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## Remarks at a Bush-Cheney Reception in Atlanta, Georgia January 15, 2004

Thank you very much. Thanks for coming. And thanks for your support. I'm honored—first, let me tell you how honored I am to be introduced by a bestselling author—[*laughter*—and a great American. I am privileged to call Zell Miller my friend. The people of Georgia are privileged to call him United States Senator. He is a decent, honorable citizen of this country.

I'm also proud to be on the stage with your Governor, Sonny. Sonny said, "I want you to meet some of my friends from the legislature." He said, "What's unusual about this bunch is they don't call themselves Republican." [*Laughter*] There's a handful of Democrat legislators here from the great State of Georgia. I know there's a handful of Republican legislators as well. I'm kind of taking you for granted tonight. [*Laughter*] But I do want to say thanks, Sonny—to Sonny and the Democrat legislators who've come. I'm proud to have you on my team. You're welcome on my team.

And I'm proud you all are here. We put together a good team in Georgia in the year 2000. We're going to do better in the year 2004. We're laying the foundation for what is going to be a great national victory in November of 2004. And you're helping, and I appreciate your help.

I'm loosening up. [*Laughter*] I'm getting ready. But I got a job to do for everybody who lives in this country. When you're going to your coffee shops and your community centers, they say, "What is George W. up to," you tell them this, that I'm doing the people's business in Washington, DC, that I'm working hard to earn the confidence of every single American by

keeping this Nation secure and strong and prosperous and free.

I know that Zell's wife, Shirley, is with us today as well. Shirley, I'm proud you're here. Zell and I both married above ourselves. [*Laughter*] I regret that Laura hasn't joined us. She is a fabulous First Lady for this country. I'm really proud of her.

And I'm proud as well of the junior Senator from the great State of Georgia, a close ally, good friend, good, honorable man, Saxby Chambliss.

I better make sure I mention Mary Perdue as well, the first lady of the great State of Georgia. Governor, I appreciate what you're doing at the statehouse here.

I'm proud of my friend Jamie Reynolds. I appreciate the team he has put together to help make this an incredibly successful fundraiser. Don't go overboard on Jamie. He's not bad for a country boy. [*Laughter*]

I appreciate the members of the congressional delegation who are here: Mac Collins and Nathan Deal, Charlie Norwood, Phil Gingrey, and Max Burns. These are good ones, good, honorable citizens who are doing what they think is right for the country. I appreciate you all coming.

I know my friend Nancy Coverdell is here. She is just a great personal friend of our family's. Nancy, thank you for taking time out of your schedule to be here.

I'm honored that my friend Mercer Reynolds—happens to be related to Jamie—he's the national finance chairman for Bush-Cheney—is here. It's important to make sure that you've got plenty of cash on hand when you're running for President.

You want to be well-financed. We're becoming well-financed. We've got a great national effort, a great Georgia effort. And again, I want to thank you all you all for participating in this.

Ralph Reed is with us. He's the Southeast regional chairman and he's the Georgia chairman for my campaign, for the campaign of Vice President Cheney. Alec Poitevint is with us as well, who's the party chairman.

And for the grassroots activists who are here, I want to thank you for what you're going to do. Thank you for the work that you're going to do as we're coming down the stretch. That's the work that's putting up the signs and talking the talk, getting on the phone, and addressing the envelopes. I appreciate what you're going to do. You cannot win a campaign unless hard-working grassroots people get out there and pound the pavement on behalf of this ticket. And I can assure you, we'll be right with you.

And when you're out there, I want you to remind everybody that for the last 3 years, our Nation has acted decisively to confront great challenges. I came to this office to solve problems, not to pass 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 of the key leaders of the Al Qaida network, and the rest of them know that we are 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 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.

Three years ago, the economy was in trouble and the recession was just beginning. And then there was attacks on our country and scandals in corporate America and war, which all affected the people's confidence. But this administration 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 understand that when Americans have more take-home pay to spend, to save, or to invest, the whole economy grows, and people are more likely to find a job. So we're returning more money to the people to help them raise their families, reducing 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 are laying the foundation for greater prosperity and more jobs so every single citizen in this country has a chance to realize the American Dream.

