

Remarks at the National Republican Senatorial Committee Dinner *September 25, 2002*

Thank you all very much. Well, thanks for coming tonight. I appreciate so many of our fellow Americans being here. I'm here because I want to urge you to do everything you can to make sure that the United States Senate is a Republican Senate.

In order to make real progress for America, I believe we need to have a change of leadership in the United States Senate. And together—together—we can work together to make America a stronger place, a safer place, and a better place for everybody who is fortunate enough to live in this country.

I want to thank Bill Frist, who's the chairman of the National Republican Senatorial Committee. I want to thank you for your kind words. I want to thank you for your leadership. I want to thank Karyn Frist for being a patient woman, standing by this guy. Frist and I married above ourselves. We both married Texas women. Laura is not here. I wish she were. She's on her way down to do a little diplomatic work in Mexico. She sends her best. She sends her love. And I can't tell you how proud I am of the job she's doing on behalf of America.

They tell me this is a successful dinner. And I'm not surprised. After all, the chairman of the dinner is from Texas, a fine United States Senator, a close friend, Kay Bailey Hutchison. Kay, I want to thank you for your dedication and for your hard work.

I also am honored to be in the presence of the next majority leader of the United States Senate, Trent Lott. I want to thank all the Senators who are here tonight. I appreciate your friendship. I appreciate the opportunity to work with you.

One Senator not here tonight is Senator Strom Thurmond. Today he gave what is likely his farewell speech on the floor of a body he loves a lot. I join his colleagues

and join you all in expressing our appreciation and deep admiration for Senator Strom Thurmond and his 48 years of service in the United States Senate.

I also want to thank my friend Michael W. Smith and Debbie Smith for being here. You're in for a real treat when you hear him sing. He is one of the great voices in America. I love his spirit. I love his soul. I'm proud to call him friend. I wish I could stay for the songs, Michael, but my dinner might get cold. [*Laughter*]

I want to work with all of us here in Washington to make America a stronger place. And that starts with making sure we do everything in our power to make our economy grow. See, if anybody who wants to work can't find a job, we've got a problem. And so we've got to continue to focus on economic growth and economic vitality. And we made great progress when we controlled the Senate by cutting the taxes on the American people.

Well, I know—I know some up here in Washington have read a different textbook from most of us. But here's a page we remember. It says, "If you let a person keep more of their own money, they're likely to demand a good or a service. And if they demand a good or a service, somebody in America is likely to produce that good or a service. And when somebody produces a good or a service, somebody is more likely to find work."

The tax cuts came as our economy was slowing down. The tax cuts came at the right time in American history, and we need a Senate who makes the tax cuts permanent.

Working together, we promoted a trade bill, which is good for American jobs. If you're a confident nation, like we must be, if you believe in the productivity of the American worker, if you believe in the strength of the American entrepreneur, you

open up markets around the world. And thanks to the Senate, and thanks to many Senators here, I have now got trade promotion authority, which I will use for the good of the American worker.

We began to lose some confidence in our system because some of our fellow Americans thought it was okay to fudge the books, to hide numbers. And so we came together, thanks to many in this room, and passed the most comprehensive corporate reform since Franklin Roosevelt was the President. We believe that those who run corporations in America have a responsibility. They have a responsibility to the shareholder. They have a responsibility to the employee. And if we catch somebody fudging the numbers, there's not going to be any more easy money in America; there's just going to be hard time.

And there's more we can do, and these Senators here in this audience understand it. We need an energy bill. We need an energy bill for the sake of job security, and we need an energy bill for the sake of national security.

We need terrorism insurance. We want to put our hardhats back to work. We need a bill that helps get construction projects moving again. But we want a bill that rewards the hard-working hardhats of America, not the trial lawyers of America.

And as the Congress heads to home, it's very important to remember that to make sure job creation continues and to make sure our economy strengthens, we must not overspend in Washington, DC. It's very important that Members of the Congress understand whose money we're spending. See, it's not the Government's money. We're spending the people's money, and we've got to be wise about how we spend the people's money.

