

Remarks at a Reception for Senatorial Candidate George R. Nethercutt, Jr., in Spokane, Washington
June 17, 2004

Thank you all. Thanks for coming. And George, thanks for inviting me. I've come back to Spokane for one reason. I want to make it as clear as I possibly can that the right person to represent the State of Washington in the United States Senate is George Nethercutt.

Thank you for helping him. Thank you for what you're going to do to help him—[laughter]—starting with voting and turning out others to vote. And while you're getting the vote for George, why don't you get them to vote for me as well. Both of us are going to carry this State, and we're going to because we've got optimistic plans to make this country safer, stronger, and better.

There are a lot of reasons to be for George, but the best is the fact that he married well. [Laughter] Like me, he married above himself. [Laughter] He's got a wonderful family with Mary Beth and Meredith and Elliott. I want to thank them for joining us on the stage. You see, running for office is a family venture. You can't run unless you've got a good, strong marriage and a supportive family, and the Nethercutts are close. They love each other. They care for each other. And one of the reasons he's going to win is they set such a good example for people all across the State of Washington.

And the good news for me is, Laura hadn't run me off yet. [Laughter] She sends her very best. As a matter of fact, she is going to host an event for George in Washington, DC, very soon. She knows a good man when she meets one. [Laughter] I'm really proud of Laura. She is—I don't know if you remember, 4 years ago when I came here—and by the way, I remember vividly running the river. [Laughter] Unfortunately, I can't run as well anymore. It just goes to show what the Presidency does to

your knees. [Laughter] But I said I was a lucky man when Laura said yes to marry me. She was a public school librarian when I first met her. She didn't care for politics or politicians. [Laughter] And now she's the First Lady of the United States, and she's doing a heck of a job. I'm really proud of her, and she sends her best.

I'm also really pleased that my friend Dirk Kempthorne is here, the great Governor of the State of Idaho. He is a—he's back in the corner, he and Patricia are back—I thought you'd get a better seat than that. [Laughter] But thanks for coming. He is a fabulous person and a great friend of mine, and I want to thank all the folks from Idaho who slipped across the border to say hi. And Governor, one of these days, I'm coming. [Laughter]

I want to thank Secretary of State Sam Reed for being here. I appreciate you coming, Sam. I had the honor of meeting Mayor Jim West. I want to thank the mayor. I like to tell mayors when I see them, thanks for serving, and fill the pot-holes. It works every time. [Laughter]

I appreciate saying hello to former Governor John Spellman. Thank you for serving your State. And I had the pleasure of saying hello to future Governor Dino Rossi. Dino is a good man. He's a good man. He's got a good, solid head on his shoulders, and he'll do a heck of a job as the Governor of this State.

It's a strong ticket we're running on here in Washington, if you really think about it. You've got Dino Rossi, and you've got George Nethercutt. You're lucky to have two great, honorable, decent souls. You know George here. When I say "decent," you know what I'm talking about. He is from Spokane. He grew up here. People know him well, and people can vouch for him. They can vouch for his integrity and

his decency and his compassion. And those are key ingredients to serve a group of people you care about.

He—I'll tell you, he's been a strong ally in Washington, DC. We've had to make some tough decisions. The job of a President is to confront problems, not to pass them on to future Presidents and future generations. It's easier to confront problems and to solve problems when you've got people like George Nethercutt in Washington, DC, who are willing to work with you.

Look, he doesn't agree with me 100 percent of the time. He's an independent thinker. That's the kind of person you want from the State of Washington, somebody who is independent. But when the big problems came up, we stood shoulder to shoulder on behalf of the American people.

Think about what we have confronted. This country has been through a recession. That means the economy was going backwards. It's been through corporate scandals. We had some of our citizens in our country forget what it means to be a responsible—responsible—citizen. They didn't tell the truth to their shareholders and their employees. It wasn't right what they did. We passed tough laws. I appreciate George's support. It is now abundantly clear to corporate CEOs that we will not tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America.

We got attacked on September the 11th, 2001. I made a tough decision to defend the country, and we went to war in Afghanistan and Iraq. All of those events made it very difficult on our economy. These were hurdles we had to overcome.

