

Remarks in Orlando, Florida  
March 20, 2004

*The President.* Thank you all. Thanks for coming. It turns out the crowd is always a little bigger when Laura comes along. America loves her almost as much as I love her. I think she deserves 4 more years as the First Lady.

No, it's great to be back in the great State of Florida again. There's a big election coming up, and I thought I'd come down for a little spring training. It's always a good chance to be with Brother. [*Laughter*] He's a great Governor of this great State. Like me, he married well. [*Laughter*] I appreciate Colu being here as well. I used to say that Jeb was the coolest Governor in the country. That's until Arnold got elected.

Speaking about great leaders, I made a really good choice when I asked Dick Cheney to be my runningmate. He and I are grateful for the many strong supporters we have here in Florida. We're going to be spending some quality time in this State. We're here to earn the vote, and we need your help. I know you're here because you do want to help. One of the most important things you can do is encourage your neighbors to vote. We want a lot of people voting in this country. We want people from all walks of life doing their duty in this country, and that is to show up to the polls. And by the way, when you get them headed to the polls, you might suggest what's good for the country, and that is Bush-Cheney for 4 more years.

*Audience members.* Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

*The President.* And by the way, we set up a web site, so that you can get on to figure out how to volunteer. We need your help. That's what I'm here to ask for. It's not very complicated. It's georgewbush.com. That's an easy one for me to remember. [*Laughter*] With your

help, we're going to make Florida a part of a great nationwide victory this November.

I'm so thankful for you all coming. I'm proud of the fact that two Members of the United States Congress is with us, Ric Keller and Tom Feeney.

Lieutenant Governor Toni Jennings is here. I appreciate the Governor Jennings. Tom Gallagher is a statewide official. I'm proud my friend is here, Tom Gallagher. I want to thank all the statehouse members, all the local officials. The high sheriff is with us today. And thank all the law enforcement people that are with us today.

I want to thank my friend Roberto Candelario for leading the invocation. Roberto, thank you for coming. Thank you, Lisa Faulkner, for leading this great crowd in the national anthem. I got here a little late; I didn't get to hear my friend Billy Ray Cyrus. Thank you, Billy Ray. The Katinas are with us as well. I'm proud they're here. I'm proud to have their support. My friend Lynn Swann is with us. He's welcome to come to Florida. We're a little nervous about inviting him down to Dallas. [*Laughter*] You know what I mean—a lot of Cowboy fans there. I appreciate so very much Footy for being here. Footy, thank you for emceeding this event.

The chairman of Bush-Cheney, Marc Racicot, the former Governor of Montana, is with us today. Marc, thank you for coming. My friend Al Hoffman, who has worked so hard in this State, is with us. Carole Jean Jordan, the chairman of the Florida Republican Party, is with us.

But most importantly, you're with us. I appreciate you coming. I know many of you are getting on buses and vans today for a voter registration drive. Thanks for doing that. The effort is going to help us. It will help our entire ticket. We have a strong slate of candidates. We're coming

into an historic election, and we're going to win an historic victory this November.

The Presidential primary contest is over. I finally got an opponent.

*Audience members.* Boo-o-o!

*The President.* He's following an interesting strategy. The other day, here in Florida, he claimed some important endorsements from overseas. He won't tell us the name of the foreign admirers. That's okay. Either way, I'm not too worried, because I'm going to keep my campaign right here in America.

*Audience members.* U.S.A.! U.S.A.! U.S.A.!

