

Remarks on Signing the United States-Australia Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act

August 3, 2004

The President. Welcome. Please be seated. I'm honored to welcome you all to the White House this morning, as I sign the legislation implementing the historic free trade agreement between Australia and the United States.

For nearly a century, our two nations have been allies in war and partners in peace. Prime Minister Howard's superb leadership has helped ensure that the friendship between our two peoples remains strong, that our commitment to political and economic freedom remains firm.

The U.S.-Australia Free Trade Agreement is a milestone in the history of our alliance. It expands our security and political alliance by creating a true economic partnership. It will create jobs and opportunities in both our nations. It will fuel economic growth throughout the Pacific Rim, and it will strengthen our common ties of family and friendship.

I appreciate so very much those in my Cabinet who have worked hard to make this agreement come true: Secretary of State Powell, Secretary of Agriculture Ann Veneman, Secretary of Commerce Don Evans, and, of course, Ambassador Bob Zoellick, who is the U.S. Trade Representative.

Just as an aside, Zoellick has done heroic work, as has his staff, to see to it that the world trades more freely and America is treated fairly when it comes to trade.

I appreciate Ambassador Michael Thawley, the Ambassador of Australia to the United States, for his tireless efforts in representing his country's best interests as we negotiate this trade agreement. Mr. Ambassador, you are a credit to your country.

I'm also proud that Senator Orrin Hatch is with us. Senator, I appreciate you taking time to come and represent the United

States Congress. This agreement received strong bipartisan support. It represents that members of both parties understand the benefits of trade to our country. Welcome, Senator, I appreciate you coming.

We support free and fair trade. I support free and fair trade, because it has the power to create new wealth for whole nations and new opportunities for millions of people. Sound policy can help unleash the initiative and talent of free people. Open trade is sound policy. It has a record for creating jobs and raising living standards and lowering consumer prices.

My administration is working with the Congress to extend the benefits of free trade throughout the western hemisphere, in Africa, and into the Middle East. We renewed the African Growth and Opportunity Act, which promotes economic reforms and reduces trade barriers on goods from the nations of sub-Saharan Africa. Working with Congress, we entered into a new free trade agreement with Morocco and Chile. We're encouraging the free flow of trade across the Pacific. Last year I had the honor to sign a free trade agreement with Singapore, America's first with an Asian Pacific nation. Today I'm honored to sign legislation enacting the second.

The total annual two-way trade in American and Australian goods and services stands at \$28 billion. Australia is America's 10th largest export market. Our trade with Australia is important to every American. It is vital to our economy. The U.S.-Australia Free Trade Agreement is a recognition of that importance and a commitment by both our nations to work in partnership for common prosperity. This agreement will immediately eliminate duties on 99 percent of all U.S.-manufactured exports to Australia. That is the largest immediate reduction of tariffs on manufactured goods ever

achieved in an American free trade agreement.

America's manufacturers estimate that eliminating these tariffs will increase the export of manufactured goods by nearly \$2 billion per year. That will mean new jobs for American workers. This agreement will also be good for America's farmers. It will eliminate all duties on American agricultural products entering Australia. Today, American farmers export almost \$700 million worth of goods to Australia. And because of this agreement, that total will rise.

Free and fair trade means more than eliminating tariffs on existing trade. We must also work to open up new sectors of our economies to competition and trade. This agreement opens important sectors of Australia's economy, such as telecommunications, government procurement, express delivery, computers, tourism, energy, construction, financial services, and entertainment. And the agreement strengthens protections for intellectual property and promotes electronic commerce.

One of the great economic achievements since the end of the cold war has been the success of free and fair trade in raising up the world's poor, bringing hope to the world's hopeless, promoting freedom among the world's oppressed, and creating jobs at home and abroad. The same advantages that this agreement will bring to the United States and Australia can and should be available to the developing world. Our two nations are committed to the reduction of trade barriers and other restrictions that are keeping too much of the world from the kind of prosperity and opportunity that the developed world takes for granted.

On Saturday, that commitment yielded an important result that will benefit manufacturers and farmers from America, Australia, and the world. For the last several days, our trade ministers in Geneva have worked tirelessly to achieve an agreed

framework for the WTO's Doha's negotiation. This framework provides a roadmap for these ongoing talks. Among other things, it commits WTO members to the elimination of export subsidies on agricultural products. And it commits them to start new work on the overhaul, streamlining, and transparency of customs rules. There is more work to be done, but Prime Minister Howard and I remain committed to the success of the Doha negotiations.

