

Apr. 25 / Administration of George W. Bush, 2001

Remarks on Arrival in Little Rock, Arkansas
April 25, 2001

Thank you all for coming. It's my honor to be back in Arkansas. It's great to be with my friend the Governor. We got to know each other when I was the Governor of a neighboring State. I respected him then; I continue to hold him in high regard. Governor Huckabee is one of the more popular Governors in the country because he's done in office what he said he would do.

It's also my honor to come to Arkansas to support a good friend of mine and a good friend of Arkansas, Senator Tim Hutchinson. This is my first trip as a—my first fundraising trip since I became the President. It's the first time I've really gotten what they call political, and it's for a good cause. This man has done a really good job for the citizens of Arkansas, and I would like to see him returned to the United States Senate after next year's elections. He and I are working together on a lot of issues that matter to the Arkansas folks, a budget that is good for Arkansas, and a tax relief plan that will benefit some 787,000 people who live in this State.

And the budget is focused. We increase a Federal education funding from 366 million to 390 million. We increase Head Start funding from \$57.4 to \$58.5 million. There's an estimated 379 million targeted for highway funding in Arkansas. This is

a responsible budget that leaves room for tax relief, but also focuses on issues that matter to the folks of Arkansas. And coming down on the airplane, he and I spent a lot of time talking about agriculture.

One of the things the Senator talked about was there were a lot of farmers hurting in this State. And I assured him I understood that. And the point I want to make to the people is that when this election comes around in 2002, I hope the people of Arkansas realize how important it is to have a United States Senator who can walk into the Oval Office and say, "Mr. President, the people of Arkansas need your attention." And I can assure you when Tim Hutchinson walks in the Oval Office and says the people of Arkansas need my attention, they're going to get my attention.

And so, it's my honor to be here with this good United States Senator. I urge the people of this State to realize what a good man they've got in office. And I thank the people of this State for the prayers and support they've given me since I've been the President.

God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:07 p.m. at the Little Rock National Airport. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Mike Huckabee of Arkansas.

Remarks at a Reception for Senator Tim Hutchinson in Little Rock
April 25, 2001

Well, Tim, thank you very much. It's my honor to be back in the great State of Arkansas. We were just reminiscing about the campaign. I remember—I was kind of tired, because it was the last day of the campaign, and I was on the airplane flying

into Arkansas, wondering whether or not I could give one final speech. And we landed up there in northwest Arkansas, and there was about—I don't know, 17,000 people inside the area and another 17,000 trying to get in. And I had that funny feeling

right there that not only could I not only give the speech, but I had that feeling things were going to go okay on election day in Arkansas. And they did, and I want to thank you all.

I want to thank Tim Hutchinson for his help in getting me here. More importantly, I want to thank him for his help as a United States Senator. I'm here for one simple reason: This man needs to be returned back to the United States Senate, come elections in 2002.

It's good to see the Lieutenant Governor, Win Rockefeller, and wife, Lisa Ann. Thank you all for being here. Every time I came back to Arkansas, it seemed like Win was able to make time for his old buddy the Governor of Texas, and I appreciate that very much, sir. Thank you very much.

It's great to be here with former State Senator Jim Keet. It's good to see you again. He reminded me in 1988 when I campaigned here for the man we affectionately call "Number 41"—[laughter]—I'm "Number 43"—but we campaigned together for a great President, my dad, in 1998 together, and it's good to see you again, sir.

It's also great—Nick Bacon is here, Medal of Honor winner, an American hero, a man who represents the veterans of this State incredibly well. You need to know, Nick, that the veterans have got a friend in the White House. And it's my honor to be the President, not only the Commander in Chief of those who wear the uniform but a President who understands that those who used to wear the uniform need to be well represented in Washington, just like you're doing here in Arkansas. And Dennis Rainey of the FamilyLife ministry and Pastor Robert Smith, thank you all for being up here.

