

Remarks in Bangor, Maine  
October 22, 2002

*The President.* Thanks a lot for coming. Thank you all.

*Audience member.* We love you, George!

*The President.* I'm glad I came. Thank you.

Congressman, thank you for that kind introduction.

I'm here for a couple of reasons. One, I always like to come to Maine. Sometimes I come to get instructions from my mother. [Laughter] Every time I come, I've enjoyed being here. It's a beautiful place. I thank you for your hospitality. I thank you all for coming out. I thank you for your deep concern for our country, and thanks for your participation in the political process.

I'm here because there's no question in my mind, Kevin Raye will make a great United States Congressman. I'm here because I have learned a lot about Susan Collins. There is no doubt in my mind, she is a great United States Senator. And for the sake of Maine and for the sake of the United States, you need to send her back to the Senate. I'm here because I firmly believe that Peter Cianchette will make a great Governor for Maine.

I am here because I want to talk about how we can work together to make America a safer, a stronger, and a better country. I mean a safer and stronger and better country for Republicans, for Democrats, for people who don't give a hoot about politics.

First, I want to apologize and tell you, you drew the short straw. Laura was tied up—[laughter]—so you got stuck with me. I want to tell you, she's doing great. Many of you have—some of you have told me, I bet many of you feel this way, that you say prayers for Laura and me and the family. I want to thank you from the bottom of our heart for that. It means a lot. And we're doing well.

You know, when I married Laura she was a public school librarian.

*Audience member.* Oh, yeah!

*The President.* There's always one in every crowd—[laughter]—a special breed, I might add. She didn't like politics, wasn't too keen on politicians either. [Laughter] Now here she is, the First Lady of the United States and a fabulous one at that. She's calm. She's steady. She's got a great smile. She cares deeply about our children. The people of the country now understand why I asked her to marry me. A lot of them are wondering why she said yes. [Laughter]

But she sends her best, as do I, as do I to not only Susan Collins but to a really fine lady who represents Maine, a United States Senator who's got a lot of class, a lot of wisdom, a lot of power, somebody with whom I enjoy working, somebody who is making a difference for America, and that is Olympia Snowe.

We've got a man up here who wants to be one of my mother and dad's Congressmen. He's got him one in Houston, and he's got one in Maine, and he hopes to have a new one. And the guy's name is Steven Joyce, running for the U.S. Congress. My only advice, Steven, is that when you win, you make sure you answer their mail.

I'm so proud to be here with Kathy Watson, who is the chairman of the Republican Party for Maine; Jan Staples, who is the national committeewoman for Maine. I want to thank our high school choir and high school band who are here today.

But most of all, I want to thank you all for coming. I want to thank the grass-roots activists who are here. I want to thank the people who take time, who work hard to make sure that the democracy is strong. I want to thank you very much for your efforts on behalf of all candidates. I want to thank you for what you have done. I want to thank you for what you're going

to do, and that is to turn out the votes for these candidates on November the 5th.

When I say that I understand Susan Collins, I do. I've worked closely with her. I've worked with her on key issues that face the country. There was no stronger supporter for the No Child Left Behind Act than Susan Collins. You see, we passed a meaningful piece of education reform. I want to describe to you right quick the key ingredients on this piece of legislation, and you'll understand why I'm so proud of the work that she did, along with Olympia.

First of all, the bill challenges what I call the soft bigotry of low expectations. You see, what we understand is, if you have low standards and low expectations, you're going to get lousy results in our schools. We must have a system that sets the highest of high standards. You must believe every child can learn. But also we believe you've got to trust the local people. See, we understand the people of Maine are more competent in charting the path for excellence than the people in Washington, DC, are for the Maine children.

One of the key components of the No Child Left Behind legislation is what we call the Reading First Initiative. Susan Collins was instrumental in helping to write that part of the law. It tripled the amount of money available for reading programs. But as importantly, it said we must base our reading programs on what works, not what sounds good, that there is a science to teaching children how to read, and that all across the country we must dedicate ourselves to making sure that we challenge that soft bigotry of low expectations by insisting that every single child in America becomes a good reader.

