

come to provide help to a neighbor in need.

I want to appreciate our National Guard troops who are here for providing stability. I went to the National Guard bureau convention in Vegas the other day and quoted a woman from Florida, from the Punta Gorda area, who said it brought her such great comfort to see those who wear the uniform, and I appreciate you doing that.

I want to thank the police and firefighters from this part of the world, who have been working overtime, for their compassion, for providing stability so people can, at some point in time, get their lives back in order.

The Federal Government has a responsibility to provide aid as quickly as possible. FEMA Director Brown is with me today. He has done an excellent job on the two hurricanes that hit Florida earlier. He will do an excellent job on this hurricane as well in making sure that all Federal aid is coordinated well with the State and local governments, making sure all the aid that is available gets down here as quickly as possible.

I also want to assure the farmers from this part of the world, the nurserymen in

this part of the world that we will have a plan worked out to help you, that we have an obligation at the Federal level to provide assistance, and that assistance will be detailed so you understand what kind of help is available. As well we understand—fully understand that the highways have been affected here, that many of the roads are impassible. We're going to work with Congress to ensure that highways and bridges are repaired as quickly as possible.

I want to thank the—again, I want to thank the local officials for rising to the occasion. Most of all, I want to tell the citizens of this part of the world that we're praying for you, that we'll get help out here as quickly as we can, and that we ask God's blessings on you and your family.

Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:01 p.m. at Orange Beach Fire and Rescue Station 1. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Bob Riley of Alabama; Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida; Mayor Steve Russo of Orange Beach, AL; Mayor David L. Bodenhamer of Gulf Shores, AL; and Mayor Tim Russell of Foley, AL.

Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session in Derry, New Hampshire *September 20, 2004*

The President. Thank you all for coming. I'm honored to be back. Please be seated. Proud you all are here. Thanks for coming. Hey, buddy, how you doing? Thank you. It's great to be back in New Hampshire. We carried it in 2000. With your help, we'll carry it again in 2004.

That's what I'm here to ask for, your help. I do need your help. I need your help to register your friends and neighbors. I need your help to turn people out to the polls in about 40-something days. Who's counting? *[Laughter]* I'm here to

talk to you about making sure that you understand I have a reason to run again. I want to keep this country—I've got an agenda, a vision for a safer world and a more hopeful America.

This is going to be a little different from most rallies. This is an opportunity for me to talk to some of your fellow citizens here and to talk about how we're going to make sure America is a hopeful place, talk to some business leaders and people who went back to get job training, talk about tax relief. I'm also going to answer questions,

which is kind of a New Hampshire tradition, if I remember correctly. And it's a great tradition. Traditional people take your politics seriously. Traditional people expect there to be a reason for running.

My only regret today is Laura is not with me.

Audience members. Aw-w-w!

The President. I know, a lot of people feel that way. They kind of wish I'd stayed home and she came instead. But she's doing great. She is a great First Lady. When I asked her to marry me, she said, "Fine, I'll marry you, but I don't want to have to give any political speeches." [Laughter] I said, "Okay, you got a deal." [Laughter] Fortunately, she didn't hold me to that deal. She gave a great speech in New York City at our convention. People got to see a strong, compassionate soul.

And I appreciate running with Dick Cheney. He's a great Vice President and a wonderful friend and a good partner. He doesn't have the waviest hair in the race. I didn't pick him for his hair. [Laughter] I picked him for his judgment and his sound experience. I picked him because he can get the job done for the American people.

I want to thank Governor Craig Benson. I hope you put him back in office. He's a good man. [Applause] I appreciate it. New Hampshire is an entrepreneurial State. There's a lot of entrepreneurs here in New Hampshire, kind of independent-minded people who, all they want is a chance to succeed. Craig understands that. He knows the role of Government is not to create wealth but create an environment in which the entrepreneurial spirit can flourish. I agree with him. And that's one of the many reasons why I hope you put him back in as the Governor of this great State. I appreciate you, Craig.

I want to thank Congressman Jeb Bradley. I appreciate you being here, Congressman. Good to see you. He's got a great first name. [Laughter] At least that's what the Governor of Florida thinks. [Laughter]

And I want to thank my friend Charlie Bass. I appreciate you being here, Charlie. They're two really fine Members of the United States Congress. Plus I'm pleased to be working with your Senators, Senator Gregg and Senator Sununu. They are great United States Senators, really good people too.

I had the honor of saying hello to Paul Needham today. He was the—a former Derry town councilor. He was the John Edwards for President cochairman. He's now a Bush supporter. I'm proud you're here. I appreciate you, sir. I'm honored you're here.

The campaign welcomes people from all parties. We welcome all the Republicans, independents, and discerning Democrats—[laughter]—people like Paul and Zell Miller, people who care about—proud you're here.

I want to thank all the grassroots activists. Good to see you. I appreciate your national committeeman being here, old Tom. He's a good man and a great friend. I want to thank the people who put up the signs and put out the yard signs and make the phone calls. I can't thank you enough for what you have done and what you're going to do as we're coming down the stretch. It's important to get people to the polls.

Ours is a changing world. When you think about it, when our dads were coming up, or my dad was growing up, or your grandfather was growing up, a man only had one job, generally, and one career, worked for the same company all his life. Today, the world has changed dramatically. People change careers often and change jobs, and women are working not only in the house but they're working outside the house. The nature of our workforce has changed a lot, and yet the basic institutions of Government have not changed. The Tax Code has not changed. Pension funds have not changed. Health care plans haven't changed. Worker training programs haven't

changed. They were all designed for yesterday.

One of the reasons I'm running for 4 more years is so we can change the fundamental systems of Government to help people be able to realize their dreams. A proper role for Government is to stand side by side with people, not dictate to people. We have a fundamental disagreement in this campaign. There is a philosophical difference in the campaign. The proper role for Government is to encourage people to be able to have choices in life so they can realize their dreams, as opposed to creating programs where the Government tells you what you're going to do in life.

When you hear me talk about changing systems, let me start with Social Security. If you're a senior citizen, you will receive your Social Security check. I don't care what the politicians will tell you as they try to scare you into the ballot box. The promise of Social Security will be kept. And if you're a baby boomer, if you're a baby boomer like me, the trust fund is in pretty good shape. But we need to think about our younger workers, our children and our grandchildren. In order to make sure Social Security is available for them, I believe younger workers ought to be able to take some of their own tax money and set up a personal savings account, not only to help fulfill the promise of Social Security, but a personal savings account they call their own that Government cannot take away.

I think our labor laws ought to change to recognize the changing times we're in. The labor laws were designed for yesterday. I believe workers ought to be allowed to have flex-time and comp-time so moms are able to juggle the demands of family and the demands of work. Government ought to be—have family-friendly work laws, not work laws designed for yesterday.