Today, the American economy is strong, and it is getting stronger. The figures for the third quarter of 2003 show the economy grew at an annual rate of 8.2 percent, the fastest pace in nearly 20 years. Productivity is high. Business investment is rising. Housing construction is expanding. Manufacturing activity is increasing, and we've added over a quarter-million new jobs over the past 5 months. The tax relief we passed is working.

Three years ago, there was a lot of talk about education reform in Washington, but there just 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've increased spending at the Federal level, particularly for Title I students, for poor students. But for the first time, the

Federal Government is saying, “Why don’t you show us whether or not the children can read and write and add and subtract.” The reason why we’re saying that is because we believe every child, regardless of their background, can learn to read and write and add and subtract. We expect every school to teach every child to read and write and add and subtract. This administration is challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations. We expect results so that not one single child is left behind in America.

We reorganized our Government and created the Department of Homeland Security to better safeguard our borders and ports and to protect the American people. We passed trade promotion authority to open up new markets for Georgia’s farmers and ranchers and entrepreneurs and manufacturers. We passed much-needed budget agreements to help maintain spending discipline in Washington, DC. And last month, we completed the greatest advance in health care coverage for America’s seniors since the founding of Medicare. The new Medicare bill that I signed will give older Americans the option of a prescription drug benefit and more control over their health care. America’s seniors deserve a modern health care system, and this administration delivered.

On issue after issue—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 deserves a lot of credit. I enjoy working with Speaker Denny Hastert, Majority Leader Bill Frist. I enjoy working with Senator Miller and Chambliss and working with this Georgia congressional delegation. We’re working hard to change the tone in Washington, DC. There’s too much needless politics up there. There’s too much backbiting and backstabbing. The best way to fight through that noise is to focus on results, to do what I call the people’s business, and get some things done. And we’re getting a lot done.

We’re also getting a lot done because I’ve surrounded myself with plenty capable people, good, honorable, decent people from all walks of life who have come to serve in my administration with one thing in mind, to represent the greatest country on the face of the Earth. Our country has had no finer Vice President than Dick Cheney. Mother may have a second opinion. *[Laughter]*

In 3 years, we’ve done a lot. We have 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 that is prosperous and compassionate so every citizen has a chance to work and to succeed and to realize the great promise of America.

It is clear that the future of freedom and peace depend on the actions of America. We are 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 all people can be certain they will never again have to fear the rule of Saddam Hussein. The Ba’athist holdouts largely responsible for the current violence now know there will be no return to corrupt power and the privilege they once held. All Iraqis who have taken the side of freedom have taken the winning side.

We still face terrorists who would rather go on killing the innocent than accept the rise of liberty in the Middle East. You see, they know that the advance of freedom in Iraq would be a major defeat for the cause of terror. This collection of killers is trying to shake the will of the United States of America. 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 country. Other nations are helping to build a free Iraq because they understand a free and peaceful Iraq in the heart of the Middle East 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. We will finish what we have begun, and we will win this essential victory in the war on terror.

And part of winning the war on terror is to oppose proliferation around the world. Last month, after talks with the United States and Great Britain, Libya voluntarily committed to disclose and dismantle all its weapons of mass destruction programs. Leaders around the world now know this: Weapons of mass destruction do not bring influence or prestige; they bring isolation and other unwelcome consequences. [Laughter] And nations who abandon the pursuit of these weapons will find an open path to better relations with the United States of America.

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 destruction. Americans believe that freedom is the deepest need and hope of every human heart. I 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 God's gift to every man and woman in this world.

America also understands that unprecedented influence brings tremendous responsibilities. We have duties in this world, and when we see disease, starvation, and hopeless poverty, we will not turn away. On the continent of Africa, this great, mighty land is committed to bringing the healing power of medicine to millions of men and women and children now suf-

fering with AIDS. This great country of ours 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 these challenges. This administration will continue to promote a pro-growth, pro-small business, pro-entrepreneur economic agenda until everyone who wants to work can find a job.

And for the sake of our health care system, we need to cut down on the frivolous lawsuits which are driving up 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 that requires a national solution.