I thank Susan Collins for her leadership on that issue. Not only—not only did we insist upon high standards and local control of schools, we increased the amount of money available for education, the largest expenditure of Federal dollars and edu-

cation ever. There's \$200 million of Federal monies coming to Maine this year.

But we also said, "In return for receiving this new money, we expect you to deliver results. In return for money, we want to know whether or not our children are learning to read and write and add and subtract." And when we find out they are, we'll praise the teachers. And for those of you who are teachers out there, thank you, on behalf of our collective hearts. It's a noble profession.

But the reason we have demanded accountability is because we want no child left behind. When we find our children trapped in schools which will not teach and schools which will not change, we better have the courage to challenge the status quo. Every child counts in America, and no child should be left behind.

Now, I appreciate Susan a lot. She has delivered on behalf of Maine, and she has delivered on behalf of the country. I also appreciate her working on Medicare. You see, medicine has changed, and Medicare hasn't. Medicare is modern—medicine is modern, and Medicare is stuck in the past. It needs to be changed. We need to make sure there is a prescription drug program for our seniors. Susan Collins can get the job done on behalf of Maine, people in Maine.

I like to say when you find a good one, you've got to send them back to office, and you've found a good one in Susan Collins. I'm proud to call her friend, and I hope you're proud to call her United States Senator.

I'm also proud to be here for Kevin Raye. He's going to make a fine Congressman if for no other reason than he worked for Olympia Snowe for all these years. I appreciate his strong principles. I appreciate his good judgment. I appreciate his independent spirit. I appreciate his common sense. I look forward to working with him on doing what's right for Maine and doing what's right for America.

He knows what I know: There's too much name calling in Washington, DC; there's too much finger-pointing; there's too much zero-sum politics. This is a man who's going to bring dignity to the office. He'll work with both Republicans and Democrats to get the job done. He's no-nonsense. He's also clear-eyed. He understands the threat the United States faces. He's not going to be one of these folks that is naive about the threats we face. I need somebody in Congress with whom I can work to make sure that we do the job of keeping America safe and strong, and that person is Congressman Kevin Raye.

And finally, you'd better get you a Governor with whom we can work on this education reform, somebody who's got one special interest in mind, and that's the children—somebody who cares deeply about the children of the State, and that Governor is going to be Peter Cianchette.

He knows what I know: Education is to a State what national defense is to the Federal Government. The number one priority of any Governor must be the education of every single child. I know he will challenge the soft bigotry of low expectations. I know he'll work with the teachers. I know he believes in local control of schools. I know he'll work with parents. And most importantly, I know he'll challenge failure when he finds it. Every child matters to Peter, and no child will be left behind.

No, I want to thank you all for coming today to give me a chance to tout these candidates. Again, I urge you to make sure you work hard to turn out the vote. They're counting on you. They're counting on you to go to the coffee shops. They're counting on you to go to the community centers. They're counting on you to talk it up, and make sure when you talk it up, just don't talk it up to Republicans. There's a lot of Democrats who are wise enough to vote for these candidates. And make sure you talk it up with independents and people who don't care. Turn them out to the polls.

It's an important election, and we need these candidates to win.

We've got some big challenges ahead of this country. That's why I've taken a keen interest in these elections. I look forward to having a Congress with which I can work to meet the challenges facing America. And we've got some big challenges. It doesn't matter how big they are, as far as I'm concerned, though. See, there's nothing we can't accomplish in this country. This is the greatest country on the—finest country on the face of the Earth, no doubt in my mind.

One of the challenges we have is to make sure people can find work. Anytime somebody is looking for a job and can't find work means we've got a problem. The foundations for growth are strong; interest rates low; inflation is low. We've got the highest productivity in the world amongst our workers and our farmers and our ranchers. No, we're strong in America. But still too many people can't find a job. So I look forward to working with Congress to expand jobs opportunities.

