

Remarks at a Bush-Cheney Reception in Phoenix November 25, 2003

The President. Thank you all very much. Thank you for coming. I'm honored that so many people showed up tonight. Jon said, "If you come to Arizona, we may be able to get a couple of folks to come." [Laughter] This is a fantastic event. You know what we're doing? We're laying the foundation for what is going to be a great national victory in 2004.

I'm honored you're here, I really am. I want to thank you all for coming. It's a big deal that you showed up. It means a lot. You know, I'm getting ready. I'm kind of loosening up. [Laughter] But politics will come in its own time. I've got a job to do. I've got a job to do in our Nation's Capital. And as you circulate around this important State, when you go to your coffee shops or your community centers or your houses of worship, you tell them President Bush and his administration is focused on the people's business. We're working on behalf of everybody to keep this country strong and secure and prosperous and free.

My one regret for this evening, Senator, is the fact that Laura isn't with me.

Audience members. Aw-w-w.

The President. No, I know it. I know it. A lot of you would rather have had her than me. [Laughter] It shows how wise you are. [Laughter] She is a fabulous lady. She is a great wife, a wonderful mother, and she's doing a heck of a good job as the First Lady of this country.

Kyl married well too; I'm honored Caryl is here. I picked two fine people to be the State cochairmen of this campaign, and that's Senator Jon Kyl and Senator John McCain. You've sent two fine Americans to the United States Senate.

We've also got a great congressional delegation, some of whom are here tonight. I'm so honored that Congressman Jim Kolbe is here. Congressman J.D. Hayworth

and his wife, Mary, is here. As I mentioned a little while ago, they're starting to call him "Slim" Hayworth. [Laughter] He's looking quite pretty these days. [Laughter] John and Shirley Shadegg are here with us today. John, thank you for coming. Cheryl and Jeff Flake are with us today. Josie and Trent Franks are with us today. And finally, Congressman Rick Renzi is with us today. I'm honored that they're—thank you all for coming.

I appreciate working with these fine folks from Arizona. They care deeply about our country. They're strong leaders. They love the people of Arizona. I know you're proud of them. I'm proud to call them friends and allies.

I also want to thank statehouse members who are here. Jan Brewer, the secretary of state, is with us. Jan, thank you for coming. Speaker Jake Flake asked me to watch Congressman Jeff Flake in Washington to make sure he behaved himself. [Laughter] But Mr. Speaker, I'm glad you're here. As Jeff came through, he said he's a real, live cowboy. I like coming to States where they have real, live cowboys. You know, Senator, we're keeping pretty good company when people show up to fundraisers in cowboy hats. [Laughter]

I appreciate the mayor of this fine city, Skip Rimsza, for being here. Mr. Mayor, you've done a fine job, but most of all, thank you for coming. I do know that the former Governor, Fife Symington, is here. I saw him up close. He's a great Governor for the State of Arizona.

I appreciate my buddy from down south, Jim Click, for being such a great friend—[inaudible]—and Jim Simmons. Both of you all have worked hard to make sure this has been a fantastic evening, and I want to thank you. I want to thank the chairman of the Republican Party, Bob Fannin, and I want to thank Mike Hellon, the national

committeeman. I want to thank the grass-roots activists who are here. It's important to have a successful fundraising operation. Evelyn, thank you for coming. *[Laughter]* It's important to have a active fundraising effort, and we've done well tonight. It's equally important to have an active grass-roots effort. You see, you win campaigns when you go and you put up the signs and you get on the telephone and you write the letters. For the grassroots activists here, I want to thank you for what you're going to do on behalf of the Bush-Cheney ticket in '04.

In the last 3 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 the Al Qaida network, 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. Fifty million people in those two countries once lived under tyranny, and today they live in freedom.

Three 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, the strength, and the spirit of the United States military.

Three years ago, our economy was in trouble, and recession was beginning. And then our country was attacked, and we had scandals in corporate America, and we went to war to make our country more secure and the world more peaceful. And all those actions 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.

Here is what we believe, that when Americans have more take-home pay to spend, to save, or invest, the whole economy grows, and someone is more likely to find a job. We're returning money to the people. To help them raise their families, we've reduced taxes on dividends and capital gains to encourage investment. We've given small businesses incentives to expand and to hire new people. With all these actions, we're laying the foundation for greater economic prosperity and more jobs across America, so that every single citizen in this country has a chance to realize the American Dream.

Today, this economy of ours is strong, and it is getting stronger. They just released some new figures on the revised third-quarter growth. It turns out the third quarter grew at an annual rate of 8.2 percent. That's the fastest growth in nearly 20 years. You see, productivity is high; business investment is rising; housing construction is strong. The tax relief we passed is working.