The House of Representatives passed a good bill. The bill is stuck in the United States Senate. Senators Miller and Chambliss are working to get it unstuck. The Senate must act on behalf of the American people. Some of those Senators must understand that no one has ever been healed by a frivolous lawsuit in America.

I have a responsibility as your President to make sure the judicial system runs well, and I 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. 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 Senate floor. I appreciate Senator Miller and Senator Chambliss' strong support for the nominees I've nominated. It's time for some of the Members of the United States Senate to stop playing politics with American justice.

This country needs an energy plan, and Congress needs to complete the work on that bill and get it to my desk. We must

promote energy efficiency and conservation and to develop cleaner technologies to help us explore in environmentally friendly ways. But for the sake of economic security and for the sake of national security, we 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 our agenda of compassionate conservatism, which means we'll apply the best and most innovative ideas to the task of helping fellow citizens in need. We need—there are millions of men and women in this country who want to end their dependence on government and become independent through hard work. We must build on the success of welfare reform, put good job-training programs in place that help people find work that actually exists, so that more people can have work and dignity in their lives.

With the help of Congress, we're working to ensure that more Americans can serve their communities and their country through what's called the Citizen Service Program. Both Houses of the United States Congress must pass my Faith-Based Initiative. It is essential that our Government not fear the influence of faith in our society but welcome people of faith into serving the difficult problems of heart, the difficult problems of the homeless, the addiction, mentoring of children. Faith is one of the great strengths of America, and our Government must welcome faith-based programs.

A compassionate society must promote opportunity for every single citizen, including the independence and dignity that come from ownership. This administration will constantly strive to promote an ownership society in America. We want more people owning their own home. In our country today, we have a minority homeownership gap, and that's not good for America. I have put forth plans, have worked with Senator Miller and Senator Chambliss to close this gap. We're working

hard to encourage more people in America to own their own home. We want more people owning their own health care plans and managing their health care plans. We want people owning and managing their own retirement accounts. We want more people owning their own small business, because we understand that when a person owns something, he or she has a vital stake in the future of America.

A compassionate society is one in which people respect one another, respect their religious views, respect their backgrounds, and take responsibility for the decisions they make in life. The culture of this country 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 culture in which each of us understands that 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 are 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 ourself.

We can see that culture of service and responsibility growing around us. I went to a church in downtown New Orleans today that was full of neighborhood healers, people who have heard the universal call, people from all walks of life, different religions, all aimed at serving our Nation by helping somebody who hurts.

I started what's called the USA Freedom Corps to encourage Americans to extend a compassionate hand to a neighbor in need, and the response has been fantastic. The strength of this country lies in the hearts and souls of our citizens. Policemen and firefighters and people who wear our Nation's uniform remind us what it means

to sacrifice for something greater than ourselves in life. Once again, the children of this country 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 America.

This is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it and know that for our country, the best days lie ahead.

May God bless you all. Thanks for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:12 p.m. at the Georgia World Congress Center. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Sonny Perdue of Georgia; Alec Poitevint, chairman, Georgia Republican Party; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. He also referred to Title I of the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 (Public Law No. 103-382), which amended Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (Public Law No. 89-10).

## Letter to Congressional Leaders on Termination of Emergency With Respect to Sierra Leone and Liberia *January 15, 2004*

*Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)*

Consistent with section 202(a) of the National Emergencies Act, 50 U.S.C. 1622, I hereby report that I have issued an Executive Order on January 15, 2004, that terminates the national emergency described and declared with respect to Sierra Leone in Executive Order 13194 of January 18, 2001, and expanded in scope with respect to Liberia by Executive Order 13213 of May 22, 2001.

I am enclosing a copy of the Executive Order. This order becomes effective at

12:01 a.m. eastern standard time on January 16, 2004.

Sincerely,

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Richard B. Cheney, President of the Senate. This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 16. The Executive order is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

## Statement on the Recess Appointment of Charles W. Pickering as a United States Court of Appeals Circuit Judge *January 16, 2004*

Today I was proud to exercise my constitutional authority to appoint Judge Charles W. Pickering to serve on the

United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit. Judge Pickering has served with distinction as a United States District