

More than 800 members of the administration have been interviewed. More than 20 White House officials have met with the Commission or soon will do so. Dr. Rice herself has already met privately with the Commission for 4 hours. I've ordered this level of cooperation, because I consider it necessary to gaining a complete picture of the months and years that preceded the murder of our fellow citizens on September the 11th, 2001.

As the Commission has done its work, I've also been concerned, as has Dr. Rice, that an important principle be upheld: A President and his advisers, including his Adviser for National Security Affairs, must be able to communicate freely and privately without being compelled to reveal those communications to the legislative branch. This principle of the separation of powers is protected by the Constitution, is recognized by the courts, and has been defended by Presidents of both political parties. We have observed this principle while also seeking ways for Dr. Rice to testify, so that the public record is full and accurate.

Now the Commission and leaders of the United States Congress have given written assurances that the appearance of the National Security Adviser will not be used as precedent in the conduct of future inquiries.

The leaders of Congress and the Commission agree—they agree with me that the circumstances of this case are unique, because the events of September the 11th, 2001, were unique. At my direction, Judge Gonzales has informed the Commission that Dr. Rice will participate in an open public hearing.

Our Nation must never forget the loss or the lessons of September the 11th, and we must not assume that the danger has passed. The United States will confront gathering dangers to our freedom and security. The Commission knows its responsibility to collect vital information and to present it to the American people. And I know my responsibility as well to act against the continuing threat and to protect the American people. I have made that pledge to my fellow citizens, and I will keep it.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:46 p.m. in the James S. Brady Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Thomas H. Kean, Chairman, and Lee H. Hamilton, Vice Chairman, National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States (9/11 Commission); and Counsel to the President Alberto R. Gonzales.

## Remarks Honoring Members of the National Baseball Hall of Fame *March 31, 2004*

Thank you all for coming. Laura and I are honored and thrilled that you're here. We have a fair amount of lunches and dinners here, and I've got a confession to make. This is my favorite one. [Laughter] It's kind of like having your baseball card collection spread out in real life. [Laughter]

Some of you were here the last time we invited the Hall of Famers here. It was one of the first lunches we had. It's when I discovered that one of the best parts

about living in the White House is that when you invite somebody for lunch, they generally come. [Laughter]

We're glad you're back. Vice President Cheney is with us. Mr. Vice President, thank you for coming. Secretary of Energy Spence Abraham is with us. He's a Tiger fan, I believe, if I'm not mistaken.

We've got a great Hall—lot of Hall of Famers. One that I work with on a regular basis, of course, is Senator Jim Bunning.

Mr. Senator, thank you for being with us today.

I want to thank Jane Forbes Clark, the chairman of the Hall of Fame, appreciate you being here, Jane. Dale Petroskey, thank you for being here, Dale, as well. He is the president of the Hall of Fame.

All the Hall of Famers, we're glad you're here. And thanks for bringing family members too. You're welcome to the people's house.

I appreciate the ESPN Baseball Tonight folks who are here, Joe, Tim, and Peter. That's where I get my news. *[Laughter]* They do a great job of making—bringing baseball into our homes.

My Chief of Staff is here, by the way, Andy Card. He is a long-suffering Red Sox fan. I'm glad you're here. George Will is here as well—long-suffering Cubs fan. But welcome, everybody.

I particularly want to congratulate Paul Molitor and Dennis Eckersley, who will be the newest members of the Hall of Fame. Thank you all for coming. We're honored you're here, and congratulations. And Ozzie Smith and Gary Carter and Eddie Murray took your rightful place amongst some of the game's greatest players. We welcome you here as well. Thanks for coming, honored you're here, and congratulations.

I can't wait for the baseball season to open. You know, some people, like when they go up to relax, will have the symphony on. I have a baseball game on. I like to do my—prepare for the next day, and my background noise is a baseball game. I'm really looking forward to it. And it's a great way for us to kick off the season here in Washington is have some of the greatest players ever to come and help us kick off baseball.