And there's some things we can do, starting with making sure people have got more money in their pocket. See, here's the textbook I've read from. It says, if you let a man or woman have more of her own money or his own money, they're going to demand a good or a service. And when they demand a good or a service in the marketplace, somebody is going to produce the good or service. And when somebody produces that good or service, somebody is more likely to find work. That tax relief plan we passed was good for the American economy.

As a matter of fact, over the next 10 years, that tax relief plan will mean over \$5 billion for Maine residents. That's 5 billion additional dollars of your own money that you will be able to choose how to spend, \$5 billion that you can use to invigorate the economy.

But the problem is, some in Washington don't see it that way. Some in Washington

want this tax relief plan not to be permanent. Some in Washington want this tax relief plan to go away. It doesn't make any sense. Either you trust the Government, or you trust the people—we trust the people.

I look forward to working with Congress to make sure we get a terrorism insurance package that rewards hardhats and not trial lawyers, that gets our construction people back to work. I look forward to having an energy bill which encourages alternative uses, renewables, increased conservation, but at the same time makes us less dependent on foreign sources of crude oil.

I look forward to working with people like Susan and Olympia and Kevin who understand that when they talk it up in Washington, they say, "The Government's spending the Government's money here, and the Government's spending the Government's money there," that we recognize we're not spending the Government's money. We're spending the people's money, and therefore we need to be fiscally sound with the people's money.

Now, there's a lot of things we can do to work together to make this economy grow. And I look forward to working with Congress and won't rest until people who are looking for work can find work.

We've got a big job as well to make sure we protect America. I was amazed when Kevin told me that in the course of a debate, he said one of the two in the race didn't believe we were still under a threat. That's just not the case. I wish it were true, but it's not true. There's still an enemy out there that's acting. There's still an enemy which hates America. They hate America because of what we love. We love freedom. We love the fact that people can worship an almighty God any way they see fit in America. We love the freedom for people to speak their mind. We love a free press. We love every aspect of our freedom, and we're not going to change. And therefore, there's an enemy out there which hates what we love. And so we've

got to do everything we can to protect the homeland.

My most important job is to protect American life, to protect innocent life. I mention that because you've got to know something about these people we fight. Unlike us, they don't value life. See, we think every life is precious. Everybody counts. Everybody matters. We face an enemy which has hijacked a great religion and are nothing but a bunch of coldblooded killers, and therapy won't work. *[Laughter]*

We learned a tough lesson on September the 11th. See, it used to be oceans could protect us, and if there was a war on another continent, we'd make the choice as to whether or not we would join that war, that we were safe and secure as a nation because oceans could keep us safe and secure. But the harsh reality of the 21st century came home. Oceans no longer protect us. Threats overseas are threats that we must recognize here at home and deal with them. That's why I asked the United States Congress to have a dialog on Iraq. That's why I asked the Congress to seriously consider, along with the administration, as to whether or not we should deal with a true threat to our country.

I want to remind you that we're dealing with a man who has used weapons of mass destruction on his own people, on people in his neighborhood. This is a man who has defied the United Nations 16 times over an 11-year period. The world has said, "You must do what you said you would do, Saddam Hussein, and that is disarm." And 16 times the United Nations, over and over and over again, has written resolution after resolution, saying, "Mr. Saddam Hussein, you must disarm." And he has defied an international body.

So I gave a speech, and I said to the world, "For the sake of peace, for the sake of peace at home, for the sake of peace in the Middle East, for the sake of determining whether or not that international body is going to be the League of Nations or the United Nations, Saddam Hussein

must disarm, and we expect you, the world, to disarm him”—for the sake of peace, for the sake of security for our country. It’s his choice to make. “You said you would disarm, disarm. The United Nations has asked you to disarm.” They need to work together to disarm. But my fellow Americans, if they won’t act, and if Saddam Hussein won’t act, for the sake of peace, for the sake of our security, we will lead a coalition to disarm that man.

