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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 is not one of those times. This is a time that requires firm resolve and clear vision and the deep faith in the values that make us a great nation.

None of us will ever forget that week when one era ended and another began. September the 14th, 2001, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers. It's a day I'll never forget. I'll never forget the workers in hardhats that were yelling at me at the top of their lungs, "Whatever it takes." I will never forget the man who had been in the rubble looking for a friend, who came out and grabbed me by the arm, and he said, "Do not let me down." Ever since that day, I wake up every morning thinking about how to better protect our country. I will never relent in defending America, whatever it takes.

You know, 4 years ago when I traveled your great State in the caucuses and then in the general election, I made a pledge that if you gave me the chance to serve, I would uphold the honor and the dignity of the office to which I had been elected. With your help, with your hard work, I will do so for 4 more years.

God bless. Thank you for coming. I'm honored you're here. Thank you all for being here.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:13 a.m. at Riverfront Stadium. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister John Howard of Australia; David Roederer, Iowa State chair, Bush-Cheney '04, Inc.; Leon Mosley, State cochair, Republican Party of Iowa; entertainer Sonny Burgess; Charles Duelfer, Special Advisor to the Director of Central Intelligence; Prime Minister Ayad Allawi of the Iraqi Interim Government; and Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan. He also referred to the "Comprehensive Report of the Special Advisor to the DCI on Iraq's WMD," issued September 30.

Remarks in Chanhassen, Minnesota October 9, 2004

The President. Thank you all. Thank you all for being here. What a beautiful day.

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

The President. Thank you all. It turns out I am the first sitting President ever to visit Chanhassen, Minnesota. All the other ones missed out on a beautiful part of America. Thank you for coming out today. I'm here asking for the vote, and I'm here to ask for your help in getting that vote out. There is no doubt in my mind, with your help, we will carry Minnesota and win a great victory in November.

We're getting close to voting time here in America, and today a great thing happened in Afghanistan. The people of that country, who just 3 years ago were suffering under the brutal regime of the Taliban, went to the polls to vote for their President. A 19-year-old woman, an Afghan refugee who fled her homeland during its civil war, became the very first voter. It's amazing, isn't it? She said, "I cannot explain my feelings, just how happy I am. I never would have thought I'd be able to vote in this election." Freedom is beautiful. Freedom is on the march.

So today is an appropriate day for Americans to remember and thank the men and women of America's Armed Forces who liberated Afghanistan. Because of their actions, America is safer, and the world is better off.

Australia had an election as well. And I was honored to call my friend John Howard, the Prime Minister, and congratulate him on a great victory. As you can see, I'm keeping good company today.

So here's the way I like to tell the day I asked Laura to marry me. I said, "Would you marry me?" She said, "Fine, just so long as I never have to give a political speech." [Laughter] I said, "Okay, you've got a deal." [Laughter] Fortunately, she didn't hold me to the promise. Americans, when they see Laura speak, see a compassionate, decent, warm, great First Lady.

I'm proud of my runningmate, Dick Cheney. I thought he did a great job in his debate. I admit it, he didn't have the waviest hair on the platform there. Of course, I didn't pick him for his hair. [Laughter] I picked him because of his experience and sound judgment. I picked him because he can get the job done for the American people.

I'm proud of your Governor, Tim Pawlenty. He's a good Governor, and I'm proud to call him friend.

Plus, I like working with Norm Coleman. He's a fine United States Senator. And I hope you put John Kline back in office, the United States Congressman from this district. They're not here. They're in Washington, still voting. I can't wait for them to get out of town. [Laughter]

I want to thank the mayor of Chanhassen, Tom Furlong, for being here. I'm proud you're here, Mr. Mayor. One of the things I'm proud of is there's all kinds of Democrats around the country supporting me. People like Zell Miller are supporting my candidacy. But so is my friend, the mayor of St. Paul, Randy Kelly.