But we acted. We moved forward. And we moved forward on this principle: We have great faith that if the American people have more money in their pocket, it would help us overcome the obstacles that we confronted. We had great faith that if we could invigorate the entrepreneurial spirit in America, we could recover and people could find work. And I want to thank George for his strong and steady support for the economic stimulus plan that we got

through the United States Congress, not once, not twice but three times, in order to make sure we overcame—[*applause*].

There's a difference in his campaign, a clear difference when it comes to taxation. There's a clear difference about—there's a clear difference in the philosophy of government. See, we believe that people can spend their money far better than the Federal Government can. We understand how the economy works. When a small-business owner has a little more money in his or her pocket, she's likely to make a new investment. An investment means somebody has to produce a capital good or a service, and when somebody produces a good or a service, somebody is more likely to find work.

The economic stimulus package we passed not only affected our citizens, the families of America—see, we raised the child credit, reduced the marriage penalty. And by the way, what kind of Tax Code is it that penalizes marriage? It's a lousy Tax Code that penalizes marriage. We ought to be encouraging marriage in our society. We created a new 10-percent bracket that will help lower income people.

We put the death tax on the road to extinction. Look, I like giving speeches where there's cowboy hats. [*Laughter*] It kind of reminds me of home. I see them. [*Laughter*] But one thing is for certain. We got a tax system that makes it hard for people to pass their family farm from one generation to the next. We got a tax system that's lousy on small-business owners being able to pass their assets. We need to get rid of the death tax forever. That's the clear difference in this campaign.

An integral part of the stimulus plan was to provide incentives to the small businesses to expand in America. See, 70 percent of new jobs are created by small businesses. And if your job base is lagging, it seemed to make sense to George and me that we would provide incentives to the small business. So we increased the amount of allowance for deductibility for capital

purchases. And by cutting individual taxes, we stimulated growth in the small-business sector, because most small businesses are Subchapter S corporations, and they pay tax at the individual income-tax rate.

Now, people in Washington, DC, were griping about this plan. I suspect perhaps your opponent was saying, "Oh, this is just rewarding the rich." We've heard that kind of class warfare language before, but look what's happened. The growth over the last year has been strong and steady. We've added 1.4 million new jobs since last August. The homeownership rate is the highest in American history. This economy of ours is strong; it is getting stronger. The tax relief we passed is working. The faith that George and I put into the American consumer, the American farmer, the American rancher, and the American entrepreneur is paying off.

There is a clear difference of opinion about how to grow an economy. One group of people say, "Let's raise your taxes and increase the size of the Federal Government and hope the economy grows." George and I believe that if you have more of your own money in your pocket, you make the decisions that help this economy grow, and the statistics and today's growth shows that our philosophy works.

Some of these tax—some of this tax relief is set to expire now. And if the United States Senate lets these taxes expire, it means they're raising taxes on the American people at the wrong time. A big issue in this campaign is going to be the issue on taxes. It's a big issue. There's a clear difference between the two running for the United States Senate. George wants you to keep your money. He doesn't believe the taxes ought to go up. He's willing to stand on the side of the small-business owner and the rancher and the farmer and the individual consumer. I can't say the same for his opponent.

See, the Senate needs to make sure that the tax relief that's set to expire doesn't expire. Otherwise, they're raising your

taxes, and that will hurt our economy. We don't need to be raising our taxes right now. We've got plenty of money in Washington, DC, if we set our priorities. If we make sure we set our priorities, we can cut our deficit in half by 5 years. The tax relief that we passed must remain the same if we want this economy to continue to grow.

I'm running against a fellow who's already promised over a trillion dollars in new money, and we're just getting started. [Laughter] And he says he's going to pay for it by taxing the rich. There's not enough money to tax the rich to pay for a trillion dollars in new spending. You know who's going to end up paying for the new spending, don't you? You are, hard-working American people. Tax is an issue in this campaign. It's an issue, and the people of Washington must understand that by putting in George Nethercutt, he's not going to raise your taxes.