The United States and Australia have never been closer. We're allies in the war on terror. We're partners in the effort to help democracy take root in Afghanistan and Iraq and throughout the world. We understand that free societies will be peaceful societies. We long for peace. I appreciate Prime Minister Howard. He's a strong partner in peace. We understand that over the long term, the only way to create a safer world is to create a better world. We share a belief in the need to help others.

This trade agreement serves the interests of our countries. It serves the interests of the United States and Australia. It serves the interests of citizens with ambition and initiative and entrepreneurial instincts in both our countries. It advances the principle of free and fair trade. I am grateful to the Prime Minister, John Howard, for his good work and his vision and his friendship.

And it's now my honor to sign the U.S.-Australia Free Trade Implementation Act.

[At this point, the President signed the bill.]

The President. Thank you all for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:27 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister John Howard of Australia. H.R. 4759, approved August 3, was assigned Public Law No. 108-286.

Remarks to the Knights of Columbus Convention in Dallas, Texas August 3, 2004

Thanks for the warm welcome. Welcome to Texas. And thanks for inviting me so I can come home. [Laughter] I really appreciate the Knights of Columbus. This strong organization believes in families and faith and compassion for those in need. And I'm honored you'd invite me to the 122d Convocation of this great organization.

I appreciate Carl Anderson and his leadership. I've gotten to know Carl because, you see, he's more than just an introducer of Presidents. [Laughter] He's a person who works with Presidents—at least this President. And I'm proud to have his help. It's good to see my family friend Virgil Dechant. Virgil, it's good to see you, sir. Thank you for such a warm greeting in the photo op line and reminding me of some great days gone past.

I'm proud to be here with Cardinal McCarrick. It's good to see you, sir. He's a neighbor in my temporary residence. [Laughter] I appreciate Cardinal Egan. I appreciate Cardinal Rigali of the great city of Philadelphia, Cardinal Francis George of Chicago, Cardinal Keeler of Baltimore, Maryland. I'm honored you all are here. I thank you for your presence. I'm honored to be in the presence of Cardinal Macharski, the Archbishop of Krakow, who succeeded the Holy Father in that role. Welcome to the United States. Appreciate you coming, sir. I appreciate Bishop Wilton Gregory's leadership of the Conference of Catholic Bishops.

I appreciate Your Eminences and Your Excellencies, reverends, monsignors, fathers, and deacons. *Nuestros amigos de Mexico*. I appreciate the officers and directors, State deputies, board of directors, delegates, ladies and gentlemen, Knights, and my fellow Americans. Thanks for having me.

Two months ago, I had the privilege of visiting His Holy Father Pope John Paul

II at the Vatican. It was my third meeting with His Holy Father since I took office, and for those of you who have ever met him, you know I'm telling you the truth when I tell you being in his presence is an awesome experience. He is a true presence. On the occasion, I had the special honor of presenting him with America's highest civil award, the Presidential Medal of Freedom. It was my chance to express our Nation's respect for a devoted servant of God and a true hero of our time.

Pope John Paul II has been a unique and commanding voice for the cause of the poor, the weak, the hungry, and the outcast. He has challenged our Nation and the entire world to embrace the culture of life. He's called upon us to uphold and affirm the dignity of every person, rich and poor, able and disabled, born and unborn. He's called us to love and serve our neighbors in need. Few organizations have worked harder and done more and met this challenge than the Knights of Columbus. I know you're proud of your organization, and you should be.

The Knights were born in New Haven, Connecticut. Come to think of it, so was I. [Laughter] From your foundations in a small church basement, you have raised up one of the great America organizations dedicated to charity and mutual assistance and the fight for civil liberties.

I'm proud to say that my family has contributed to your ranks. A few years ago, Governor Jeb became a Knight. [Applause] And he—yes—and he recently took his Third Degree. I'll see him this weekend. His son is getting married. I'll pass on the word, aim for the Fourth. [Laughter] Jeb knows, as I do, that your works of mercy are making our society more compassionate, changing the lives of millions of citizens. Compassionate work changes our society one heart and one soul at a time.