When I'm talking about changing systems, I'm talking about making sure that systems such as the Tax Code does its job. And one way the Tax Code can do its job—the job is to collect enough revenues in

a fair way to meet the priorities of Government without complicating lives. I believe the Tax Code we have is a complicated mess. I believe it needs to be—I know it's full of loopholes. In order to make sure this economy grows, in order to make sure there's fairness, I'm going to lead a bipartisan effort to simplify the Tax Code.

In changing times, it's important to encourage ownership. If you own something, it brings stability in your life. One of the most hopeful statistics of the recent years is the fact that more and more people are now owning their own home. Think about that. Homeownership is at an alltime high in America today. That's important. We got a plan to make sure it continues that way. I want more and more people from all walks—I want to close the minority homeownership gap in this country, and we've got a plan to do that. There's nothing better than a fellow citizen opening up their door and saying, "Welcome to my home. Welcome to my piece of property."

When it comes to health care, the system ought to have a—be a patient and doctor-centered system, as opposed to a system of Federal bureaucrats. That's why I'm a big believer in health savings accounts. Health savings accounts are a tax-free way for individuals to be able to take care of catastrophic needs and, at the same time, be in charge of health care decisions. And as well health savings accounts allows a worker to take their own account from job to job, career to career.

If you own something, you have a better chance of controlling your destiny. What I'm telling you is, is that over the next 4 years, I will work to change the fundamental systems of our Government so that people have more choices and more opportunities to be able to realize their dreams and the great promise of the United States of America.

Now, look, I recognize that a hopeful society is one in which this economy has got to continue to grow. And when you're out there gathering the vote, you need to

remind our fellow citizens what this economy has been through. The stock market started going down before I got into office. As soon as we show up, we have a recession—[laughter]—which is three quarters negative growth. We started to come out of that, and we discovered that some of our citizens forgot what it meant to be a responsible America. See, when I say we usher in a period of personal responsibility, I'm talking about CEOs in corporate America that have a responsibility of telling the truth to their shareholders and their employees. The fact that people didn't tell the truth affected our economy. It affected the confidence of people. We sent messages loud and clear now: We're not going to tolerate dishonesty in our boardrooms. Thirdly, those attacks hurt us. Make no mistake about it, the attacks on our country affected our economy.

And yet, we've overcome these obstacles. This economy of ours is growing. As the Governor said, your unemployment rate is low. People are working in this State. The national unemployment rate is 5.4 percent. That's lower than the average of the 1970s, the 1980s, and the 1990s. That's okay. That's good. We're doing fine. Except the question is, how do we keep it going? That's the fundamental question of this campaign. What does it take—

Audience member. [Inaudible]

The President. What does it take to make sure this recovery is sustained recovery, so that the economy is a hopeful place? I'll tell you what we need to do. We need to make sure we have reliable energy supplies. If we want this economy to grow, we've got to make sure that you can afford energy at reasonable prices. That means we've got to encourage conservation, the use of renewable sources of energy, using our technologies to make sure we can burn coal in an environmentally friendly way, explore for natural resources in an environmentally friendly way. In order to make sure jobs are available today and tomorrow,

we need to be less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

Listen, in order to make sure this economy stays strong and people can keep working here in New Hampshire, we've got to open up markets to U.S. products. There's a tendency in this country to say, "Oh, it's tough out there, so let's have economic isolationist policies." I strongly reject that. We've opened up our markets, and it's good for you. It's good for the consumers. If you've got more products to choose from, you're likely to get that which you want at a better price and higher quality. That's how the marketplace works. So what I'm saying to places like China is, "You treat us the way we treat you. We've opened up our markets. You open up yours." That's why we filed a WTO case against them. That's why we filed anti-dumping edicts against them. We're enforcing the laws, because I believe we can compete with anybody, anytime, anywhere, if the rules are fair.

If you want to have jobs continue to grow, our society must do something about excessive regulation and all the lawsuits. You know, ask these employers, large and small, what it's like to live in a society where they're constantly afraid of being sued. We need legal reform in this country if we expect to keep jobs here in America.

And finally, in order to make sure we have jobs here, we've got to be wise about how we spend your money, and we've got to keep your taxes low. And taxes are an issue in this campaign, make no mistake about it. I'm running against a fellow who's promised over 2.2 trillion new dollars of Federal spending so far, and that's a lot even for a guy from Massachusetts.

So they said, "How are you going to pay for it?" That's a legitimate question, isn't it? "All these promises, how are you going to pay for it?" He said, "That's simple, just tax the rich." We've heard that before, haven't we? First of all, you can't raise enough by raising the top two brackets and

paying for all the new spending he's promised. So there's a tax gap, which means somebody has got to fill the tax gap. That's you. Secondly, they say "tax the rich." The rich hire lawyers and accountants for a reason, to kind of move out of the way and let the tax bill go elsewhere. That's you. We're not going to let him tax you in 2005, because we're going to win the election in November.

Listen, let me talk to some of our citizens here to help make my points. Kathy Helm is with us today. I'm proud that Kathy is here. She's right there. Those are your little squirts? [Laughter] The guy has got him a good-looking car. What are their names?

Kathy Helm. Steven, Thomas, and Lauren.

The President. Yes. And how old?

Mrs. Helm. Four weeks, five, and two-and-a-half.

The President. Great. She's a—and what do you—you got your hands full.

Mrs. Helm. Yes, I do.

The President. You are a stay-at-home mom, you told me.

Mrs. Helm. Yes, I am.

The President. That's a lot of work. What's your husband do?

Mrs. Helm. I'm sorry?

The President. Your husband?

Mrs. Helm. Tom.

The President. Yes, he works—

Mrs. Helm. He works at Southern New Hampshire University. He's the A/V manager there.

The President. Great. One of the things we did when we provided tax relief was to help families. Tax relief helped with the economic recovery. If people have got more money in their pocket, they're going to demand an additional good or a service, and when they demand that good or additional service, somebody has got to provide it. That's how the marketplace works as well. And when somebody provides it, somebody is going to work.

And so the Helms family received—how much did you get in tax relief in '03—2,200 it says here—1,700, yes.

Mrs. Helm. Yes.

The President. I'll answer it for you. [Laughter]

Mrs. Helm. Thanks. Thank you.

The President. I know there's a lot of cameras over there—[laughter]—1,700, is that right?

Mrs. Helm. Yes.

The President. Yes. That doesn't sound like a lot if you're in DC, I guess, when you're dealing with a lot of zeros; 1,700, I presume, means a lot to you.

Mrs. Helm. Yes, it does.

The President. Yes. So what did you do with the money?

Mrs. Helm. Well, we bought a dining room table, one thing.

The President. Yes, that's good.

Mrs. Helm. Just nice for our new house.

The President. Somebody had to make it.

Mrs. Helm. That's right.

The President. Help raise your kids.

Mrs. Helm. That's right.

