Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey, and that he will travel to Istanbul, Turkey, to attend the NATO Summit on June 27-29.

The President announced his intention to nominate Timothy S. Bitsberger to be Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for Financial Markets.

The President announced his intention to nominate Larry C. Kindsvater to be Deputy Director of Central Intelligence for Community Management.

The President announced his intention to nominate James R. Kunder to be Assistant Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development for the Bureau for Asia and the Near East.

The President announced his intention to nominate Joseph F. Bader to be a member

of the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board.

The President announced his intention to appoint John Bryant and Nancy J. Leake as members of the Community Development Advisory Board.

May 11

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Fort Smith, AR, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Alyse Eady. He then traveled to Van Buren, AR.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC.

The President announced his intention to nominate Deborah P. Majoras to be a member, and upon appointment to designate her as Chairman, of the Federal Trade Commission.

The President announced his intention to nominate Brett T. Palmer to be Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Legislative Affairs.

May 12

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by a National Security Council meeting. He then met with Secretary of State Colin L. Powell. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with President Jose Eduardo dos Santos of Angola.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Bethesda, MD, and later returned to Washington, DC. Later, he participated in an interview with Readers Digest.

The President announced his appointment of Carol J. Thompson as Director of the Office of National AIDS Policy.

May 13

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Parkersburg, WV, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Heather Stout.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC.

The President announced his intention to nominate Tom C. Korologos to be Ambassador to Belgium.

The President announced his intention to nominate Cynthia G. Efird to be Ambassador to Angola.

The President announced his intention to designate Nancy C. Pellett as Chairman of the Farm Credit Administration Board.

May 14

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the Roosevelt Room, he met with foreign ministers from G-8 countries.

Later in the morning, the President traveled to St. Louis, MO, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Rev. Mark Reyling. He then traveled to Bridgeton, MO.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Milwaukee, WI, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Rebecca Haupt. He then traveled to Mequon, WI, where he gave the commencement address at Concordia University Wisconsin.

Later in the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC.

The White House announced that the President will welcome Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi of Italy to the White House for a meeting and working dinner on May 19.

Nominations Submitted to the Senate

The following list does not include promotions of members of the Uniformed Services, nominations to the Service Academies, or nominations of Foreign Service officers.

Submitted May 10

Thomas B. Griffith, of Utah, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the District of Columbia Circuit, vice Patricia M. Wald, retired.

Submitted May 11

Joseph F. Bader, of the District of Columbia, to be a member of the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety

Board for a term expiring October 18, 2007, vice Jessie M. Roberson, term expired.

Timothy S. Bitsberger, of Massachusetts, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, vice Brian Carlton Roseboro, resigned.

Larry C. Kindsvater, of Virginia, to be Deputy Director of Central Intelligence for Community Management, vice Joan Avalyn Dempsey, resigned.

James R. Kunder, of Virginia, to be an Assistant Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development, vice Wendy Jean Chamberlin.

Deborah P. Majoras, of Virginia, to be a Federal Trade Commissioner for the unexpired term of 7 years from September 26, 2001, vice Timothy J. Muris, resigned.

Brett T. Palmer, of New York, to be an Assistant Secretary of Commerce, vice Brenda L. Becker.

Craig T. Ramey, of West Virginia, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the National Board for Education Sciences for a term of 2 years (new position).

Submitted May 13

John O. Colvin, of Virginia, to be a Judge of the U.S. Tax Court for a term of 15 years (reappointment).

Linda Morrison Combs, of North Carolina, to be an Assistant Secretary of Transportation, vice Donna R. McLean, resigned, to which position she was appointed during the last recess of the Senate.

Linda Mysliwy Conlin, of New Jersey, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Export-Import Bank of the United States for a term expiring January 20, 2007, vice April H. Foley, to which position she was appointed during the last recess of the Senate.

Cynthia G. Efird,
of the District of Columbia, a career member
of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Angola.

Eugene Hickok,
of Pennsylvania, to be Deputy Secretary of Education, vice William D. Hansen, resigned, to which position he was appointed during the last recess of the Senate.

Tom C. Korologos,
of the District of Columbia, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Belgium.

Edward R. McPherson,
of Texas, to be Under Secretary of Education, vice Eugene Hickok, to which position he was appointed during the last recess of the Senate.

on June 4 and to Paris and Normandy, France, beginning on June 5

Statement by the Press Secretary on the President's upcoming visits to County Clare, Ireland, on June 25–26, to Ankara, Turkey, on June 27, and to Istanbul, Turkey, on June 27–29

Released May 11

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Fact sheet: No Child Left Behind Is Making a Difference for America's Children

Fact sheet: Implementing the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Act of 2003

Released May 12

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President received the report and recommendations of the Presidential Emergency Board appointed in the dispute between the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority and employees represented by the United Transportation Union

Released May 13

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Released May 14

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Statement by the Press Secretary: Visit of Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi of Italy

**Checklist
of White House Press Releases**

The following list contains releases of the Office of the Press Secretary that are neither printed as items nor covered by entries in the Digest of Other White House Announcements.

Released May 9

Statement by the Press Secretary condemning the terrorist attack in the Chechen capital of Grozny

Released May 10

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Statement by Press Secretary on the upcoming visit of President Jose Eduardo dos Santos of Angola on May 12

Statement by the Press Secretary on the President's upcoming visits to Rome, Italy,

**Acts Approved
by the President**

NOTE: No acts approved by the President were received by the Office of the Federal Register during the period covered by this issue.