

Statement on the Enlargement of the European Union May 3, 2004

I applaud the action by the European Union (EU) to welcome into their membership 10 new countries from Central Europe and the Mediterranean. This enlargement will bring opportunity and hope to millions of Europeans. Along with NATO's expansion, the EU's enlargement further unites the new and the established democracies of Europe and helps create a Europe whole, free, and at peace. We welcome the prospect of further enlargement of the EU

to qualified countries, including Romania and Bulgaria, and we support Turkey's European Union aspirations.

This new European Union will more effectively play its essential role as a force for democracy, prosperity, and stability. This action strengthens the enduring partnership between the United States and Europe and marks a major advance for the common values and purposes of our transatlantic community.

Remarks in Sterling Heights, Michigan May 3, 2004

The President. Thanks for coming. It is great to be back in Michigan. In case you haven't heard, we're on the George W. Bush bus tour. It's my way to let the people of Michigan know how much I appreciate their support, how much I'm counting on your support. It's my way of letting you know I want to win and be President for 4 more years.

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

The President. Thank you all for coming. The first thing is I'd like to ask you to volunteer in the campaign. Get your neighbors to register to vote. Put the signs up. Talk to people from all walks of life and tell them this, that I've got a positive vision for the future of this country. I've got a positive vision for winning the war on terror and to spreading peace and freedom throughout the world, a positive vision for creating jobs and opportunity for every single American, a positive vision for capturing the great spirit of this country so every citizen has a chance to realize their dreams. I've got a goal to make sure this country is safer and stronger and better. I will leave

no doubt where we stand, and we will win on November the 2d.

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

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

The President. We've had a fabulous day today. It's been somewhat diminished by the fact that Laura had to go home early. No, I know, you drew the short straw. [Laughter] There's a lot of reasons why I think I need to be reelected, but for certain, one of the most important reasons is to make sure that Laura is the First Lady for 4 more years.

[At this point, there was a disturbance in the audience.]

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

The President. I can't tell you how proud I am of Laura. She is a fantastic First Lady. She is the love of my life. I am really proud of her, and I appreciate the job she has done. She loves the children of America. She understands the importance of teaching every child to read. And she sends her very best to all our friends here in

the Detroit area of the great State of Michigan.

I picked a really good man to be the Vice President of the United States in Dick Cheney. I want to thank Congresswoman Candice Miller for being my State campaign coordinator. I appreciate so very much Congressman Joe Knollenberg for being here today. Congressman Mike Rogers is with us as well.

I want to thank the secretary of state, Terri Lynn Land, for—Terri Lynn just drove with us from Kalamazoo here to the Detroit area on the George W. Bush bus.

I want to thank all the State and local officials who are here. I want to thank all the grassroots activists who are here. I want to thank my friend Travis Tritt for coming up from Nashville. I appreciate it. Billy Cervený—I appreciate both of these great artists for coming today. I'm honored to have your support and your friendship. It means a lot to me.

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

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

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

The President. 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 dan-

gerous regimes on Earth. We liberated over 50 million people. Once again, America is proud to stand against tyranny and to set nations free.

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

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

The President. It is the President's job to confront problems, not to pass them on to future Presidents and future generations. The President needs to step up to make the hard decisions and to keep his commitment, and that is how I will continue to lead our Nation for 4 more years.

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 stakes are high.

I'll have a tough race, and that's why I'm counting on your help. I'm running against an experienced United States Senator.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. He's been in Washington for quite a long time. He's been there long enough to take both sides of just about every issue. He voteded for the PATRIOT Act. He voted for NAFTA. He voted for No Child Left Behind, and he voted 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.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. He's been on both sides of big issues. And if he could find a third side—[laughter]. He recently gave us another example of his technique. Last winter, my opponent was in Michigan and somebody asked him about the cars he had.