I want to thank all the statehouse people who are here. I want to thank the Shooting

Star Band. I want to thank all the grass-roots activists for what you're going to do. I can see by the signs and the size of this crowd you have done a lot. But it's what you're going to do I want to thank you for, and that is turn out the vote, get people to the polls.

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

The President. We had an interesting evening last night. It was a great debate. I thought the citizens did a fantastic job of asking good questions, and that debate highlighted some fundamental differences on issues from jobs and taxes and health care and national security. Much as he tried to obscure it, on issue after issue my opponent showed why he earned the ranking of the most liberal Member of the United States Senate. And several of his statements just don't pass the credibility test.

With a straight face, he said, "I've only had one position on Iraq." [Laughter] I could barely contain myself. [Laughter] He must have—he must think we're on a different planet. [Laughter] In the spring of '03, as I ordered the invasion of Iraq, Senator Kerry said, "It was the right decision." Now he says, "It was the wrong war." He tries to tell us he's had only one position. Who's he trying to kid? He can run, but he cannot hide.

Again, with a straight face, he tried to tell Americans that when it came to his health care plan, quote, "the Government has nothing to do with it." [Laughter] Eight out of ten people who get health insurance under Senator Kerry's plan will be placed on a Government program. He can run, but he cannot hide.

And then Senator Kerry was asked to look in the camera and promise he would not raise taxes on anyone who earns less than 200,000 a year.

Audience members. [Inaudible]

The President. I know. The problem is, to keep that promise he would have to break almost all of his other ones. [Laughter] You see, his plan to raise taxes on

the top two income brackets will raise \$600 billion a year by our estimate and \$800 a year by—\$800 million by his estimate—will raise \$600 billion by our estimate and \$800 billion by his estimate. I think I finally got it right. *[Laughter]* But his own health care plan costs \$1.2 trillion. So you begin to see the problem. He can't have it both ways. To pay for the big spending programs he's outlined during his campaign, he's going to have to raise your taxes. And he can run, but he cannot hide.

You know, after listening to his litany of complaints and his dour pessimism, it was all I could do not to make a bad face. *[Laughter]* I have a very different philosophy from Senator Kerry. I'm a compassionate conservative. As your President, I've worked to make America more hopeful and more secure. I've led this country with principle and resolve, and that's how I will lead with—the next 4 years.

I'm looking forward to coming back to Minnesota before election day. I'm looking forward to this stretch run. I like to be with people. I like to tell people what I believe and where I stand. I believe every child can learn and every school must teach. I went to Washington to challenge the soft bigotry of low expectations. I felt strongly we needed to end this business about just shuffling the kids through, grade after grade, year after year, without teaching the basics. We've raised the standards. We measure early to solve problems before it's too late. We trust the local people to make the right choices for their schools. We're closing an achievement gap in America, and we're not going to go back.

I believe our seniors must have a good health care system. I went to Washington to fix problems, not pass them on to future Presidents. I saw a problem in Medicare. Let me give you an example. Medicare would pay thousands of dollars for a heart surgery but not one dime for the prescription drugs to prevent the heart surgery from being needed in the first place. That wasn't right for our seniors. It wasn't right

for the taxpayers. We came together and strengthened Medicare for our seniors. Seniors will get prescription drug coverage in 2006, and we're not going to go back.

I believe in the energy and innovation and spirit of our workers and small-business owners and farmers and ranchers. That's why we unleashed that energy with the largest tax relief in a generation. When you're out there gathering up the vote, remind people what we've been through, what this economy has been through. Six months prior to our arrival in Washington, DC, the stock market was heading down. Then we had a recession. Then we had some corporate scandals, which affected our economy. We passed laws that say to people, "We will not tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of this country." And then the enemy hit us. And that attack cost us a million jobs in the 3 months after September the 11th. We've been through a lot. You think about that.

But our economy has been growing at rates as fast as any in nearly 20 years. The national unemployment rate is 5.4 percent, which is lower than the average of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. The unemployment rate in the great State of Minnesota is 4.8 percent. Farm income is high. The homeownership rate is at an alltime high in America. America is on the move, and we're not going to go back.

