

his remarks, he referred to actor Bruce Willis, spokesman for Children in Foster Care.

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Remarks at a Bush-Cheney Luncheon in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania December 2, 2003

I appreciate you coming. Thanks for being here. It's great to be back in Knowledge City—Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Thanks for the warm welcome. I thought I'd start off by talking a little bit about Texas football. *[Laughter]* Then I ran into Jerome Bettis. *[Laughter]* I'm a man who listens to good advice. *[Laughter]* So I'd better talk about thanking you for coming. *[Laughter]*

I appreciate your strong support. I'm proud to be back in Pennsylvania. We're laying the foundation for what is going to be a victory in Pennsylvania in 2004 and a nationwide victory in 2004.

I'm getting ready. I'm 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 for every single American. I want you to remind your friends as the political season unwinds that I will continue to work hard to earn the confidence of every American by keeping this Nation secure and strong and prosperous and free.

I regret one thing about today, and that is that Laura is not traveling with me. Yes. You probably regret the fact that she's not the headline speaker. *[Laughter]* She is a fabulous lady. I love her dearly. She's a great wife, a wonderful mother, and she's doing a wonderful job for the people of this country as the First Lady.

I appreciate Evans Rose's leadership and short introduction. *[Laughter]* Evans has done a fine job. He's been a friend for a long time. I want to thank you for responding to his call. I want to thank Arlen Specter, who is the State campaign cochairman for Bush-Cheney '04. I'm proud that he's traveling with me today on Air Force

One. He'll attest to the fact there's not much air rage on Air Force One. *[Laughter]* But I'm proud of his leadership for the State of Pennsylvania. I look forward to working with him as the chairman of the Judiciary Committee in the United States Senate to make sure my judges get through and get appointed.

I want to thank Congresswoman Melissa Hart and Congressman Tim Murphy for joining us today. Both are doing a fine job and are strong members of the mighty Pennsylvania delegation. I understand my friend Rob Portman has snuck across the border from the State of Ohio. I appreciate so very much Rob being here. He's one of the rising stars in the United States House of Representatives and is a strong ally.

I'm honored that the Attorney General Mike Fisher has joined us. General, I'm glad you're here. I appreciate you coming.

I want to thank the local and State officials who are here. I know we've got the—Roddey is with us, and other mayors might be with us. If you're a mayor who is here, my only advice is to make sure you fill the potholes—*[laughter]*—maybe pick up the garbage too. Thanks for serving.

My friend Mercer Reynolds, who is the Bush-Cheney '04 national finance chairman, is here today. And I appreciate Mercer's strong support and hard work. David Girard-diCarlo is here, and Manny Stamatakis is here. They're both great friends. They're not from this part of the State; they're from down there in the Philadelphia area, like Arlen, but they're strong supporters and they're taking a leadership role to help us

raise money. I appreciate Leslie Gromis Baker for her hard work.

And I want to thank all the grassroots politicians who are here, the people who are turning out the vote. I'm counting on you. I'm counting on you to go to your coffee shops and community centers, and I'm counting on you to put up the signs and to make the phone calls and to mail the letters. I'm counting on you to find the people and get them to the polls. That's how you win elections. And that's how we're going to win in Pennsylvania, because of your hard work and strong support.

And finally, I'm proud to be here with Lynn Swann, my friend who is the chairman of the President's Council on Physical Fitness. What you need to do—[*applause*—you need to exercise. [*Laughter*] And Lynn is helping us send the message to young and old alike in this country that a healthy America is a country that takes care of its physical fitness needs. As a matter of fact, when I get back this evening, I think I'll just get a good jog in. I appreciate Lynn's friendship.

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 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 today, they live in freedom.

Three years ago, our military was not receiving the help it needed, and morale was beginning to suffer, so we increased the defense budget 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.

Three years ago, the economy was in trouble, and a recession was beginning. And then our country was attacked, and we had some scandals in corporate America, and we marched to war for our own security and for the peace of the world. All that 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. When Americans have more take-home pay to spend, to save or invest, the whole economy grows, and some people are more likely to be able to find a job. So we're returning money to the American people to help them raise their families, reducing taxes on dividends and capital gains to encourage investment. We're giving small businesses incentives to expand so they can hire new people. With all these actions, this administration has laid the foundation for greater prosperity and more jobs across America, so every single citizen has a chance to realize the American Dream.

The American economy is strong, and it is getting stronger. Perhaps you saw the fact that the third quarter annualized growth numbers were increased to 8.2 percent, the fastest pace in nearly 20 years. Yesterday, the Purchasing Managers Index was released, which shows strong growth in the manufacturing sector of the U.S. economy. Productivity is high. Business investment is rising. Housing construction is strong. The economic stimulus package that we passed out of the United States Congress is working.