A fundamental issue in this campaign is who understands how to make sure the environment for economic growth continues, not just this year but beyond. See, I want America and George wants America to be the best place to do business in the world. We live in a global economy, and if we can't compete, our people aren't going to be able to work. That's just the way it is. And here's some things we can do to make sure that we've got—that we can compete in a global economy.

First, we need an energy plan. I submitted a plan 2 years ago. George supported it. His opponent voted against it. It's a plan that does a lot of things. One, it encourages conservation. It encourages alternative sources of energy. Look, I'd love to be the President that said, "The harvest is up recently. The corn harvest is up, and we're less dependent on foreign sources of oil." We need more energy here at home, though, folks. We can do so in environmentally friendly ways as well. But when you go to your gas pump, the reason that the gasoline prices are high is because

we're dependent. We're dependent on other nations for our energy. For the sake of economic security, for the sake of national security, we need an energy bill out of the United States Congress.

If we want to make sure our people work, we better make sure markets are open to U.S. products. There's some economic isolationists in Washington, DC, who believe the best way to deal with our economy is to shut it off from the rest of the world. I strongly disagree. I think that's too pessimistic. I'm confident we can compete with anybody. My job is to make sure the playing field is level. My job is to make sure other nations treat us like we treat them. And we're making progress there. Just ask your soybean growers and your wheat growers and your corn growers. We're selling products. Listen, if you're good at something, you ought to be selling it all around the world. We're good at making things. We're good at growing things. The best way to make sure we've got jobs out into the 21st century is to open up markets for U.S. products. America's producers and laborers can compete with anybody, anywhere, anytime if the playing field is level.

In order to make sure we've got a good economy in the out-years, you've got to make sure you've got a man up in Washington, DC, who understands something about agriculture, particularly for this part of the State. George Nethercutt understands agriculture. We've talked together, and we've got the farm bill moving. The ag sector, by the way, is strong right now. People are making a good living, and that's good for the U.S. economy.

Speaking about agriculture, you need to make sure you got the electricity to live out here in this part of the world. I told you when I came out here, we were going to be responsible when it came to the dams. I fully believed that we could make sure that the salmon runs were strong and that we could maintain the dams at the same time. I have fulfilled that promise.

You better make sure he's in the United States Senate to keep it that way. I appreciated working with George on the Healthy Forest legislation, commonsense legislation.

And one thing else I want to talk to you about—about the domestic economy—is that in order to make sure jobs are available, we need people who are willing to vote for tort reform in the United States Senate. I got up to Washington, and I thought for a while that medical liability reform was a State issue, and then I saw the effects of the practice of defensive medicine on the U.S. budget. I mean, think about what the frivolous and junk lawsuits do to our budgets. We've got Medicare and Medicaid budgets and veterans health budgets. And these lawsuits are running up the cost to the U.S. taxpayers, make it hard for people—small businesses, in particular, to stay in business. It's running docs out. We've got docs leaving the profession all over our country, and that's not good. Listen, the doctors are compassionate, decent people who are healing on a daily basis. And if they can't make a living because of junk and frivolous lawsuits, our system will hurt; our communities will hurt.

And therefore, I decided that medical liability reform was a Federal issue and worked with the House of Representatives to put good legislation forward—good, sound legislation with real caps, legislation that will allow somebody who's been injured by a bad doc to have their day in court, but legislation which also will make sure we're not running good docs out of business. It passed the House. It is stuck in the United States Senate. Your Senator will not vote for medical liability reform. We need to get medical liability reform unstuck. One way to do is to put George Nethercutt in the United States Senate.

I have a duty to name good judges to the Federal benches. I have honored that duty. I have honored—I have put forth fine names, fine nominees, people who will strictly interpret the law, not legislate from the bench. It's what I said I would do

when I was running for President of the United States. I said, "These are the types of people I would nominate." And I put people from all walks of life up in front of the United States Senate. And unfortunately, some United States Senators are playing politics with my nominees, two of them right from this State. One of the reasons you ought to have George Nethercutt as the United States Senator is to make sure that good, honorable, decent judges are able to make it through the nominating process and the confirmation process of the United States Senate.