I'm sorry my wife isn't here with me. She is in Crawford, Texas, and I'm headed to Crawford, Texas, after this speech. [Laughter] They say, "Well, you must not like to live in Washington because you like to go to your ranch or Camp David." Well,

I like to do both. I like—I love my life in the White House. I love getting up every morning and going into this majestic office that we call the Oval Office. As Tim said, it is an honor to be the President of the United States, and I view it that way, but I also like to stay in touch with the people that got me here. I like to get outside of Washington. I like to go to where the space is open, where I can walk around with Spot and Barney, the two family dogs. [Laughter] My wife loves our country—the country house we've got, and so do I, and so I beg your forgiveness for not eating dinner here tonight. I am here to thank you for supporting Tim. I do want to give some remarks about what I think is going on in Washington, but then I'm fixing to get on Air Force One and take it to Crawford, Texas. [Laughter]

By the way, our family is happy. I'm really proud of the work that Laura is doing. She is—people are learning about west Texas women. They sometimes don't say a lot, but when they speak, people do listen. She's a great listener. And she's doing the country a great service by traveling our Nation, convincing people, both young and old alike, to become teachers, reminding people that teaching is a noble profession and that you do the country a great service if you end up in the classroom. We're working on Troops to Teachers programs that take retired teachers—I mean, retired military folks and help them become a teacher. And she, as well, is working with youngsters who are just getting out of college and saying, "Be a teacher. It will be a huge contribution to America," and people are listening. And for that, I am grateful, and I know you are, as well.

As Tim mentioned, I think we are making good progress in Washington, reminding people that we're up there for a reason, and it's not just politics. We're up there to get some things done on behalf of the American people. And Tim's helping—a lot. And he mentioned tax relief.

I want to remind people that before the tax relief debate started because of me, he had already been up there talking about increasing the child credit for people who are raising children in America. Well, now, one of the key ingredients in our tax plan is doubling the child credit, and that's an important part of tax relief. It's an important part of tax relief, particularly when you drop the bottom rate in our Tax Code, like we're advocating. And the reason that's important is because there's a lot of folks in our country who live on the outskirts of poverty who are working hard to get ahead and, as a result of the way this Tax Code is structured, as they begin to get ahead, pay a higher marginal rate on dollars earned than somebody who is successful.

I love to use the example, because it helps make my case as loud—as clearly as I can, about the single lady working in any State in the Union, trying to get ahead. She may have two children. First, it's important for Congress to understand she's got the toughest job in America. Raising children on her own is the hardest work in our country, coupled with the fact that for whatever reason, she's making \$22,000 a year. The way this Tax Code is structured today, for every additional dollar she earns, she pays a higher marginal rate on that dollar than someone making \$200,000 a year. And that is not fair, and that's not what America is about, as far as we're concerned.

So tax relief, when you combine dropping the bottom rate from 15 to 10 and increasing the child credit, it makes the Tax Code more fair and more equitable. It inculcates this principle: The harder you work, the more money you ought to put in your pocket in America. And Tim understands that.

Well, I've heard a lot of the debate about taxes. You know, they say, "Well, George W., he only cares about the wealthy people." That's because I believe if you pay taxes, you ought to get tax relief. What I don't subscribe to is this business about

Washington, DC, people being able to pick and choose the winners. That's code word for targeted tax cuts. That means elected officials get to sit in a room, and they get to say, "This table over here gets tax relief, and this table doesn't." Our attitude is, if you pay taxes, you ought to get relief. That's the only fair thing in America.

We dropped that top rate, just like we dropped the bottom rate. And there are two positive effects when you do so. First of all, it sets a principle, that the Federal Government should take no more than a third of anybody's check. It's time we have some principles in the Tax Code. One, the code ought to be more fair. Two, our Federal Government doesn't need to take more than a third of anybody's check. And secondly, it's important for the policymakers in Washington to focus on the reality of dropping the top rate. By dropping the top rate, we stimulate investment. We send a clear message that ours is an entrepreneurial economy.

