

Zargawi; David Kay, former CIA Special Advisor for Strategy Regarding Iraqi Weapons of Mass Destruction Programs; Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom; Prime Minister Ayad Allawi of the Iraqi In-

terim Government; and Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

Remarks in Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio October 2, 2004

The President. Thank you all for coming.

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

The President. Thank you all. The sun is shining on Ohio. I'm thrilled to be here. I am the first sitting President ever to come to this fine city. The rest of them missed a great place. I'm so proud you all came out today.

I'm so honored to be standing up here with Chuck Canterbury to receive the endorsement of the Fraternal Order of the Police. It means a lot to get the endorsement from those who serve our country on a daily basis to make it safe. I'm proud of that endorsement. I want to thank Jim Pasco and Nick DiMarco as well as all the Fraternal Order of Police folks standing behind me.

I want to thank you all for coming. I'm here to ask for your vote. We're getting closer and closer to election day, and I'm here to ask for your help as well. Go out and register your friends and your neighbors. Tell them they have a duty in America to vote. In a free society, we have an obligation to go to the polls. Make sure you don't overlook those discerning Democrats, either—[laughter]—like Zell Miller. Or my friend the mayor of Youngstown, Ohio, George McKelvey. I'm proud you're here, Mr. Mayor. I'm proud to call you friend, and I'm proud to call you supporter. Thanks for coming.

Then after you get them registered to vote, get them headed to the polls. And remind them that if they want a safer

America, a stronger America, and a better America, to put me and Dick Cheney back in office.

Listen, I have one regret, and that is that Laura isn't here with me.

Audience members. Aw-w-w!

The President. Yes, I know. I hear it all the time, "Why didn't you send Laura, and you stay at home?" [Laughter] True story. She said, "Fine, I'll marry you," when I asked her, but she said, "I don't ever want to have to give a speech." [Laughter] I said, "You got a deal." [Laughter] Fortunately, she didn't hold me to my word. The country got to see Laura speaking in New York City at that convention. They got to see a strong, decent, fine woman. Laura is a great First Lady. I'm really proud of her. 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.

And I'm proud of my Vice President, Dick Cheney. He's warming up. [Laughter] He'll be right around the corner pretty soon. He's not going to have the waviest hair on the set. [Laughter] I didn't pick him for his hair. [Laughter] I picked him because of his judgment and his sound experience. Dick Cheney is getting the job done for the American people.

I'm proud of your United States Senator Mike DeWine. Thanks for coming, Mike. I'm honored you're here. Speaking about Senators, you've got another good one in George Voinovich. You need to put him back in. He's doing Ohio good work. He's

a good, solid man, a good, decent fellow. I want to thank Congressman Ralph Regula for being with us today too. Thank you, Chairman. I'm glad you're here.

Lieutenant Governor Jennette Bradley is with us. Today is her birthday. Yes. What a great way to celebrate your birthday. *[Laughter]*

I want to thank the mayor, Don Robart, who is here. Mr. Mayor, my only advice, my only advice—I know you didn't ask for any—but my only advice is, fill the pot-holes. *[Laughter]*

I want to thank the high school band that's here. Appreciate you coming. But most of all, thank you all. I want to thank those who work at the grassroots level for putting up the signs and making the phone calls. I appreciate you. I want to thank you for what you have done and what you're going to do coming down the stretch. With your help, there is no doubt in my mind we will carry Ohio again and win a great victory in November.

And I'm looking forward to this campaign. I love coming to your State. I've been spending some quality time here. *[Laughter]* I like to come because I want to tell people where I stand, what I believe, and where I'm going to lead this Nation.

I believe every child can learn and every school can teach. I went to Washington to challenge what I've called the soft bigotry of low expectations. That's a system that, in some cases, passes children through, grade after grade, year after year, without learning the basics. It's not right. It's not right for our country. We've raised the standards. We're now measuring early, so we can solve problems before they're too late. I believe in local control of schools. We're closing an achievement gap in America, and we're not going to go back to the old days.

