

Remarks at a Breakfast for Gubernatorial Candidate Bill Simon in
Westwood, California
August 24, 2002

Thank you very much. Please. Thanks for that warm welcome, and good morning. It's great to be here. I'm—had a great stay here in California, went to Stockton and then Dana Point and finishing off our visit here in the Los Angeles area. I'm off to New Mexico, and after I spend the afternoon in New Mexico, I'll be back in Crawford, Texas, where I'll tell the First Lady of your thanks.

By the way, she's doing a fabulous job. She is a really remarkable woman. She is a—when the Nation needed a calm, reassuring voice, she provided it. And when I need someone to kind of calm me down, she does. I'm real proud of Laura. She was born and raised in Midland, Texas. She was a public school librarian. She didn't care for politics. She didn't like politicians. And now she a great First Lady of the United States. [*Laughter*]

I also thank Cindy Simon for being a good, strong mom and a great wife and a future first lady of the State of California. I appreciate David Murdock for his hospitality. And I want to thank you all for coming. I want to thank you for supporting this good man in his quest to be the Governor of this important State.

I stand by his side because I know that you can do better in California, that the status quo is not acceptable, that what Sacramento needs is a breath of fresh air, a new way of thinking, a new attitude about politics. That attitude starts with understanding the job of the Governor is to serve everybody. It's not to pit one group of people against another. It's not to take into account of who is for you and who is against you and, therefore, make decisions based upon that. You need a Governor who makes decisions based upon principle, not polls, a Governor who understands that setting priorities is important.

You see, you can't balance the budget unless you set priorities. You can't be all things to all people in the political process. You need a Governor who is willing to make tough decisions. And I know Bill Simon is that kind of person. See, he doesn't need a poll or a focus group to tell him what to think. You've either got it inside your soul, or you don't. And this man's priorities are strong—his faith and his family and his desire to serve his community. And those are important values for somebody who wants to lead the State of California.

And what I appreciate most of all is his compassion for education. I share the same passion. Education—good education policy starts with a frame of mind that says every child can learn. That sounds simple, of course, but that's not the way it is in a lot of school districts. You see, it's a—and I learned this lesson as the Governor of the State of Texas, when I traveled around my own State. I went to places where it became apparent to me that people thought some children couldn't learn, generally kids whose parents didn't speak English as a first language, the newly arrived, or the inner-city African American child. You know, it's easy to walk into a classroom and just assume these kids can't learn. "Let's just move them through, see. Let's just get them out of the system." Those days have got to end, and Bill understands that. If you want a hopeful California for everybody, you must start with an education system that starts with high expectations. In other words, you've got to challenge what I call the soft bigotry of low expectations.

There are two crucial ingredients to doing that. One is recognize there are a variety of paths to excellence. In other words, one size doesn't fit all when it

comes to schools; that you've got to trust the local folks, the parents and the teachers and the principals, to design the path to excellence. That's really important—out of Washington, DC, I mean—one of the really good parts of the No Child Left Behind legislation was that we divested Washington of power. And Bill understands you've got to do the same thing in Sacramento. You cannot micromanage your way to excellence in education.

And another cornerstone of excellence is to measure, is to be willing to take on the status quo by measuring. See, if you believe every child can learn, then you want to know if every child is learning. And the only way you do that is you devise accountability systems, accountability systems designed to let us all know the truth. And if children are learning, it gives us an opportunity to praise the teachers and the principals and the curriculum that's used. But you see, an accountability system also will show which children aren't learning. And then that becomes an opportunity to correct problems early, before it's too late. Every child matters in California, and no—not one single child should be left behind.

Bill understands that. And I appreciate his vision and his care. I also appreciate his understanding that the great strength of this country is not in our governments but in the hearts and souls of our people, and that any of us in positions of responsibility must be willing to challenge and rally the great armies of compassion which exist all across the country—these armies of compassion can be found in church, synagogue, or mosque; they can be found in the Boys and Girls Clubs; they're found in the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts; they're found in the bosoms of our fellow citizens—and that, while Government can hand out money, what it cannot do is put hope in people's hearts or a sense of purpose in people's lives. And the job of Government is not to discriminate against faith-based and charitable programs but to wel-

come them to make the society a better place for all.

So I appreciate his vision. I appreciate his attitude. And I appreciate the fact that with your help he's going to be the next Governor of the State of California.

Before I leave, I do want to give you an update about the issues we face on a national basis. First, our economy is—has had some tough times. We inherited a recession. The first three quarters of my Presidency were negative growth; that means it's a recession. The positive news is the next three quarters have been positive growth. Inflation is low. Interest rates are low. Productivity is up. We've got the best workers in the world. We've got the most innovative entrepreneurs in the world. Things are clicking along.

