

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.

[*Laughter*] I was going to say “my fellow Texans.”

I am so proud of you all. Thank you for coming. Senator, thank you for being here. Congressman, I appreciate you being here. President Boren, you had quite a year—you had quite a year.

First, let me say to the unsinkable bunch of upstarts, the ladies softball team: Congratulations. Coach Patricia Gasso has done a fabulous job, and I’m honored that you all have come. I am fully aware of the dominance of California teams in ladies softball, and you proved that those of us who live in the middle part of the country can win, as well.

And to the football team: Congratulations, coach. I know you’re proud of these people. We share a lot in common. We both started our respective campaigns as underdogs. [*Laughter*] We both won our championships in the State of Florida. [*Laughter*] There’s a big difference though: It took you all 60 minutes; it took me 36 days. [*Laughter*]

But it’s my honor to welcome you all here. I like to remind those who are champions on the field that it’s important to be a champion off the field, too; that there’s a lot of young men and women who look at you all as champs and that adds an added burden, an added sense of responsibility; that if part of our role as role models is to set the—is to explain the difference between right and wrong to people looking at us, then we’ve got to live that way. Being the champ, the national champ, is an awesome responsibility. It means not only do you get to carry a trophy, it means you have the burden of setting the example, of saying to young kids, “Somebody cares about you enough so that we’ll help you make the right choices in life,” so they get to be a champion, not only on the

football fields or on the softball diamonds but in life—in life.

And so, I am so honored you’re here. I really appreciate you coming. I’m proud of your victory. It’s a big deal to be the national champs. But it’s also going to be a big deal to set the right example for some young lady or some young man who wonders whether or not life’s worth it all, as you’ve proven it is. You’ve proven that if you set a goal and work hard, you can achieve it.

And so, congratulations to the great University of Oklahoma teams. I’m proud to welcome you. I’m proud you’re here in the people’s house. It is an honor to be your President, more than you can possibly imagine, and it’s an honor to welcome you here.

God bless.

[*At this point, University of Oklahoma president David L. Boren, head softball coach Patty Gasso, director of athletics Joe Castiglione, and head football coach Bob Stoops each made brief remarks and presented the President with gifts.*]

The President. Well, thank you all for coming. I look forward to shaking everybody’s hand. And I guess it’s time to get a few pictures.

But again, I want to welcome you all here. This is a majestic place, as you can see. It is a magnificent home, and it’s the people’s house. That’s what we like to call it. We’re just temporary residents. But it’s an honor to have you all here. I hope you get a good tour and realize this country is a fantastic place. It’s based upon the greatest principle of all: We’re all free, and we’re all equal under the eyes of God.

God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:45 p.m. in the East Room at the White House.