

can do, working together to make sure people work.

But I'm an optimist. I'm optimistic because this is America; that's what makes me optimistic. The entrepreneurial spirit is strong, and we're really good at a lot of things we do.

But no question that, you know, that things changed, I mean, from the boom days. The market started to decline in March of 2000. That's when it peaked. The sellers outnumbered the buyers starting in March of 2000. And then in the summer of 2000, the economy began to slow down, people began to see a serious slowdown. And then we came into office, and we had three quarters of negative growth. That's called a recession.

And we're dealing with it. We're dealing with a sound—fiscal policies, starting with letting people have more of their own money. See, the tax cut was actually necessary, a necessary part of economic recov-

ery. And there are some up here in Washington, DC, who would like to raise the taxes on the people. And that's just—that's bad economics; that's bad policy. People up here want to stop the reduction in income taxes for the American people. That's bad policy in the face of an economic slowdown.

So you bet I'm optimistic. But I understand we've got a lot of work to do. And we will—we will continue to work hard to make sure that people can find work.

Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11 a.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; and Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom. A reporter referred to Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization, and Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority.

Remarks Honoring the NCAA Spring Championship Teams September 24, 2002

The President. Thank you all. Welcome. Please be seated. Thank you. This is champions day here at the White House, and I want to welcome all the champs who are here. I particularly love being around those who've set high goals, worked hard to achieve them, and win.

I want to thank the chancellors, presidents, athletic directors, supporters, family members for being here as well. I'm honored to welcome people of high accomplishment to the White House. You're here during extraordinary times. This is a time of challenge for our country. It's really a time to determine the fiber of our Nation, the character of our people. We're being tested. But because we're Americans, because we believe things—hold values deep-

ly in our heart, we will succeed. There's no question in my mind.

And one way we're going to succeed is for all of us, particularly the champs here, to remember there is a responsibility that comes with being a champion. I happen to believe you have a responsibility to set an example for others, that as you succeed on the field of play, you've got to remember there are youngsters looking at you, trying to determine how they should live their life. So as you set high standards for yourself, I hope you remember people are watching and that you can affect people's lives in an incredibly positive way.

There's another way you can serve your community as well, by loving a neighbor like you'd like to be loved yourself; that a champion on the field can be a champion

off the field by mentoring a child or caring for somebody in need or helping to eliminate pockets of despair and hopelessness in the country. You've got an opportunity as champions to be champions off the field in the community in which you live. And there's no question in my mind that when you put your mind to it, you can. You can help shape the character of the country. You can overcome—help overcome evil by doing some good in the communities in which you live.

So I want to welcome you all here. I want to welcome two Members of the United States Congress, Jim Walsh and Joe Wilson—Jim from New York, and Joe from South Carolina.

I appreciate all the team captains who are up here. And it's now my honor to kind of go through the roster of the champs, those who have earned the title of NCAA champion and, therefore, get to come to this fabulous place—[laughter]—my temporary home.

First, out of the State of California, the softball champs, NCAA softball champs from the University of California, coached by Diane Ninemire. These girls beat a tough field. They got a one-hitter from Jocelyn Forrest to win the championship. It's my honor to welcome the Golden Bears of California here to the White House.

[At this point, third baseman Candace Harper presented the President with a team jersey.]

The President. Next, men's lacrosse. This year was dominated by Syracuse. I say "dominated"—they won the last four games by one goal, but they were 15 and 2. [Laughter] They were 15 and 2. They've won their eighth national championship. They are coached by John Desko—a fine group of people from Syracuse. Congratulations, and welcome to the White House.

[Team captain Josh Coffman presented the President with a signed team poster.]

The President. And then the best women's lacrosse team in the history of Princeton University is with us. At least, that's how they were rated by those who know something about women's lacrosse. Their coach is Chris Sailer—Gary Walters, the athletic director. These ladies scored the most points and the most goals in Princeton history. I know the Syracuse men beat Princeton. It's lucky you didn't play the women this year. [Laughter] Anyway, it's my honor to welcome the Princeton Tigers, NCAA champs here.

[Team co-captain Lauren Simone presented the President with a T-shirt featuring the final score of the team's win against Yale during the season.]

The President. Tennis team. [Laughter] The University of Southern California Trojans have been coached by a man named Dick Leach for 23 years. And under his leadership, they've won four NCAA championships; they've won 16 in their school's history.

It is my honor to welcome Coach Leach, the University of Southern California Trojan champions, along with new coach Peter Smith and Athletic Director Mike Garrett. Welcome to the White House.

[Team captain Andrew Park presented the President with an inscribed tennis racket.]

The President. Stanford University. They win a lot of things, and this year the women's tennis team is here at the White House because they won the NCAA championships. They're coached by Lele Forood. They have been here a lot. They were here 2 years in a row. This is their second year in a row. They have won the national championship 12 times in 22 years. It is my honor to welcome a group of ladies from a school that has had an unbelievable tradition of winning NCAA championships, and that is the Stanford women's tennis team. Welcome.

[Team members presented the President with a T-shirt.]

The President. Men's golf. The University of Minnesota won its first NCAA men's golf championship this year. Incredibly enough, it was the only team in the tournament to finish below par. That's a hard course.