*The President.* He's an experienced Senator, and he's built up quite a record. In fact, Senator Kerry has been in Washington long enough to take both sides on just about every issue. [*Laughter*] Senator Kerry voted for the PATRIOT Act, for NAFTA, for the No Child Left Behind Act, and for the use of force in Iraq. Now he opposes the PATRIOT Act, NAFTA, the No Child Left Behind Act, and the liberation of Iraq. My opponent clearly feels strongly about each of these issues—[*laughter*—so strongly that one position is never just enough. He demonstrated the technique the other day. Someone asked Senator Kerry why he voted against the \$87-billion funding bill to help our troops in Iraq. Here is what he said: "I actually did vote for the 87 billion, before I voted against it." [*Laughter*] End of quote. [*Laughter*] That sure clears things up, doesn't it? [*Laughter*]

His answers aren't always clear, but the voters will have a very clear choice in this campaign. It is the choice between keeping the tax relief that is moving this economy forward or putting the burden of higher taxes back on the American people. It is a choice between an America that leads the world with strength and confidence or an America that is uncertain in the face of danger.

Now, I look forward to this debate. I look forward to this campaign. I'm looking

forward to talking about what we've accomplished and what we're going to do. In the past 3 years, we've achieved great things, and most important, we have a positive vision for the years ahead: A positive vision for winning the war against terror; a positive vision for extending peace and freedom throughout our world; a positive vision for creating jobs and promoting opportunity and compassion here at home. We will leave no doubt where we stand. We will win on the 2d of November.

The last 3 years have brought serious challenges, and we've given serious answers. We came to office with a stock market in decline and an economy heading into recession. We delivered historic tax relief. And now, our economy is the fastest growing of any major industrialized nation. We had to confront corporate crimes that cost people their jobs and their savings. We passed strong corporate reforms, and we made it clear, we will not tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America.

We saw war and grief arrive on a quiet September morning, so we pursued the terrorist enemy across the world. We have captured or killed many of the key leaders of the Al Qaida network, and the rest of them will know there is no cave or hole deep enough to hide from American justice.

We confronted the dangers of state-sponsored terror and the spread of weapons of mass destruction, so we ended two of the most violent and dangerous regimes on Earth. We freed over 50 million people. Once again, America is proud to lead the armies of liberation.

When Dick Cheney and I came to Washington, we found a military that was underfunded and underappreciated, so we gave our military the resources and respect they deserve. Today, no one can question the skill and the strength and the spirit of the United States military.

It is the President's job to confront problems, not to pass them on to future Presidents or future generations. It is the President's job to step up and make the tough decisions and to keep his commitments. And that is how I will continue to lead our great Nation.

*Audience members.* Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

*The President.* Great events will turn on this election. The man who sits in the Oval Office will set the course of the war on terror and the direction of our economy. The security and prosperity of America are at stake. The other side hasn't offered much in the way of strategies to win the war or policies to expand our economy. So far, all we hear from that side is bitterness and partisan anger. Anger is not an agenda for the future of America. We will take on the big issues with optimism and resolve and determination, and we will make it clear to the American people, we stand ready to lead this Nation for 4 more years.

A big issue for every family in America is the Federal tax burden. With the largest tax relief since Ronald Reagan was President, we have left more money in the hands that earned it. By spending and investing and helping to create new jobs, the American people have used their money far better than the Federal Government would have.

Oh, I know there's some economic pessimists who refuse to accept good news about our economy. But I'm optimistic. I'll tell you why. I know what we've overcome. I've seen the spirit of the American people. I've seen Americans overcome economic challenges. Because of good policies and the hard work of the American people, our economy is strong, and it is growing stronger. Economic growth in the second half of 2003 was the fastest in nearly 20 years. Manufacturing activity is increasing. Business investment is rising. Disposable income is rising. Inflation is low. Interest rates are low. Homeownership is at the highest rate ever. Job creation is gaining

strength. We've added more than 350,000 new jobs over the last 6 months. The tax relief we passed is working.

My opponent has a different view of tax relief. When we passed an increase in the child credit to help families, he voted against it.

*Audience members.* Boo-o-o!

*The President.* When we reduced the marriage penalty, he voted against it.

*Audience members.* Boo-o-o!

*The President.* When we created a lower 10-percent tax rate for working families, he voted against it.

*Audience members.* Boo-o-o!

*The President.* When we reduced the tax rate on dividends that many seniors depend on, Senator Kerry voted against it.

*Audience members.* Boo-o-o!