I believe we have a moral responsibility to honor our seniors with good health care. I went to Washington to solve problems, not to pass them on to future Presidents and future generations. I saw a problem

in Medicare. Medicine had changed, but Medicare hadn't. You know, we pay \$100,000 or so for a heart surgery for a Medicare patient but not one dime for the prescription drugs to prevent the heart surgery from being needed in the first place. That doesn't make any sense for our seniors. It doesn't make any sense for the taxpayers. I brought Republicans and Democrats together. I signed a bill that modernizes Medicare. Seniors will get prescription drugs in 2006, and we're not going to go back to the old days.

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

When you're out gathering up the vote, remind your friends and neighbors about what this economy has been through. The stock market started to decline before Dick Cheney and I got to Washington. Then we had a recession. Then we had some citizens forget what it means to be a responsible American. They didn't tell the truth. We passed tough laws. It is abundantly clear now in America, we will not tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of our country. And then the enemy hit us. And that hurt us. That hurt our economy. You know it hurt the economy.

But this economy is strong, and it is getting stronger. We've been growing at rates as fast as any in nearly 20 years. It's growing because of the spirit of the people. It's growing because of those tax cuts. We've added 1.7 million new jobs last year. We've added 107,000 manufacturing jobs since January. The national unemployment rate is 5.4 percent, which is lower than the average of the 1970s, the 1980s, and the 1990s.

There's still work to do in parts of Ohio. I understand that. That's why I support opportunity zones, places like Summit County, to give companies relief and incentives so that they can expand to places where the manufacturing sector has been

hurt. No, there are things we're going to do, but this economy is strong, and it's growing stronger. We're not going to go back to the old days of tax and spend.

I believe the most solemn duty of the President is to protect the American people. If America shows uncertainty or weakness in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This will not happen on my watch.

I'm 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 is why with your help, we're going to win a great victory in November.

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

The President. The world in which we live and work is changing. I understand that. The generation of our dads and granddads, a man generally had one job and one career, and the company he worked for paid for the pension plan and health care. This world we're living in is different. The workforce is changing. Women are working inside the house and now outside the house. And many workers change careers and jobs over their lifetime.

And yet, the most fundamental of our systems, the Tax Code, health coverage, pension plans, and worker training, were created for yesterday, not tomorrow. I am running to change those systems so all citizens are equipped, prepared, and thus truly free to make your own choices so you can pursue your own dreams.

Now, I understand that a hopeful society is one that has got a growing economy. If we want to keep jobs here in America and expand the job base, America must be the best place in the world to do business. That means less regulations on our businessowners. That means we got to do

something about these frivolous lawsuits that plague our small businesses.

If we want to keep jobs here, if we want to—Congress needs to pass my energy plan. It is a plan that encourages conservation. It is a plan that encourages the use of renewables like ethanol and biodiesel. It is a plan that says we'll explore technologies to make sure we consume energy in different ways. It is a plan that encourages clean coal technology. It is a plan that allows us to explore for natural gas in environmentally friendly ways. It is a plan that recognizes, to keep jobs here in America, we must be less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

To keep jobs in this country, we've got to reject economic isolationism. See, we've opened up our markets—just not me. Other Presidents, as well, from both parties, have opened up our markets because it's good for you, the consumer. See, 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 market works. And so what I'm saying to places like China, "You treat us the way we treat you." Opening up markets is good for our workers. It's good for our farmers. See, we can compete with anybody, anywhere, anytime, so long as the rules are fair.

To make sure we keep jobs here, we've got to be wise about how we spend your money in Washington, and we've got to keep your taxes low. Taxes are an issue in this campaign. I'll tell you why. The fellow I'm running against has so far proposed \$2.2 trillion in new spending. Yes.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. No, I know. That's a lot, even for a Senator from Massachusetts. So they asked him how he's going to pay for it, and he said, "Well, we're just going to tax the rich." We've heard that before, haven't we? Let me tell you a couple things wrong with this "tax the rich."

First of all, you can't raise enough money by taxing the rich to pay for \$2.2 trillion.