Every idea up here sounds like a good idea. Except in Washington, when you start totaling up the bill, it runs into the billions. And so, for the sake of job creation, the Congress must not use a continuing resolution for pet projects. For the sake of fiscal

sanity, we must fund our priorities and hold the line elsewhere in the budget. And I appreciate the Senators leading the charge in this audience, understanding the need for fiscal—that fiscal responsibility equals jobs for the American people.

And for a stronger America, we need good judges. We need people who will not write the law from the benches but people who strictly interpret the Constitution. I have been appalled at what has taken place in the United States Senate recently. I named two good judges, one from Mississippi and one from my home State of Texas, Charles Pickering, Priscilla Owen. Their records were distorted. I don't think they were given a fair hearing. Special interests got a hold of the committee. It is not right that these two fine, fine people were denied the bench.

Soon the Senate will take up the nomination of Miguel Estrada. Miguel Estrada is an excellent lawyer. He's a fine man. He's an American success story. The Senate should not play politics with this nomination, for he will be an outstanding judge. One of the reasons to change the United States Senate is to make sure the good judges I nominate get a fair hearing, a swift vote, and approval.

And as we work hard to make sure our economy grows so people can find work, we've also got to remember our number one priority, and that is to protect our homeland from further attack. There's an enemy which hates America lurking around. They hate us because we love freedom. They hate everything our country stands for. They can't stand the thought that in this great country, we worship an almighty God any way we see fit. They can't stand the thought that we have good, honest political discourse. They hate a free press. They hate everything we love.

And there's something else which distinguishes us from the enemy. We value life in America. We say everybody has worth. Everybody is precious. They take innocent life, as they've hijacked a great religion.

And because the enemy lurks and because we refuse to yield on our love for freedom, we must prepare the homeland for future attack.

I asked the Congress to join me in creating a Department of Homeland Security. I did so because we must better coordinate our defenses. If homeland security is the number one priority of the Government, it ought to be the number one priority of every agency in Washington, DC. If protecting the homeland is the number one priority, we ought to be in a position where we can move people to protect our homeland. This President and future Presidents must have the ability to put the right people in the right place at the right time in order to protect America.

Unfortunately, some Senators, not all Senators but some Senators, believe it is best to try to micromanage the process, believe the best way to secure the homeland is to have a thick book of regulations which will hamstring this administration and future administrations from dealing with an enemy that could care less about thick books of regulations. Unfortunately, some in the Senate, not all in the Senate, want to take away the power that all Presidents have had since Jimmy Carter. And I'm not going to stand for it. The Senate must hear this, because the American people understand it: They should not respond to special interests in Washington, DC. They ought to respond to this interest—protecting the American people from future attack.

I see Senator Gramm from Texas here. I want to thank Senator Gramm, Republican, Senator Zell Miller, Democrat from Georgia, for proposing a good piece of legislation. I urge the Senate to support this legislation. It is right for America. You see, we have a chance to leave a legacy behind. And that legacy could be found in the Gramm-Miller bill. I support it strongly. I urge all the Senate to support this good piece of legislation.

The best way to secure the homeland of America, however, is to hunt the killers down, one person at a time, and bring them to justice, which America will do.

It's a different kind of war. It used to be you could count progress against an enemy by the number of tanks he had or the number of airplanes he had or the number of ships he was able to float. We're fighting against people who hide in caves, people who kind of find dark corners and lurk around them, and at the same time, boldly send youngsters to their own suicidal death. Those are the kind of people we fight. They don't require much money. But if they're trying to get money, we're cutting it off.

What it requires is a United States that is firm in our resolve, determined in our efforts, a United States who is willing—which is willing to uphold doctrine. One doctrine is: Either you're with us, or the enemy. And that doctrine still stands today. The other doctrine is: If you harbor a terrorist, if you feed a terrorist, if you hide a terrorist, you're just as guilty as the terrorists who murdered thousands of Americans.

And we're making progress. We're making progress in this first war of the 21st century. Just ask the Taliban. *[Laughter]* I want you all to remind your children about the great strength and heart of this country. Not only do we do what we say we're going to do, but we went into Afghanistan not to conquer anybody but to liberate a nation from the clutches of one of the most barbaric regimes in the history of mankind. Thanks to the United States and our friends and allies, young girls now go to school for the first time in Afghanistan.