The role of Government is not to create wealth. The role of Government is to create an environment in which the entrepreneur or the small-business person can flourish. And these Senators that are balking on this plan must understand that most small businesses all across America are unincorporated. They're Subchapter S's. They're sole proprietorships. They don't pay the corporate tax; they pay the personal tax. And by dropping the top rate, we're sending a clear message that small business must thrive and flourish in America, that we want our entrepreneurs to have more cash so they can expand their payrolls, create new investment opportunities. No, the way to deal with this Tax Code is to recognize if you pay taxes, you've got to get relief. And that's what this Senate must hear loud and clear from the people of Arkansas.

We're trying to do something about the marriage penalty. This Tax Code of ours sends the wrong signals. It taxes marriage. We ought to be rewarding marriage. We

ought to be encouraging families in the Tax Code.

And finally, one area the Senator and I are working closely on, it's an area dear to the hearts of a lot of people—doesn't matter whether you're Republican or Democrat—and that's this business about the death tax. The death tax is unfair, and we need to repeal the death tax in the code. It's unfair to tax a person's assets twice. I've talked to hundreds of people all across America who've heard this message about repealing the death tax, and they come up to me and say, "I've worked all my life. I started with nothing. It looks like I'm going to end up with something, and it should be the American right to be able to pass my assets on to my children without the Federal Government making it impossible for me to do so."

This is a State with a lot of farmers. And Tim and I spent a lot of time talking about agriculture, coming down here. And I understand that some in the agricultural sector are hurting. And I understand there is pressure—what they call urban sprawl in some areas. Well, if you're worried about urban sprawl and if you're worried about the farmer, why don't we make it easier for people not to have to sell their farm upon death? We need to get rid of the death tax, and the Senate needs to hear that loud and clear.

I'm sure you've heard the arguments—I certainly have—that, well, if you have a \$1.6 trillion tax cut, the Government is not going to be able to meet its needs, that by letting people keep their own money, the Federal Government is going to starve to death.

Well, let me tell you about the budget that Tim has supported and I proposed. It increases discretionary spending by 4 percent. Now, there are some parts of our budget that are going to grow based upon what they call entitlements. That's like Social Security. And Social Security, by the way—we've set aside all the payroll taxes, and they're only going to be spent on Social

Security. This business about letting Congress dip into Social Security, that's over with. People have got to understand the Social Security system is safe and secure and sound under a Bush administration.

But discretionary spending grows in my budget at 4 percent. Is that enough? Well, 4 percent is greater than the rate of inflation. Seems like it's enough to me. Four percent is greater than most people's paychecks increase by. That ought to be enough. But it's not enough, and over the objections of Senator Hutchinson, the United States Senate passed a discretionary budget of 8 percent.

Now, what does 8 percent mean? If we increase the discretionary budget by 8 percent, on an annual basis, it means that in 9 years the discretionary budget of the United States of America will double. And when you double the discretionary budget of Federal spending, you crowd out capital in the private sector, and it's a drag on the U.S. economy. This Congress needs to be able to live within its means, and 4 percent is plenty.

We've got some choices to make: Bigger Government or a stronger economy. And we've got some choices to make, once we meet the needs of the Government: Who do we trust with the money? Who do we trust? And that's the question I'm asking Washington to think about. Senator Hutchinson trusts the people, and so does President Bush, because we understand this surplus is not the Government's money. The surplus is the people's money. And we've got to trust them with their own money to make decisions for their family. It's a fundamental, philosophical question.

Some of your members here of the congressional delegation are struggling with that question. Who do you trust? Who do you trust with that additional money? And Senator Hutchinson has no problems making the statement loud and clear. Once we meet our needs in Washington, he trusts the people, the people of Arkansas to make the right decisions for their families and

the children, make the right decision on how they're going to save and what they're going to do with their money.

And we've got some priorities in the budget, and that's one reason why I think it's safe for me to say that the budget meets the needs. Instead of trying to be all things to all people, it sets clear priorities. Education is a priority in our budget, and it should be a priority in the budget. The Department that gets the biggest increase of any one, of any Department in my budget, is the Department of Education. And let me tell you what we do in it.