You raise about \$680 billion. Therefore, there is a tax gap. Guess who always gets to fill the tax gap? Yes, you do. "Tax the rich," yes, we've heard it. The rich hire lawyers and accountants for a reason, because they want to stick you with the bill. We're not going to let John Kerry tax you; we're going to win in November.

Now that we're on taxes, let me say something about the Tax Code. It's a complicated mess. It's a million pages long. It takes 6 billion hours a year to fill out the tax forms in this country. In a new term, I'm going to bring Republicans and Democrats together to simplify this Tax Code so it's more fair for you.

In a changing world, the skills that are required for the jobs of the 21st century change. We have a skills gap in America in some communities. Some jobs are gone; new jobs arrive. In order to help our workers, I'm a big believer in the community college system, to make the systems available so people can gain the skills necessary to fill the jobs of the 21st century. As well in a changing world, most new jobs filled by people—are filled by people with at least 2 years of college, yet, one in four of our students gets there. That's why I believe in early intervention programs in high school to help our at-risk students. That's why I know we've got to place a new focus on math and science. Over time, we'll require a rigorous exam before graduation. See, by raising the performance in our high schools and by expanding Pell grants for low- and middle-income families, more Americans will start their career with a college diploma.

In this time of change, we've got to do something about the health care system. There's a big difference in this campaign on health care. You listen carefully to what my opponent's laying out, and it says one thing: The Federal Government's going to run it.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. I want you to run it. I want you to be the decisionmaker. So

here's some practical ways to help. First of all, we'll take care of the poor and the needy by expanding community health centers all around the country. We have a duty and an obligation to do so. It makes sense that those folks get good health care in these centers and not in the emergency rooms of our hospitals. Secondly, we'll continue to expand the children's health care program for low-income Americans.

In order to make sure health care is available and affordable, we're going to help our small-business owners. One-half of the uninsured, currently uninsured, work for small businesses. There's a reason why, small businesses can't afford health care. They ought to be allowed to pool together their risk so they can buy insurance at the same discount big businesses can. That makes sense. That's a commonsense way to make sure the control of health care is in your hands. My opponent opposes that.

I'll tell you another thing we need to do to make sure health care is available and affordable. We've got to do something about these junk lawsuits that are running up the cost of medicine and running good doctors out of practice. You cannot be pro-doctor, pro-patient, pro-hospital, and pro-trial-lawyer at the same time. See, I think you have to make a choice. My opponent made his choice, and he put a trial lawyer on the ticket.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. I made my choice. I'm standing with the docs and patients. I'm for medical liability reform—now. In all we do, we'll make sure the medical decisions are made by doctors and patients, not by bureaucrats in Washington, DC.

In a changing society, it helps bring stability in people's life if they own something. The homeownership rate under my administration is the highest it's ever been in America. Over the next 4 years, we'll continue to expand the homeownership policies to every corner of America. I love the idea of somebody opening up the door where

they live and saying, "Welcome to my home. Welcome to my piece of property."

As well, we've got to think different about our retirement systems. You might remember the 2000 campaign, when people said, "Well, if George W. gets in, they're going to take away your Social Security check." You still got your check, didn't you? So here's my message to our seniors: Don't worry about what they tell you in the campaign; the Social Security obligation will be fulfilled. And for us baby boomers, there's enough money in the system to take care of us.

But because there's a lot of baby boomers getting ready to retire, we need to worry about our children and our grandchildren when it comes to Social Security. I believe younger workers ought to be allowed to take some of their own tax money and set up a personal savings account that they can call their own, that the Government cannot take away.

In this world of change, there are some things that do not change, the values we try to live by, courage and compassion, reverence and integrity. In changing times, we'll support the institutions that give our lives direction and purpose, our families, our schools, our religious congregations. We believe in a culture of life in which every person matters and every being counts. We stand for marriage and family, which are the foundations of our society. We 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've 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. We're reforming and strengthening our intelligence services. We're strengthening our All-Volunteer Army, which will remain an all-volunteer army. We are staying on the

offensive. We are striking the terrorists abroad so we do not have to face them here at home.