Three years ago, there was a lot of talk in Washington about education reform, and there wasn't much action. So I acted. 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 increased spending for Title I students. But for the first time, the Federal Government has asked a simple question: Are the children learning to read and write and add and subtract? In return for Federal money, we now expect results. You see, we believe every child can learn. This administration is challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations. Not only do we believe every child can learn, we expect every school to teach, so that not one single child is left behind.

We 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 up new markets for Arizona's farmers and ranchers and entrepreneurs. We passed budget agreements, 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.

And the Congress gets a lot of credit. As I told you, I've enjoyed working with the Members from the great State of Arizona, good, honorable, and decent people. I've got a great relationship with Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist from Tennessee and Speaker Denny Hastert from Illinois. These are fine people.

We're working hard on behalf of the American people. We're working hard to change the tone in Washington. There's too much needless backbiting and petty politics in the Nation's Capital. We're working hard to focus on results to do the people's work, and those are the kind of people I've attracted to my administration. I brought people from all walks of life, all backgrounds to serve the people of America. There has never been a finer administration than the one I put together for the people of this country, and we've had no finer Vice President than Dick Cheney. Mother may have a second opinion, Senator. *[Laughter]*

In 3 years, we've come far. If you look at the results, we've done a lot. But our work is only beginning. See, I've set great goals worthy of this 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 that is prosperous and compassionate so that every single citizen has a chance to work and to succeed and realize 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.

The 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 Iraq into chaos by attacking coalition forces, international aid workers, and innocent Iraqi citizens. You see, they know that the advance of freedom in Iraq would be a major defeat in the cause of terror. This collection of coldblooded killers is trying to shake the will of the civilized world and trying to shake the will of America. America will never be intimidated by a bunch of thugs.

We're on the offensive in Iraq. We're aggressively after them. We're striking the terrorists in Iraq. We will defeat them there so we will not have to face them in our own cities. Other nations are helping, and there is a simple reason: They understand that a free Iraq will make the world more secure. And 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. And 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 threaten the world with weapons of mass terror. Americans believe that freedom is the deepest need and hope of every human heart. We believe that freedom is the future of every nation. And we know that freedom is not America's gift to the world; freedom is the Almighty's gift to every person who lives in the world.

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 suffering with AIDS. This incredibly strong and powerful Nation is a compassionate nation, and we are leading the world in this very important work of human rescue.

We face challenges here at home as well, and we will be equal to those challenges. This administration will stay focused on a pro-growth economic agenda until everyone who wants to work can find a job.

We are keeping our commitment to America's seniors by strengthening and modernizing Medicare. For years, seniors have asked that the Federal Government keep its commitment, its solemn promise, by having a modern Medicare system that provides preventative care and prescription drugs and health care choices for our seniors. And Washington listened to those seniors but didn't do anything. Finally, the House and the Senate have acted. They've approved legislation that will bring modern medicine to our seniors. This historic legislation is the greatest improvement in senior health care coverage since the enactment of Medicare in 1965. I look forward to signing this bill.

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 doctor deserve their day in court, yet the system shouldn't reward lawyers who are simply fishing for a rich settlement. Frivolous lawsuits drive up the cost of health care. They affect the Federal budget, and therefore, medical liability reform is a national issue that requires a national solution. I submitted a good plan to the Congress. The House of Representatives acted. The bill is stuck in the United States Senate.

I want to thank Senator Kyl and Senator McCain for working for this important legislation. Certain Members of the Senate must understand, however, that no one has ever been healed by a frivolous lawsuit. We need medical liability reform now.

I have a responsibility as your President to make sure the judicial system runs well, and I have met that duty. I have nominated superb men and women for the Federal courts, people who will interpret the law, not legislate from the bench. Some Members of the Senate—not this Senator, not Senator McCain—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 to stop playing politics with American justice.

Congress needs to get an energy bill to my desk. We need a comprehensive energy plan in this country. We need to encourage conservation, develop cleaner technology. We need to do a lot of things. But one thing we need to do is to become less dependent on foreign sources of energy. For the sake of economic security and for the sake of national security, I need an energy bill to my desk.

Our strong and prosperous Nation must also be a compassionate nation. I'll continue to advance our agenda of compassionate conservatism, which means we'll apply the most effective and innovative ideas to the task of helping our fellow citizens who hurt. See, there's still millions of men and women who want to end their dependence on our Government and become independent through work. I want to work with Congress to build on the success of welfare reform, to bring work and dignity into the lives of more of our citizens.

