

I want to thank you all for coming. May God bless you all, and may God continue to bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:35 a.m. in the equipment warehouse. In his remarks, he referred to David and Steve Upton, own-

ers, CraneWorks; Rom L. Reddy, founder, chairman of the board, and chief executive officer, Nexcel Synthetics, LLC; and Uday and Qusay Hussein, sons of former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq, who were killed July 22 by U.S. military forces in Mosul, Iraq.

Remarks at a Bush-Cheney Luncheon in Birmingham, Alabama November 3, 2003

The President. Thank you all very much. Thanks for coming. I told Shelby I wanted a short introduction. [Laughter] He delivered. [Laughter] Thanks for coming. I'm thrilled to be back in the great State of Alabama. I do have a lot of friends here, and I appreciate your friendship, and I appreciate your support. What we're doing here is laying the foundation for what is going to be a great national victory in 2004.

And I'm getting ready for it. [Laughter] I'm loosening up. [Laughter] But I want you to know that politics will come in its own time. As my strong supporters, you've got to know that I know I've got a job to do. And so when you start laying the grassroots organization and you go to your coffee shops and your houses of worship and your farm implementation dealership, you tell them the President is doing the job. He's doing the job for every single American. I will keep America strong and secure and prosperous and free.

My regret is that Laura didn't come. A lot of people are—

Audience member. [Inaudible]

The President. Yes, I'm sure it is. [Laughter] She said, "Mine, too." [Laughter] She understands you drew the short straw. [Laughter] For the people in Mobile who are here, thank you for coming up. But you drew the long straw, and Laura had a fabulous visit down to Mobile, Alabama. But she sends her best. I've got to tell you, I'm really proud of her. She is

a fabulous wife, a great mother, and a wonderful First Lady.

I want to thank Richard and Annette for their friendship. Shelby is a good man, and he told me, he said, "I'm going to make sure this fundraiser is successful." I know here we're talking about our election campaign, but it's very important you send Senator Shelby back to the United States Senate. And I also like your other Senator a lot, Senator Jeff Sessions. He's doing a fabulous job for Alabama.

I'm proud to be here with my friend the Governor of Alabama, Bob Riley. I appreciate Governor Riley coming. I'm also honored to be with many members of the Alabama congressional delegation: Jo Bonner and Terry Everett and Mike Rogers and Robert Aderholt and Spencer Bachus. I want to thank all of them for coming.

And I want you all to know who came up here with Robert's mother, that I know where Winston County, Alabama, is—[laughter]—mobile homes and Republicans. [Laughter]

I appreciate so very much Attorney General Bill Pryor. I want to thank my friend Mercer Reynolds from Cincinnati, Ohio, who is the national finance chairman for Bush-Cheney. He's an entrepreneur, like many of you all are. He is taking time out of his life to help us gather the resources necessary to run a vibrant campaign, and I appreciate his help. And I want to thank Mike Thompson. Mike is

our State finance chairman here in Alabama, and obviously he has done, along with many others, a fabulous job of organizing this fundraiser.

I want to thank Marty Connors and Edgar Welden and Bettye Fine Collins, all of whom are very much involved in grassroots politics here in Alabama. I'm going to be counting on you. I'm going to be counting on you to put up the signs and to send out the letters and counting on you to get this grassroots organization alive and well here. We can't win this without your help.

I want to thank you for—all of you who are involved in grassroots politics. I want to thank the local officials and the State officials who are here. I want to thank the mayors who are here.

I had the honor of meeting Johnny Spann, whose son, Mike, was one of the first casualties in the war on terror in Afghanistan. Our prayers are with the Spann family. I want to thank Johnny for his spirit and his strength, and I want to thank Mike for giving his life for a cause greater than himself.

And finally, I want to thank Dr. Charles Durham, the pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Tuscaloosa. I'm not surprised that Shelby made sure that the pastor here was from Tuscaloosa. *[Laughter]*

Most of all, I want to thank you all for coming.

In the last 2½ years, our Nation has acted decisively to confront great challenges. I came to this office to solve problems, instead of passing them on to future Presidents and future generations. I came to seize opportunities instead of letting them slip away. My administration is meeting the tests of our time.