The President. See, we raised the child credit to \$1,000 a child. She's got three children. That helps. She said she's married; we reduced the marriage penalty. The Tax Code ought to encourage marriage, not discourage marriage. We created a 10-percent bracket to help families like the Helm family. In 2004, you're estimated to save 2,200.

Mrs. Helm. That's great.

The President. Is that right?

Mrs. Helm. Yes.

The President. Okay.

Mrs. Helm. That's what I hear. [Laughter]

The President. That's what I hear too. [Laughter]

So here's the point. I've asked Kathy to come for this reason. A lot of these tax relief—a lot of this tax relief is going to expire. By the way, this is tax relief my

opponent voted against. He voted against raising the child credit.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. He voted against lowering the marriage penalty. He voted against creating the 10-percent bracket. That's his history. He voted against it for a reason. See, he'd rather have the Federal Government spending the \$1,700, as opposed to Kathy and her husband, Tom. That shows the philosophical difference we have in this campaign. I believe Government ought to set its priorities, fund its priorities, and trust people like Kathy to spend their money.

And if Congress allows this tax relief to expire, her taxes go up by a thousand dollars. That makes no sense for a family. That doesn't make any sense at all. Tell your friends and neighbors when they're headed to the polls, there's just a philosophical difference about who best can spend that \$1,700. We believe the Helm family can spend it better than people in Washington, DC, can spend it.

Jim Bell is with us today. Appreciate you coming.

Jim Bell. Pleasure to be here, Mr. President.

The President. He said he's been training for this moment most of his life.

Mr. Bell. How am I doing so far?

The President. About as good as a Harvard man can be expected to. [Laughter] That's a cheap shot. [Laughter] Just kidding.

Mr. Bell. Okay.

The President. Listen, Jim is the president and CEO of—

Mr. Bell. EPE Corporation in Manchester, New Hampshire.

The President. Right. And what do you all do?

Mr. Bell. We are an automated factory that produces sophisticated electronics for about 20 customers in New England.

The President. Fantastic. A couple of points. Do you realize that most small businesses pay tax at the individual income-

tax level? Most people don't know that. About 90 percent of the small businesses in America are Subchapter S corporations or limited partnerships, which means they pay individual income taxes. You are a—

Mr. Bell. We are a Sub S corporation.

The President. Right. And so the first point I want to make is he's—you're a job creator, right? How many jobs have you created?

Mr. Bell. This year, 17.

The President. Yes, 17. That's good, 17 jobs. Do you also realize 70 percent of all new jobs are created by small businesses, guys like Jim Bell. They're dreaming. They're expanding. They're taking advantage of the environment, and they're creating jobs—17 jobs. And yet, my opponent says he's going to raise the top tax brackets. Guess who "the rich" is in this case? This corporation, who is creating new jobs in New Hampshire. It makes no sense to tax Subchapter S corporations just as the economy is beginning to expand. Why would you want to tax a job creator? You know why? Because there's a fundamental difference. He wants the Government to be able to decide things for people. We want to free up people like Jim Bell to invest and expand to create more jobs.

One of the—so when you reduce all taxes, which we did, we helped Jim's corporation. But as well we put some incentives in the Tax Code to encourage people to invest. And did you take advantage of that?

Mr. Bell. Well, your tax incentives were terrific for us this year. We've invested \$100,000 in new equipment and capability.

The President. That's good.

Mr. Bell. And with that incentive, we had tax relief of about \$34,000.

The President. See, the Tax Code sent a signal to Jim: Invest. Now, what did you buy? Invest means buy. What did you buy?

Mr. Bell. Well, we're in the automated factory business. In this particular case, we invested in automatic optical inspection

equipment, which is very sophisticated technological equipment.

The President. Right. And that's—two points on that. One is, somebody had to make the equipment. So the Tax Code—the tax plan—this economic growth plan we put out said to Jim, this is—it's to your advantage to buy equipment for your company, and he did. And somebody had to make this sophisticated machine. And when somebody makes the machine, it means there's another worker who's likely to keep a job, maybe more than one worker. So his decision ripples throughout the economy. So the tax relief plan encourages new job creation, is what I'm telling you. But as well it makes his workers more productive. In other words, he is now more likely to be able to compete, I guess.

Mr. Bell. You bet, sir.

The President. Otherwise, you wouldn't have bought the machine.

Mr. Bell. As a matter of fact, the machine was made in the State of California, so we're trying to pump that up a little bit too.

The President. That's good, yes. But your workers—

Mr. Bell. The workers are far more productive, are more competitive.

[At this point, Mr. Bell made further remarks.]

The President. That's great. Because you're a good business guy.

Mr. Bell. I'm working at it.

The President. See, here's one of the challenges we face. You know, people talk about outsourcing. Of course, we want jobs here. The best way to keep jobs here is to make sure America is the best place in the world to do business. To make sure we don't raise his taxes, to make sure we do something about the lawsuits that plague him, to make sure health care is reasonable in cost, to make sure he can stay in business—that's the best way to keep jobs here in America.

Let me talk about one other thing—two other things. One, I talk about a changing world. He's talking about his workers becoming more productive. It means the same worker can do more. Now, if that's the case, one of the challenges we have, in order to make sure people can find work, is that you've got to keep growing this economy. As the worker becomes more productive, there is a need to make sure you've got progrowth policies in place. And that's what a productive workforce does. But if you're a productive worker, you're going to make more money.

Mr. Bell. Absolutely.

The President. And that's what happens. So when you hear about productivity increases, it means he can compete. But it also means his workers are going to make more money, which is what we want. By the way, after-tax incomes in this country have risen since 2000. That means people have got more money in their pocket. That's what this administration is for. We want people walking around with a little extra money.

One final point. This is a family business.

Mr. Bell. Yes, sir.

The President. Yes. We've got a Tax Code that does not allow Jim and his wife to pass the business on to whom he wants. That's called the death tax. The death tax taxes assets twice. We need to get rid of that death tax forever, to make sure the entrepreneurial spirit is strong.

Thanks, Jim. Good job.

Mr. Bell. Thank you very much, sir.

The President. Excellent. Just kidding on the Harvard thing. [Laughter]

Jen Brier is with us. Jen, what were you doing—you were working as a—something. What were you doing before you went back to school?

Jen Brier. Before I went back to school, I was working at a mail-order catalog company, opening mail.

The President. Good. Then what happened?

Ms. Brier. I went to school, and now I'm a registered nurse.

The President. Right. So a job was available, but it required a new skill. It's kind of hard to go from catalog-mail opener to nurse, I presume.

Ms. Brier. Yes, it is.

The President. So where did you go?

Ms. Brier. I went to the New Hampshire Community Technical College in Nashua.