*The President.* When we gave small businesses a tax incentive to expand and to hire, he voted against it.

*Audience members.* Boo-o-o!

*The President.* We're beginning to see a pattern here. [Laughter] Senator Kerry is one of the main opponents of tax relief in the United States Congress. However, when tax increases are proposed, it's a lot easier to get a "yes" vote out of him. [Laughter] Over the years, he's voted over 350 times for higher taxes on the American people—

*Audience members.* Boo-o-o!

*The President.* —including the biggest tax increase in American history. He also supported a 50-cent gallon tax on gasoline.

*Audience members.* Boo-o-o!

*The President.* He wanted you to pay all that money at the pump and wouldn't even throw in a free car wash. [Laughter]

Now, Senator Kerry is proposing a lot of new Federal spending in this campaign. He's going to have pay for it somehow. There's a gap between Senator Kerry's spending promises and Senator Kerry's promise of a lower deficit. It's what I call a tax gap. Given Senator Kerry's record of supporting tax increases, it's pretty clear

how he's going to fill the tax gap. He's going to tax all of you.

*Audience members.* Boo-o-o!

*The President.* Fortunately, you're not going to give him that chance.

Higher taxes right now would undermine growth and destroy jobs just as our economy is getting stronger. It's bad policy. To help grow the American economy and create more jobs for American workers, I have a better idea: We should make all the tax cuts permanent.

We must do more to keep this economy growing to create jobs. We need to maintain spending discipline in our Nation's Capital. I have a plan to protect small-business owners and employees from frivolous and junk lawsuits and needless regulation. We have a plan to control the cost of health care and give people better access through association health care plans and health savings accounts. And in order to control health care costs and to make sure docs are available, we need national medical liability reform now.

We have a strategy to make sure Florida goods are sold in markets all around the world. I proposed a great strategy to make sure our Nation has a sound energy plan, a plan that encourages conservation, a plan that modernizes the electricity system, a plan to make America less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

They talk a lot about job creation. My opponent talks about it, but he's against every one of these job-creating measures. Empty talk about jobs and economic isolationism won't get anyone hired. The way to create jobs is to reelect a pro-growth, pro-entrepreneur, small-business President, and that's George W. Bush.

Our future also depends on America's leadership in the world. The momentum of freedom in our time is strong, but we still face serious dangers. Al Qaida is wounded but not broken. Terrorists are testing our will in Afghanistan and Iraq. Regimes in North Korea and Iran are challenging the peace. If America shows weak-

ness and uncertainty in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This will not happen on my watch.

This Nation is strong and confident in the cause of freedom. And today, no friend or enemy doubts the word of the United States of America. America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Afghanistan. The Taliban chose defiance, and the Taliban no longer are in power. America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Iraq. The dictator chose defiance, and the dictator today sits in a prison cell.

September the 11th, 2001, taught a lesson I will never forget: America must confront threats before they fully materialize. In Iraq, my administration looked at the intelligence, and we saw a threat. Members of Congress looked at the intelligence, and they saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence, and it saw a threat. The previous administration and Congress looked at the intelligence and made regime change in Iraq the policy of our Government.

In 2002, the United Nations Security Council yet again demanded a full accounting of Saddam Hussein's weapons programs. And as he had for over a decade, Saddam Hussein refused to comply. So we had a choice to make, either take the word of a madman or to take action to defend America. Faced with that choice, I will defend America every time.

My opponent admits that Saddam Hussein was a threat. He just didn't support my decision to remove Saddam from power. Maybe he was hoping Saddam would lose the next Iraqi election. [*Laughter*]

We showed the dictator and a waiting world that America means what it says. Because our coalition acted, Saddam Hussein's torture chambers are closed. Because we acted, Iraq's weapons programs are ended forever. Because we acted, nations like

Libya have gotten the message and renounced their own weapons programs. Because we acted, an example of democracy is rising at the very heart of the Middle East. Because we acted, the world is more free and America is more secure.