I've made reading a priority in our Nation. I fully understand if you can't read, it's going to be hard to get ahead. One of the worst things that's happened is, we've just shuffled children through the system who are illiterate. And that has got to end in America, and it starts by having the Federal Government make a commitment to sound reading programs, diagnostic tools. And so we've tripled the amount of money in the Federal budget, money that's accessible by the local school districts.

We tripled character education funds. It's one thing to teach children to read and write, but we also have to teach them right from wrong in America. And so we make money available for local school districts for character education.

Teacher training is a priority. So we increase teacher training funds by 18 percent from 2001 to 2002.

No, we set priorities in the budget. And I appreciate Senator Hutchinson's leadership on the Labor and Education Committee in the Senate. He talked about a bipartisan consensus, and we're getting there, because the principles inherent in the bill are sound and make sense. It's a commonsense approach to education.

It says, first and foremost, this Nation must set high standards for the children to go to school. If you set low standards, guess what you get? Low results. And so we set high standards and high expectations. Secondly, we know who is best to

chart the path to excellence, and it's not in Washington, DC. This bill and reforms that we're proposing in Washington will pass power out of Washington because I strongly believe, as does Senator Hutchinson, in local control of schools.

We've done something different at Washington, DC. We have said, "Listen, we've spent a lot of Federal money, and some of it makes sense. And if you receive Federal money, you have to account for it." It's time to have a results-oriented approach to public policy. And it says, if you receive money, you must measure. It doesn't say the Federal Government should measure; it says the State of Arkansas ought to measure. And you ought to test, and you ought to let us know whether or not children are learning to read and write and add and subtract. And if they are, there ought to be ample praise in society. But if they're not, instead of just quitting on children, instead of just shuffling through the school system, we've got to end that practice.

Up until now, much of public education has asked the question to our children, "How old are you? If you're 10, you're supposed to go here, and if you're 12, you belong here, and if you're 16, you go here." And guess what happens in a system that simply asks age as opposed to, "What do you know?" Children get shuffled through the system. And many times, sadly enough, they're inner-city kids. It's so much easier to quit on a child than to take the extra time to teach them.

The system must stop asking the question, "How old are you?" and start asking the question, "What do you know?" And if the children do not know what they're supposed to know early in life, we need to correct those problems, because there are no second-rate children in America as far as this administration is concerned. There are no second-rate dreams. And the education reform package we're sending sets this clear and profound goal: Not one

single child will be left behind in the great country called America.

I take my obligation to defend our country very seriously. I'm proud to be the Commander in Chief. And I fully understand that to enhance morale in the United States military, it requires a Commander in Chief who honors the men and women who wear the uniform and, in turn, earns the respect of the men and women who wear our uniform. And secondly, in order to boost morale, we must increase pay, and my budget does so. It improves housing. And my budget does so. And Tim Hutchinson stands side by side. We need modern defenses. And he and I agree strongly that the Little Rock Air Force Base is important for the future of this country. He not only looks out for Arkansas; this Senator looks out for America. And for that, I hope the people of this great State are grateful.

You will hear those who make every excuse in the world to keep your money in Washington say, "Well, the Bush budget or so-and-so votes means that somebody is not going to get adequate health care." In the budget I submitted to Congress, we doubled the Medicare budget over a 10-year period of time. In the budget I submitted to Congress, we doubled the number of folks who will be served in community health centers in America over a 5-year period of time. In the budget I submitted for America, we have tax credits for working uninsured. We have a President who is saying to Congress, "Instead of just talking about these health care issues, let's get something done on them." And my budget reflects that, and that's an important priority of ours—the health of our citizens.

And finally, I believe that Senator Hutchinson and I and others, but Republicans and Democrats, are doing something that's immeasurable. You can't talk about it in terms of the budget. But they're working hard to change the tone of Washington, DC. I have pledged to the American people to change the tone of our Nation's Capital so that when people look at Wash-

ington, they are proud of what they see. I believe most Americans of either party are sick and tired of needless partisan bickering and name-calling and finger-pointing.