The President. Right. Remember when I told you that worker training programs need to change? One reason they need to change—and to make sure they're relevant—is because the job base is changing. In changing times, new jobs are created with new opportunities and new careers available. But there's a skills gap in our country. If we want jobs to stay here in America, we've got to make sure that people like Jen can go back to school. That's why I'm a big believer in the Pell grants. That's why we've got a focused effort on expanding our community college system here. Community colleges are able to design a curriculum to fit the needs of the local communities.

I know the Governor is a big believer in the community college system, and you found that, right? Did you know the job existed as a nurse before you went to school, or did you find out after you went to school?

Ms. Brier. That there was jobs in nursing?

The President. Yes.

Ms. Brier. Before I went.

The President. So somebody said, "All you've got to do is go back to school, and there's a job available for you"?

Ms. Brier. Well, I mean, you would look in the paper, and nurses were in demand.

The President. Good. They still are, right?

Ms. Brier. Absolutely.

The President. Yes, see, I want people listening out there to understand that if you're stuck in a job that you're dissatisfied with, there is money available to help you

go back to school. How many people in your class to become a registered nurse? A lot?

Ms. Brier. Mine was a small class of, like, 12.

The President. Yes, so you didn't get lost, in other words. It must be kind of hard for some to go back to school—not for you, some.

Ms. Brier. Well, some people. I have a—we have a lot of older students that were graduating in our class. One of them was 52, who's now a nurse.

Audience member. That's not old. [Laughter]

The President. Yes, it's not old. Yes, now you're talking. But think about that. Seriously. Our society must provide opportunity for 52-year-old people who want to become a more productive worker. Education means that you become more productive and you make more money.

Ms. Brier. I do. My salary doubled.

The President. Yes, she goes back to community college, and her salary doubles. A changing workplace means that we have got to be smart about how we provide help for people to go back to community colleges. And we do it. We do it in the form of Pell grants. We've expanded Pell grants by a million students since I've been the President, and we do it in the form of loans. You're a loan person?

Ms. Brier. I did. All my school loans are from Federal loans.

The President. Yes, and it helps, by the way, that she saved \$1,100 on income taxes as a result of the tax relief we passed. People say—now, you're going to get your master's degree?

Ms. Brier. I'm sorry?

The President. Somebody said—does it say here you're going to get your master's degree? Thinking about it?

Ms. Brier. I'm at the University of New Hampshire right now to get my bachelor's, and then I'll probably stay there to get my master's.

The President. This is fantastic. Learning is a lifetime experience, and Government ought to help people like Jen. Thanks for coming, Jen. I'm proud you're here. A more productive person makes more money.

Now, we've got Ken Holmes with us. He also is a job creator. And we're going to talk to him about health care. Let me say a couple of things about health care very quickly.

There is a philosophical debate—or philosophical difference, philosophical divide in this campaign. If you listen very carefully to what my opponent is saying, he's saying he's going to increase the role of Government in health care decisions. And I think it's a mistake. I really do. I think that leads to rationing. It means people get to decide for you what—that which you ought to be deciding for yourself.

We've got a different plan. First of all, it says we're going to take care of those who can't help themselves. I believe every poor county in America ought to have a community health center. That's a place for the indigent and poor to receive preventative care and primary care so they're not receiving it in emergency rooms and hospitals.

I believe we ought to make sure SCHIP, which is the low-income children's health care program, is accessed by everybody who is deserving of that program. We want to help these kids with good health care. I believe that we ought to continue the reforms of Medicare. I went up to DC to solve problems, not to pass them on to future Presidents and future generations. We had a problem with Medicare. The system was not modernized. It would pay for \$100,000 for heart surgery but not one dime for the prescription drugs that would prevent the heart surgery from being needed in the first place. That made no sense for our seniors. It made no sense for the taxpayers. We have modernized Medicare by giving seniors more choices, prescription

drug cards, preventative care for the first time, and in 2006, prescription drugs.

If you're worried about health care costs in this country—and we should be—and if you're worried about availability for health care—and we should be—we need to do something about these junk lawsuits that are running docs out of business and running the cost of your medicine up. This is an issue in this campaign. It's an issue. A lot of ob-gyns are being run out of business. I've talked to many moms who had to drive miles to find an ob-gyn because their local ob-gyn simply couldn't stay in business.

I don't think you can be pro-doctor, pro-patient, pro-hospital, and pro-trial-lawyer at the same time. I think you have to make a choice. My opponent made his choice, and he put a trial lawyer on the ticket. I made my choice: I'm for medical liability reform—now.

And finally, we're going to help small businesses. Kenny Holmes is with us. Do you realize that 50 percent of the working uninsured work for small businesses? It says to me, if that's the case, we ought to help small businesses be able to afford insurance.

What do you do?

Kenny Holmes. I'm owner and general manager of North Branch Construction, a general contracting and construction management firm in the State of New Hampshire.

The President. Good. Building things. That's good.

Mr. Holmes. Yes, lots of things.

The President. That's even better. And health care is an issue with your company?

Mr. Holmes. It certainly is. We're an active member of ABC, Associated Builders and Contractors, our national association that has been pushing—I should say supporting your effort for association health plans for the last couple of years now.

The President. Now, here's what they are—that's the problem in Washington; we talk in words that people don't understand

what they mean. Association health plans mean the small businesses can pool risk, can join together across jurisdictional boundaries, across State lines, so that there's a larger pool of people to insure. The more people you insure, the more risk you spread, the cheaper the policies, the less expensive your policies are. That's what we're talking about.

So in other words, he ought to be able to combine with somebody from—a company from Texas or a company from California in the same industry, and they can write insurance with large pools, see? Association health plans means small businesses will eventually be able to get their insurance at the same discount that big businesses can get their insurance. And that makes sense. If 50 percent of the working uninsured work for small businesses, why not allow small businesses to bind together, to purchase insurance in pools? I'll tell you why: Because people in Washington, DC, won't let it happen, is why it's not happening.

He's a big believer in association health plans, and so am I, because I want people to have insurance. I want small businesses to be able to stay in business.

Your premiums are going up?

Mr. Holmes. They have been for several years.

The President. Yes. Lawsuits driving them up, the fact that you can't bind together is drawing them up too—driving them up.

Mr. Holmes. No question. We spend \$240,000 a year now for our 55 employees to have insurance, and their families.

The President. See, what we want is commonsense, practical plans to address the needs of people, rather than plans that empower the Federal Government to make your health care decisions. In all we're doing in this health care reform debate, we're saying the decisions ought to be made between doctors and patients, not between—by bureaucrats in Washington, DC. And it's a fundamental difference in this

campaign, and it's an important philosophical difference in this campaign.

Thanks for coming, buddy.

I want to talk about how to make America and the world a safer place. Then I'll answer some questions. Let me tell you some of the lessons that I have learned and the country must learn about the world we live in today. Our world changed, obviously, on September the 11th, 2001. We were confronted with an enemy that has no conscience, period. They will behead people in order to shake our will. They will try to sow chaos and disorder and try to affect our confidence. These people are ideologues of hatred. They stand for exactly the opposite we stand for. We stand for freedom of religion. They stand for a narrow view of religion. And if people don't toe the line, they will whip them in public squares. We believe in freedom of speech. They say, "If you speak wrong, you're in trouble." They're the opposite of what we believe in, and they use terror as a tool to shake our will.

