

always be the happiest of times. But Joe will help Americans deal with the worst in the best, most compassionate way possible.

Thank you for accepting this responsibility.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:15 a.m. in the Columbia Room at the Holiday Inn Cap-

itol At The Smithsonian. In his remarks, he referred to Director Allbaugh's parents, Marvin and Peggy; his brother, Jay; and his wife, Diane, and daughter, Taylor. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Director Allbaugh.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Congressional Leaders and an Exchange With Reporters

March 5, 2001

Santana High School Shootings

The President. Before I talk about the business at hand here, I want to say how saddened we all are to know that two students lost their lives in southern California, others have been injured, in a disgraceful act of cowardice. When America teaches their children right from wrong and teaches values to respect life—and the values that respect life in our country, our country will be better off.

Our hearts go out and our prayers go out to the parents and the teachers and the children whose lives have been completely turned upside down right now.

Q. What can the President do to stop, if anything, to stop children from shooting children?

The President. All of us, all adults in society can teach children right from wrong, can explain there is a—that life is precious. All of us must be mindful of the fact that some people may decide to act out their aggressions or their pain and hurt on somebody else, and be diligent.

We don't know enough of the facts right now, Ron [Ron Fournier, Associated Press], as to what took place. But I do know that first things are first, and that is, our prayers go with the families who lost a child today.

Legislative Agenda

On another matter, I'm honored that Members of the House and the Senate came up to discuss a couple of issues: the budget, Medicare, Medicare funding, Medicare restructuring, and tax relief. We've had a good discussion.

I didn't mention many names of Members during my speech to the Congress nearly a week ago, but most of the names I mentioned are here. And the reason why I talked about Breaux, Frist, and Thomas—and I would have worked in you, Mr. Chairman, but—was because there had been a lot of work done on discussing Medicare modernization in the past. And I believe the framework for a bipartisan consensus about how to make sure the Medicare system fulfills its promise is at hand, and we've got a lot of work to do. But I assured these Members—two chairmen, as well as the Members I just named—that this administration is here to work with them to do what's right for our seniors.

I also appreciate the progress being made on the tax relief package. It will give me a chance to thank the chairman for moving the bill to the floor of the House. The sooner we can get that done, the more likely it is that we'll provide relief for people and provide a second wind for our

economy, and then we'll be able to deal with issues such as Medicare.

Tax Relief Legislation

Q. Mr. President, is your tax bill in trouble? Is that why you're traveling so much this week? Some Democrats think that might be the case.

The President. Oh, I'm—first of all, I like to get out of Washington, Bill [Bill Plante, CBS News]. [Laughter] Secondly, I'm pleased with the progress that we're making. We're going to get a good bill out of both the House and the Senate. I look forward to signing it, and the sooner, the better. But we're making very good progress.

Secondly, I think it's important for the President to get out amongst the people. I'm not only going to be going to North Dakota and South Dakota and Illinois this week, I'm coming down to Louisiana. And I've got a lot of friends in Louisiana, and I'm looking forward to seeing them and talking to them and explaining what's going on in Washington. The American people want to hear from the President, and this will give me a chance to talk about the progress that we're all making together. And we're making good progress.

Q. Mr. President?

The President. Yes, Stretch [David Gregory, NBC News]?

President's Visits to North Dakota and Louisiana

Q. Kent Conrad is one of the opponents of the tax cut plan. You're going to his

State; you're also going to Louisiana, where Mary Landrieu—everyone knows is going to be under pressure to support the bill. Is it a coincidence that you're going to be going there, or is this trip part of the intention to send them a message?

The President. I think there's some methodology in my travels. Not only—you mentioned two fine Senators, and I'm confident we'll be able to work with them as time goes on. Those also happen to be States where the majority of the folks there saw it my way when I was running for President.

I'll be going to States where we've got a good chance of convincing Members in States where maybe there's some obstinance. But nevertheless, I need to get out, and with the people, and talk about the plans and why this plan is fair and why it makes sense and why it's important for the economic vitality of the country. We're making good progress. We'll get a good bill, and I look forward to signing it.

Russia-U.S. Relations

Q. Mr. President, are you going to apologize to the Russians for digging under their Embassy?

The President. You need to talk to the appropriate folks involved with that.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:45 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks Honoring the NCAA Football Champion and Women's Softball Champion University of Oklahoma Sooners
March 5, 2001

The President. Sit down. [Laughter] It's an honor to be here. This is the first championship teams that I've had a chance to

honor since I've been the President. And it's a big deal for a boy from Texas to welcome the folks from Oklahoma here.