[*Laughter*] Here in the great auto-producing State, he said, quote, “We have some SUVs.” He was talking about having a couple of minivans and a big Suburban. Last month, on Earth Day, Senator Kerry had a different description of his fleet. [*Laughter*] He said, and I quote, “I don’t own an SUV.” To clear up the confusion he said, “The family has it. I don’t have it.” [*Laughter*] In other words, he doesn’t have an SUV except when he’s in Michigan. [*Laughter*] Now, there’s a fellow who’s getting a lot of mileage out of his Suburban. [*Laughter*]

Whatever he drives, the voters this year will have a clear choice. It is a 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.

The other side hasn’t offered much in the way of strategies to win the war or policies to help people find work. We’re well into the campaign, and all we hear is bitterness and outbursts instead of calm debate. They will find out that anger is not an agenda for the future of America. I will take on the big issues with optimism and resolve and determination. And I will make it clear, we stand ready to lead this country for 4 more years.

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

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

We’ve overcome some tough challenges in this country, but I’m an optimist, because I understand the entrepreneurial spirit of America. I’ve seen small-business

owners dream big dreams. I know you’re facing economic challenges here in the great State of Michigan. Manufacturing communities have been especially hard hit. There are workers who are concerned about their jobs. I understand that—I understand that. Our economy is in a time of transition, and if you’re the one going through transition, it’s not an easy experience.

Workers and businesses in Michigan are meeting the challenges, though, with energy and optimism because of good policy. Because of the hard work of the people of this State and other States, our economy is strong, and it is growing stronger.

The economy grew at a strong rate of 4.2 percent in the first quarter of this year. Economic growth over the past three quarters has been the fastest in nearly two decades. In March, America added 308,000 new jobs, the highest monthly job growth total in almost 4 years; 5,900 of those new jobs was created here in Michigan.

Across this country, manufacturing activity is increasing. Business investment is rising. Disposable income is up. Inflation is low. Mortgage and interest rates are low. Homeownership is at the highest rate ever. The tax relief we passed is working.

My opponent has a different view of letting the American people keep more of their own income. When we passed an increase in the child credit to help families, he voted no. When we reduced the marriage penalty, he voted against it. When we created a lower 10-percent tax rate for working families, he voted no. When we gave small businesses a tax incentive to expand and hire, he voted against it.

When tax increases are proposed, it’s a lot easier to get a “yes” vote out of him. [*Laughter*] He voted for taxes over—for higher taxes over 350 times since he’s been a United States Senator. He supported gas tax increases 11 times and once favored an increase of 50 cents a gallon.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. By the way, it costs you \$5 every time you filled up your car. For that, he at least ought to throw in a free car wash. [Laughter]

He's also proposing a lot of new spending. You've got to be careful about these folks that go around the country making promises with your money. He's increased spending over a trillion dollars, and we're just getting started in the campaign. He says he's going to pay for it by raising taxes on the rich. But he's got a problem—he's got a problem. All that new spending can't raise enough money—can't be paid for by raising money on the rich. Guess who he's going to raise taxes on: You. In order to pay for that new spending he's promised, he's either going to break the promise, or he's going to have to raise the taxes on the hard-working American people. And we're not going to let him have a chance to do so.

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

The President. See, you and I understand that higher taxes would undermine growth and destroy jobs just as our economy is getting stronger. To help grow the American economy and to create more jobs for American workers, I've got a better idea: We should keep the tax rates low. We should not raise taxes on the American people.

I want to be your President for 4 more years because I got a plan to make sure our country is the strongest economy in the world so people can find work. I have a plan to protect small-business owners and employees from frivolous lawsuits and needless regulations. We got a plan to help control the cost of health care by giving people better access through health savings accounts and association health care plans. I understand what frivolous lawsuits do to the cost of medicine. We need medical liability reform at the Federal level.

In order to make sure this economy is strong over the next decade, we need to have an energy plan. We need to encourage

conservation, alternative sources of energy, but we need clean coal technology. We need exploration for natural gas. We need to become less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

In order to keep this economy strong and to make sure we're the leader in the world in economic growth so people can find work, I will continue to knock down trade barriers in foreign countries. Listen, we're the best in the world at growing things and manufacturing things in the high-tech world. All our people need is a level playing field. We should reject economic isolationism and work to make sure that our workers are treated fairly in overseas markets.