Congress needs to complete the "Citizen Service Act" so that we can encourage more Americans to serve their communities and their country. We need to get the Faith-Based Initiative finished. I proposed

a Faith-Based Initiative which will empower the armies of compassion which exist all across America to help the homeless, to mentor the children, to offer hope to the addicted. This is a great nation because we're a nation of many faiths. People are free to worship any way you see fit. But there's a commonality to our faiths, the call to help somebody—hurt. Our Government should not fear faith. We ought to welcome faith into helping cure some of the intractable problems of our society.

A compassionate society must promote opportunity for everyone, including the independence and dignity from ownership. My 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. I proposed a plan to the Congress to close that gap. We want people owning and managing their own retirement accounts. We want people owning and managing their own health care plans. We want more people owning their own small business. This administration understands that when a person owns something, he or she has a vital stake in the future of this country.

In a compassionate society, people respect one another, respect their opinions and respect their beliefs. And people take responsibility for the decisions they make in life. America's culture is changing 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're 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. If you're 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. In a responsibility society, each of us is re-

sponsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourself.

The culture of service and responsibility is strong in this great country. It's truly one of the great strengths of America. I started what's called the USA Freedom Corps right after September the 11th. It was a chance to give people a web portal in which to find out how to volunteer in their communities, and the response has been really strong. Americans care about their neighbors. Our charities are vibrant. If you're involved in a charity or a faith-based group, thanks for what you're doing. You're making America a better place.

Our policemen and firefighters and people who wear our Nation's uniform—[*applause*]*—*you haven't even got the punch line yet. [*Laughter*] People who wear the uniform remind us what it means to sacrifice for something greater than yourself. You know, 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 3 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 our country. 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.

May God bless you all. Thank you for coming. I appreciate it.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:36 p.m. at the Arizona Biltmore Resort & Spa. In his remarks, he referred to Franklin "Jake" Flake, speaker pro tempore, Arizona State House of Representatives; Mayor Skip Rimsza of Phoenix, AZ; former Gov. Fife Symington of

Arizona; Robert Fannin, Arizona State chairman, and Mike Hellon, Arizona national committeeman, Republican National Com-

mittee; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Remarks to the Troops at a Thanksgiving Dinner in Baghdad, Iraq November 27, 2003

Thank you. I was just looking for a warm meal somewhere. [*Laughter*] Thanks for inviting me to dinner. General Sanchez, thank you, sir, for your kind invitation and your strong leadership. Ambassador Bremer, thank you for your steadfast belief in freedom and peace. I want to thank the members of the Governing Council who are here, pleased you are joining us for one of our Nation's great holidays. It's a chance to give thanks to the Almighty for the many blessings we receive.

I'm particularly proud to be with the 1st Armored Division, the 2d ACR, and the 82d Airborne. I can't think of a finer group of folks to have Thanksgiving dinner with than you all. We're proud of you. Today Americans are gathering with their loved ones to give thanks for the many blessings in our lives, and this year we are especially thankful for the courage and the sacrifice of those who defend us, the men and women of the United States military.

I bring a message on behalf of America: We thank you for your service; we're proud of you; and America stands solidly behind you. Together, you and I have taken an oath to defend our country. You're honoring that oath. The United States military is doing a fantastic job. You are defeating the terrorists here in Iraq so that we don't have to face them in our own country. You're defeating Saddam's henchmen so that the people of Iraq can live in peace and freedom.

By helping the Iraqi people become free, you're helping change a troubled and violent part of the world. By helping to build a peaceful and democratic country in the

heart of the Middle East, you are defending the American people from danger, and we are grateful.

You're engaged in a difficult mission. Those who attack our coalition forces and kill innocent Iraqis are testing our will. They hope we will run. We did not charge hundreds of miles into the heart of Iraq, pay a bitter cost in casualties, defeat a brutal dictator, and liberate 25 million people only to retreat before a band of thugs and assassins.

We will prevail. We will win because our cause is just. We will win because we will stay on the offensive. And we will win because you're part of the finest military ever assembled. And we will prevail because the Iraqis want their freedom. Every day, you see firsthand the commitment and sacrifice that the Iraqi people are making to secure their own freedom.

I have a message for the Iraqi people: You have an opportunity to seize the moment and rebuild your great country based on human dignity and freedom. The regime of Saddam Hussein is gone forever. The United States and our coalition will help you, help you build a peaceful country so that your children can have a bright future. We'll help you find and bring to justice the people who terrorized you for years and are still killing innocent Iraqis. We will stay until the job is done. I'm confident we will succeed because you, the Iraqi people, will show the world that you're not only courageous but that you can govern yourself wisely and justly.