

of Japan; and Chairman Kim Chong-il of North Korea.

Remarks in Holland, Michigan September 13, 2004

The President. Thank you all very much for coming. Nothing like a little Dutch hospitality on the campaign trail.

I'm here to ask for your vote. That's what I'm doing today. I believe you've got to get out amongst the people and ask for the vote. And not only do I want your vote, I want your help. Go out and register your friends and neighbors to vote. Don't overlook the discerning Democrat, people like Zell Miller. And then when you register them to vote, get them headed to the polls. Then when you get them headed to the polls, tell them if you want a safer America, a stronger America, a better America, put Dick Cheney and me back in office.

I wish Laura were here today. She is a great mom, a wonderful wife. I'm going to give you some reasons to put me back in, but perhaps the most important one of all is so that Laura is the First Lady for 4 more years.

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

The President. Listen, I'm real proud to be—I'm proud to be running with my friend Dick Cheney. Look, I admit it, he doesn't have the waviest hair in the race. [Laughter] I didn't pick him because of his hair. I picked him because he's a man of good judgment, good experience, a man who gets the job done.

I want to thank my friend Pete Hoekstra and his wife, Diane. Hoekstra is a good one, a fine Member of the United States Congress. I look forward to working—he said, when we were coming in on the bus, he said, "Remind them we worked on the desks together." [Laughter] I did. They put

him the head of the Intelligence Committee. Believe me, that's a big deal. I'm looking forward to working with him to make sure we've got the best intelligence possible to protect our country.

I want to thank the mayor for being here. Mr. Mayor—Mayor Al is with us today. I appreciate him coming. Just fill the potholes, Mr. Mayor, and everything will be fine. [Laughter] I appreciate, Mayor—tell your police force how much we appreciate their sacrifice and service. And while you're thanking the police, thank those firefighters, too, for their service.

And I want to thank my friend Betsy DeVos and her father-in-law, Rich. I want to thank all the grassroots activists who are here. Those are the people who put up the signs and make the phone calls. Thank the local officials who are here.

I thank the Bellamy Brothers are here, my friends the Bellamy Brothers. Good to see you guys. Thank you for coming. I want to thank the Holland Public High marching band for coming today. Make sure you hustle back to class and start studying. [Laughter]

Here's what I believe. I believe with your help, we will carry Michigan and win a great victory in November. I'm looking forward to campaigning in your State. I'm looking forward to spending a lot of time here. I'm going to tell the people where I stand, what I believe, and where I'm going to lead this Nation for the next 4 years.

I believe every child can learn and every school must teach. I went to Washington to challenge the soft bigotry of low expectations, to raise the standards, to measure

early and solve problems before it's too late. I went to stop this practice of just shuffling children through the schools grade after grade, year after year, without learning the basics. I went to make sure Washington trusts the local people to make the right decisions for their schools. We're closing the achievement gap in America, and we're not turning back.

I believe we have a moral responsibility to provide our seniors with good health care. I knew Medicare was an important program, but it wasn't changing with the times. See, we pay \$100,000 for heart surgery but not the prescription drugs to prevent the heart surgery from being needed in the first place. That didn't make any sense for our seniors. It didn't make any sense for our taxpayers. We've strengthened Medicare, and we're not turning back.

I believe in the energy, innovation, and spirit of America's workers and farmers and small-business owners. And that's why we unleashed that energy with the largest tax relief in a generation.

When you're out rounding up the vote, you remind your friends and neighbors what this economy has been through. We have been through a recession. We've been through corporate scandals. By the way, we passed new laws, and it's now clear, abundantly clear, that we're not going to tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America. And we went through that terror attack. And that attack hurt our economy.

But we're overcoming those obstacles. Our economy has been growing at rates as fast as any in nearly 20 years. We're overcoming those obstacles because we've got great workers and great farmers. We're overcoming those obstacles because the tax relief is working.

The national unemployment rate is 5.4 percent. That is lower than the average rate of the 1970s, the 1980s, and the 1990s. Listen, there are some areas of our country that are still lagging behind, but we'll continue to promote a pro-growth, pro-small-business policy, pro-entrepreneur policy for

the next 4 years so people can find a good job here in America.

I believe a President—I believe it's a job of a President to confront problems, not pass them on to future Presidents and future generations. I believe the most solemn duty of the American President is to protect the American people. If America shows uncertainty and weakness in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This is not going to happen on my watch.