You cannot negotiate with these people. You cannot hope for the best. Our strategy is clear: We will stay on the offensive against them; we will bring them to justice so we do not have to face them here at home.

The second lesson is that this is a different kind of war, and these people will try to hide in countries. They're like parasites. Their desire is to take over the host. And so I issued a statement, a doctrine that said, "If you harbor a terrorist, you're just as guilty as the terrorist." Now, when the President says something, he better mean what he says. In order to keep this world safe and secure, you better mean what you say when you speak. And you better say it so everybody can understand it. So I said, "If you harbor a terrorist, you're just as guilty as the terrorist." I was speaking to the Taliban at this point in time, and they ignored what we said. And thanks to a great military, the Taliban are no longer in power. [Applause]

Okay, a couple of other points—we've got too much work to do here. [Applause] Thank you all—too much work here. And so we went in and removed the Taliban from power. Now, remember, Al Qaida was training there. They trained thousands of killers. And Al Qaida no longer has a safe haven. They're on the run in that part of the world, and we're safer for it. We're safer for it. We're safer because people now are free in Afghanistan as well.

Think about a society just 3 years ago in which these barbarians were—they weren't allowing young girls to go to school. An amazing society, isn't it? Can you imagine growing up in a world—you can't—we can't possibly think that way in America. I told you, these people are just the opposite of us. We believe every human being matters, that every soul counts. And yet, young girls were not allowed to go to school. Their mothers were executed in sports stadiums if they stepped out of line.

Today, in Afghanistan, 10 million citizens, over 40 percent of whom are women, have registered to vote in the upcoming Presidential election. What a fantastic—and the world is better off for it. Nobody would have predicted that 3 years ago. Nobody could have envisioned after we went in that democracy would be on the march. Freedom is powerful. I don't care what your religion is. I don't care where you live. Freedom is a powerful concept. People long to be free in this world.

Another lesson of September the 11th, another lesson is that we must take threats seriously before they fully materialize. Prior to September the 11th, if we saw a threat, we could deal with it if we felt like it or not, because we never dreamt it would come home to hurt us. So if we saw a gathering threat overseas, maybe it's something to pay attention to; maybe it wasn't. Today, that world changed. Today, we've got to take every threat seriously because we saw the consequences of what can happen. We're still vulnerable.

So I looked at the world and saw a threat in Saddam Hussein. I'll tell you why I saw a threat. He was a sworn enemy of the United States of America. He had ties to terrorist networks. Do you remember Abu Nidal? He's the guy that killed Leon Klinghoffer. Leon Klinghoffer was murdered because of his religion. Abu Nidal was in Baghdad, as was his organization. Zargawi—still in Baghdad, creating havoc in Baghdad, trying to stop the march to democracy is what he's trying to do right now, but he was there. Saddam Hussein was paying the families of suicide bombers. That's support for terror. He was dangerous. He also used weapons of mass destruction against his own people and against a country in his neighborhood. Saddam Hussein was a threat.

We had been to war with him once. Many politicians prior to my arrival in Washington had said we better—it would be naive to the point of grave danger not to confront Saddam Hussein—that would be Senator John Kerry—"naive to the point of grave danger." I went to the Congress and said, "I see a threat." They looked at the same intelligence I looked at, the very same intelligence, and they came to the same conclusion as I came to, that Saddam Hussein was a threat, and they authorized the use of force. My opponent looked at that intelligence, as he had for many years, since he had been in Washington for a long period of time, and voted yes when it came to the authorization of the use of force.

Before the Commander in Chief ever commits a troop into harm's way, we must try all options. The decision to go to war is the toughest, by far the toughest decision I'll ever have to make. And I knew that. And that's why I went to the United Nations, because I was hoping that diplomacy would work. I knew we had to deal with a threat, but my hope was—is that, finally, Saddam Hussein would listen to the free world. And I stood up there, and I laid

out the case, and they looked at the intelligence, and they voted 15 to nothing to say to Saddam Hussein, "Disclose, disarm, or face serious consequences." I believe when international bodies say something, for the sake of peace, they must mean what they say.

Saddam Hussein ignored the demands of the free world. This wasn't the first resolution he ignored. I think it was 17 resolutions—17 times the free world spoke. He wasn't paying attention, because he was hoping we would look the other direction, because he was hoping we would forget. As a matter of fact, it is documented that he systematically deceived the inspectors the United Nations sent in. Diplomacy wasn't working. The world had given Saddam Hussein a chance, a last chance to listen to the demands of the free world. And he made the decision, and so did I. I had to either trust a madman, or forget the lessons of September 11th, or take the tough decision to defend our country. Given that choice, I will defend America every time. [*Applause*] Thank you all.

Today my opponent continued his pattern of twisting in the wind, with new contradictions of his old positions on Iraq. He apparently woke up this morning and has now decided, no, we should not have invaded Iraq, after just last month saying he still would have voted for force, even knowing everything we know today. Incredibly, he now believes our national security would be stronger with Saddam Hussein in power, not in prison.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Today he said, and I quote, "We have traded a dictator for a chaos that has left America less secure." He's saying he prefers the stability of a dictatorship to the hope and security of democracy. I couldn't disagree more. And not so long ago, so did my opponent. [*Laughter*] Last December, he said this: "Those who doubted whether Iraq or the world would be better off without Saddam Hussein and those who believe we are not safer

with his capture don't have the judgment to be President or the credibility to be elected President." End quote. I could not have said it better.

He also changed his mind and decided that our efforts in Iraq are now a distraction from the war on terror, when he earlier acknowledged that confronting Saddam Hussein was critical to the war on terror. And he's criticizing our reconstruction efforts, when he voted against the money to pay for the reconstruction.

Forty-three days before the election, my opponent has now suddenly settled on a proposal for what to do next, and it's exactly what we're currently doing. We're working with the international partners; we're training Iraqi troops; we're reconstructing the country,* we're preparing for elections. They're going to have elections in January.

Our work in Iraq is hard work. There are people there who want to stop the march to democracy. That's what they're trying to do. They want us to leave. They want us to quit. Our work in Iraq is absolutely essential—Iraq—essential for our country's security. For our children and grandchildren to grow up in a safer world, we must defeat the terrorists and the insurgents and complete our mission in rebuilding Iraq as a stable democracy.

I'm going to New York after this, and in the next couple of days, I'll be meeting with Prime Minister Allawi, the Prime Minister of Iraq. He is a strong and determined leader. He understands the stakes in this battle. I hope the American people will listen carefully to his assessment of the situation in his country. We must show resolve and determination. Mixed signals are the wrong signals to send to the enemy. Mixed signals are the wrong signals to send to the people in Iraq. Mixed signals are the wrong signals to send to our allies. And mixed signals are the wrong signals to send to our troops in combat.

