

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:40 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Anthony F. Earley, Jr., chairman and chief executive officer, DTE Energy; Paul Fessler, director, Monroe Power Plant; Mike Smith, chief

steward, Utility Workers Union of America Local 223, Power Generation Division; Mayor Al Cappuccilli of Monroe, MI; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Remarks at a Bush-Cheney Reception in Drexel Hill, Pennsylvania September 15, 2003

The President. Thanks for your warm welcome. Thanks for coming out tonight. I'm honored so many showed up. Thanks for coming. Thanks for your friendship, and thanks for your strong support. I appreciate the generous contributions you have made. The truth of the matter is, what we're doing is we're laying the groundwork for what is going to be a great nationwide victory in November of 2004.

I'm going to count on you for more than just contributions. I need your help. I need you to put up the signs, to mail out the brochures. When you go to the coffee shop, you look them in the eye, and you tell them this administration has got a hopeful and optimistic vision for every single American.

There's a lot of talk in the air, a lot of political talk, and the truth of the matter is, I'm loosening up. [*Laughter*] I'm getting ready. But the political season will come in its own time. I've got a job to do. I'm focused on the people's business in Washington, DC. I've got a lot on the agenda, and I will continue to work hard to earn the confidence of all Americans by keeping this Nation secure and strong and prosperous and free.

Most of you probably wish you were at the fundraiser a month ago when Laura was the keynote speaker. [*Laughter*] If so, you've got great judgment. She's a fabulous First Lady.

Audience member. So was your Mom! [*Laughter*]

The President. I'm sorry she's not here tonight. And speaking about my mother, I'm still listening to her, by the way. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank my friend David for being a fine chairman. He's been a long-time friend. I've called upon him time and time again to help, and he's never let me down. David, thank you, and the great team you put together, for—[*applause*].

I've got two great campaign cochairmen for the State of Pennsylvania, two fine United States Senators, men with whom I work closely on key issues, Senator Santorum and Senator Specter. Thank you all for your—[*applause*]. Like me, Arlen married above himself. [*Laughter*] And I'm proud that Joan is with us today as well. Thank you for coming, Joan.

I'm also honored that members of the Pennsylvania congressional delegation are with us today, Congressman Gerlach, Congressman Weldon, Congressman Greenwood. Congressman Sherwood is with us. It's good that you brought your family, Don. From the great State of New Jersey, Congressman Jim Saxton is with us as well.

I'm also pleased that Attorney General Mike Fisher is with us today. General, thank you for coming. We've got another attorney general with us, from the State of Delaware, Jane Brady. Thank you for being here, Jane. I'm so pleased to be able to say hello to Bill Scranton. He's one of the great Pennsylvania political families. I'm honored you're here, Bill. Thank you for coming.

Finally, I have the pleasure of saying hello to a fantastic lady and her two children, Connie Katz. Connie is here. She is representing her husband, who is running a spirited campaign for the mayor of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. And we're proud you're here.

I want to thank the grassroots activists who are here. I particularly want to thank Bob Asher, a national committeeman from Pennsylvania, and Alan Novak, who is the chairman. I thank my friend Mercer Reynolds, who is the national chairman of this campaign. He's from Cincinnati, Ohio, and he's taken a lot of time out of his life to help gather the resources necessary to wage a strong campaign in '04.

Finally, I want to thank Bill Kay, who is the owner of this establishment. I want to thank Bill and all the good folks who have worked hard to put on this event. Most of all, thank you all.

In the last 2½ years, our Nation has acted decisively to confront great challenges. I came to this office to solve problems, not to 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 declared war on the United States of America, and war is what they got. We have captured or killed many key leaders of the Al Qaida network, and the rest of them know we're on their trail. In Afghanistan and in Iraq, we gave ultimatums to terror regimes. Those regimes chose defiance, and those regimes are no more. Fifty million people in those two countries once lived under tyranny, and now they live in freedom.

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 upon our country, as well as corporate scandals and the march to war, all of which affected the confidence of the American people. But we acted. We passed 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 for the American people.

I believe and I know that when Americans have more take-home pay to spend, to save, or invest, the whole economy grows, and people are more likely to find a job. This administration also understands whose money we spend in Washington. It's not the Government's money. It's the people's money. We are passing more of the people's money so they can help raise their families. We're reducing the taxes on dividends and capital gains to encourage savings and investment. Small businesses now have new incentives to expand and to hire new people. With all these actions, we're laying the foundation for greater prosperity and more jobs, so that every single citizen of this country can realize the great promise of America.

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 and Congress passed the No Child Left Behind Act. With a solid bipartisan majority, we delivered the most dramatic education reforms in a generation. We now bring high standards and strong accountability measures to every public school in America. We believe every child can learn the basics of reading and math, and we expect every school to teach the basics of reading and math. This administration is challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations. The days of excuse-making are over. We expect results in every single classroom, so that not one child is left behind.

We reorganized our Government and created the Department of Homeland Security to safeguard the borders and ports

and to make America more secure. I picked a good man to run that Department. Tom Ridge is doing a great job. You trained him well. *[Laughter]*

We passed trade promotion authority to open up new markets for Pennsylvania's entrepreneurs and farmers and manufacturers. We passed much needed budget agreements to bring spending discipline to Washington, DC. On issue after issue, this administration has acted on principle, has kept its word, and has made progress for the American people.

