

them and bring them to justice. And that's exactly what the United States and a lot of other nations, including a free Iraq, will do. We do this in the name of humanity. We do this in the name of freedom, and we do it in the name of peace.

Thank you all very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:57 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey.

## Remarks Honoring NCAA Spring Championship Teams November 17, 2003

Please be seated. Thanks for coming. Let's see, I forgot who said, "This is the people's house, and we're just letting you live here." You're right. Welcome to the people's house. I'm glad to be just living here for a while.

I'm also really glad to honor some of our country's really fine individuals to the White House, all of whom worked to make their team successful. It is—we call this championship day, where champions come, people who put their talents to good use, and people who have got a lot of talents to continue to put to use to make sure our country is as hopeful and compassionate as possible. So welcome to the White House. We're really thrilled you're here.

We've got some pretty interesting characters with us today. *[Laughter]* Every person has got to have a good lawyer, particularly in America. And I got a good one, and that's Judge Al Gonzales, who is the White House legal counsel, who graduated from Rice University. Judge, thank you for coming.

We have got Members from the United States Congress with us today. From the great State of Texas, Chris Bell and John Culberson. Thank you all for coming, Chris and John. I'm glad you're here. I suspect I know why you're here. Rush Holt from the State of New Jersey is with us. Rush, thank you for coming. Mark Kennedy is with us. Mark, good to see you, sir, glad

you're back. Cliff Stearns—hi, Cliff, how are you?

We've got the university leaders with us. Chancellor Nancy Cantor from the University of Illinois is with us. Chancellor, we're honored you are here. Jim Barker, the president of Clemson University; Malcolm Gillis, from Houston, Texas, Rice University. Thank you all for coming, and thank you for bringing the people from your universities here to the White House. We're glad you're here.

First, I want to honor an individual. I said this, that we're going to honor teams, but we're going to first start off with an individual here on Champions Day. The man I'm about to introduce has been winning college football games since Harry Truman was in the White House. *[Laughter]* His teams have picked up 409 victories in the course of his career, and that's John Gagliardi. The reason why his teams play so well is because not only is he a good coach, he's first and foremost a very decent person who honors values, who believes in the potential of every individual, who leads through example.

Coach Gagliardi, we're honored that you're here. We appreciate so very much Peggy and Jim being with you. Coach Gagliardi told me Jim—or Jim told me he's the offensive coordinator. He said, "I kind of like"—I said, "I kind of like a guy who follows in his father's footsteps." *[Laughter]* But it's such an honor to welcome this fine human being with us today. Coach

Gagliardi, congratulations, and thank you very much for being here, sir.

Every team here did really well. But only one team was undefeated, and that was the Mighty Illini tennis team. They were 32–0. Coach Tiley, I don't know if it was the scheduling that did it. *[Laughter]* You had a lot of really good players; I know that. I'm so glad you're here. I appreciate the fine tennis players being here. I want to congratulate you on your undefeated season. I want to congratulate you on being national champs in men's tennis.

The Lady Gators are with us from Florida. If you've got any complaints, Lady Gators, about this day, just go ahead and write the Governor. *[Laughter]* This is the fourth team from your distinguished university to make it to the White House. I appreciate Coach Thornqvist. I'm honored that the Lady Gators are with us today. And I want to congratulate you as well for being the national champs, representing your school.

The Clemson golf team started the year at number one—this will be your Clemson men's golf team—and they ended the year at number one. That's called a wire-to-wire, start to finish. I appreciate very much Larry Penley; he's been the coach. He's been there for only two decades. He's taken a while to get it right. No. *[Laughter]* I want to congratulate Coach Penley and the mighty Clemson golf team. I know the people down there in South Carolina are really proud of you.