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

The President. I am running for President with a clear and positive plan to build a safer world and a more hopeful America. I am running with a compassionate conservative philosophy that Government should help people improve their lives, not try to run their lives. I believe this Nation wants steady, consistent, principled leadership, and that's why, with your help, we're going to win a great national victory in November.

Listen, I understand the world we live in today is a changing world. Think about what happened in the workplace. Years ago, our fathers and grandfathers worked for one job, one company. They had one pension plan, one health care plan. Today, people change careers and change jobs often, and the most startling change of all is that women now work not only in the house but outside the house.

We have a changing world. And yet, the fundamental systems haven't changed. The Tax Code, health coverage, pension plans, worker training were created for the world of yesterday, not tomorrow. So over the next 4 years we're going to transform these systems so that all citizens are equipped, prepared, and thus truly free to be able to make their own choices and to be able to realize the great promise of this country.

Listen, any hopeful society has got to be one in which the economy is growing, and I've laid out a plan to make sure that this economy of ours continues to grow. To keep jobs here in America, America

must be the best place in the world to do business. That means less regulations and less lawsuits on our small-business owners.

Listen, to keep jobs here in America, we need an energy plan. I submitted a plan to the United States Congress, and it's stuck in there. It's a plan that encourages conservation, encourages the use of renewables, encourages clean coal technology, encourages the use of technology to make sure we explore for hydrocarbons in environmentally friendly ways. But it's a plan that recognizes to keep jobs here, we need to be less dependent on foreign sources of energy. To keep jobs here, we've got to be wise about how we use our natural resources, including water. And that starts with keeping the Great Lakes water in the Great Lakes Basin.

See, earlier this year, my opponent said a decision about Great Lakes water diversion would be a delicate balancing act.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. That kind of sounds like him, doesn't it? My position is clear: My administration will never allow the diversion of Great Lakes water.

Listen, to keep jobs here, we've got to make sure we open up foreign markets to our products. See, if we open up our market, it's good for you we do. See, the economy works this way: If you have more choices in the marketplace, you're likely to get the product you want at a better price and higher quality. So what I'm telling the places like China is, "You treat us the way we treat you." And the reason I'm saying that is I know we can compete with anybody, anytime, anywhere if the rules are fair.

To create jobs here in America, to make sure this economy continues to grow, we've got to be wise about how we spend your money, and we've got to keep your taxes low. Taxes are an issue in this campaign. I'm running against a fellow who's promised at least \$2 trillion in new money so far.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. And we haven't even gotten in the stretch run yet. So they said to him the other day, "Well, how are you going to pay for them?" And he said, "That's easy. Just tax the rich."

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. We've heard that before, haven't we? First of all, you can't raise enough money by taxing the rich to cover his \$2.2 trillion of new spending. There is a tax gap. Guess what he's thinking? Guess who he thinks is going to fill the tax gap when he can't make it with the rich? Yes.

Let me tell you what else—you've heard that "I'm going to tax the rich" before, haven't you? That's why the rich hire accountants and lawyers so you get stuck with the bill. But we're not going to let him tax you. We're going to win in November.

Let me tell you something else we've got to do about this Tax Code: We've got to change it. It's a complicated mess. It's full of special-interest loopholes. In a new term, I'm going to bring the Republicans and Democrats together to simplify the Tax Code, to make the Tax Code more fair. We want more people working than spending time—than the time they have to spend on filling out all these forms. Do you realize Americans spend about 6 billion hours a year on Federal taxes? That's one complicated code that needs to be fixed and will be fixed.

In a changing world, we've got to recognize we've got to help our workers gain the skills necessary to fill the jobs of the 21st century. Jobs are changing. Sometimes the skill sets aren't. That's why I'm such a big believer in the community college system around America. I also understand that most new jobs are filled by people with at least 2 years of college. Yet, only one in four of our students gets there. That's why in high schools we'll fund early intervention programs to help students at risk. We must place a new focus on math and science. Over time, we will require a

rigorous exam before graduation. By raising performance standards in high school, by expanding Pell grants for low- and middle-income families, we will help more Americans start their career with a college diploma.

Times have changed. We've got to do more to make sure health care is available and affordable. More than half of the uninsured in America are small-business employees and their families. Small businesses are having trouble affording health care. In order to help the families who work for these companies, we must allow small firms to join together so they can purchase insurance at the discounts available to big companies.

We want people owning and managing their own health plans, and that's why I believe we ought to expand health savings accounts. I want to expand community health centers so poor people can find good health care all across America, particularly in our poor counties.