We need to spend our energy getting things done, not passing the blame. And we're making good progress. There is a culture of respect that's beginning to emerge in Washington. I'm beginning to notice that the rhetoric is toning down just a little bit. I hope people realize that good public policy means good politics. And we don't need to be spending all our time on politics in Washington. It's time to focus on the people's business. Tax relief is in the people's interest. It's good for our economy. It's good for our people.

This doesn't have to be a, "Well, I can't vote for that bill because it might make George W. Bush look good or some political party look good." We need to get the attitude in Washington, DC, we've been elected for a reason, and that's to stand up and do what each of us think is right on behalf of the American people. Tim Hutchinson understands that. I hope all Senators understand that. And if they understand that, then the dialog is going to be much, much more civil, much more responsible.

And that's what we need in this country. We need responsibility. We need to usher a period of personal responsibility, where each of us understands we have the awesome responsibility to be a good citizen. If you happen to be a mom or dad, you have the awesome responsibility of loving your children with all your heart and all your soul. If you're a fortunate citizen in this country, you have the responsibility of putting your arm around a neighbor in need and say, "Brother or sister, somebody loves you. Somebody cares."

One of the most profound initiatives that we are working on—one of the most profound initiatives that we are working on is the Faith-Based Initiative that welcomes people of faith and community and good heart into the compassionate delivery of

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help for people who need help in America. We should not fear faith in America; we ought to welcome faith. It changes lives and changes hearts.

We're making good progress toward ushering in a period of personal responsibility. But it requires people serving in Washington who understand the reason they are there. And I firmly believe Senator Tim Hutchinson understands the reason they are there. He loves and cares about the people of Arkansas.

And by the way, as this campaign gets going, you might turn to a friend or neighbor and say, "It makes a lot of sense for Arkansas to have somebody who can walk into the Oval Office. It makes a lot of sense for our State, with the problems we have, to have a United States Senator be able to pick the phone up and say, 'Mr. President, I'd like to discuss the concerns of the people of Arkansas. We've got some

problems with our farmers; I'd like to discuss the concerns. We may have a problem in our education system; Mr. President, I'd like you to hear me out. I'd like to deliver a message on the people of Arkansas.'" And I can assure you, folks, that the person running this race who will have the ear of the President of the United States is Senator Tim Hutchinson.

So I want to thank you all for coming. Thank you for your generous support. Work hard. We need this man in Washington, DC.

God bless. And God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:53 p.m. at the Statehouse Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Nick Bacon, director, Arkansas Department of Veterans Affairs; and Dennis Rainey, executive director, FamilyLife.

Statement on the Anniversary of Ukraine's Closing of the Chernobyl Nuclear Plant

April 26, 2001

Last year on December 15, Ukraine ended one of the darkest chapters of the Soviet legacy and opened a new stage in Ukraine's evolution into a modern European state when it permanently closed the Chernobyl nuclear plant.

Closing Chernobyl created the circumstances for a safer and more prosperous Ukraine for future generations. We are reminded of this today on the 15th anniversary of the terrible accident at Chernobyl and are again grateful that an environmental threat has been removed from the Central European landscape.

Today's anniversary is an occasion for the global community to pause and reflect on the lessons provided by this disaster, to recall the valor and dignity that the people of Ukraine displayed in the face of adver-

sity, and to acknowledge the suffering that many victims of Chernobyl continue to endure throughout the region.

I am proud of the American people's role in helping to alleviate this suffering—at the time of the tragedy and continuing through today. I am proud of our continued efforts to work with Ukraine to improve nuclear safety and mitigate the harsh social impact of Chernobyl's closure on the local population.

Much work remains to be done in Ukraine's transition to a modern European state. This work will require strong and courageous leadership over the coming months and years. It will require real support for democracy and difficult but necessary reforms. Last year strong Ukrainian