Last year I had the honor of hosting the Princeton women's lacrosse team, and so I just kind of said, "You think you'll be back next year?" They said, yeah, they thought they'd be back next year. I like people who do what they say they're going to do. *[Laughter]* I want to congratulate the Princeton women's and Coach Sailer for winning your sport back-to-back. These are great athletes and great scholars with us. And I'm real proud that you're here. So I asked them once again, "Are you going to be back next year?" They said, "How

about you?" No. They said—*[laughter]*. I appreciate—*[laughter]*—never mind. *[Laughter]*

The USC women's golf team is with us. Mikaela Parmlid was the national champ last year, the individual championship. The thing I like about her, she was more interested in helping her team win. And thanks to Andrea Gaston, the Lady Trojans, they beat a difficult field and are national champs from USC. I bet there are some men's football players that'd like to be here as well from your university. *[Laughter]*

The mighty Virginia Cavalier lacrosse team is here. This is—I didn't know much about lacrosse. I kind of saw it in the periphery for a while. Then I watched—I happened to be working out upstairs and watched the finals. Whew, it's a tough game, and banging each other over the heads with sticks, and—*[laughter]*—but I'm proud of Coach Starsia and the Cavaliers for winning this important championship, a 9–7 championship game. It was a classic of conditioning and toughness and desire. And I'm proud to say that you won it.

We've also got the UCLA softball team here with us, ladies' softball team. I can remember when I was the Governor of Texas, I used to work out in the weight room. And I can remember the Texas girls telling me, they said, "Don't worry, Governor, we'll be the national champs." They forgot about Coach Enquist's team. The UCLA Bruins are a great ladies' softball team. It's a tough field, and they had great pitching—a very competitive team. And I want to congratulate you all for being here. I asked if there are any that are going to be on the Olympic team. I think three or four hands went up who will be representing the United States in Olympic softball. I pity the teams they play. *[Laughter]*

Finally, the mighty Rice Owls are here with us. I grew up in Houston. I can remember going over to the ballpark over there on the campus to watch the Rice teams of old play. Coach Graham and the

Owls not only represented a fine university well, they represented a great baseball State. They—I told Coach Graham, I said, “It’s great to be with people who go to a fine school and at the same time beat a really tough, tough field in baseball.” And so I want to congratulate the mighty Owls for coming. I know a lot of folks in Houston are really proud of your accomplishments. So are a lot of people in Texas.

So this is championship—we’re honored to have the teams with us—championship day. The thing—the lesson I love about team sports and about champions is that champions work hard. They live a good, clean life in order to succeed. But they all serve something greater than themselves in life. And that’s an important example for our country. It’s important for people to recognize that serving something greater than yourself in life makes you a whole person, helps you understand the significance of life.

My call to these champs is to remember that now that you’re a champion, a lot of people, particularly young kids, are looking at you, wondering what it’s like to be a champ, wondering what it’s like to serve the school or the region or the State so very well. It means you’ve got a little extra task at hand, means you got to understand that you’re an example for somebody and

you can actually affect somebody’s life in a positive way by how you handle the responsibilities of being a champion.

Again, congratulations for working hard, for winning. Congratulations for what you have done. Congratulations for what you’re going to do with your life. May God bless you all, may God bless your universities, and may God continue to bless our great country.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:40 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Malcolm Gillis, president, and Wayne Graham, head baseball coach, Rice University; John Gagliardi, head football coach, St. John’s University, his wife, Peggy, and their son, Jim, offensive coordinator, St. John’s University football team; Craig Tiley, men’s tennis head coach, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida; Roland Thornqvist, women’s tennis head coach, University of Florida; Larry Penley, men’s golf head coach, Clemson University; Chris Sailer, women’s lacrosse head coach, Princeton University; Andrea Gaston, head coach, and Mikaela Parmlid, former player, women’s golf, University of Southern California; Dom Starsia, men’s lacrosse head coach, University of Virginia; and Sue Enquist, head softball coach, University of California-Los Angeles.

## Remarks Following a Meeting With Congressional Leaders *November 17, 2003*

I just had the honor of meeting with the Medicare Conference Working Group. I first thanked them for their extraordinary leadership on developing a fine piece of legislation for Medicare. There are Republican leaders at this table; there are Democrat leaders at this table. These are Americans who understand we have an obligation to our seniors to modernize and strengthen the Medicare system.

The bill that will be offered to the House and the Senate modernizes and strengthens Medicare. There’s 400 billion additional dollars available for our seniors in this bill. There’s prescription drug coverage in the bill for our seniors. This vote will demonstrate whether the Members of the House and the Senate will help keep our commitment to America’s seniors. I look forward to working with the Members