The Congress gets a lot of credit. I appreciate working with Members of the Congress. Got a great relationship with the majority leader, Bill Frist, and Speaker Denny Hastert. We're going to continue to work together to try to change the tone of Washington, DC, to get rid of the needless bickering and endless politics and to focus on the people's business by focusing on results. Those are the kind of people I've asked to serve in my administration. I've put together a great team on behalf of America, good, honest, honorable citizens to serve the people of this country. Our country has had no finer Vice President than Dick Cheney. Mother may have a different opinion. *[Laughter]*

In 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 citizen has a chance to work and to succeed and to realize the American Dream.

It's clear that the future of peace and freedom depend on the actions of America. This Nation is freedom's home. We are 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 holdouts and foreign terrorists are desperately trying to throw that country into chaos by attacking coalition forces and aid workers and innocent Iraqis. They know that the advance of freedom in Iraq would be a major defeat for the cause of terror. This collection of killers is trying to shake the will of America and the civilized world. But America will not be intimidated.

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

Our greatest security, however, comes from the advance of human liberty, because free nations don't support terror. Free nations don't attack their neighbors. Free nations do not develop weapons of mass terror to blackmail the world. 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 I believe that freedom is the future of every nation.

America also understands that unprecedented influence brings tremendous responsibilities. We've duties in the world, and when we see disease and starvation and hopeless poverty, we will not turn away. On the continent of Africa, America is now committed to bringing the healing power of medicine to millions of men and women and children suffering with AIDS. This great, strong, compassionate Nation is leading the world in this important work of human rescue.

We face challenges here at home, and our actions will prove that we're equal to those challenges. So long as anybody who wants to work is looking for a job, means that I'll continue to work for an environment that encourages the entrepreneurial spirit to flourish, working hard to make sure the environment is such that jobs grow so people can find work.

We have a duty to keep our commitment to America's seniors by strengthening and modernizing Medicare. The 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 both bodies to iron out their differences to get a good bill to my desk. It is time for the Congress to fulfill the promise of our seniors today and those of us who are going to be seniors tomorrow.

For the sake of our health care system, we need to cut down on the frivolous lawsuits which increase the cost of medicine. People who have been harmed by a bad doc deserve their day in court. Yet the system should not reward lawyers who are simply fishing for a rich settlement. Frivolous lawsuits drive up the cost of health care, and therefore, they affect the Federal budget. Medical liability reform is a national issue which requires a national solution.

I appreciate working with Congressman Greenwood. The House passed a good bill to reform the system. The bill is stuck in the United States Senate. Senators must realize that no one has ever been healed by a frivolous lawsuit in America. Not these people.

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 for our Federal courts, people who will interpret the law, not legislate from the bench. Members of—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 Senate floor. It is time for some Members of the United States Senate to stop playing politics with American justice.

Congress needs to complete work on a comprehensive energy plan. The lessons of last summer ought to be an indication that we need to modernize our electricity grid. You all know it well here. I have submitted such a plan that will make the reliability standards mandatory, not voluntary, that will encourage new investment so we can say as we head into the 21st century, "We're doing everything we can to make sure power is available to the American citizens."

We need to use our technology to promote conservation. We need to be able to explore for energy in environmentally friendly ways. We need an energy plan. For the sake of economic security and for the sake of national security, this Nation needs to be less dependent on foreign sources of oil.

Our strong and prosperous Nation must also be a compassionate nation. I will continue to advance our agenda of compassionate conservatism, applying 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. Congress must build on the success of welfare reform to bring work and dignity into the lives of more of our fellow citizens. They should complete the "Citizen Service Act," so more Americans can serve their communities and their country. And both Houses should reach agreement on the Faith-Based Initiative, to support the armies of compassion that are mentoring our children and caring for the homeless and offering hope for the addicted. It's in our churches and synagogues and mosques, it's

where we find Hindus and Jews and Christians and Muslims, that we find decency and compassion. This country should not fear faith in the important works of saving lives.

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

In a compassionate society, people respect one another and take responsibility for the decisions they make. We're changing the culture of America from one that has said, "If it feels good, do it," and "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each of us understands we are responsible for the decisions we make in life. If you are fortunate 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 worried about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you're responsible for doing something about it. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you're responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And in a responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving a neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourselves.

We can see the culture of service and responsibility growing around us here in America. I started the USA Freedom Corps to encourage Americans to extend a compassionate hand to a neighbor in need. And

the response has been strong. Charities are strong. Our grassroots faith-based organizations are strong all across America. Policemen and firefighters and people who wear this Nation's uniform are reminding us what it means to sacrifice for something greater than yourself. Once again, the children of America believe in heroes, because they see them every day.

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 that strength to defend the peace. We're an optimistic country, confident in ourselves and in ideals bigger 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 this country. This is the work that history has set before us, and we welcome it. And we know that for our country and for our cause, the best days lie ahead.

May God bless you all. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:35 p.m. at Drexelbrook. In his remarks, he referred to David Girard-diCarlo, Pennsylvania State co-chairman, Robert Asher, Pennsylvania finance cochairman, and Mercer Reynolds, national finance chairman, Bush-Cheney '04, Inc.; Joan Specter, wife of Senator Arlen Specter; Pennsylvania State Attorney General Mike Fisher; Connie Katz, wife of Philadelphia, PA, mayoral candidate Sam Katz, and their children, Philip and Lauren; Alan Novak, chairman, Pennsylvania Republican Party; L. William Kay II, managing partner, Drexelbrook Associates; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.