We still face thugs and terrorists in Iraq who would rather go on killing the innocent than accept the advance of liberty. There's a reason. They know that a free Iraq will be a major defeat for the cause of terror. This collection of killers is trying to shake the will of the United States. They don't understand us. America will never be intimidated by thugs and assassins.

*Audience members.* U.S.A.! U.S.A.! U.S.A.!

*The President.* We are aggressively striking the terrorists in Iraq. We're on the offensive. We will defeat them there so we do not have to face them in our own cities.

Other nations are helping us to build a free society in Iraq, because a free Iraq will make us all safer. 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. America will finish what we have begun, and we will win this essential victory in the war on terror.

On national security, Americans have the clearest possible choice. My opponent says he approves of bold action in the world but only if other countries don't object.

*Audience members.* Boo-o-o!

*The President.* I'm all for united action, and so are our 34 coalition partners in Iraq right now. Yet America must never outsource America's national security decisions to the leaders of other countries.

Some are skeptical that the war on terror is really a war at all. Senator Kerry said, and I quote, "The war on terror is far less of a military operation and far more of an intelligence gathering, law enforcement operation."

*Audience members.* Boo-o-o!

*The President.* I disagree—I disagree. Our Nation followed this approach after the

World Trade Center was bombed in 1993. The matter was handled in the courts and thought by some to be settled. The terrorists were still training in Afghanistan. They were still plotting in other nations. They were still drawing up more ambitious plans.

After the chaos and carnage of September the 11th, it is not enough to serve our enemies with legal papers. With those attacks, the terrorists and supporters declared war on the United States of America, and war is what they got.

Our men and women in the military are taking great risks, and they're doing great work. At bases across our country and the world, I've had the privilege of meeting with those who defend our country and sacrifice for our security. I've seen their great decency and unselfish courage. And I can assure you, ladies and gentlemen, the cause of freedom is in good hands.

This Nation is prosperous and strong, yet we need to remember that our greatest strength is in the hearts and souls of our fellow citizens. We're strong because of the values we try to live by, courage and compassion, reverence and integrity. We are strong because of the institutions that help give us direction and purpose, families and schools and religious congregations. These values and institutions are fundamental to our lives, and they deserve the respect of our Government.

We stand for the fair treatment of faith-based groups so they can receive Federal support for their works of compassion and healing. We will not stand for discrimination by the Federal Government against people of faith.

We stand for welfare reforms that require work and strengthen marriage, which have helped millions of Americans find their independence and dignity. We will not stand for any attempt to weaken those reforms and send people back into lives of dependence.

We stand for a culture of life in which every person counts and every person matters. We will not stand for the treatment

of any life as a commodity to be experimented upon or exploited or cloned.

We stand for the confirmation of judges who strictly and faithfully interpret the law. We will not stand for judges who undermine democracy by legislating from the bench or judges who try to remake the values of America by court order.

We stand for a culture of responsibility in America. It's the culture of a country that's changing 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 mother or a father, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart. 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 the responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor, just like we'd like to be loved ourselves.

For all Americans, these years in our history will always stand apart. There are quiet times in the life of a nation when little is expected of the leaders. This is not one of those times. You and I are living in a period when the stakes are high, challenges are difficult, a time when resolve is needed.

None of us will ever forget that week when one era ended and another began. On September the 14th, 2001, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers. I'll never forget that day. One guy pointed at me and said, "Don't let me down." Workers in hardhats were shouting, "Whatever it takes." And as we all did that day, these men and women searching through the rubble took it personally. I took it personally. I have a responsibility that goes on. I will never relent in bringing justice to

our enemies. I will defend the security of America, whatever it takes.

In these times, I've also been witness to the character of this Nation. Not so long ago, some had their doubts about the American character, our capacity to meet serious challenges or to serve a cause greater than self-interest. But Americans have given their answer. I've seen the unselfish courage of our troops. I've seen the heroism of Americans in the face of danger. I've seen the spirit of sacrifice and compassion renewed in our country. We've all seen our country unite in common purpose when it mattered most.