Terrorists declared war on the United States of America, and war is what they got. We've captured or killed many of the key leaders of 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 today, 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 our country was attacked. And we had scandals in corporate America, and we marched to war, all of which 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 for the American people.

We 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. So we're passing money back to the people to help them raise their families. We're reducing taxes on dividends and capital gains to encourage investment. We're giving small businesses incentives to expand and to hire new people. With all these actions, we're laying the foundation for greater economic prosperity and jobs across America so every single person in this country can realize the American Dream.

Two-and-a-half years ago, there was a lot of talk about education reform, but there wasn't much action. So I called for and the Congress passed the No Child Left Behind Act. With a solid bipartisan majority, we delivered the most dramatic education reforms in a generation. We insist upon high standards and accountability in every public school in America because we believe every child can learn. We are challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations. In return for increased Federal money, we

expect results. We want to see results. The days of excuse-making are over. We expect results because we don't want one single child in America left behind.

We've reorganized our Government and created the Department of Homeland Security to better safeguard our borders and ports and to better protect the American people. We passed trade promotion authority to open new markets for Alabama's farmers and entrepreneurs and manufacturers. We passed budget agreements to help maintain a much needed spending discipline in Washington, DC. On issue after issue, this administration has acted on principle, has kept its word, and has made progress for the American people.

And the Congress has shared in these great achievements. I've got a great relationship with Denny Hastert, the Speaker of the House, and Bill Frist, the majority leader, as I do with the Alabama Senators and congressional delegation. They deserve a lot of credit. We're working hard to change the tone in Washington. And the truth of the matter is, there's just too much needless politics up there. We're focusing on the people's business, focusing on results.

And those are the kind of people I've attracted to my administration. I've put together a superb team on behalf of the American people, starting with a Birmingham soul, Condi Rice, who is doing a fabulous job. Our country has had no finer Vice President than Dick Cheney. Mother may have a different opinion. *[Laughter]*

We've done a lot in 2½ years. We've 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 for our own security and 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 succeed and to

realize the great promise—the great promise—of America.

It is clear that the future of freedom and peace depend on the actions of America. This Nation is freedom's home and freedom's defender. We welcome this charge of history, and we are keeping it.

Our war on terror continues. And 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 Iraq into chaos by attacking our forces and aid workers and innocent Iraqi citizens. They know that the advance of freedom in Iraq will be a major defeat for the cause of terror. This collection of killers is trying to shake the will of America. We will not be intimidated.

We are aggressively striking the terrorists in Iraq, defeating them there so we will not have to face them in our own country. We're calling other nations to help Iraq to 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're essential tasks for the security of the United States and for the peace of the world. We will finish what we have begun, and we will win this essential victory in the war on terror.

Our greatest security comes from the advance of human liberty, because free nations do not support terror, free nations do not attack their neighbors, free nations do not develop 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 I believe that freedom is the future of every nation.

America also understands that unprecedented influence brings tremendous responsibilities. We have duties in this 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, 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 here at home as well, and our actions will prove that we're equal to those challenges. I just spent some time at CraneWorks, a successful small business here in Alabama. I went there to deliver this message as clearly as I could: So long as anybody in our country is looking for work and can't find a job, I know we have a problem. My job as the President is to continue to create an environment for small businesses to grow to be big businesses, an environment that rewards the entrepreneurial spirit.

We have a duty to keep our commitments to America's seniors by strengthening and modernizing Medicare. The Congress has taken historic action. The House acted and the Senate acted to improve the lives of older Americans. For the first time since the creation of Medicare, the Congress is passing reforms to increase choices for our seniors and to provide coverage for prescription drugs. Those two bodies need to iron out their differences and to modernize the Medicare system. We owe it to our seniors and we owe it to those of us who are going to be seniors to have a modern Medicare system.

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 they therefore affect the Federal budget. Medical liability reform is a national issue which requires a national solution. The House of Representatives passed a good bill. It is stuck in the United States

Senate. Senators must realize that no one has ever been healed by a frivolous lawsuit.

I have a responsibility as the 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. I have nominated really good, honest people like Bill Pryor. Bill Pryor will make a fantastic judge on the court of appeals. Because of a small group of Senators who are willfully obstructing the process, some of my nominees, like Bill, have had to wait months, in some cases, even years, for an up-or-down vote. But needless to say, delays in the system are harming the administration of justice. They are deeply unfair to the nominees themselves. It is time for some Members of the United States Senate to stop playing politics with American justice.