Three years ago, there was a lot of talk about education reform, but 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. This administration is challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations. We believe every child can learn the basics of reading and math. We expect every school to teach the basics of reading and math. In return for increased Federal money for Title I students, we want States to measure so that not one single child is left behind in America.

We reorganized the Government and created the Department of Homeland Security, ably headed by former Governor of Pennsylvania Tom Ridge. We did so to better safeguard our borders and our ports and to better protect the American people. We passed trade promotion authority to open up new markets for America's entrepreneurs and farmers and ranchers and manufacturers. We passed much needed budget agreements to maintain 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.

The Congress gets a lot of credit. I enjoy working with Speaker Denny Hastert and Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist. I enjoy working with the Pennsylvania Senators and the Members of the House. I enjoy working on the people's business. We're working hard to change the tone in Washington, DC. It's—there's just too much backbiting and endless politics. And the best way to change the tone is to focus on results, is to do the work on behalf of the American people. And that's exactly what we're doing.

And those are the kind of people I've attracted to my administration. I've assembled a fine group of Americans, people from all walks of life, people from different backgrounds, who have come to Washington, DC, with one thing in mind, and that is to serve the greatest nation on the face of the Earth. Our country has had no finer Vice President than Dick Cheney. Mother has a second opinion. [*Laughter*]

In 3 years, we have come far. We have done a lot for the people, but our work is only beginning. We have great—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 that is prosperous and compassionate so that every single citizen has a chance to 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 stop, we will not tire 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 or international aid workers and innocent Iraqi citizens. See, they know that the advance of freedom in the heart of the Middle East would be a major defeat for the cause of terror. This collection of coldblooded killers is trying to shake the will of the United States. America will never be intimidated by a bunch of thugs and assassins.

We are aggressively striking the terrorists in Iraq, defeating them there so we do not have to face them in our own cities. Other nations are helping in Iraq, because they understand a free Iraq will make us all more secure. And we're standing with the brave Iraqi citizens as they assume more of their own defense and move towards self-government. These are not easy tasks, but they are essential tasks. We will finish what we have begun, and we will win this important victory in the war against 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. I believe that freedom is the future of every nation. I know that freedom is not America's gift to the world; freedom is God's gift to every man and woman in this world.

America also understands that unprecedented influence brings tremendous responsibilities. We have duties in the world. When we see disease and starvation and hopeless poverty, we will not turn away. And that is why, on the continent of Africa, America is committed to bringing the healing power of medicine to the millions of men and women and children suffering with AIDS. This great, powerful nation is leading the world in this incredibly important work of human rescue.

We face challenges here at home, and our actions will prove we're equal to the challenges. I'm going to stay focused on a progrowth economic agenda, one that elevates the entrepreneurial spirit of America, until everybody who wants to work can find a job.

We're keeping our commitment to our country's seniors by strengthening and modernizing Medicare. For years, our seniors have called for a modern Medicare system that provides more choices and prescription drug coverage. For years, the United States Congress did nothing. Finally, the Congress acted. The House and the Senate have approved historic legislation that I look forward to signing soon that will keep this country's promise to our Nation's elderly citizens.

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 fishing for a rich settlement. Frivolous lawsuits drive up the cost of health care. They therefore affect the Federal budget. Medical liability reform is a national issue that requires a national solution.

I proposed a good plan to the Congress. The House of Representatives passed a good bill to reform the system. The bill is stuck in the United States Senate. I appreciate the hard work of Senator Specter and Senator Santorum to get the bill to the floor of the United States Senate. Yet it is being blocked. It is time for some of the Members of the United States Senate to understand that no one has ever been healed by a frivolous lawsuit in America. We need medical liability reform now.

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 for the Federal courts, people who will interpret the law, not legislate from the bench. My nominees have been strongly supported by your two United States Senators, yet some Members of the 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 Senate. It is time for some members of the United States Senate to stop playing politics with American justice.

This country needs a national energy policy. We need an energy bill out of the United States Congress. I appreciate the hard work in both bodies, but they need to get a bill to my desk. We need to encourage conservation. We need energy efficiency. We need new technologies to help us explore for energy in environmentally friendly ways. But for the sake of economic security and for the sake of national security, this country must become less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

A strong and prosperous nation must also be a compassionate nation. I will continue to advance what I call compassionate conservation, which means we'll apply the best, most efficient, and most innovative ideas to the task of helping our fellow citizens who are in need. There are still millions of men and women who want to end their dependence on the Government and become independent through hard work. I

look forward to working with Congress to expand on the success of welfare reform and to help people better prepare themselves and to better find a job and the dignity that comes from working.

