

Remarks on Senate Action on Jobs-and-Growth and AIDS Relief
Legislation and an Exchange With Reporters
May 16, 2003

The President. We had a good day yesterday in the United States Senate as the Senate passed a bill that will make it more likely people looking for work will find a job. I'm pleased with the progress. I look forward to working with House and Senate leadership to reconcile any differences they have and get a bill to my desk as soon as possible. I'm optimistic about our economy and its future. I'm even more optimistic now that the Senate has acted.

I'm also so pleased that the Senate passed a bill to help ease the suffering on the African Continent as well as in some Caribbean nations. We've got a HIV/AIDS initiative that will help—say to the world that the United States is a compassionate country; we care deeply about the suffering that takes place in the world.

Again, I want to thank the Senate for—as well as the House—for passing a good piece of legislation. It looks like that bill can get done pretty quickly, and I'll be able to sign it and take it to Europe with me as a symbol of the great depth of compassion that our country holds for those who suffer.

I'll ask—answer a few. Tom [Tom Raum, Associated Press].

Tax Cut Legislation

Q. Mr. President, can you live with a tax cut like the one the Senate passed that goes away after 3 years?

The President. Here's the thing about the tax cut. The tax cut must be strong and robust so people will be able to find work. That's what I'm focused on. I'm interested in jobs and job creation. And the more bold the tax relief package, the more likely it is a fellow American will be able to find work.

Saudi Arabia/Terrorism

Q. Mr. President, in terms of combating terrorism at home, do you think the Saudis have gotten the message this time around?

The President. Well, Saudi Arabia is our friend, John [John Roberts, CBS News], and we're working closely with them to track down the killers of American citizens and British citizens and citizens from Saudi Arabia as well as other countries.

The best way to defend the homeland, the best way to secure the future of the American people is to find the killers before they strike us. And that's exactly what we're doing now inside of Saudi Arabia.

Obviously, we mourn the loss of life. It is a—it is certainly a wake-up call to many that the war on terror continues, that we've still got a big task to protect the American people and others who love freedom from the designs of—and the will of these purveyors of hate. And we'll find them. We'll bring them to justice.

Q. But sir, is the message coming from this administration to the Saudis that you've got a problem, you have to deal with it—

The President. The message—

Q. —and you have to wake up to the fact that you have to deal with it?

The President. Yes, here's the message. The message is the war on terror goes on, that there are killers on the loose—obviously, killers on the loose inside of Saudi Arabia in this example. And we want to work with them and find them, find those killers, and bring them to justice. And we are still in a—it's dangerous in the world. And it's dangerous inside Saudi Arabia, and it's dangerous so long as Al Qaida continues to operate.

And so we'll chase them down. We're doing everything we can to secure the homeland. The best way to secure the

homeland is to work with countries like Saudi Arabia and to find the killers and get them before they get us. And that's what this country will do.

Woodward [Bob Woodward, Washington Post].

Q. Sir.

The President. How are you?

Q. Very well.

The President. Yes, Mark [Mark Knoller, CBS Radio].

2004 Election

Q. Mr. President, you filed with the FEC today. How does it feel to be a candidate? And how do you assess your chances?

The President. The American people will decide whether or not I deserve a second term. In the meantime, I am focusing my attention today on finding—helping people find work. And that's where I'm going to be for a while. I want this economy to be robust and strong so that our fellow Americans who are looking for a job can find a job.

We've also got a lot of work to do on the security front. As John clearly pointed out, we've got an issue. We're dealing with countries from around the world to make sure that they know that the war on terror continues. No one should be complacent in the 21st century, the early stages of the 21st century, so long as Al Qaida moves. I've told the country that we've brought to justice about half of the Al Qaida network—operatives, key operatives. And so the other half still lives. And we'll find them, one at a time.

Listen, have a great weekend. Thank you all.

You're looking good, John, from the war zone.

Q. Thank you, sir. I call it the Iraqis Diet. [Laughter]

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:20 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House prior to his departure for Camp David, MD. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Statement on Senate Action on Jobs-and-Growth Tax Relief Legislation May 16, 2003

I commend the Senate for its bipartisan passage of a jobs-and-growth package that includes all of the components of my original plan. By including a measure to completely abolish the double taxation of dividends, the Senate has demonstrated that they are committed to creating as many jobs as possible for American workers. The Senate bill also speeds income-tax rate cuts for individuals and families, increases the child credit, provides marriage penalty re-

lief, and increases expensing for small businesses.

Jobs are on the line, and I look forward to working with the full Congress to pass a robust economic growth plan. I call on Congress to resolve their differences quickly so that I can sign a bill that will help create jobs, boost take-home pay, and spur economic growth.