

Remarks at a Bush-Cheney Reception in Fort Lauderdale, Florida September 9, 2003

Thanks for coming. Great to be back in beautiful Fort Lauderdale. I appreciate so many folks showing up tonight, and I'm honored to be introduced by a great Governor. I'm not surprised he's so successful. We both share the same political consultant—[laughter]—Mother. [Laughter]

This is a fantastic turnout, and I'm so honored you're here. What we're doing is laying the framework and the foundation for what will be a great victory in November of 2004. I appreciate your contributions, but Jeb is right. We're going to count on you to energize the grassroots, to make the phone calls, and to put up the signs. And when you go to the coffee shop, you tell them that this administration is committed to making sure that our country is positive and hopeful and optimistic for every single citizen who lives in America.

There's a lot of politics in the air, it seems like. And I'm loosening up, and I'm getting ready. The truth of the matter is, the political season will come in its own time. I've got a job to do. I've got a job to do on behalf of the American people, and there's a lot on the agenda. But I will assure you, my administration will continue to work hard to earn the confidence of all Americans by keeping this Nation secure and strong and prosperous and free.

I am sorry Laura didn't travel with me today, not as sorry as you, probably. [Laughter] But I am really proud of Laura. She's a fabulous wife, great mom, and a terrific First Lady for the United States of America.

I want to thank this cast of characters who is on the stage with me tonight: my great friend Al Hoffman, who is the honorary State finance chair; Tom Petway, who is the State finance cochair; Zach Zachariah, the State finance cochair; and my friend Jim Blosser, who is the event chair-

man tonight. I want to thank you guys for your hard work. Thank you all.

Also, I want to thank my friend Mercer Reynolds, the national finance chairman, from Cincinnati, Ohio, who is taking a lot of time off to make sure that this campaign is well-funded. I appreciate members of the statehouse who are here. Johnny Byrd, the speaker of the house, is with us today. Other members of the statehouse, State senators are with us. I want to thank you all for coming. Make sure you do what Brother says to do—[laughter]—most of the time. [Laughter] I'm honored that our attorney general, Charlie Crist, is with us today. I know we've got local officials with us. I particularly want to say thanks to the mayor, Jim Naugle of Fort Lauderdale, and Oliver Parker, mayor of Lauderdale-by-the-Sea.

But most of all, I want to thank you all for coming. This is a big turnout. It makes me feel pretty spunky to see this many people out there.

In the last 2½ years, our Nation has acted decisively to confront great challenges. I came to this office to solve problems and not pass them on to future Presidents and future generations. I came to seize opportunities instead of letting them slip away. This administration is meeting the tests of our time.

Terrorists, coldblooded killers, declared war on the United States of America, and war is what they got. We have captured or killed many key leaders of Al Qaida, and the rest of them know we're on their trail. In Afghanistan and Iraq, we gave ultimatums to terror regimes. Those regimes chose defiance, and those regimes are no more. Think about this: 50 million people who once lived under tyranny in those two countries now live in freedom, thanks to the United States of America and our friends and allies.

Two-and-a-half years ago, our military was not receiving the resources it needed, and morale was beginning to suffer. So we increased the defense budgets to prepare for the threats of a new era. And today, no one in the world can question the skill and the strength and the spirit of the United States military.

Two-and-a-half years ago, we inherited an economy in recession. And then the attacks came on our country, and we had scandals in corporate America, and war. All affected the people's confidence. But we acted. We passed tough new laws to hold corporate criminals to account. And to get the economy going again, I have twice led the United States Congress to pass historic tax relief.

I know that when Americans have more take-home pay to spend, to save, or to invest, the whole economy grows and people are more likely to find a job. I also know whose money we spend in Washington, DC. We do not spend the Government's money; we spend the people's money.

We're returning the money to the people so they can better raise their families. We're reducing taxes on dividends and capital gains to encourage investment. We're giving small businesses incentives to expand and, therefore, to hire new workers. With all these actions, we are laying the foundation for greater prosperity and more jobs so that everybody in America has a chance to realize the great promise of our country.

Two-and-a-half years ago, there was a lot of talk about education reform, but there wasn't much action. So I acted. I called upon the Congress to pass the No Child Left Behind Act. And with a solid bipartisan majority, we delivered the most dramatic education reforms in a generation. We bring high standards and strong accountability to every public school in America. We are challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations, because we believe every child can learn the basics of reading and math, and we insist that every school teach the basics of reading and math. In return

for Federal money, we're now asking schools to show us whether or not children are learning to read and write and add and subtract. We're providing extra resources to make sure that not one single child is left behind in America.