We'll need all these qualities for the work ahead. We have a war to win. The world is counting on us to lead the cause of freedom and peace. We have a duty to spread opportunity to every corner of America. With your help, we're going to share our message of optimism and national strength with every voter in the State of Florida.

I'm looking forward to this campaign ahead. I'm going to give it my all. And I'm counting on you all to do the same. Talk to your friends. Talk to your neighbors. Get out the word. Ask people to join our cause to participate in democracy. With you at my side, there is no doubt in my mind we're headed to a victory on November the second.

Thank you for coming. God bless. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:14 p.m. at the Orange County Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida, and his wife, Columba; Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger of California; Lt. Gov. Toni Jennings of Florida; Tom Gallagher, chief financial officer, Florida Department of Financial Services; Kevin Beary, sheriff, Orange County, FL; Roberto Candelario, pastor, Centro de la Familia Cristiana, Orlando, FL; country music entertainer Billy Ray Cyrus; musical group the Katinas; pro football Hall of Fame receiver Lynn C. Swann;

John “Footy” Kross, Miami Y100.7 radio personality; and Al Hoffman, finance chairman, Republican National Committee.

## Telephone Remarks to the South Boston Saint Patrick’s Day Breakfast March 21, 2004

*The President.* Senator, this would be your President calling.

*State Senator Jack Hart.* President Bush, President Bush is on the line. How about a nice round of applause for President Bush? Happy Saint Patrick’s Day. What an honor.

*The President.* Yes, same to you, Jack. Thanks for letting me call in. I appreciate you taking my call.

*Senator Hart.* Any time, Mr. President, we’ll take your call any time, for crying out loud.

*The President.* Well, I’m proud of that. Listen, I want to thank Father Casey. I presume he’s got quite a few souls to save there in that crowd. [Laughter]

*Senator Hart.* There’s quite a few Democratic souls to save in this hall, Mr. President.

*The President.* I know you’ve got one—you invited at least one Republican, and that’s my friend the Governor.

*Senator Hart.* Yes, yes, he’s here. Mitt Romney is here. We were going to ask you, Mr. President, do you need a runningmate? [Laughter]

*The President.* Wait a minute.

*Senator Hart.* We like Dick Cheney and all, but we’d like for you to take the Governor to Washington, DC. [Laughter]

*The President.* Look, you’re lucky to have the guy. Here’s the way I like to put it about Massachusetts: I know there’s a lot of talk about a Massachusetts politician who has his eye on the Presidency. But tell Mitt it’s not open until 2008. [Laughter]

*Senator Hart.* Oh, you’re talking about—you had me stumped for a second there.

You’re talking about Senator Kerry, of course.

*The President.* Oh, no, no.

*Senator Hart.* Oh, my goodness.

*The President.* You mean the—well, never mind. [Laughter]

I want to thank the Lieutenant Governor. I want to thank the speaker and the senate president. I miss my days as being the Governor. I loved dealing with our Lieutenant Governor and speaker and members of the statehouse and the State senate. And I wish you all the very best. I know you’re struggling with some big issues. But these are good, decent folks working for the people of Massachusetts to get some things done, and I appreciate, Jack, the spirit of this lunch.

*Senator Hart.* Well, thank you very much. We are certainly honored that you called, and we respect the job that you’re doing. We pray for you every day, Mr. President. You’re a good man, and we just wanted to wish you a very, very happy Saint Patrick’s Day.

*The President.* Same to you, sir, and I wish everybody a happy Saint Patrick’s Day as well. God bless, everybody. God bless our great Nation.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:25 a.m. from the Residence at the White House to breakfast participants meeting in Boston, MA. In his remarks, he referred to Rev. Robert E. Casey, pastor, Saint Brigid’s Catholic Church, Boston, MA; Gov. Mitt Romney and Lt. Gov. Kerry Healey of Massachusetts; Thomas M. Finneran, speaker, Massachusetts State House of Representatives; and