And we're not leaving. There's more work to do. There are Al Qaida killers lurking around the neighborhood. But they must understand there is no cave deep enough, there is no corner dark enough for the long arm of justice of the United States and our friends and allies. We've

arrested over a couple of thousand of them. Got one the other day, one of the ones kind of bragging about he thought he was going to be the 20th—20th killer on September the 11th. He poked his head up, and we found him. He's no longer a threat to freedom. And there's a lot of them like him. Slowly but surely, we're hunting them down.

And we've got a lot of work to do. There's a lot more effort that's going to go into securing America and our friends and defending our freedom. And that's why I asked the Congress to pass the largest increase in defense appropriations since Ronald Reagan was the President. I did so because I firmly and strongly believe that anytime we send one of our youngsters into harm's way, they deserve the best pay, the best training, and the best possible equipment. We owe it to them, and we owe it to their loved ones.

It also will send a message—this defense appropriation increase will send a message to friend and foe alike that the United States is not going to quit when it comes to our freedom, that no matter how long it takes, no matter how tough the task, this Nation will defend our freedoms. History has put the spotlight on us. And the world must understand that we're not going to blink; we're not going to tire. We will do whatever it takes to make the homeland secure and to make freedom reign across the world.

And so my call to Congress is to get the defense appropriations bill to my desk before you go home. For the sake of the national security, for the sake of sending the right messages around the world, we need to get the defense bill complete.

Not only will we pursue Al Qaida one person at a time, not only will we resist terror wherever it lurks, we will also deal with madmen who harbor and develop and want to use weapons of mass destruction.

I made a decision to call upon the international community to join us in holding Saddam Hussein to account. I did so at

the United Nations because I want the United Nations to be an effective body. I remember what happened with the League of Nations. For the sake of security, for the sake of peace, the United Nations must not become the League of Nations. The United Nations must have backbone. The United Nations must be willing to uphold resolution. The United Nations must be strong enough to hold Saddam Hussein to account.

After all, he's defied the United Nations for 11 years. He's thumbed his nose at the world. He must be laughing when he hears about the United Nations and its resolutions, and that's not good for the health of the world. He's a man who poisoned his own people. He's a man who invaded two countries twice—two countries, once each time. He's a man who has got weapons of mass destruction, yet lies to the world. He's a man who needs to be brought to justice.

And the choice is his to make, and the choice is the United Nations to make. He must destroy his weapons of mass destruction. He must stop his deceit. He must stop his lying. He must stop torturing his own citizens. And the United Nations must uphold its resolutions. The choice is theirs. But if they choose not to, for the sake of our future, for the sake of our freedom, we will not let the world's worst leader threaten us, blackmail us, or hurt us with the world's worst weapons.

And I want to thank Members of Congress of both political parties for coming together to send a strong message to the world that this Nation loves freedom—members of both parties coming together to send a clear word to friend and foe alike that the United States is united in our resolve to defend that which we hold dear, that when we see a problem, we will deal with it. We owe it to our children. We owe it to our children's children to defend freedom, to free people from the

clutches of barbarism. We owe it to civilization, itself, to remain strong and focused and diligent.

And as we work to make America a stronger and safer place, we've also got to remember to make it a better place too, a better place, for all our citizens. Many Senators here joined me in working on an education bill. It was the most constructive piece of education reform in a long time. See, we believe every child in America can learn. We're willing to challenge the soft bigotry of low expectations. We also trust the local people to chart the path to excellence in our public schools in America.

And for the first time, thanks to Senator Gregg and others, we're starting to ask the question in America, "Can our children read and write and add and subtract?" You see, if you believe every child can learn, it's a legitimate question to ask. And we find our children trapped in schools which will not teach and will not change. We will demand—we will demand something else happens. No child in America should be left behind.

For a better America, Congress must remember that those on welfare want to work. Work ought to be the cornerstone of the welfare reauthorization. In work, people find dignity. In work, people find hope for the future. As we debate a welfare reauthorization bill, let us not forget the successes of the past, and let's make sure work is the cornerstone of a responsible tomorrow for every citizen in our country.

