

Message to the Congress Transmitting a Report on the Operation of the
Andean Trade Preference Act
February 5, 2001

To the Congress of the United States:

As required by section 203(f) of the Andean Trade Preference Act (APTA) of 1991, as amended (19 U.S.C. 3201 *et seq.*), I transmit herewith the third report to the Congress on the Operation of the Andean Trade Preference Act.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,

February 5, 2001.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 6.

Remarks at Tree Top Toys & Books and an Exchange With Reporters in
McLean, Virginia
February 6, 2001

The President. I am honored to be here, Carole. Thank you very much. Next time my mother shops, I am going to tell her to double the amount of purchases. [Laughter] I want to thank the other small-business owners who are here, as well.

One of the unique things about America is the entrepreneurial spirit of our country. The small-business owner is really the backbone of the Nation in terms of job creation, in terms of hope, in terms of offering dreams for people. I am here to talk to these entrepreneurs about the benefits of the tax relief package, the benefits for the small-business owner.

First, we'll make the code simpler, consolidate the rates from five to four. By dropping the top rate from nearly 40 percent to 33 percent, we really say to the sole proprietor, the business owner, that there is more capital available for you to expand your business if need be, your own money in your own pocket to be able to make sure your small business flourishes. I strongly believe and know that cuts in marginal rates will affect capital growth, which is so important for the growth of small businesses in America.

Secondly, the tax relief package will help the consumers, the customers of the small-business owner. We have an issue in America right now called energy, and the energy prices are beginning to affect the purchasing patterns of the people who come to the shops such as this one. Many of the Americans have got a consumer debt load that is significant, and it is important for us to provide meaningful tax relief for all taxpayers so that they can better manage their own personal accounts.

There is a lot of talk about paying down debt, and my budget that I will submit to the Congress does pay down the national debt. But by cutting taxes on everybody who pays taxes, by recognizing a family of four earning \$50,000 a year will receive a \$2,000 tax cut, it helps people get out from underneath their own personal debt load. And that's important. It's important for the families; it's important for the small-business owners.

And finally, as Carole mentioned, part of our tax plan eliminates the death tax. Small-business owners work hard to have a financial platform from which they can not only live but also a financial platform

that they can pass on to their heirs. And the death tax is unfair. The death tax is a tax that unfairly penalizes people who have worked hard to build up their own businesses.

So this tax relief package is not only good for taxpayers; it is also good to stimulate and to help the entrepreneurial spirit in America, a spirit seen right here with these good folks who have taken risk, are creating jobs, but most importantly, realized their dreams of owning their own business. So it's such an honor to be here. I appreciate your inviting us. Thank you all for your hospitality. I'll be glad to answer a few questions.

David [David Gregory, NBC News].

Patients' Bill of Rights

Q. Mr. President, can you explain your position on a patients' bill of rights, as proposed today in the Senate? Are you for it, as it was outlined by Senators Kennedy and McCain and others?

The President. Well, I haven't seen all the details. But first, I am pleased that Senator Kennedy and Senator McCain have come together to offer a plan. Inherent in their plan, as I understand, is some tort reform. That is a really important ingredient in order to move patients' bill of rights, as far as I'm concerned. We can't have a patients' bill of rights that encourages and invites all kinds of lawsuits, because the ultimate effect will be to run up the cost of business, particularly for small businesses. And so, as I understand, there is some tort reform language in there.

I'm a little concerned about the size of the cap on punitive damages. I want to make sure that if there is tort reform, it's a tight tort reform package, without a lot of loopholes that will allow trial lawyers to skirt the intent of the law. But as far as I am concerned, I am really pleased with the fact that they are moving legislation in the Senate. It is a good sign that Republicans and Democrats are getting together.

Q. May I just follow up on one point? *The President.* Sure.

Q. The administration's meeting last night with Congressman Norwood—was that in any way an effort to stall this effort on a patients' bill of rights for now? Do you feel like anybody's trying to steal your thunder as you're trying to talk about tax cuts?

The President. No, I don't think so, David. I know the reason why our folks met with Charlie Norwood, like we're meeting with other people, is to lay out our principles, is to talk about an administrative initiative. And our initiative is going to encompass many of the principles that are inherent in John's and Senator Kennedy's—John McCain's and Senator Kennedy's bill. All these bills, they are going to get worked out over time.

I just want the people in the House and the Senate to know that I'm coming with a plan. And as you know—and you heard me in the campaign several times talk about the fact that our legislation in Texas, our patients' bill of rights in Texas, was a pretty strong piece of legislation. And one of the things I am concerned about is to make sure that the Federal Government law doesn't override what we did in our State.

There are a lot of details to be worked out. But I am really pleased with the progress, and I am very hopeful that we can get a patients' bill of rights on my desk pretty soon. And the fact that, again, John McCain and Senator Kennedy and others have come together is a good sign.