Congress should complete the "Citizen Service Act" so more of our citizens can serve their communities and their country. Both Houses should reach agreement on my Faith-Based Initiative. It will help support the armies of compassion that are mentoring our children, caring for the homeless, offering hope to the addicted. America's strength is based upon our religious diversity. People of all faiths have heard a call to help somebody who hurts. Our Government must not fear faith; we must welcome faith into helping solve the intractable problems that face our country.

A compassionate society is one that promotes opportunity for everybody, including the independence that comes from owning something. This administration is working hard 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 presented plans to help close that gap. We want people owning and managing their own retirement accounts, owning and controlling their own health care accounts. 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 our country.

A compassionate society is one in which people respect one another, respect their opinions, respect their religious beliefs, and a society in which people take responsibility for the decisions they make. The culture of this country 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 is responsible for the decisions we make. If you're a mom or a dad, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart. If you don't like 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 are responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. In a responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourselves.

The culture of service is strong in America. The culture of responsibility is growing. You know, I started what's called the USA Freedom Corps; it's a chance to encourage Americans to extend a compassionate hand to somebody who hurts. And the response is strong. The charitable organizations in America are growing. I want to thank you for supporting our local charities, thank you for helping people who hurt. You know, the true strength of the country is found in the heart and souls of the American citizens. Policemen and firefighters and people who wear our Nation's uniform are reminding us what it means to sacrifice for something greater than ourselves. 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 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 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. We welcome it, and we know that for our country, the best days lie ahead.

God bless you all. Thank you for coming. Proud you're here.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:58 a.m. at the Westin Convention Center Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Pittsburgh Steelers

running back Jerome Bettis; Pennsylvania State Attorney General Mike Fisher; Allegheny County Chief Executive Jim Roddey; and David Girard-diCarlo, Pennsylvania

State cochairman, and Leslie Gromis Baker, campaign chairperson for the mid-Atlantic region, Bush-Cheney '04, Inc.

Remarks Honoring 2003 NASCAR Drivers December 2, 2003

The President. Good to see you all. Thanks for coming. Welcome. Please be seated. Thanks for coming. Welcome to the White House, and congratulations on a great NASCAR Winston Cup Series. We're honored you all are here. I see a lot of the "Bubbas" who work in my administration who have shown up. [Laughter] I wonder why. I've hosted champions from many sports here at the White House—first time, however, we ever parked stock cars in the South Lawn. [Laughter] We're proud you all are here.

I'm proud to be here with such an outstanding group of NASCAR drivers. I didn't realize you all dressed up so well—[laughter]—with the NASCAR owners, the crew members, and the executives of this fine sport.

I appreciate the Members of Congress who are here. I see Senator Jon Kyl of Arizona. I didn't realize you were such a race fan, Senator—helped us get the Medicare bill through the Senate, by the way. I appreciate Bart Gordon of Tennessee for joining us. Congressman Mac Collins—I knew he was a race car fan. It's good to see you, Mac.

Representative Collins. [Inaudible]

The President. Yes, you are a "Bubba." [Laughter] I'm glad you all are here. I thought you might be here just because you were looking for a fast ride back up to the Capitol.

I want to congratulate Matt Kenseth, the 2003 Winston Cup points champion. Like all champs, he succeeded because of his dedication and his hard work. He started

racing late-model cars in his home State of Wisconsin before he was 20 years old. He worked his way up the ranks to the Busch Series. I kind of like the name of that series. [Laughter] This year, he drove his number 17 Ford all the way to the Winston Cup title. He's a great driver, and, like me, he married well. We appreciate Katie coming here today. Thanks for being here, Katie.

But every NASCAR fan knows that behind the—the talent behind the wheel is not just enough, that NASCAR is a team sport. When you hear these drivers talk after a victory, they're always talking about how well their team performed, how well the team did. He had a great group in the pit, obviously—otherwise, he wouldn't be the champion—starting with the cat in the hat, the team owner, Jack Roush. Thank you for coming, Jack, and congratulations. Every team needs a strong crew chief, and Matt had a great one in Robbie Reiser. Robbie, thank you for coming. I appreciate you being here. Some of the other members of the crew are here as well. Where are they, Robbie? Where are the members of your crew? Well, they must have—couldn't pass the security check. Let them in the gate. [Laughter] But all of you have earned your right—earned the right to call yourselves champs. I congratulate you. We welcome you to the White House. I'm really proud of the job you've done.

One of the reasons for the success of NASCAR is the strength of its leadership. I want to thank Mike Helton, who is the