Empty talk about jobs and economic isolationism won't get anybody hired. The way to make sure this country is strong and people can find work is to reelect a pro-growth, pro-entrepreneur, pro-small-business President, and that is George W. Bush.

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

The President. 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 weakness 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 are no longer in power. America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Iraq. The dictator chose defiance, and now the dictator sits in a prison cell.

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

The President. September the 11th, 2001, taught a lesson I will never forget and America must 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. As a matter of fact, the previous administration and the Congress looked at the intelligence and made regime change in Iraq the policy of our country.

In 2002, the United Nations Security Council yet again demanded a full accounting of Saddam Hussein's weapons programs. As he had for over a decade, Saddam Hussein refused to comply. I remembered the history of this man. He invaded his neighbors. He hated America. He had used weapons of mass destruction against his own people. He paid for suiciders to attack Israelis. He had ties to terrorists. So I had a choice: Either take the word of a madman, or defend America. Given that choice, I will defend America every time.

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

The President. 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 watching world that America means what it says. Because we acted, Saddam's torture chambers are closed. Because we acted, Iraq's weapons programs are ended forever. Because we acted, nations like Libya got 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.

On the ground in Iraq, we still face serious challenges. It's hard work, but it's necessary work. Illegal militias and remnants of the regime, joined by foreign terrorists, are trying to take by force the power they could never gain by the ballot. They know a free Iraq will be a major defeat for the cause of terror. These groups have found little support among the Iraqi people. And they will find no success in their attempts to shake the will of America. You see, they don't understand our country. We will never be intimidated by thugs and assassins.

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

The President. A free Iraq is an historic opportunity to change the world for the better. A free Iraq will be a peaceful Iraq, and we're implementing a clear strategy in Iraq. First, we will ensure there's an atmosphere of security as Iraqis move toward self-government. We support the effort of local Iraqis to convince the radicals to disarm. We made it clear that militias in Najaf and elsewhere must disarm, or they will face serious consequences. American and coalition forces are in place, and we are fully prepared to bring security and order in Fallujah and Najaf and around the country of Iraq.

The second element of our strategy is to return sovereignty to the people of Iraq on the schedule that we agreed to. We must keep our word. Like any proud people, Iraqis want to manage their own affairs, and I believe they can. It's a common goal we share. So on June 30th, a sovereign Iraq interim government will take office. We will still have hard work to do. These are not easy tasks, but they are essential tasks. We 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 do not object.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. I'm all for united action. We built strong coalitions. There are more than 30 coalition partners in Iraq right now. But I will never turn over America's national security decisions to leaders of other countries.

We have a different point of view on security matters. Over the years, my opponent has opposed many of the aircraft and weapons programs, including the Bradley Fighting Vehicle and the Tomahawk Cruise Missile you build right here in Michigan, programs that are vital to our Nation's defense and programs that are now helping us win the war on terror. Last year, he voted against funding for ammunition and supplies and body armor for our troops on the frontlines of the war on terror.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Someone recently asked Senator Kerry why he voted against the 87 billion supplemental bill to fund those essential needs for our troops, and here is what he said: "I actually did vote for the 87 billion, before I voted against it." [Laughter] The President must speak clearly and mean what he says.

Some are skeptical the war on terror is really a war at all. Again, my opponent says the war on terror is far less a military operation and far more an intelligence-gathering, law enforcement operation. 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. But 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 their 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 have had the privilege of meeting with those who defend our country and sacrifice for our security. I've seen their great decency and their unselfish courage. And I assure you, ladies and gentlemen, the cause of freedom is in good hands.

Audience members. Bush! Bush! Bush!

The President. This Nation is prosperous and strong. Yet, we need to remember that our greatest strength is in the hearts and souls of the American citizens. We are strong because of the values we try to live by, courage and compassion, reverence and integrity. We are strong because of the institutions that give us direction and purpose, our families, our schools, our 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 Government discrimination against people of faith.