And so we face true threats at home. And I went to Congress to ask them to join me in the creation of a Department of Homeland Security. I did so because I wanted to take the agencies involved with securing our homeland and put them under one Cabinet Secretary, so we can set clear priorities, the priorities to protect you, the priorities to do everything we can to protect you. And therefore, I thought it would be wise for us to have a Department of Homeland Security so we could better coordinate, better facilitate, better prioritize, if need be, change cultures within agencies, so this becomes the primary focus of a lot of good people who are working on your behalf.

And by the way, there are a lot of good people working on your behalf. We understand the stakes now. We see the reality clearly. We know there’s an enemy lurking around. We’re aware of Bali, Indonesia, where people just—innocent lives were just destroyed as a result of these coldblooded killers. We know the stakes. People are working hard on your behalf. Anytime we’re getting a hint, anytime we’re getting a scintilla of evidence, anytime we think somebody is fixing to do something to the American people, we’re moving; we’re disrupting; we’re denying. We’re doing everything we can.

But we can be more effective, and that’s why I asked Congress to join me in the creation of a homeland defense, department of homeland defense. The House acted, and the United States Senate is stuck. And it’s not because of the two U.S. Senators on this stage, I might add. They’re

struggling in the Senate because of special interests. They’re struggling because they’re trying to get me to pay a price for a homeland security bill. And I want to describe the price that they want me to pay.

Every President since John Kennedy has had the ability to act in the interests of the country for national security purposes. Every President has had the capacity to suspend some labor rules if those rules get in the way of national security concerns. Listen, I strongly support the right for people to bargain collectively, if they choose to do so. But I also am going to hold dear to that right Presidents have had to be able to suspend some work rules for the sake of national security.

I’ll give you an example of what I’m talking about. After September the 11th, the Customs Service wanted to quickly assign its best, most qualified inspectors to the northern border. See, we were worried about our borders. We’re still worried about our borders. We need to know who’s coming into the country, what they’re bringing into the country, and if they’re leaving the country when they say they’re going to leave the country. That’s what we want to know. So we wanted to move the best inspectors up there. But the leaders representing this part of the workforce said, “No way. See, we’re not going to let you do that. You have to bargain over these assignments.”

Now, that’s not right. We asked inspectors to wear radiological detection devices so that they may be able to sniff out a weapon of mass destruction. They said, “No. No, we’ve got to have collective bargaining over that.” It took us 4 months of negotiations with the head of the union to be able to get that done.

Now, see, I need the right to be able to put the right people at the right place at the right time to protect America. And I’m not changing, because I understand what’s at stake. What’s at stake—we’ve got to make sure we do it right, to make sure that this President and future Presidents

can protect the homeland. And I say “future Presidents” because in my judgment, this deal isn’t ending anytime soon—that even though we’re making progress, we still have got a long way to go.

And I want to remind you all that the best way to protect the homeland is to hunt the killers down, one person at a time, and bring them to justice. And that’s what this country is going to do. And we’re making progress. In the old days, you know, you could measure progress based upon the number of tanks you destroyed, or whether or not somebody’s navy had fewer ships, or whether or not the air force wasn’t able to fly. But this is a different kind of war, see. We’re facing these kind of people that hide in caves or move around in the dark corners of some of these cities in the world; they send youngsters to their suicidal deaths. It’s a different kind of war.

But we’re making progress. The doctrine that says, “Either you’re with us or the enemy”—it still stands. There’s a lot of good people around the world working hard too. We’ve hauled in a couple of thousand; like number weren’t as lucky. None of them are a threat anymore. The other day, a guy named bin al-Shibh popped his head up. You don’t have to worry about him. He was the man who wanted to be the 20th hijacker. He was lurking around Pakistan, figuring out a way how to hurt America again. And we found him, and he’s now in custody.