We will continue to spread freedom and liberty in the broader Middle East and around the world, and we will prevail. Our strategy is—see, you think about the world the way it was a while back. 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 secretly pursuing nuclear weapons; Iraq was a gathering danger; and Al Qaida was largely unchallenged as it planned attacks.

Because we acted, a free Afghanistan is fighting terror; Pakistan is capturing terrorist leaders; Saudi Arabia is making arrests; Libya is dismantling its weapons programs; the army of a free Iraq is fighting for freedom; and more than three-quarters of Al Qaida have been brought to justice. We've 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. Saddam Hussein was a threat. We knew his record of aggression, support for terrorist organizations. Saddam Hussein used weapons of mass destruction. He fired missiles at our pilots which were enforcing the world's sanctions. He slaughtered his own people. Saddam Hussein was a threat. And after September the 11th, we must always remember, we must take threats seriously, before the fully materialize.

That is the reality of the world in which we live. I recognized that reality, and I went to the Congress. Congress debated the issue. They voted overwhelmingly to authorize the use of force. They had looked at the same intelligence I did, remembered the same history I did, and voted overwhelmingly for force. My opponent looked at the same intelligence I did, and when the vote came to authorize force, he voted yes. I guess now it depends on what the meaning of "yes" is in his mind.

Audience members. Flip-flop! Flip-flop! Flip-flop!

The President. Before the Commander in Chief commits our troops into harm's way, he must try every other alternative. And so I went to the United Nations hoping that diplomacy would work. The United Nations debated the issue and voted 15 to nothing, the U.N. Security Council, to say to Saddam Hussein, "Disclose, disarm, or face serious consequences." I believe when an international body speaks, it must mean what it says.

As he had for 16 other resolutions, Saddam Hussein ignored the United Nations. The other night, my opponent suggested we probably should have passed the 18th resolution. [*Laughter*] What good would a resolution do after he ignored the first 17? As he had for a decade, he wasn't about to listen to the demands of the free world. As a matter of fact, when they sent inspectors in—it is now a fact that Saddam Hussein was systematically deceiving the inspectors. Part of my opponent's plan, as articulated in Miami, said, "Well, we should have let the inspectors work." They weren't working. He was deceiving them. He was hoping the world would turn away. So I had a choice to make at this point in time: Do I take 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.

We didn't find the stockpiles we all thought were there. But remember, Saddam Hussein had the capability of making weapons of mass destruction. He could have passed that capability onto a terrorist enemy, and that was a risk we could not afford to take after September the 11th. Knowing what I know today, I would have made the same decision. America and the world are better off with Saddam in a prison cell.

Because we acted to defend our country, 50 million people now live in freedom in Afghanistan and Iraq. I want you to remind your friends and neighbors about the Af-

ghan story. You realize, almost 3½ years ago, the Taliban, these ideologues of hate, would not yet—let many young girls go to school. Imagine a society in which young girls weren't allowed to go to school. When their mothers didn't toe the line on their ideology, they'd take them in the public square and whip them. Sometimes, they shot them in the sports stadium. It was a dismal, dark society.

Today, 10 million Afghan citizens have registered to vote, 41 percent of whom are women, and they're having a Presidential election later on this month. Think about that. Freedom is powerful. Freedom has converted a society that was dark and gloomy to one of hope and light.

In Iraq, there's a brave Prime Minister named Prime Minister Allawi. They're going to have elections in January. It's hard work there. I know it's hard work. But you can be realistic and optimistic at the same time. We got a good plan. We're training the Iraqis so they can do the hard work. A hundred-thousand of them are trained. They're taking action today against some of those terrorist thugs. Slowly but surely, their forces are getting up, and some point in time, they'll be ready to defend themselves.

We're helping to rebuild that country. Other nations are involved. They're having conferences here and conferences there. I'll tell you one thing, a summit isn't how you solve the problem. I've been to a lot of summits. I've never seen one that brought a terrorist to justice.