Obviously, we're recovering from the attacks. We're making progress. The tax cuts that we passed were incredibly important, incredibly important to our economy. And one of the things Congress needs to do is make them permanent. In order for entrepreneurs to plan, they have got to make the tax cuts permanent. We're making progress, but we're not going to rest. You've got to understand, though. I understand the role of Government is not to create wealth; that's not the role of Government. The role of Government is to create an environment in which businesses—small, large, entrepreneurs—can flourish. And that's the kind of work we'll continue to do until anybody who wants to find a job can find one. That's my concern.

The economy is on my mind and so is the defense of our homeland. And it would be on your mind, too, if you saw what I saw on a daily basis, which is a continued threat to our country. And we take every threat seriously. I had the opportunity of meeting one of our finest, an FBI agent who is here today, and you just need to know that whether it be the FBI or other intelligence-gathering networks, agencies in the United States, or State or local officials,

we're all working overtime to protect the American people.

We've got a new task at hand. We're in a new era. The first war of the 21st century is taking place, and we must respond at home in an intelligent and smart way. That means sharing intelligence; that means running down every hint; that means chasing every single lead. And that's exactly what we will continue to do.

It also means that we've got to reorganize our Government in a smart way. I gave—I'm sure you've heard by now that I've asked the Congress to reorganize the agencies involved with homeland defense so that there's one bureaucracy, one agency. When I first got going, people said, "Well, gosh, it doesn't seem to make sense." I said—I assured them, I wasn't running, you know, "Vote for me. I want Government to be bigger." That wasn't my slogan. *[Laughter]* But now that we're in this new war, I'd like it to work better, so I can assure the American people that we're doing everything we can to fulfill our number one priority, which is to protect innocent life here at home.

And so we've asked the Government to respond. The House has. The Senate is kind of caught up in—not kind of—really caught up in their own special interests. They kind of want to micromanage. They want to tell the administration branch, "You can't move this person here or there without a permission slip." We need flexibility. We need the ability to move people around. We need the ability to better protect our borders. We need the ability to make sure our first-responders are better trained.

And so I think we're going to get a good bill, but not unless the Senate lets us move people—the right people to the right place at the right time. And I need this agency. I need it so I can assure the American people that at home we're doing everything we can.

And we are. But the best way to make sure that we secure the homeland and pro-

tect and defend our freedoms is to hunt these killers down, one person at a time. That's what we have to do, and that's exactly what we are going to do. We're going to do so because we love freedom. One of the challenges I knew I would have—that the farther we got away from September the 11th, the more likely it would be people would forget—would forget the challenge, would not remember the pain and suffering. We kind of think that the enemy might have forgotten—their ideology, now that they struck, would just kind of go away.

That's not reality, you see. That's not the way the world is today. These people are haters. They're coldblooded killers. They can't stand the thought that we worship freely. They do not like the thought that we value each life. And so the only way to deal with them is to use every resource at our disposal and to bring them to justice.

Now, you notice I said "bring them to justice." I didn't say "seek revenge." We're not a revengeful nation; we believe in justice. I also want to assure you all—I particularly want you to assure your children—that when the United States moves, when we uphold doctrine—like the doctrine that says, "If you harbor one of them, you're just as guilty as they are"—that doctrine—that when we made our decision against the Taliban and moved against the Taliban, we did so not to conquer anybody. America doesn't conquer people. We went in as liberators, because not only do we value life here at home, that everybody matters; we feel the same way about lives around the world.

We don't like it when barbaric regimes such as the Taliban deny young girls the opportunity to go to school. See, that's not in our grain. We don't think that is the right way. And in this case, not only were we able to uphold a doctrine, but by the use of force to uphold that doctrine, we also liberated young girls and liberated women and liberated men from the clutches of a terrible regime.

We've got a lot of work ahead of us. Obviously, one of the jobs is to continue to work on keeping our coalition together. That part of the doctrine said, "Either you're with us, or you're with them." And most people have chosen to be with us, because they understand that we do believe in freedom, and we're motivated by positive values—not American values, by the way, but universal, God-given values. Those are the values we hold dear.

We've got to continue to work to gather intelligence around the world and share it, so that we can haul them in. And we, being the coalition, have done a pretty good job of arresting or incarcerating, however you want to call it, over a couple of thousand of Al Qaida killers. So, one by one, we're finding them. And another—about the equal number haven't been quite as lucky, as a result of the war in Afghanistan.