We reorganized our Government to create the Department of Homeland Security to better guard our ports and borders and to protect the American people. We passed trade promotion authority to open up new markets for Florida's ranchers and farmers and entrepreneurs and manufacturers. We passed budget agreements to—so that we have much needed spending discipline in Washington, DC. On issue after issue, this administration has acted on principle. We have kept our word, and we have made progress for the American people.

The Congress gets a lot of credit. I'm happy to work with Speaker Hastert and Senator Frist. We're working hard to change the tone in Washington, to get rid of all the needless politics, to elevate the discourse, to focus on results, so the people know we went to the Nation's Capital to serve our country.

And those are the kind of people who I've attracted to my administration. I have put together a fabulous team on behalf of the American people, good, honorable, hard-working, decent Americans. Our country has had no finer Vice President than Dick Cheney. Mother may have a second opinion. [*Laughter*]

In 2½ years—2½ years, we've done a lot. We have come far, but our work is only beginning. I have set great goals worthy of a great nation. First, America is committed to expanding the realm of freedom and peace, not only for our own security but for the benefit of the world. And second, in our own country, we must work for a society of prosperity and compassion so that every single citizen has a chance to work and to succeed and realize the American Dream. It is clear that the future of peace and freedom depend on the actions of America. This Nation is freedom's

home. This Nation is freedom's defender. We welcome this charge of history, and we are keeping it.

Our war on terror continues. The enemies of freedom are not idle, and neither are we. This country will not rest. We will not tire. We will not stop until this danger to civilization is removed. We are confronting that danger in Iraq, where Saddam Hussein holdouts and foreign terrorists are desperately trying to throw Iraq into chaos by attacking coalition forces, aid workers, and innocent Iraqis. They know that the advance of freedom in Iraq would be a major defeat for their cause of terror. The collection of killers is trying to shake the will of the United States of America and the civilized world. This country will not be intimidated.

We are aggressively striking the terrorists in Iraq. By defeating them there, we will not have to face them on our own streets. We're calling other nations to help Iraq build a free country, which will make us all more secure. We're standing with the Iraqi people as they assume more of their own defense and move toward self-government. These are not easy tasks, but they are essential tasks. We will finish what we have begun, and we will win this essential victory in the war on terror.

Yet I understand that our greatest security comes from the advance of human liberty, because free nations do not support terror. Free nations do not attack their neighbors. And free nations do not threaten the world with weapons of mass terror. Americans believe that freedom is the deepest need and hope of every human heart, and I believe that freedom is the right of every person and the future of every nation, including nations like Cuba.

America also understands that unprecedented influence brings tremendous responsibilities. We have duties in the world. And when we see disease and starvation and hopeless poverty, we will not turn away. On the continent of Africa, this great, strong, compassionate Nation is now com-

mitted to bringing the healing power of medicine to millions of men and women and children now suffering with AIDS. This great land is leading the world in this incredibly important work of human rescue.

We face challenges at home as well. And our actions will prove that we are equal to those challenges. So long as anybody who wants to work cannot find a job, I will continue to work to create an environment that emphasizes job growth.

As well, we must keep our duty and commitment to America's seniors by strengthening and modernizing Medicare. Congress took historic action to improve the lives of older Americans. For the first time since the creation of Medicare, the House and the Senate have passed reforms to increase choices for our seniors and to provide coverage for prescription drugs. It is now time for the House and the Senate to iron out their differences, to modernize Medicare, not only for the seniors who are depending upon Medicare today but for those of us who will be depending upon Medicare tomorrow. We have an obligation to the future of this country.

For the sake of our health care system, we need to cut down on the frivolous lawsuits which increase the cost of medicine. I appreciate Jeb's leadership on this issue here in the State of Florida. Listen, people who have been harmed by a bad doctor of course deserve their day in court. The system should not reward lawyers who are simply fishing for rich settlements.

Because frivolous lawsuits drive up the cost of health care, they affect the Federal budget. Medical liability reform is a national issue that requires a national solution. I have put out a good reform plan for medical liability. The House acted. It is stuck in the Senate. Senators must understand, we need to change the system. No one has ever been healed in America because of a frivolous lawsuit.

I have a responsibility as President to make sure the judicial system runs well, and I have met that duty. I have nominated

superb men and women to the Federal courts, people who will interpret the law, not legislate from the bench. Some Members of the United States Senate are trying to keep my nominees off the bench by blocking up-or-down votes. Every judicial nominee deserves a fair hearing and an up-or-down vote on the floor of the United States Senate. It is time for some Members of the United States Senate to stop playing politics with American justice.