Slowly but surely, we’re dismantling the Al Qaida terrorist network—slowly but surely. And as we do so, we’re spreading freedom. I want you to remind your kids and any other child you come in contact with that amongst all this war talk, that this great country never has conquered anybody. We’re liberators. Thanks to the United States and our friends and allies, many young girls go to school for the first time in Afghanistan. We will never be conquerors. We believe in freedom. See, when I say, “Every life counts; everybody has worth; every individual matters,” I don’t

mean just Americans. I believe that way for everybody. I believe freedom is universal. It’s just not an American ideal; it’s a God-given ideal. It’s a universal ideal, and we love freedom in America.

Tomorrow I’m going to sign a defense appropriations bill. I want to thank Senator Snowe and Senator Collins for working on that bill and getting it to my desk. It’s the largest increase in defense spending since President Reagan was the President. I’m going to tell you the two reasons why. Anytime the United States of America sends our youngsters into harm’s way, they deserve the best pay, the best training, and the best possible equipment. We owe that to our troops, and we owe that to the loved one of our troops—you loved ones out there of your troops. I’ve got great confidence in the United States military. I have great confidence in the ability of our United States military. I’m incredibly proud of those who wear our uniforms.

And the second reason the defense bill had the size it did, it sends a message to friend and foe alike: It doesn’t matter how long it takes to defend freedom; we’ll do it. There’s no calendar on my desk that says, by such-and-such a date we’re going to have to haul the troops home; such-and-such a date we’re going to quit. That’s not the way America thinks. That’s certainly not the way I think. We love peace, and we love freedom, and it doesn’t matter how long it takes to secure both.

History has called us into action. History has called us to action. We have a duty to future generations of Americans to make this land secure. That’s an obligation we have. It’s an obligation we won’t—from which we will not shirk.

I can’t imagine what was going through the minds of the killers when they hit America. Oh, they must have thought we were so materialistic and selfish, so self-absorbed that after September the 11th, we’d file a lawsuit or two. *[Laughter]* They didn’t understand. They just didn’t get it.

They don't understand that this great Nation will defend that which we love. They don't understand that as a nation we see opportunity out of the midst of the terrible evil.

See, I do believe this: I believe the stronger we are, the more resolved we are, the more clear-sighted we are, the more likely it is we'll not only achieve peace for ourselves, but we can achieve peace in the Middle East. We can achieve peace in South Asia. No, out of the evil done to this great country can come incredible good. I truly believe that staying the course, speaking clearly, fighting terror where it exists, spreading freedom in a humble way, we can achieve peace.

And I also know here at home that we can achieve a better America, and Government can help. We talked about education initiatives and health initiatives. There's a lot of ways Government can help. But we've got to remember that Government can hand out money, but what it can't do is put hope in people's hearts or a sense of purpose in people's lives. In order to eradicate the pockets of despair and loneliness and hopelessness which exist in this great land, which has got to be a national cause, we want everybody in this country to recognize and realize the great promise of America. See, when one of us hurts, we all hurt. In order to eradicate those pockets of despair, we must love a neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourselves. Each of us can make a difference in making sure the American experience is available to all. Each of us can love a neighbor like we'd like to be loved ourselves.

America can and will change—one conscience, one heart, one soul at a time. Not one person can do everything, but each of you can be somebody doing that something to make America a better place. Mentor a child. Feed the hungry. Find shelter for the homeless. No, the enemy hit us, but they didn't know who they were hitting. The enemy hit us, and out of the evil done to America is going to come some incredible good.

There's no doubt in my mind we will be a better society, a more decent society, a society in which we understand that being a patriot means more than just putting your hand over your heart. Being a patriot means helping somebody in need. Being a patriot means serving a cause greater than yourself.

No, they hit us, and out of the evil done to America is going to come a more peaceful world, a more—better America, no doubt in my mind, because this is the greatest country, full of the finest people on the face of the Earth.

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

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:26 p.m. in Hangar 12 at Bangor International Airport. In his remarks, he referred to Kevin Raye, candidate for Maine's Second Congressional District, who introduced the President; Steven Joyce, candidate for Maine's First Congressional District; President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; and 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.