We stand for welfare reforms that require work and strengthen marriage, which have helped millions of Americans find independence and dignity. We will not stand for any attempt to weaken those reforms and to 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. The culture of our country is changing from one that has said, "If it feels good, just go ahead and do it," and, "If

you 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’re a mom or a dad, you are 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 this responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we 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 isn’t one of those times. You and I are living in a period when the stakes are high, the challenges are difficult, a time when firm 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. The workers in the hardhats were shouting, “Whatever it takes.” One man pointed at me and said, “Don’t let me down.” As we 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 the enemies. I will defend the security of America, whatever it takes.

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

The President. In these times, I’ve also been witness to the character of this Nation. Not so long ago, some had their doubts about the America 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 service and compassion renewed in our country, and we’ve all seen our Nation unite in common purpose when it mattered most.

We will need all of these qualities for the work ahead. We’ve got work to do for this Nation. We’ve got 4 more years to make—[applause].

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

The President. We’ve got 4 more years to make sure that we win the war on terror. The world is counting on us to lead the cause of freedom and peace. We have a duty to spread opportunity to every part of America. 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.

I’m honored to have your support. May God bless you, and may God continue to bless America. Thank you all very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:44 p.m. in the Jerome-Duncan Theatre at Freedom Hall. In his remarks, he referred to Michigan Secretary of State Terri Lynn Land; and country music entertainers Travis Tritt and Billy Cerverny. The transcript of these remarks was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 4.

Remarks in Maumee, Ohio
May 4, 2004

The President. Thank you. Thank you all very much. Thanks for coming. Please be seated.

Audience member. Ohio is Bush-Cheney country!

The President. There you go. [Laughter] Thanks for coming. Nothing better than having a good pancake for breakfast—except I didn't get mine. [Laughter]

Audience member. Viva Bush!

The President. *Vamos a ganar.* That means, we're going to win. Gosh, it's exciting to be here. I'm here because I want you to know I have a reason to be your President for 4 more years. I see clearly where we need to go as a nation. I have a positive vision for our country and the world. I have a plan to win the war on terror and to spread freedom and peace. I have a plan to make sure prosperity reaches every corner of America so our citizens can realize the full promise of our country. I have a plan to tap into the deep compassion of America so the lonely will find help, so the children can be mentored, so that the hungry can be fed. I have a positive, optimistic vision for our country.

I'm here to ask for your help. I'm here to help you—I'm here to ask you to help me serve for 4 more years in the great country of America.

Here's the agenda. Together we can work together to make sure America is safer, stronger, and better. And I cannot do it without your help. And so, first, I want to thank my chairman. Bernie, thanks for your leadership. Thanks for all the people who put on this fantastic breakfast. I want to thank the grassroots activists who are here. I want to thank those who are going to put up the signs. I want to thank those who are going to go to the community centers, to the religious congregations. I want to thank those who are going to go to your neighbors, both Republicans,

Democrats. I want you to thank those who are going to go to the independents, and you remind them that we have a positive vision that benefits all of America.

I'm sorry Laura is not here. Yes, I know. She was on the bus trip yesterday but had to go back to Washington because, like me, she is—she works for the country. She's got something to do. She's got a scheduling conflict. [Laughter] But I tell you, she sends her love and her best. She is a fabulous First Lady. One of the main reasons to put me back in there—[laughter]—is so that Laura has 4 more years as the First Lady.

I think when you're out there garnering the vote, convincing people to show up to vote, make sure you remind them that I put together a fantastic administration—good, solid Americans, people from all walks of life who have served our country, put their country above self-interest. I'm running with a fantastic man, a great Vice President in Dick Cheney.

I one time said to a crowd—and my mother was in the audience—I said, "Dick Cheney is the finest Vice President the country has ever had." [Laughter] Mother yelled out, "Wait a minute, buster!" [Laughter]

I want to thank your Governor, who's traveled with me today, Governor Bob Taft. I'm proud you're here, Governor. Thank you for coming. I want to thank Congressman Paul Gillmor for being here today. Congressman, I appreciate you coming. Larry Kaczala is with us, who is going to be elected to the United States Congress. I'm proud he's here. I know we got a lot of State and local officials. I'm proud you're here. I appreciate you being here. I know there's some mayors here. I like to give advice to mayors. When you're the President, you can take liberties to give people advice. Fill the potholes. [Laughter]