We—it's very important to have somebody represent you who clearly sees the threats to the United States of America, has a clear vision of the problems we face and the opportunities before us. I believe George Nethercutt is such a man.

The lessons of September the 11th must never be forgotten by any of us who have the honor of serving you. And here's the way I see the lessons: One, the nature of the enemy is such they'll kill indiscriminately in order to try to frighten the United States of America, in order to shake our will, in order to cause us to run from our duties. And therefore, it's very important for the United States to stay on the offense against these people. You can't negotiate with them. Therapy will not work. [*Laughter*] What is necessary is to use all the assets at our disposable to bring these people to justice before they hurt America again.

It's also very important that when the United States says something we mean it. In order to make the world a more peaceful place, it is essential that a leader, when they speak, means what he says. And when I say something to the enemy or to allies, I mean it. I understand the duty I have. And I said, "If you harbor a terrorist, you're just as guilty as the terrorist." And I meant that, and we acted on that. I want to thank George for his strong support.

We first acted on that in Afghanistan. Afghanistan was a place that had been bru-

talized by the Taliban. The Taliban is an indication of the ideology of these killers, see. Let me just put it to you this way: Young girls don't get to go to school. They're so backwards and so barbaric, they—their society—their view of society is dark and dim. A whole class of—a whole group of people are totally written off by the Taliban. In this case, they were also providing safe haven for Al Qaida. They were training there, and we issued an ultimatum. They defied the free world, and they no longer exist. And as a result, people have been freed.

They—there's individual Taliban moving around, and we're on the hunt with some really brave people. And I'm going to Fort Lewis tomorrow to thank a lot of the brave people on the hunt. But the government doesn't exist anymore. As a matter of fact, there's a—they're going to have elections in Afghanistan in September. They've got a modern constitution. They'll have women serving in their parliament.

President Karzai came to America, spoke in front of the Congress—George heard him—and he said, "I want to thank America. I want to thank America for your sacrifice. Thank you for your friendship. Thank you for standing with us." A free society in Afghanistan is going to make a difference for the peace of the world, and we're headed in that direction.

One of the lessons of September the 11th is that when we see a threat, we must take it seriously. We can no longer assume oceans protect us. If we see a threat materializing overseas, we must take every threat seriously, before it's too late. That's one of the really important lessons of that day.

I saw a threat in Iraq. I looked at the intelligence, and I saw a threat. The United States Congress, Republicans and Democrats, looked at the very same intelligence, and they saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence, and it saw a threat. And there's a reason why we saw threats. Saddam Hussein was

a brutal dictator who tortured his own people, who opened mass graves for innocent Iraqis and filled them, who harbored terrorists, who provided safe haven for people like Zarqawi who still kills in Iraq today, who used weapons of mass destruction on his own people. Yes, we saw a threat, and I remembered the lessons of September the 11th, that we must take threats seriously.

So I went to the United Nations, and I said, "Here's a threat." And unanimously, they said, "You're right. Mr. Saddam Hussein, disarm, disclose and disarm, or face serious consequences." When America speaks, we better mean what we say. When we say "serious consequences," we mean serious consequences. Saddam Hussein once again defied the free world. I had a choice to make, to trust the judgment of a madman or defend America. Given that choice, I will defend America every time.

And our troops have performed brilliantly. And I want to thank George Nethercutt for his strong support in making sure the President can look at the moms and dads and husbands and wives of those who serve in our military and say, we will make sure your loved one has everything he or she needs to defend the United States of America.

We're doing hard work in Iraq. You've seen how hard it is on your TV screens. It's hard, but it's necessary. And I'll tell you why it's necessary. In a short term, we will defeat the terrorists by hunting them down and bringing them to justice. In the long term, we will defeat the terrorists by spreading freedom and democracy. The best way to defeat hatred and bitterness and the lack of hope is to spread hope through freedom. That's what we believe in America. We've seen it work before.