No, we've got a plan, and it's working. Mr. Zarqawi's got one—he's got one weapon, and that is to shake our will, because we've got good conscience, because we care about human life and human dignity. Every life is precious. That's his one weapon. But when America gives its word, America will keep its word, for the Iraqi and Afghan citizens. We'll help these people move toward elections. We'll get them on the path to 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 military. I'm proud of our military. And I want to thank the veterans who are here for having set such a great example for those who wear the uniform. I also want to thank the military families who are here today. We appreciate your sacrifice, and I made a commitment to our families and to those who wear the uniform that you'll have all the resources you need to complete your missions.

That's why I went to the Congress, September of 2003 and asked them for \$87 billion of important funding, funding to support our troops in harm's way. We got great support there. As a matter of fact, the support was overwhelming for the \$87 billion. All but 12 United States Senators voted for the funding, 2 of whom were my opponent and his runningmate. I want you to remind your friends and neighbors this: There was only four Members of the Senate that voted to authorize the use of force and didn't vote to fund our troops, two of whom would be my opponent and his runningmate.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. So they actually asked him, they said, "Why did you do that?" He said, in one of the famous quotes of the 2004 campaign—[laughter]—"I actually did vote for the \$87 billion, right before I voted against it."

Audience members. Flip-flop! Flip-flop! Flip-flop!

The President. They kept pressing him. He said he was proud of the vote. Finally, he said, "It was a complicated matter," and, yet, incredibly enough, he came up with a new reason. Last week, he described his vote against funding the troops as a protest vote. He said it on national TV.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. When American troops are in harm's way and defending our country, they deserve better than to have a candidate for President use them as a protest vote. Oh, I forgot. I forgot. There's yet

another explanation since then, and it happened at the debate. He said he made a mistake in how he talked about that vote. The mistake wasn't what Senator Kerry said. The mistake is what Senator Kerry did.

In the debate, my opponent also said something revealing when he laid out the Kerry doctrine. [Laughter] He said this, that America has to pass a "global test"—

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. —before we can use troops to defend ourselves. Senator Kerry's approach to foreign policy would give foreign governments veto power over national security decisions.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. I have a different view. When our country is in danger, the President's job is not to take an international poll. The President's job is to defend America.

I believe in the transformational power of liberty. The heart of my conviction is that liberty can help change societies for the better. You know, I spend time with the Prime Minister of Japan. He's a good friend. I was in New York with him at the U.N. I said, "By the way, I'm talking about you on the campaign trail. Do you mind?" And he said, "No, not at all." I didn't tell him I was going to tell you that he likes Elvis. [Laughter]

Nevertheless, here's why I like to bring him up. Wasn't all that long ago that our country was at war with Japan. My dad fought them. Your dads and granddads fought them as well. They were the sworn enemy. And after World War II, Harry Truman and other Americans believed that liberty could transform an enemy into an ally and worked with Japan to promote democracy. Now, a lot of people then, I'm confident, were skeptical about that being able to happen. You understand why. We had just fought them. A lot of lives had been lost. But because Harry Truman stuck to those values, today, I sit down at the table with the head of a former enemy,

talking about the peace we all want, talking about how to work together to keep the peace.

Liberty is powerful. It is powerful. I am confident that someday, an American President will be sitting down with a duly elected leader of Iraq talking about how to keep the peace in the greater Middle East, and our country will be better off for it. Our children and grandchildren will be able to grow up in a more peaceful world.

I believe that the women in the Middle East want to live in freedom. I believe that everybody wants their child to grow up in a free and peaceful society. I believe if given the chance, the people in that part of the world will embrace the most honorable form of government ever devised by man. And I'll tell you why I believe these things: 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 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 work to spread ownership and opportunity to every corner of our country. We'll pass the enduring values of our country on to a young generation. We'll continue to work for peace and freedom around the world.

You know, for all Americans, these years in our history will always 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 this a great nation.

None of us will ever forget that week when one era ended and another began. September the 14th, 2001, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers. I'll never forget it. There were workers in hardhats there yelling at me at the top of their lungs, "Whatever it takes." I remember trying to console some people coming out of that rubble. A guy grabbed me by the arm. He looked me straight in the eye, and he said, "You don't let me down." Waking up every morning since then, trying to figure out how best to protect America. I will defend the security of the people of this country, whatever it takes.