I know in order to make sure we've got good docs practicing medicine, to make sure health care is affordable, we need to stop these junk lawsuits. You cannot be pro-doctor, pro-patient, pro-hospital, and pro-trial-lawyer at the same time. You have to choose. My opponent made his choice, and he put him on the ticket.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. I made my choice. I'm for medical liability reform—now.

Our plan to improve the quality of health care is practical. It's a commonsense plan to make health care more accessible, more affordable, and to keep the good docs practicing medicine. I believe that health care decisions should be made by doctors and patients, not by Washington, DC, bureaucrats.

We have a difference of opinion in this campaign. I'm running against a fellow who's put out a health care plan that is massive. It is complicated. It is a blueprint to have the Government control your health care.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. And he can't pay for his plan. Today there's an independent study out that says his health care plan today would cost taxpayers 1.5 trillion new dollars.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. No, that's just the kind of plan you would expect from a Senator from Massachusetts.

In a new term, I'll continue to promote an ownership society in America. In changing times, ownership can bring stability to your lives. One of the great statistics of the modern—of the last couple of years, is the homeownership rate is at an alltime high in America. We've got a plan to continue homeownership in America. I love the fact, when people from all walks of life can open up their door where they're living and say, "Welcome to my home. Welcome to my piece of property."

We need to—listen. On Social Security, we need to—I want the younger workers here to listen carefully to this debate on Social Security. If you're on Social Security today, nothing is going to change. I do not care what the DC politicians will tell you. Nobody is going to take away your benefits. And if you're a baby boomer, you're in pretty good shape when it comes to Social Security.

But we need to worry about our children and grandchildren when it comes to the Social Security system. I think we need to think differently when it comes to our children and grandchildren. I think we ought to allow young workers to put aside some of their own tax money in a personal savings account, to make sure Social Security fulfills the promise.

If you listen carefully to the rhetoric in this campaign, I'm running against a fellow who wants to expand Government. We want to expand opportunity for every single citizen of this country.

I also recognize, in the world of change, some things do not change. The values we try to live by do not change, courage and

compassion, reverence and integrity. In times of change, we'll support the institutions that gives our lives direction and purpose, our families, our schools, our religious congregations. We stand for a culture of life in which every person counts and every being matters. We stand for marriage and family, which are the foundations of society. And I stand for the appointment of Federal judges who know the difference between personal opinion and the strict interpretation of the law.

This election will also determine how America responds to the continuing danger of terrorism. Since the terrible morning of September the 11th, 2001, we have fought the terrorists across the Earth, not for pride, not for power, but because the lives of our citizens are at stake. Our strategy is clear. We're defending the homeland, transforming our military, and strengthening our intelligence services. We're staying on the offensive. We are striking the terrorists abroad so we do not have to face them here at home.

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

The President. We will work to advance liberty in the broader Middle East and throughout the world, and we will prevail. Our strategy is succeeding. Four years ago, Afghanistan was the home base of Al Qaida; Pakistan was a transit point for terrorist groups; Saudi Arabia was fertile ground for terrorist fundraising; Libya was pursuing nuclear weapons; Iraq was a gathering threat; and Al Qaida was largely unchallenged as it planned attacks.

Because we acted, because we led, the Government of a free Afghanistan is fighting terror; Pakistan is capturing terrorists; Saudi is making raids and arrests; Libya is dismantling its weapons programs; the army of Iraq is fighting for freedom; and more than three-quarters of Al Qaida's known leadership has been brought to justice.

We have led. Many have joined, and America and the world are safer. This

progress involved careful diplomacy, clear moral purpose, and some tough decisions. And the toughest came on Iraq. We knew Saddam Hussein's record of aggression and support for terror. We knew his long history of pursuing, even using, weapons of mass destruction. And we know that after September the 11th, our country must think differently. We must take threats seriously before they fully materialize.

In Saddam Hussein, we saw a threat. I went to the United States Congress, and members of both political parties, including my opponent, looked at the same intelligence, remembered the same history, and recognized Saddam Hussein was a threat. They voted the authorization of force. They said, "Go ahead and use force if you need to. He's a threat."

Before the Commander in Chief commits troops into harm's way, we must have tried all alternatives. That's why I went to the United Nations. I was hopeful that diplomacy could deal with this threat. I was hopeful diplomacy would work. The United Nations looked at the same intelligence I did. They remembered the same history we remembered and voted 15 to nothing to say to Saddam Hussein, "Disclose, disarm, or face serious consequences."