A better tomorrow means a modern health care system for all, but particularly for our seniors. Medicine has changed; Medicare hasn't. For the sake of a better tomorrow, we must have a prescription drug benefit and a modern Medicare system.

And finally, a better tomorrow understands that in our faith-based and charitable institutions, we find great compassion and hope and love. Washington, DC, should not fear faith-based programs. We ought to

welcome them in the lives of citizens who hurt.

I say a better tomorrow depends upon programs that emanate from our churches and synagogues and mosques as well as charitable organizations, because I understand the true strength of the country. And the true strength of the country lies in the hearts and souls of our fellow citizens.

Right after September the 11th, after we shed our tears and mourned, I was absolutely convinced that out of the evil done to America can come great good. And I still believe it today. I believe that if our country is steadfast and strong, we can achieve peace.

You need to tell your youngsters that behind the rhetoric of war is a strong desire for a peaceful world; that I long for peace, not just for Americans, but because our country values each life, everybody has importance. I long for peace around the world. I believe by being tough and strong and determined, that we can achieve peace in places in the world where people have quit on peace. I firmly believe peace is possible in the Middle East. I believe peace is possible in South Asia. No, out of the evil done to America can come incredible good if we stay the course and if we remain strong.

And here at home, the evil done to America can yield some great good as well. We must remember there are pockets of despair and hopelessness and loneliness in America. The Government can hand out money, and we do a pretty good job of it here in Washington. But what Government cannot do is put hope in people's hearts. It can't put a sense of purpose in people's lives.

Government can't say to a lonely child, "I love you." That happens when a fellow American chooses to be more than just a citizen—a self-serving citizen. It happens when people understand that the definition of a patriot today in America is somebody who's willing to serve something greater than yourself in life.

That example came home most vividly on Flight 93. It's a story that I hope will remain etched in the minds of our fellow Americans and written in the history books of our country. I think it was a turning point of a culture which used to say, "If it feels good, do it," and "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else." These citizens showed the strongest sense of personal responsibility you could possibly imagine. After all, they were on an airplane thinking they were flying across the country. They heard reports about what was taking place on the ground. They told their loved ones goodbye. They told them they loved them. History will record that they said a prayer. They asked for guidance. One guy said, "Let's roll." They took the plane in the ground to serve something greater than self in life.

It's a vivid example of what America must realize in order to fight evil. In order to fight evil, do some good. Love your neighbor like you'd like to be loved yourself. Mentor a child. Start a Boys or a Girls Club. Be involved with Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts. Feed the hungry. Find shelter for the homeless.

And that's what's happening in this country. No, the enemy thought that we might file a lawsuit or two. But instead, they found a determined nation, a nation which longs for peace, and a nation which is willing to work to save America one heart, one soul, one conscience at a time.

There is no question in my mind that we will succeed as a country. After all, we're the greatest nation, the greatest nation on the face of the Earth, full of the most loving, hard-working, decent people.

Thank you all for coming tonight. May God bless you all, and may God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:59 p.m. at the National Building Museum. In his remarks, he referred to Karyn Frist, wife of Senator Bill Frist; entertainer Michael W. Smith, and his wife, Debbie; Ramzi bin al-Shibh, an Al Qaida operative suspected of helping to plan the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, who was captured in Karachi, Pakistan; and President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Congressional Leaders *September 26, 2002*

Good morning. We've just concluded a really good meeting with both Democrats and Republicans—Members of the United States Congress—to discuss our national security and discuss how best to keep the peace. The security of our country is the commitment of both political parties and the responsibility of both elected branches of Government.

We are engaged in a deliberate and civil and thorough discussion. We are moving toward a strong resolution. And all of us, and many others in Congress, are united in our determination to confront an urgent

threat to America. And by passing this resolution, we'll send a clear message to the world and to the Iraqi regime: The demands of the U.N. Security Council must be followed; the Iraqi dictator must be disarmed. These requirements will be met, or they will be enforced.

The danger to our country is grave. The danger to our country is growing. The Iraqi regime possesses biological and chemical weapons. The Iraqi regime is building the facilities necessary to make more biological and chemical weapons. And according to the British Government, the Iraqi regime