* White House correction.

A couple of other points I want to make. Any time we put our troops into harm's way, they need to have the full support of the United States Government—the full support. And that's why I went—and went to the Congress and said, "We need \$87 billion of money to support our troops in harm's way." These were for troops in Afghanistan and in Iraq. And I was pleased to get strong support. Bass and Bradley, they were strong in their support. Sununu and Gregg were strong on that support.

The support was so strong that only 12 Members of the Senate voted against it, 2 of whom were my opponent and his runningmate. When you're out gathering the vote, when you're out there gathering the vote, remind people of this fact: Four people in the United States Senate voted to authorize the use of force and did not vote to fund our troops, two of whom were my opponent and his runningmate.

So they asked my opponent, "Why? Why did you make that vote?" He said, "I voted for the \$87 billion, right before I voted against it." That's not the way people talk here in New Hampshire. He went on and said, well, he said he's proud of the vote, and finally he said, "It's a complicated matter." There's nothing complicated about supporting our troops in combat.

Let me tell you what else I believe. I'm kind of winding down here, getting ready for questions. Let me tell you what else I believe. I believe that liberty can transform nations from places of hopelessness to hope, from places of darkness to light. We're seeing that in Afghanistan today. Ten million people registering to vote is a phenomenal statistic. It is such a hopeful number, isn't it, in spite of the fact that the Taliban were pulling women off buses and killing them because they were trying to register to vote. People want to be free.

I believe liberty can transform enemies into friends, because I've seen it firsthand when I've talked with Prime Minister Koizumi of Japan. I want you to think about this now, as you're contemplating the

historic opportunity we have in the world today. It wasn't all that long ago in the march of history that we were fighting the Japanese as the sworn enemy—sworn enemy. My dad, your dads and granddads were fighting the Japanese. Yet after World War II, Harry Truman, Harry S. Truman believed that we should work to help Japan become a democracy. He believed that liberty could transform societies.

There was a lot of skeptics then, a lot of people who doubted whether or not the hard work that went into that—to changing Japan was worth it. You can understand that. First of all, there are skeptics in every society. And secondly, a lot of people in this country's lives had been turned upside down as a result of the war we had just fought, and they had trouble realizing that an enemy could become a friend.

But there were some people in this country who just refused to yield to the value that we know, that liberty is a powerful, powerful part of everybody's soul. And today, I sit down at the table with Prime Minister Koizumi—I'm going to be doing so here in the next couple of days in New York too—as a personal friend, but we're talking about keeping the peace. We're talking about how to make this world a more peaceful place. We're talking about the peace that we all long for. Think about that. Here I am talking to the head of a former enemy, working together to make the world a better place.

And that not only means helping Iraq get up on its feet; that means feeding the hungry. Do you realize, our country feeds more empty stomachs than any country in the world by far? That means helping those poor souls on the continent of Africa deal with HIV/AIDS. We're by far the most generous nation when it comes to helping people ravished by the pandemic of AIDS. We're working with people together to make this world a better place.

Someday—we will succeed in Iraq and Afghanistan by being firm in our beliefs, unyielding to the demands of those who

want us to quit, those terrorists who are trying to kill people to get us to leave. That's what they're trying to do. We'll be successful. Everybody longs to be free. And when we are, we'll be able to look back and say, "The world is better off." Someday, an American President and an Iraqi leader are going to sit down, talking about keeping the peace, talking about how to make a part of the world that is so desperate for freedom become a more peaceful place. And our grandchildren and our grandchildren's children will be better off for it. [Applause]

Okay, what—not yet, not yet. The stakes are high. These are historic times. I clearly see where I want to lead this country. I know what we've got to do the next 4 years to make this country a safer place and the world a more hopeful place. And I appreciate you giving me a chance to come and explain why I'm running again.

Now, let me answer some of your questions, and then—yes, sir?

A Soldier's Letter

Q. I work at a local school, and two of the ladies' sons were deployed with the Marine Corps to Iraq. And they asked us to do something. So—I'm nonmilitary, myself, but grew up in a military family. My father served '41 to '68 in the National Guard too. I had local veterans—I sent out for shirts from the Marine Corps down in DC, and I had local veterans sign them, from World War II to Desert Storm, some of the names, Jim Panis—[inaudible]—U.S. Navy; Lieutenant Harold Heck, Mobile Riverene Force, Vietnam, Silver Star winner; a three-star general.

Anyway, Mr. President, I got this letter from one of our local boys. He'll be home October 2d. I'd like to read it to you.

The President. Okay. Thank you.

Q. You people think the last generation was the greatest. Wait until you hear this one. "Dear Mr. Hussey, Sr."—I'm a senior too, like your father. "The gift you sent me"—this is a 19-year-old kid, just out of

Londonderry High—"Dear Mr. Hussey, the gift you sent me almost brought tears to my eyes. I want you to thank the men who signed it, who came before me, so I might have the opportunity to enjoy the freedoms of America. Now is my time to return the favor. I gladly serve, and I am honored to have a unique connection with the generation before me. War is something that no one can really understand unless they've served in the military and been in combat. Unfortunately, I have lost friends here, but I will never forget them and those who paid the price before them.

"The t-shirt you sent me is hanging right above my rack, and every day or night when I get back from patrolling or setting up an ambush site, if I feel tired, worn, hungry, I look at the names of those who took their time and, for some, their lives for this country of ours, and I feel renewed strength for the coming battles. Before I joined the Corps, people would ask me why I wanted to join, especially during a time of war. I replied, 'Men have died for this freedom that they believed in, and if we forget this privilege, they will have died in vain, and it would have been for nothing.' Especially now, with the loss of my buddies, I understand what they felt and what drives me as a Marine.

"Thank you again, Lance Corporal Jesse Braggin," who will be home October 2d.

The President. There you go. Thank you, sir. Thank you. I appreciate you reading that. Let me—

Audience member. We love you, President Bush!

The President. Thank you. I met with many families who have lost a loved one in Iraq and Afghanistan, and it's—you know, it's a hard part of the job, and it's a necessary part of the job. And I assure them that their loved one will not die in vain because we will complete the mission. And the mission will make the world a better place. And that's what you've got to tell this guy when he gets home, that his service and the service of those buddies

of his who lost their life were part of securing America.

Because, one, Prime Minister Allawi says we've got to defeat them in Iraq, otherwise we'll face them here. It's essential that people understand the world has changed. It's a different world we live in.