The world spoke, but as he had for over a decade, he ignored the resolutions of the United Nations. He wasn't about to listen to the demands of the free world. As a matter of fact, when the U.N. sent inspectors in to find the truth, he systematically deceived them. So at this point, I have a choice to make. I have a decision to make, a decision that only comes to the Oval Office, a decision no President wants to make but must be prepared to make, and that is: Do I trust the word of a madman, forget the lessons of September the 11th, or take action to defend this country? Given that choice, I will defend America every time.

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

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

The President. Because we acted to defend ourself, more than 50 million people are now free. That makes the world more peaceful. Think about Afghanistan. It wasn't all that long ago that young girls weren't allowed to go to school, and their mothers got whipped in the public square because they didn't toe the line of the Taliban. These people were barbaric people. They had hijacked a good religion and converted it into an ideology of hate. Today, in Afghanistan, more than 10 million people, 40 percent of whom are women, have registered to vote in the upcoming Presidential election.

Despite ongoing acts of violence, Iraq now has a strong Prime Minister, a National Council, and national elections are scheduled in January. We're standing with the people in those countries, because when America gives its word, America must keep its word. And by standing with them, we're also serving a vital and historic cause that will make our country safer. See, free societies in the Middle East will be hopeful societies which no longer feed resentments or breed violence for export. Free governments in the Middle East will fight terrorists instead of harboring them, and that helps us keep us safe.

So our mission in Afghanistan and Iraq is clear: We will help the new leaders train their police and their armies, so the people of Afghanistan and Iraq can do the hard work of defending freedom. We will help them move toward elections. We'll get them on the path of stability and democracy as quickly as possible, and then our troops will come home with the honor they have earned.

We've got a great United States military, people like Lance Corporal Russell Bullock, who's with us today. I've had the honor of meeting people like Russell, men and women who wear our uniform. I've seen their great decency and unselfish courage. I want to thank the veterans who are with

us today for having set such a great example.

And I believe the Government has a commitment, has an obligation to those who wear our uniform. They must have all the resources they need to complete their missions. That's why a year ago I went to the United States Congress and proposed \$87 billion of supplemental funding to support our troops in combat in both Iraq and Afghanistan. It was a very important piece of legislation. As a matter of fact, most Members of the United States Congress understood its importance. We had great bipartisan support for this request, so strong that only 12 Members of the United States Senate voted against it, 2 of whom are my opponent and his runningmate.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. When you're out gathering the vote, when you're out convincing people to go to the polls, remind them that only four United States Senators voted to authorize the use of force and then voted against funding our troops, and two of those four are my opponent and his runningmate.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. They said, "Why did you do that?" And he said, "Well, I actually did vote for the \$87 billion, before I voted against it." Now, I know Holland, Michigan, well enough to know not many people talk like that around here. [Laughter] And they kept pressing him. They kept pressing him. He said he was proud of his own—he finally just said, "The whole thing is a complicated matter." There is nothing complicated about supporting our troops in combat.

The Commander in Chief must have clear vision and mean what he says when he speaks. When it comes to Iraq, my opponent has more different positions than all his colleagues in the Senate combined. Senator Kerry once said, "It would be naive, to the point of grave danger, not

to believe that left to his own devices Saddam Hussein will provoke, misjudge, or stumble into a future, more dangerous confrontation with the civilized world.” Then, in 2002 he voted for the war, but then voted against funding for our troops. When the heat got on in his Democrat primary, he declared himself the antiwar candidate. Then, later—earlier this summer he said he would have still voted to go to war even knowing everything we know today. Then, about 10 days ago he adopted the language of his one-time rival, Howard Dean, saying it was “the wrong war at the wrong time,” even though he said earlier it was the right decision and he supported it.

Here’s the latest wrinkle—I’m trying to figure out what he believes. He said we’re spending too much money in Iraq, even though he earlier criticized me for not spending enough. One thing about his position is clear. If he had had his way, Saddam Hussein would still be in power and would be a threat to our security and peace in the world.

Listen, I want to thank our friends and neighbors—friends and allies for their contributions. I’ve spent a lot of time doing that. I appreciate the fact—we’ve got nearly 40 nations involved in Afghanistan, some 30 nations involved in Iraq helping us to spread freedom and peace. But I will never—as I build coalitions over the next 4 years, as I continue to work with friends and neighbors, I will never turn over America’s national security decisions to leaders of other countries.