I want to thank Brad James, the head coach, and Joel Maturi, who is the athletic director, for coming. And congratulations to the Golden Gophers golf team of Minnesota.

[Assistant coach Andrew Tank presented the President with a box of golf balls.]

The President. Guy must think I play golf a lot around here. [Laughter]

And the women's golf team of Duke University is the NCAA champs, coached by Dan Brooks. This is their second national title. Joel Alleva is here as well, who is the athletic director. Dan Brooks must be a great coach—looks like a pretty young guy to me, and he's already in the National Golf Coaches' Association Hall of Fame.

Congratulations, Duke. Congratulations for a victory. These girls told me they're going to be back next year. I look forward to seeing them again.

[Team captain Candy Hanneman presented the President with a box of golf balls.]

The President. LS&U, right across the border from where I used to live. I want to welcome the men's outdoor track and field team and the women's indoor track and field team. If you ever follow college track, you know that LSU has been dominant, to say the least. And once again, they have been dominant. This is the 23d championship under Coach Pat Henry's leadership. And I want to welcome, first, the men's outdoor track team. Welcome to the White House, and congratulations for a great victory.

[Team member Walter Davis presented the President with a gift.]

The President. And the women's indoor track team routed the field this year. Their

closest competitor was 14 points. Welcome to the LSU Tigers women's track team. Congratulations.

[Team members presented the President with a T-shirt.]

The President. The University of South Carolina had never won an NCAA championship until this year, when the women's outdoor track and field team beat a tough field. It's my honor to welcome Andrew Sorensen, who is the president of the University, Mike McGee, the athletic director, Coach Curtis Frye, and the women from the University of South Carolina. It's a great tribute to your skill and talent. It's a great honor for you to have won your university's first NCAA championship. Welcome to the White House.

[Team member Demetria Washington presented the President with a team warm-up jacket.]

The President. And finally—[laughter]—the mighty Longhorns of the University of Texas. There were a lot of people here in the White House that were sweating out the NCAA final in college baseball this year. I'm probably going to rewrite a little history here, but I was the Governor when Augie Garrido first came to the University of Texas. And as I recall it, he said, "I'm going to win a national championship for Texas." He just didn't tell me he was going to win the national championship and I was going to be the President. [Laughter] He forgot the second part.

But we're really proud of the University of Texas. We're proud of Coach Garrido. We're proud of the—we're proud of—all the Texans here that work here in Washington, DC, are proud to be able to "hook the horns." Congratulations.

[Team captain Ryan Hubele presented the President with a team jersey.]

The President. So that concludes championship day here at the White House. We hope to see you all here next year. In the

meantime, I want you to remember that you're a citizen of the greatest country on the face of the Earth. May God bless you all, and may God continue to bless America. Thanks for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:39 p.m. in the East Room at the White House.

Remarks at a Reception for Senatorial Candidate John R. Thune *September 24, 2002*

Thank you all for coming. "Senator," thanks for that kind introduction. There should be no doubt where my allegiance is in South Dakota, and that's with John Thune, the next Senator from the State of South Dakota.

There's a lot of reasons why I think John ought to be in the Senate, starting with the fact that he really married well. [*Laughter*] Probably some of you haven't had a chance to meet Kimberley, but you'll know it's true when I say he married above himself. [*Laughter*] They've got a fabulous family. Every time I've been to South Dakota, they've been there to greet me. And there's no doubt in my mind where his priorities lay, and that is with his family and his faith and his State and his country. He's a man of deep value, a good, honorable guy. He's a man who will bring credit to the United States Senate, and I'm proud to endorse him and to work as hard as I possibly can to see that he becomes the next Senator from South Dakota.

Kimberley was wise enough to skip my speech, and so was Laura. [*Laughter*] She sends her affection to the Thunes and joins me in thanking you all for being here to support this good fellow.

Laura is doing great, by the way. She was a, you know, public school librarian when I married her, and she didn't like politics and really didn't like politicians, if the truth be known. [*Laughter*] She liked a few of them, but she could never envision herself being involved in the political process. And thank goodness she said yes when

I asked her to marry me. A lot of people are wondering why she did that. But she's doing a fabulous job as our First Lady. She sends her best.

I want to thank some Senators here who are anxiously awaiting the arrival of John Thune. I know Trent Lott is here, soon to be majority leader of the Senate. I know Bill Frist is here, from Tennessee, in the back. Thank you for coming, Bill. I see my friend Larry Craig is here. I appreciate you coming, Larry.

I know a lot of Members of Congress who are here because they know John and like him a lot. I want to thank all the supporters and organizers who have helped in the past and are helping this time again. I appreciate you all coming. It's good to be with friends and people who care deeply about the future of our country—something we all have got to be concerned about, the future of our country.

One of the things I like about John is that he's a fellow who can get things done on behalf of the citizens of South Dakota and the citizens of our country. As you know, a lot of folks are suffering out there as a result of a drought. And in Washington there's always a lot of talk about trying to get something done, and a lot of times something doesn't get done in this town.

But thanks to his leadership, his willingness to represent the farmers and ranchers of South Dakota, he worked with Ann Veneman and my administration to get immediate relief to people who hurt. So while Washington was talking, John Thune was