Secondly, that by helping Iraq become a secure nation, and by training Iraqis so they can do the hard work of defending their freedom against the few who want to stop the march to liberty, we're making ourselves more secure. A free Iraq in the heart of the Middle East will make the world a more peaceful place. A free Iraq will set such a vivid example for women in the Middle East, who long for a chance for success. It will provide a vivid example for the reformers in the Middle East. It will say that here is the future for you. Free societies do not export terror. Free societies are allies in the war against these killers.

And you tell that guy, thank you for your service, and God bless him.

Men of Truck Number 2/Iraq

Q. Mr. President, my brother is in NYPD, emergency service unit, Truck Number 2. I just wanted to say—you mentioned the—his partner in the State of the Union Address. You mentioned his father, John Vigiano, and the two boys.

The President. Yes, I know them well.

Q. I just want to say, thank you, as being a beacon of strength at a time of need for our country.

The President. Thank you, sir. Your brother was their partner?

Q. My brother-in-law is Rob Beeger, Truck Number 2.

The President. Yes, yes.

Q. I've got a picture of them with you.

The President. What a great family. You're not going to believe this family. Two sons go in the rubble and don't come out. It's really important we never forget that day. It's just important. It's a part of our history.

You know, I—you've got a question, or do you want to keep going?

Q. I actually have a question for you as well.

The President. Okay, good. [Laughter] I was about to wax eloquently—[laughter]—or at least wax. [Laughter]

Q. Is that from the top of my head? [Laughter]

The President. See, you probably appreciate my comments about Vice President Cheney. [Laughter]

Q. I just don't have the curls, either.

The President. That's right. [Laughter] Go ahead.

Q. I hear a lot of things in the press in regards to what's happening in Iraq. I don't appreciate the fact that the press only presents a certain point of view. I hear different things, and one thing I've learned—I did a little bit of studying—I was wondering if you can tell me a little bit about Salman Pak. And we know about Zarqawi and how he's causing all sorts of problems in Fallujah.

And the other question I have real quick is, is that I watched a special on FOX News last night on the U.N., the oil for food scandal. And the thing is, is that when it comes down to the oil for food scandal, we have a lot of countries that opposed us at the very beginning of the war that have a lot of money staked in with Saddam. And I was just wondering if, when you address the U.N., do you plan on bringing it up to these countries?

The President. No. [Laughter] There is an investigation going on. Paul Volcker is leading the investigation, and it's best that the investigation run its course.

Zarqawi—look, here's the situation. It's tough as heck in Iraq right now because people are trying to stop democracy. That's what you're seeing. And Iraqis are losing lives, and so are some of our soldiers. And it breaks my heart to see the loss of innocent life and to see brave troops in combat lose their life. It just breaks my heart. But I understand what's going on. These people

are trying to shake the will of the Iraqi citizens, and they want us to leave. That's what they want us to do.

And I think the world would be better off if we did leave—if we didn't—if we left, the world would be worse. The world is better off with us not leaving. It's a mistake to pull out. Can you imagine what Iraq would be like today if Saddam Hussein were in power? It would be terrible for them, and we'd be dealing with a guy who had just totally ignored the demands of the free world. The sanctions weren't working. We know he had the capability of making weapons, and it was just a matter of time.

No, we didn't find the stockpiles we thought would be there. But his desire to make weapons and the ability to make them and the ability to work with these terrorist organizations was a threat we could not afford to take.

Secondly, if we put an artificial timetable out there on withdrawal, all the enemies says is, "We'll wait them out." Our mission has got to be to help to train the Iraqis, get them on the path to stability and democracy as quickly as we can, and then our troops come home, but to complete the mission. It makes no sense to pull out of there early. If we pull out of there early, Iraq will come even more dangerous. See, we've got to get it right in Afghanistan and Iraq, and we will. And now, it's a matter of will.

You asked me what's it's like there. It's tough. But Prime Minister Allawi is the best way to—the best person to talk to there. He said this is desperation by these people. They're watching TV screens too. They're watching the reactions of people around the world. They see countries pull out of Iraq. They saw what happened when one country pulled out after a citizen was beheaded. They saw what happened after elections in Europe. They know that people are—can grow weary of this battle. We've got to be firm and strong. I believe we're right in what we're doing. And I believe democracy in Iraq is going to happen, and

I believe the world will be better off for it.

Yes, sir.

Freedom for Iraq/Marshall Plan

Q. My grandfather came over as a—an immigrant. My father was a career Army officer. I was a career Army officer. My son is a lieutenant in Iraq, cavalry platoon leader, fighting the war on terrorism right now. My—we have—well, first, all three of us, our three generations, fully support your foreign policy and the third world war we must fight against the terrorists.

The President. Thank you.

Q. Beyond that, the questions are, why don't either the Defense Department or the State Department provide a weekly briefing on all the good things we're doing in Iraq? It's not just fighting over there.

The President. Right. Now, look, what's he's talking about is the number of children who've been immunized. It's—a phenomenal number of children have been immunized—or the new schools that have been built and opened or the fact that power now is up to prewar levels. I mean, there are positive developments going on in the world in Iraq, and they're headed to elections.

Look, Prime Minister Allawi has been—the sovereignty was transferred 3 months ago, and now they're going to have elections in January. Saddam Hussein wasn't about to have elections. And they're headed to elections. And again, I repeat, it's hard. It's hard because people—there are people who fear what freedom means. Remember, the ideology of these people is the opposite of what we stand for. They don't believe in elections. They don't believe in free thought. They don't believe in free religion. They don't believe in free press. And that's why they're stopping—that's why they're trying to stop the march of freedom.

And I appreciate that.

Q. The second thing is that I grew up in Europe when the Marshall plan was in effect. What I don't understand is why we

don't remind the American people of the Marshall Plan and the amount of time it took to rebuild Europe.

The President. Yes, I appreciate that.

Q. We can't leave Iraq on a timetable that Senator Kerry says. We have to stay there until the job is done.

The President. I agree.

Q. We have to—

The President. No, I appreciate that.

Q. We have to say that this is our generation's Marshall plan, that we need that done, and that, yes, we are—many of our troops are having to sacrifice, but if we don't do it, the world will be a lot worse off place.

The President. Yes, sir, I agree with that, Colonel. Thank you very much.

Yes, ma'am. Here's your chance.

Chechen Terrorist Attack in Beslan, Russia/ Domestic Security

Q. Hi. I was wondering, my friend and I go—we're seniors at Londonderry High School, and we are wondering what your plan is to protect our schools—like what happened in Russia—what your plan is for that.

The President. I appreciate that. Yes, what happened in Russia was so appalling, and it just crushed—it's such a crushing moment, when you think about it. It's really hard to envision people that way. But that's the nature of the folks we're dealing with. Obviously, look, every school has got to be on alert. Every school has got to be diligent. Every school has got to be ready to make a quick response to local police. Every school has got to be—just recognize the nature of the world we live in.