The Congress needs to complete work on a comprehensive energy plan. Our Nation must promote energy efficiency. We must work to increase conservation. We must develop cleaner technology to explore for supplies of energy at home in environmentally friendly ways. But for the sake of our economic security and for the sake of our national security, we 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, which means we'll apply the most innovative and effective ideas to the task of helping our fellow citizens in need. 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 dignity into the lives of more of our citizens.

Congress should complete the "Citizen Service Act" so that more Americans can serve their communities and their country. Both Houses should reach agreement on

my Faith-Based Initiative to support the armies of compassion that are mentoring children and caring for the homeless and offering hope to the addicted. This Nation of ours—[applause]—Government should welcome the great work that comes out of our Christian houses and Jewish temples and Muslim institutions. We must not fear faith in our society. We must welcome faith and welcome the armies of compassion who are healing hearts and helping change America one soul at a time.

A compassionate society must provide—promote opportunity for all, and that includes the independence and dignity that come from ownership. This administration will constantly promote an ownership society in America. We want more people owning their home. We've got homeownership—a minority homeownership gap in America. I've submitted a plan to Congress to close that gap.

We want more people owning their own health care plans and managing their own health care plans. We want people to manage and own their own retirement accounts. We want more people owning their own small business. 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, respect their points of view, and they take responsibility for the decisions they make. The culture of America is changing from one that has said, "If it feels good, do it," and "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a new 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. If you are concerned 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 this new responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourselves. We can see the culture of service and responsibility growing around us. I started what's called the USA Freedom Corps. If you're interested, you can go right on the computer and look it up. It's a chance to encourage people to extend a compassionate hand to a neighbor in need, and the response has been strong. America is a giving country. The heart and soul of the American people is really the strength of our country.

Policemen and firefighters and people who wear our 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 have 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 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, the best days lie ahead.

God bless. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at noon at the Sheraton Birmingham Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Senator Richard Shelby of Alabama and his wife, Annette; Mercer Reynolds, national finance chairman, and Mike Thompson, Alabama State finance chairman, Bush-Cheney '04, Inc.; Marty Connors, chairman, Alabama Republican Party; W. Edgar Welden, Sr., Alabama national committeeman, and Bettye Fine Collins, Alabama national committeewoman, Republican

National Committee; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Statement on Senate Passage of the “Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act for Defense and for the Reconstruction of Iraq and Afghanistan, 2004”
November 3, 2003

I commend Congress for providing vital funds to support our mission and our troops deployed in Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere. These resources, coupled with the growing assistance of international donors, will provide essential support to make Iraq more secure and to help the Iraqi people transition to self-government. The funds will also enable us to continue our efforts to help Afghanistan become a peaceful, democratic, and prosperous nation that contributes to regional stability.

Our country is being tested. Those who seek to kill coalition forces and innocent Iraqis want America and its coalition partners to run so the terrorists can reclaim control. The strong bipartisan show of support for this bill underscores that America and the world are united to prevail in the central front in the war on terror by helping build a peaceful, democratic, and prosperous Iraq.

I thank Chairmen Stevens and Young for their efforts and look forward to signing this bill.

Remarks on the California Wildfires and an Exchange With Reporters in Harbison Canyon, California
November 4, 2003

The President. A lot of people in this neighborhood lost all their possessions, but the spirit is strong. America has got some wonderful citizenry who just refuse to be defeated. I met some families here that are obviously crushed by the material loss, and they look forward to rebuilding—rebuilding their lives. And the role of government, the Federal Government and the State government and the local government, is helping as best as we can.

You know, the worst of nature can bring out the best in our fellow human beings. And to a person, they were thankful for the fact that neighbors do care about neighbors and people are helping people here.

It's just tough for a lot of folks who live in this part of the world.

I want to thank the supervisor and firefighters for welcoming us here.

Let me answer a few questions, and we'll keep going.

Q. What do you say to these people—

The President. Hold it one second, please. We've got an order—

Q. I'm sorry.

Iraq/California Wildfires

Q. Thanks, Mr. President. I've got a couple questions. One, what's your evaluation, your assessment of this scene you've seen here? And two, to more and more Americans, the situation in Iraq is looking like