Airline Labor Disputes

Q. Are you worried about the possibility of strikes at four major airlines, sir, and what can you do about it?

The President. I am worried about strikes at airlines. I think that could have a harmful effect on our economy. And I would urge that the parties settle their disputes. The President has got some opportunities—

if they are unable to do so—some opportunities available, and I will explore all options. But I am concerned about it and so should America.

Africa

Q. Mr. President, it's now clear that the continent of Africa, particularly sub-Saharan Africa, is very important to you. Colin Powell mentioned that over the weekend. But what's unclear are the priorities in sub-Saharan Africa. We understand that there is a problem with AIDS, and they're a mineral-rich country. What are your priorities for Africa?

The President. You bet. Well, the priorities have got to be the same priorities we have for our own hemisphere, for example, or for around the world: freedom, democracy, opportunity through open markets. And so the first place to start on the economic front is to make sure we have free and fair trade with the African Continent. There ought to be significant trade back and forth, and we ought to explore opportunities to do so. If there are barriers—and some are worried about the textile industry barriers, for example—we need to examine them all, and I will instruct Robert Zoellick to do just that.

In terms of having a peaceful continent, it is very important for us to work with countries like Nigeria—to enable Nigeria to have an effective peacekeeping force, to keep warring parties apart on that continent. It's also important for us not to ignore Africa, so that we can anticipate problems before they occur. Oftentimes on that important continent, things get out of hand, and they could have been prevented in the first place, which means to have the Secretary of State and the National Security Adviser pay attention to Africa, which we will do.

Q. Are you possibly thinking of going back—going to Africa?

The President. Well, I'm—one country at a time. [Laughter] I'm going to Mexico first. I've got a lot of work to do at home.

Gregory—David Gregory brought up a very important issue. It reminds me about how—it should remind you about how involved I'm going to be on pieces of legislation, whether it be patients' bill of rights or tax relief or education reform. I've got a lot of work to do here—to work with the Congress, to make sure that the principles that I think are important are inherent in these different pieces of legislation. I'll be making some trips, but I'm not exactly sure when I would be going to Africa, for example.

Tax Relief Legislation

Q. Mr. President, what is it you think you're going to need to do to get enough Democratic support for your tax cut plan?

The President. Say that again now?

Q. What are you going to have to do to ensure that you get enough Democratic support for your tax cut plan to make sure that it gets down to your desk for a signature?

The President. Well, I appreciate that. The thing I'm going to need to do is to remind Democrats, one, our budget works—that you can set aside payroll taxes for Social Security, set clear priorities, pay down debt, and there's room for the \$1.6 trillion tax cut. It started off at 1.3, and evidently it's grown to 1.6.

Secondly, to remind people in Congress that this tax relief package is fair and positively affects the lives of people who are standing up here by me. It is a positive effect on our economy.

Thirdly, remind them, we'd better act. The economy is slowing down, and we need to act and act as quickly as we possibly can, including working with Congress to make sure the tax cuts can take—as much of the tax cuts as possible can take immediate effect to help people.

Q. If I could follow up, do you favor doing something retroactively, or would you simply accelerate the benefits in the first year of your plan?

Feb. 6 / Administration of George W. Bush, 2001

The President. We'll work with Congress on that. The strategy, or the goal—let me put it to you that way—the goal is to get money in the pockets of the working people as quickly as we can.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:37 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Carole Segal, owner, Tree Top Toys & Books, Inc.

Videotaped Remarks in a Tribute to Former President Ronald Reagan *February 6, 2001*

Laura and I have now spent 2 weeks in the house where you lived for 8 years. Everywhere we look, we find reminders of the great men and women who lived here and the achievements they left behind.

Your achievements, Mr. President, are clear to all Americans. They are found in the spirit of our Nation and the peace of the world.

You came here at a time when our country needed confidence. You told us we could be strong again, at home and abroad. And when you left, we were.

You came to the White House when the cold war was real. You told us, even when few believed it, that the evil empire would pass and that freedom would prevail. And your resolve made it happen.

In your time here, you never tried to seize credit, one of the traits we've always

admired most about you. But tonight, on your 90th birthday, America knows where the credit belongs. America knows you came here 20 years ago and changed the world. America knows the good heart that always guided you, the unbending principles that always defined you, the kindness and courage and inner grace that makes you the man you are.

For all of that, your country thanks you, Mr. President. Your country honors you. And your country loves you.

NOTE: The President's remarks were videotaped at approximately 10:15 a.m. in Room 457 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building for later broadcast on CNN's "Larry King Live." A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting a Report on Chemical Weapons Convention Inspections *February 5, 2001*

Dear _____:

Attached is a report to the Congress on Chemical Weapons Convention inspections in the United States, submitted pursuant to section 309 of the Chemical Weapons Convention Implementation Act of 1998.

Sincerely,

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: Letters were sent to Jesse Helms, chairman, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., ranking member, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations; Orrin G. Hatch, chairman, and Patrick Leahy, ranking member, Senate Committee on the Judiciary; Richard Shelby, chairman, and William Duhne, ranking member, Senate Committee on Intelligence; Henry J. Hyde, chairman, and Tom Lantos,