But we're making progress. But you need to know there are still some of them out there. How many we don't know. They haven't all raised their hand. This is a different kind of war. *[Laughter]* This isn't one of these wars where you measure the enemy's strength by the number of tanks or the number of airplanes or the number of ships. This is a—it's hard to count an enemy which—the leadership of which hides in caves and sends young boys to their death. That's the nature.

But this country is strong, see. They didn't know who they were hitting. I like to tease them by saying they must have thought all we were going to do is file a lawsuit. *[Laughter]* They didn't understand America. They didn't understand the fact that we do love things. We love freedom. We love each other. We cry when somebody gets hurt, like what happened on September the 11th. We mourn the loss of—anytime any one of our brave soldiers is killed in combat. We care deeply about our fellow citizens. And so, therefore, when they struck us, they struck a chord.

It's not only a patriotic chord of love of country; it's a chord of service, is what

it is. You probably have heard me say this, but I truly believe it, that this is an opportunity; out of evil will come some good. That's what I believe. And the good that will come will be peace. If we remain strong and tough and take on some of the tough tasks that we're going to have to take on, we can achieve peace—not only peace for the short run but, more importantly, peace for future generations, not only peace for our fellow Americans but peace for the Israelis and the Palestinians, peace in South Asia. That is the dream. We have an opportunity—we have an opportunity. I see a world that is peaceful.

Well, sometimes we're going to have to be tough and have to speak clearly about the difference between good and evil. We can't equivocate. We must speak about universal values. We must be strong in principle, but we can get there.

And at home—at home we can be a more compassionate America. I first got into politics—when I first got into politics—actually, when I first got into politics I lost, in 1978. *[Laughter]* The second time I got into politics—*[laughter]*—when I was running for Governor, I told the people of my State one of the reasons I was running was to help be a part of a cultural change, from a culture that said, "If it feels good, just go ahead and do it," and "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else." That's how I tried to define the culture in a way people could understand. My dream was to be a part of a shift toward a culture which says, "Each of us are responsible for the decisions we make in life, that there needs to be a period of personal responsibility in America."

It's amazing how life works, and I like to use Flight 93 as an example. The culture is shifting; it's shifting after 9/11. The enemy has awakened a spirit in America that says, part of a culture based upon personal responsibility is to serve something greater than yourself in life, starting with serving your children as loyal moms and dads.

Flight 93 was an example of that; it was a vivid, sad, tragic example. But nevertheless, it's one that will serve to me and I think many Americans as a reminder about what I'm talking about. These are people that were on an airplane. They learned the airplane was going to be a weapon. They got on their cell phones. They told their loved ones they loved them. They used the word "love." They said a prayer, and they drove the plane in the ground to serve something greater than themselves in life.

It's an example, a vivid example of what I'm talking about. You see, when you mentor a child, you're serving something greater than yourself in life. When you love a shut-in, when you teach a child values by being a Boy Scout or Girl Scout troop leader, when you say to a person who wonders about their future that "I love you. Can I help you?"—these acts of compassion and kindness and decency are all part about being an American, a patriotic American

who understands there is a responsibility to something greater than self.

No, out of the evil done to America is going to come a more compassionate and decent America. When one of us hurts, all of us hurts. And we can change America, one person, one conscience, one soul at a time—we can. We can all make a difference.

I hope you can tell that I'm an optimistic fellow, and I'm optimistic—and rightly so—because I'm the President of the greatest nation on the face of the Earth, full of the most decent and compassionate people. Thank you for helping Bill.

May God bless you, and may God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:45 a.m. in the Regency Room at the Regency Club. In his remarks, he referred to Cindy Simon, wife of candidate Bill Simon; and David H. Murdock, chairman and chief executive officer, Dole Food Company, Inc.

The President's Radio Address

August 24, 2002

Good morning. While visiting the west coast this week, I saw the destructive effects of one of the worst wildfire seasons in history. The catastrophic blazes we have seen this summer, and which I saw firsthand in Oregon, threaten the safety of forest communities and firefighters, destroy homes, businesses, farms and critical wildlife habitat, and leave behind long-lasting environmental damage. I join all Americans in thanking the brave firefighters for their service.

As we work to put out the fires and bring relief to their victims, we also have a responsibility to prevent the devastation that can be caused by future fires. For too long, America's fire prevention strategy has been shortsighted. Forest policies have not

focused on thinning, the clearing of the forest floor of built-up brush and densely packed trees that create the fuel for extremely large fires like those experienced this year.

This hands-off approach to forest management has been devastating to our environment, and it can take more than a century for forests to recover from these fires. One forest ranger said of this year's fire season: "In the next few years to come, it won't be the exception; it will be the norm because of how we have managed our forests."

We need a different approach. People who fight fires and study forests agree that we must strengthen the health of our forests through a combination of thinning and