I believe in the transformational power of liberty. I believe the wisest use of American strength is freedom.

I like to share stories of my time with different leaders around the world, and one of them is—one of the leaders I admire a lot is Prime Minister Koizumi of Japan. Think about that—one of the people with whom I have good relations is the leader of a country that my dad was at war with. Your dads or granddads, husbands, grand-

fathers were at war with them. We had a bloody war with Japan, a violent war.

So World War II was over, after we had won. My predecessor Harry Truman and other Americans believed that liberty could transform enemies into allies. They stood the line. There was a lot of skepticism during those times. But they stood strong for the values that we believe in. And as a result of helping Japan become a democracy, today I sit down at the table with Prime Minister Koizumi talking about the peace, talking about how to make the world a more hopeful place, talking about working together to spread the peace we all yearn for. Someday, an American President will be sitting down with a duly elected leader of Iraq talking about the peace. And our children and grandchildren will be able to grow up in a much better world.

I believe that millions in the Middle East want to be free. I believe women in the Middle East long for a day of their freedom. I believe that if given the chance, they will embrace the most honorable form of government ever devised by man. I believe these things, because I understand freedom is not America’s gift to the world; freedom is the Almighty God’s gift to each man and woman in this world.

This young century will be liberty’s century. By promoting freedom at home and freedom abroad, we’ll build a safer world and a more hopeful America. By reforming our systems of government, we’ll help more Americans realize their dreams. We’ll spread ownership and opportunity to every corner of this country. We’ll pass the enduring values of our country on to a new generation. We’ll continue to make the world a more free and, therefore, a more peaceful place.

For all Americans, these years in our history will stand apart. There are quiet times in the life of a nation when little is expected of its leaders. This isn’t one of those times. It’s a time that requires firm resolve, clear vision, and a deep faith in the values that make us a great nation.

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. It's a day I'll never forget. There were workers in hardhats there yelling at the top of their lungs, "Whatever it takes." I remember trying to console the people coming out of the rubble. A guy looked me in the eye, bloodshot eyes, and he said, "You do not let me down." Ever since that day, I've woken up—I wake up every morning, ever since that day, thinking about how better to protect our country. I will never relent in defending America, whatever it takes.

Four years ago, as I traveled this great country and your wonderful State asking for the vote, I made a pledge. I said that if you gave me a chance to serve, I would uphold the dignity and the honor of the

office to which I had been elected. With your help, with your hard work, I will do so for 4 more years.

God bless. Thank you all for coming. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:21 p.m. at the Ottawa County Fairgrounds. In his remarks, he referred to Senator Zell Miller of Georgia, who made the keynote address at the 2004 Republican National Convention; Mayor Albert H. McGeehan of Holland, MI; Diane Hoekstra, wife of Representative Hoekstra; Betsy DeVos, chairman, Michigan Republican Party; entertainers the Bellamy Brothers; Prime Minister Ayad Allawi of the Iraqi Interim Government; former Democratic Presidential candidate Howard Dean; and Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan.

Remarks in Battle Creek, Michigan September 13, 2004

The President. Thank you all.

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

The President. Thanks for coming. Thank you all very much. As you can see, I'm on a bus tour of your beautiful State. And stopping here in "Cereal City" is a good way to end a bus tour.

Thanks for coming out to say hello. I'm here to ask for the vote. I kind of like spending an afternoon in the ballpark asking for the vote. I so appreciate you being here. I'm not only here to ask for the vote; I want your help. See, I believe we have a duty in this country to vote, and I would hope you would go out and register your friends and neighbors. Convince them they have a duty, in a free country, to participate. Don't overlook discerning Democrats like Zell Miller when you're out registering people to vote.

We've got a lot of people from the Democrat Party supporting my candidacy. We've got a lot of independents supporting my candidacy. We've got a lot of Republicans, because they understand that with 4 more years, this country will be safer, stronger, and better. There is no doubt in my mind, with your help, we will carry Michigan and win a great victory in November.

I am sorry that Laura is not here today. She's a great wife, a wonderful mom. I'm going to give you some reasons to put me back in, but perhaps the most important one is so that Laura will be First Lady for 4 more years.

I am running with a good man in Dick Cheney. Listen, I admit it, he doesn't have the waviest hair in the race. I didn't pick him for his hair. I picked him because he's got good judgment and great experience. I picked him because he can get the job done.