Our Congress needs to complete work on a comprehensive energy plan. It should be clear to the Congress that we need to modernize our electricity grid. *[Laughter]* We have put forth a plan to do so. We must promote energy efficiency and more conservation. We must use our technologies to discover new sources of energy. We must use technology to find more energy here at home in environmentally friendly ways. For the sake of economic security and for the sake of national security, this Nation must become less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

Our strong and prosperous Nation must also be a compassionate nation. I will continue to advance our agenda of compassionate conservatism. We will apply the best and most innovative ideas to the task of helping our fellow citizens who hurt. There are still millions of men and women who want to end their dependence on Government and become independent through hard work. We must build on the success of welfare reform to bring work and, therefore, dignity into the lives of more of our fellow citizens.

Congress should complete the "Citizen Service Act" so that more Americans can serve their communities and their country. And the Congress should reach agreement on my Faith-Based Initiative to support the armies of compassion, Christian, Jew, Hindu, and Muslim, all of whom are serving our country by mentoring children, by caring for the homeless, and by offering hope to the addicted. Our Nation should not fear faith. We should welcome faith

into the compassionate delivery of those who hurt.

A compassionate society must promote opportunity for all, including the independence and the dignity that come from ownership. This administration will constantly strive to promote an ownership society in America. We want more people owning their own home. We have a minority homeownership gap in America, and I have submitted plans to the United States Congress to close that gap. We want more Americans owning and managing their own health care accounts. We want more Americans owning and managing their own retirement accounts. We want more Americans starting their own small business, because we understand in the Bush administration that when a person owns something, he or she has a vital stake in the future of our country.

In a compassionate society, people respect one another, and they take responsibility for the decisions they make. We're changing the culture of America from one that has said, "If it feels good, just go ahead and do it," and "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each of us understands that we are responsible for the decisions we make in life. If you're lucky enough to be a mom or a dad, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart and all your soul. If you're concerned about the quality of the education in your community, you're responsible for doing something about it. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you are responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And in this new responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourself.

We can see the culture of service and the culture of responsibility growing around us here in America. It was right after 9/11/2001; I started what's called the USA Freedom Corps to encourage Americans to extend a compassionate hand to a neighbor in need. And the response has been great.

Our faith-based organizations are vibrant and strong. Our charities are doing well here in America. People understand the call to serve something greater than yourself in life, just like our policemen and firefighters and people who wear our Nation's uniform. Once again, the children of America believe in heroes, because they see them every day. And in these challenging times, the world has seen the resolve and the courage of America. And I've been privileged to see the compassion and the character of the American people.

All the tests of the last 2½ years have come to the right nation. We're a strong country, and we use our strength to defend the peace. We're an optimistic country,

confident in ourselves and in ideals better than ourselves. Abroad, we seek to lift up whole nations by spreading freedom. At home, we seek to lift up lives by spreading opportunity to every corner of America. This is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it. And we know that for our country and for our cause, the best days lie ahead.

Thank you for coming. May God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:18 p.m. at the Hyatt Regency Pier Sixty-Six. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida; and Charlie Crist, Florida State Attorney General.

Remarks Following Discussions With Prime Minister Sabah of Kuwait and an Exchange With Reporters *September 10, 2003*

The President. A couple of questions. First, we'll have a couple of statements.

It's my honor and honor of senior members of my administration to welcome you, sir, to the Oval Office. Kuwait is a steady and strong friend of the United States. I thank you for your friendship.

This country led a vast coalition to make the world more secure and more peaceful, and Kuwait was steadfast in your support of our common desire to respect human life, to promote peace, and I want to thank you for that very much. We called upon you to make some difficult choices, and you made those choices, and the world is better off as a result of the decisions your Government made. So it's my honor to welcome you here, sir, today.

Prime Minister Sabah. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the President, and thank you, Mr. President, for this invitation and for asking us to come here. I believe that the discussions that I had with you were frank discussions, and they

were discussions between friends, people who are friends and allies together.

I would like to assure you that this friendship and the alliance between our two countries and our two peoples will continue. And it will not be limited to the official Government levels, but it will be also, and continue to be, between the people. This relationship will continue to exist because we strongly believe that it's in the interest of the peoples in both countries as well as the region.

Once again, Mr. President, thank you, sir, for this invitation.

The President. Mr. Prime Minister.

Terry [Terence Hunt, Associated Press].

PLO Prime Minister-Designate Ahmed Korei

Q. Mr. President, what's your evaluation of the new Palestinian Prime Minister? Do you think he's someone that you'll be able to work with as well as you were able to work with Mr. Mahmoud Abbas?