Four years ago, as I traveled your great State asking for the vote, I made this pledge. I said if I was honored to be able to hold the office of the Presidency, I would uphold the honor and the dignity of that office. With your help and with your hard work, I will do so again for 4 more years.

Thanks for coming. God bless you all. Thanks for being here. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:51 p.m. at the Cuyahoga Falls Civic Center. In his remarks, he referred to Kenneth C. Canterbury, national president, James O. Pasco, Jr., executive director, and Nicholas DiMarco, Ohio State president, Fraternal Order of Police; Mayor Don L. Robart of Cuyahoga Falls, OH; Senator Zell Miller of Georgia, who made the keynote address at the 2004 Republican National Convention; senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi; Prime Minister Ayad Allawi of the Iraqi Interim Government; and Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan.

Remarks on Signing the Working Families Tax Relief Act of 2004 in
Des Moines, Iowa
October 4, 2004

Thank you all. Thanks for coming today. Thank you all. Please be seated. Mr. Chairman—[laughter]—you probably think I've come here to sign an important piece of legislation. Actually, I'm here for a different reason. The South Lawn of the White House has a lot of grass—[laughter]—I'm looking for somebody to mow it. [Laughter] And so Mr. Chairman, you shall now be known as "Grass-mower." [Laughter] And by the way, when you're through using that car—[laughter]—I've always liked an old Olds. [Laughter] I appreciate you being here, Mr. Chairman; proud to call you friend.

Thanks for being here as well. It's a beautiful day here in Iowa. Iowa is such a beautiful place.

Today, with my signature, Federal law will extend vital tax relief for millions of American families and add momentum to our growing economy. Today here in Des Moines, Iowa, the Working Families Tax Relief Act of 2004 becomes the law of the land, and I appreciate you being here to watch it.

And I really do appreciate working with Mr. Chairman. He's had a remarkable tenure as chairman of the Finance Committee in the Senate. We have accomplished a lot together. I appreciate other Members of the congressional delegation who are with us today, the chairman of the Budget Committee in the House of Representatives, Jim Nussle—thank you for coming, Jim. Jim Leach, Congressman Jim Leach is with us. I appreciate my friend Jim Leach being here, as well as Congressman Tom Latham. I'm honored they are here.

Not here is head of the Ways and Means Committee in the House of Representatives, Chairman Bill Thomas of California. I appreciate his hard work on this bill, and I appreciate him working with Chuck

Grassley to get the bill done. I also want to thank minority leader in the House of Representatives on the—in the Ways and Means Committee, Charlie Rangel, Democrat from New York, for working on this bill, as well as Senator Max Baucus, Democrat from Montana, for working with Chuck Grassley on the bill as well. I want to thank all the Members of Congress who worked hard to get this bill done.

I appreciate members of the ex-Governors club who've joined us today. I happen to be a member of that club as well. I'm a fellow member. [Laughter] Terry Branstad and Bob Ray have served your State so very well, and I appreciate their friendship. And I'm glad Billie Ray is with Bob. I'll tell Mother and Dad hello for both of you. Appreciate you coming.

I want to thank all the State and local officials who are here. I particularly want to thank the president and CEO of the YMCA, Vernon Delpesce, as well as Dave Hoak, who's the chairman of the Y, for letting us use this facility for this bill signing ceremony.

I want to thank the Patterson family who is with us here. They're beneficiaries of the tax relief. I spent some time with them backstage. I'll be speaking about another family here in a minute.

The law I sign this morning comes at just the right time for America. Some of the tax relief provisions we passed over the last 3 years were set to expire at the end of 2004. Unless we acted, a family of four earning \$40,000 would have seen their Federal income taxes rise by more than \$900. That would have been a burden for hard-working families across America. And it would have been a setback for our economy.

Today we're acting to keep vital tax relief in place. The bipartisan bill I sign today