Let me read you something I think you'll find interesting from the New York Times. [Laughter] Now, wait, wait a minute, wait. This was in—no—in 1946. [Laughter] It was a great year. [Laughter] I was born

that year. [Laughter] Anyway, I just want you to read this—I mean, I want you to hear this as I read it: "Germany"—this is 18 months after the fall of Berlin—18 months after the fall of Berlin—"Germany is a land in an acute stage of economic, political, and moral crisis. The basic elements of recovery and peace are lacking. European capitals are frightened by the prospect of a German collapse. In every military headquarters, one meets alarmed officials doing their best to deal with the consequences of the occupation policy that they admit has failed."

Now, that was a pessimistic view of the future for Germany. Fortunately, my predecessors were not pessimistic people. Fortunately, they had great faith in the power of freedom to change societies. Fortunately, they understood that even though times were difficult, that if they were determined and strong and clear-sighted in the vision of a free society, ultimately, a free society would emerge.

At the G-8 at Sea Island, I was sitting at the table with not only Gerhard Schroeder, the Chancellor of Germany, free Germany, democratically elected Gerhard Schroeder; I was also sitting with democratically elected Prime Minister Koizumi of Japan. You see, because somebody was strong in their belief about the power of freedom, allies of the United States today are—were former enemies. Someday, an American President will be sitting, discussing world peace with a duly elected leader from Iraq.

These are historic times we're in, and it's such an honor to serve the American people during these times. But with America's leadership in the world and by being true to our values, we can change the world. We can make the world a more peaceful, hopeful place. That's what's happening. And it's hard, because there are a group of people who are trying to stop us. They're trying to shake our confidence. They're trying to dim our vision. They want us to quit. They want us to be people who

say one thing and do another. But they'll fail because we're not going to change. They'll fail because we believe strongly in the future. They will fail because America will continue to lead the world toward peace and freedom.

George understands what I'm talking about, and it's important to have him in the United States Senate to help us complete the missions.

Finally, I want to say one thing about our culture. See, I think cultures can change. I know they change. Baby boomer—I've seen one change in my lifetime. [Laughter] The culture today is changing—I like to describe it this way—"If it feels good, go ahead and do it," and, "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else"—[laughter]—to a culture in which each of us understands we are responsible for the decisions we make in life, that if you're a mom or a dad, you're responsible for loving your children with all your heart and all your soul. That's your responsibility. If you're worried about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you're responsible in Spokane, Washington, for doing something about it. It's your responsibility. You know how I feel about corporate CEOs in the responsibility era. They're responsible for telling the truth to their shareholders and employees.

Responsibility society is also one in which each of us loves our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourself. Government can hand out money, but Government cannot put hope in a person's heart or a sense of purpose in a person's life. That happens when a loving soul puts their arm around somebody and says, "I love you. What can

I do to help you?" And it seems like to me that it's the responsibility of those of us in office to capture and rally the great strength of the country. And the great strength of America is in the hearts and souls of the American people. That's our true strength.

See, I believe and George believes societies change one heart and one soul at a time. And while we recognize you can't be the full change agent, you can be a person helping to change those hearts and souls.

And it's easy for George to say that because he's lived that kind of life. He helped people understand the joy of parenthood by promoting adoption. He founded a nursery to protect abused children. He's been a leader in diabetes research. He's an honorable, decent man who not only talks the talk, but he walks the walk and will make a great United States Senator.

Thank you all for coming. God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:30 p.m. in the International Agriculture Trade Center at the Spokane Center. In his remarks, he referred to Mr. Nethercutt's wife, Mary Beth, and their children, Meredith and Elliott; Gov. Dirk Kempthorne of Idaho and his wife, Patricia; Washington Secretary of State Sam Reed; Mayor Jim West of Spokane, WA; former Gov. John Spellman of Washington; Washington gubernatorial candidate Dino Rossi; President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan; senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarkawi; and Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan. Representative George R. Nethercutt, Jr., was a candidate for Senate in Washington.

Remarks at Fort Lewis, Washington June 18, 2004

The President. Thank you all very much. It's great to be here in the State of Wash-

ington. I think the Senator would say it's great to be out of Washington—the other