

Remarks at the Congressional Barbecue June 15, 2004

Thank you all for coming. So the Vice President and I were sitting around saying, "I wonder if we can get some people to come to a barbecue here on the South Lawn." We're glad you came. Laura and I and Lynne and Dick are really pleased to host you all for the annual Congressional Barbecue. We want to thank the Rich Davis family from Kansas City for providing the barbecue and the White House staff for providing the napkins. *[Laughter]*

I think the best thing I can tell you is how much I appreciate the families of the Members of Congress for supporting your husbands and wives and moms and dads as they serve our great country. It is a—the Members of Congress work really hard on behalf of the people of the country. And they're gone a lot from their homes, and I know it's hard. It's hard to wonder whether or not the service is worth it. I'm telling you, the service is worth it. We are a great nation because men and women from all walks of life are willing to serve our country. So we really appreciate you being here.

I also want to thank the Marine Band, the Army Band, the Navy Band, the Air

Force Band, and the Old Guard Fife and Drum Corps for providing the entertainment tonight.

And our wish is that you enjoy yourself on the beautiful South Lawn of this majestic house that Laura and I are fortunate to live in. Every day we are reminded about the greatness of our country, and we are a great country. We're a great country because we believe in human dignity and the rights of every person. We're a great country because we believe that no matter who you are or where you're from, you can succeed in America. We're a great country because free men and women can self-govern in a peaceful way, and we're a great country because we are blessed by the Almighty God.

Thank you all for coming. May God bless. Enjoy yourself.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:15 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Rich Davis, founder, KC Masterpiece Barbecue and Grill restaurants.

Remarks at MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, Florida June 16, 2004

Thanks for coming. Thanks for the warm welcome. It is great to be back in Florida with the fine men and women of MacDill Air Force Base. You know, I told my dad I was coming here today, and he suggested I drop in by parachute. *[Laughter]* I told him I thought I'd wait for my 80th birthday. *[Laughter]*

With us today by satellite are American service men and women in Afghanistan and

Iraq. You are stationed in faraway lands, but you're always in the thoughts of your fellow Americans. You face hard duty. You've endured the heat of the Persian Gulf and the harsh winters of central Asia. You're serving with honor and pride. You're making our country safer, and your country is proud of you. Thank you for your service.

I also know that we're on Armed Forces radio and TV. We're carried to the bases