It's such a wonderful sport. There aren't any time limits, which means you can go and enjoy yourself. It's a great place to go and relax. It's a wonderful place to visit with somebody you love. It's an important part of our history. And we love to herald it here. We love to herald it so much that

one of my favorite things to do is to host tee-ball on the South Lawn, so that future Hall of Famers can come and say to one of their classmates, "I love baseball, and I got to play at the White House." *[Laughter]*

One of the traditions, of course, is for the President to throw out the opening pitch for baseball. I'm going to do so for the Cards. I was talking to Phil Niekro coming in. My arm is a little sore. *[Laughter]* I was getting suggestions on how to throw a knuckler. *[Laughter]*

I also know that a former pitcher for the American Legion team in Casper, Wyoming, will also be throwing out an opening day pitch in Cincinnati. That would be your Vice President. He suggested that they not pull out the radar gun. *[Laughter]*

You know, I love the game of baseball. I grew up loving baseball. It's a sport that's passed down from dad to son, in my case—actually, my mother used to keep score for the Yale Bulldogs. I happened to be 1½ years old when she was keeping score for the Yale Bulldogs. So both my parents passed on the love of baseball. I played Little League baseball in Midland, Texas. It's where I peaked. *[Laughter]* I actually played for the Midland Cubs—except, unlike Ernie Banks, I was not known as "Mr. Cub." *[Laughter]* I was known as an all-right catcher.

I think one of the wonderful things about being with Hall of Famers is you set such high standards for other players, as you've set the stage of excellence. I know there's a lot of players who are getting ready to start the opening season that long to be sitting here in the White House like you are. You've set such a high mark of how to be excellent in a grueling sport, in a sport that requires not only incredible skill but a lot of patience. It's a marathon, not a sprint. And you've set the standard, and we're proud to have the standard-setters here in the greatest house on the face of the Earth, the people's house, the White House.

Thanks for coming. May God bless you and your families, and may God continue to bless our great country. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:25 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to ESPN broadcasters Joe Morgan, Tim Kurkjian, and Peter Gammons; and columnist George Will.

## Remarks at a Bush-Cheney Dinner March 31, 2004

Thank you all very much. Thanks for coming. Thank you all. Alex, thank you very much. I didn't realize you were such a good orator. [*Laughter*]

I wasn't Alex's first choice to speak tonight. His request was that Laura come to be the key speaker. Alex is a man of good judgment. So am I, by asking Laura to marry me. She's a fabulous wife and a great First Lady. She sends her love. I think Laura deserves 4 more years as the First Lady.

Laura will be out campaigning with me, and so will Dick Cheney. Our country has had no finer Vice President than Dick Cheney. Mother heard me say that the other day, and she said, "Now, wait a minute." [*Laughter*] No, I'm proud of the Vice President. He's doing a fabulous job.

And I want to thank you all for supporting this ticket, and thanks for coming tonight. This is a huge turnout. Alex said, "Why don't you come by. I may have a few friends here"—[*laughter*]"—"a few Greek Americans might show up."

And Manny, thank you as well. I appreciate you and Alex working so hard to make this a spectacular event. I want to thank my friend Mercer Reynolds, who is the national finance chairman for Bush-Cheney. He's a business guy who has taken time out of his life to help. I thank my friends Jim Langdon and Julie Finley for being the Washington, DC, finance cochairmen. Manny and Alex have helped the DC finance cochairmen meet their goals, for which we are grateful.

I want to thank Congressman Mike Bilirakis from the great State of Florida, for joining us. Congressman Jim Greenwood is with us today, from the great State of Pennsylvania. Thanks for coming, Jim. Jerry Kilgore, the attorney general from Virginia, is with us today. The Lieutenant Governor of the great State of Maryland, Michael Steele, is with us today. I really appreciate you all being here.

I finally got an opponent. The campaign season has arrived. My opponent is an experienced Senator, and he's built up quite a record. In fact, he's been in Washington long enough to take both sides of just about every issue. Senator Kerry voted 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, No Child Left Behind, and the liberation of Iraq. He feels strongly about these issues. [*Laughter*] If he could find a third side, I imagine he'd take that one too. [*Laughter*]

It's going to be an interesting campaign. Someone asked Senator Kerry why he had voted against the \$87 billion funding bill to help our troops in Iraq. And here's what he said, "I actually did vote for the \$87 billion before I voted against it." [*Laughter*] Clears things up, doesn't it? [*Laughter*]

The voters this year are going to have a clear, unmistakable choice. It's a choice between the tax relief that is moving this economy forward or putting the burden of higher taxes back on the American people.