And what we're doing at the Federal level is we're trying to figure out who is coming in the country and why they're coming in the country, if they're leaving the country when they're supposed to be leaving the country. We're using the PATRIOT Act. Let me talk real quick about the PATRIOT Act. It's a tool that is now at the disposal of our law enforcement.

Do you realize, before the PATRIOT Act was passed that elements of the FBI couldn't talk to each other? The intelligence side and the operating side could not talk to each other about sharing intelligence. And I don't see how you can bust terrorist cells if you can't get your intelligence folks and your operators to be able to discuss things. We tore—the PATRIOT Act tore the wall down. Every action in the PATRIOT Act requires a court order, before the Government can move. In other words, your rights are protected.

The tools in the PATRIOT Act have been used against drug dealers for years. I believe we ought to extend the PATRIOT Act. I know—not believe it; I know we need to extend the PATRIOT Act, with the constitutional safeguards for our U.S. citizens. If it makes sense to use elements of the PATRIOT Act to chase down drug dealers, it certainly makes sense to use the PATRIOT Act to try to prevent the kind of horrible actions that took place on September the 11th and elsewhere around the world. And so we're doing everything we can to protect you. That's what we're doing. We're trying to find people before they get here.

The other thing we're doing is, the best way to protect the homeland is to stay on the offense, is to keep pressure on these people. We've brought 75 percent of Al Qaida to justice, and we're still working. Every day we're working to find people.

Yes, ma'am. Go ahead. Please, do.

Judicial Nominations

Q. In Stratham, I spoke with you very briefly, personally, and I just want to share with these people. My son came back from the 101st. He was a year in Iraq. And I trusted his life under your leadership. As Commander in Chief, I thank you for that. He is now going to school. He's in college. He just started this year, and the Government is paying for it. And I thank you for that too.

And I do have a question. My question is, as we—you have great courage because you stand on some platforms that are quieter than the war on terrorism, and that takes great courage. One is your value for life and your value for the institution of marriage.

The President. Thank you.

Q. My question—my question is what's—what's frustrating is that there are judges that are taking the law into their own hands. And what do you do about that?

The President. Well, that's when you appoint people that will not write law from the bench but strictly interpret the Constitution. That's what I have done. I put good people up. And you know, a lot of our judges got through, particularly at the district level, but they've held up a lot of really good appellate judges—"they" being a handful of Members in the United States Senate. They're playing politics with American justice. And another reason to put me back in office is because I'm going to knock back—knock it back down. I'm going to keep naming the people that I've told the people I'd name if I got elected President of the United States, so that there is proper balance between the executive branch and the legislative branch and the judicial branch.

Yes, ma'am. You've got a question there? Yes, you.

Stem Cell Research

Q. I wanted to say, first of all, wonderful presentation.

The President. Thank you. [Laughter] I'm glad you came. [Laughter] And more importantly, I'm glad I called on you. [Laughter]

Q. Second of all, I wanted—I promised my parents that if I got the opportunity, to send their warm and gracious regards.

The President. Thank you.

Q. And my brother, who's a corporal in the United States National Guard, is proud to be serving the country, especially under your watch. He will be leaving for Iraq

in early November for the better part of 2 years.

The President. Two years?

Q. Well, 18 months is his—

The President. That's his call-up, for 18 months?

Q. Yes. So very proud. My question, and I hope I'm not out of place asking this because it's not as prevalent an issue—

The President. Okay.

Q. Stem cell research?

The President. Yes, let me talk about it.

Q. Please. I have, like, a very personal concern about that. My two cousins, my aunt's two only children both have cystic fibrosis, neither of them expected to live beyond 25. One of them is 22, and the other one is 20.

The President. I'm sorry.

Q. And—it's just a concern.

The President. I appreciate it. It's a very legitimate question. I'm glad you asked it because I'm the only President so far in our history, the first President ever, to have allowed Federal dollars to be spent on research on stem cells—on stem cell lines.

Now, look, let me tell you about this issue. It's a very sensitive issue because in order to create a stem cell line you have to destroy life. In other words, there's a—you take an embryo, and you destroy the embryo, out of which comes a stem cell line. And before I made my decision, there was some 70 lines in existence. And I felt that those lines would be ample enough to be able to allow science to go forward to determine whether or not stem cell research would yield the results we all hope that it yields. And so I agreed to allow Federal funding to go forward on existing stem cell lines so that further life would not be destroyed.

Out of those 70 lines, some 22 are functional now. And out of that 22 lines, there's over 300 different projects that are going forward. In other words, there is an active effort to determine whether or not embryonic stem cells will yield the results we hope they yield.

I'm also a big believer in funding adult stem cell research, which does not require the destruction of life. My hope is your hope, that out of the research that exists, that we'll be able to find cures for the diseases. And one of the things that this country will be confronted with over the next decades, particularly as technology advances, is we'll be confronted with very profound ethical decisions that are going to be important decisions.

Cloning, for example, will be a decision that we have to make. I mean, does it make sense to destroy life to create life, is another decision. These are all very valid decisions. And that's what happens when you're the President. You've got to weigh all the evidence, and you think clearly about your philosophy as well as the facts, and decide. And I decided. And I think my decision was balanced and fair, and it balanced good science with good ethics. Thank you.

Last question, then I've got to go. Yes, sir.

2004 Election

Q. Good afternoon, Mr. President, and welcome to Derry, New Hampshire.

The President. Thank you, sir. It's great to be back.

Q. I'm a retired chief petty officer in the United States Navy. And I can tell you from the observing of your unworthy opponent, I would not want to serve under him as Commander in Chief. I was directly involved in the Cuban missile crisis—I mean directly—serving aboard the U.S. aircraft carrier *Intrepid*, which is now the Naval Aviation Museum in New York. And I hope someday you'll visit. I'm a member of that organization. My heartfelt prayer to you, sir, is, stay the course and win the election in '04.

The President. Thank you, sir. I can't conclude on a better note. Thank you all for coming. God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:52 p.m. at the SportsZone. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Craig Benson of New Hampshire; Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida; Senator Zell Miller of Georgia, who made the keynote address at the 2004 Republican National Convention; Thomas D. Rath, national committeeman, New Hampshire Republican State Committee; senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarkawi; Prime Minister Ayad Allawi of the Iraqi Interim Government; Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan; and Paul A. Volcker, chair, Independent Inquiry into the United Nations Oil for Food Programme.

Statement on the Final Report of the United States Commission on Ocean Policy

September 20, 2004

I commend the members of the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy for their hard work and welcome their Final Report.

Our oceans sustain an abundance of natural wonders, enable the transportation of vital goods, and provide food and recreation for millions of Americans. My administration is working with every level of government, the private sector, and other non-governmental organizations to advance the

next generation of ocean policy. In order to foster more effective management and conservation of our ocean and coastal resources, my administration has launched and supported numerous innovative science, management, and policy initiatives. We have created a new integrated ocean observing system with international partners, embarked on deep oceans research with a state-of-the-art research ship, and