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

Listen, I recognize that a hopeful society must have a growing economy, and I have a strategy to keep this economy moving forward. In order to keep jobs here in America, in order to make sure people can find work, America must be the best place in the world to do business. That means less regulations on our businesses. That means we've got to do something about

these junk lawsuits that are hurting small-business owners in America.

If we want to keep jobs here in America, this country—Congress has got to pass my energy plan. It's a plan that encourages conservation. It's a plan that encourages the use of renewables like ethanol and biodiesel. It's a plan that uses technologies to make sure we can explore for natural gas in environmentally friendly ways. It's a plan that promotes clean coal technology. It is a plan that recognizes to keep jobs here, America must be less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

In order to keep jobs here in America, we've got to open up markets for our products. Listen, we've opened up America's markets for products from overseas, and that's good for you. If you have more choices, you're likely to get the product you want at higher quality and better price. That's how the market works. So rather than shutting down our market and hurting consumers, my strategy is to tell places like China, "You treat us the way we treat you." And I'm confident in doing so, because I know we can compete with anybody, anytime, anywhere, so long as the rules are fair.

To create jobs in America, we must be wise about how we spend your money and keep your taxes low. You heard that rhetoric, "Oh, all he's going to do is tax the rich." In order to make sure he can—in order to make sure he fulfills a little bit of his promises, he said he's going to tax the rich. We've heard that kind of language before. Yes, the rich hire lawyers and accountants for a reason—to stick you with the bill. We're not going to let the Senator tax you; we're going to whip him in November.

We've got to do something about this health care system. Costs are rising rapidly. We need to make sure health care is available and affordable. Most of the people who are uninsured work for small businesses. I think we ought to allow small businesses to pool risk across jurisdictional

boundaries so they can buy insurance at the same price and the same discounts big businesses get to buy insurance. We need to expand tax-free health savings accounts to help our small businesses and our workers.

We need to make sure that each poor community in—county in America has got a community health center for our poor and the indigent. We've got to make sure our children's—low-income children's health program is fully subscribed. We've got to use technology to wring excess costs out of the system. This is a practical, commonsense way to make sure health care is available and affordable.

And another thing we need to do is we've got to get rid of those frivolous lawsuits that are running good docs out of business and running up the cost of health care. You cannot be pro-doctor, pro-patient, pro-hospital, and pro-trial-lawyer at the same time. You have to choose. My opponent made his choice, and he put a trial lawyer on the ticket.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. I have made my choice. I'm standing with the patients and the docs. I'm for medical liability reform—now. In all we do to reform health care, my administration will make sure the decisionmaking is between the doctor and the patient, not by officials in the Nation's Capital.

You know, in changing times—and we do have changing times—it helps bring stability into your life if you own something. More and more people are owning their own home. We've got plans over the next 4 years to continue to expand homeownership all around America. I love the idea of somebody opening up the front door where they live and saying, "Welcome to my home. Come to my house. Welcome to my piece of property."

In changing times, we've got to do something about our retirement system. You might remember the campaign in 2000, when they said, "If George W. wins, you're not going to get your Social Security

check.” Remember those ads? Yes. Our seniors got their checks. You’re hearing the same rhetoric this time. Baby boomers like me, we’ll get the checks.

We need to worry about our children and our grandchildren when it comes to Social Security. We need to do something to make that system available for our children and grandchildren. That’s why I think younger workers ought to be allowed to take some of their own money and set up a personal savings account, a personal savings account that will earn better interest, a personal savings account they can call their own, that Government cannot take away.

We have a difference in philosophy in this campaign. My opponent’s programs expand the Federal reach—the reach of the Federal Government. My programs expand freedom and opportunity for every American. He trusts Government. I trust the people.

In a world of change, there’s some things that will not change, the values we try to live by, courage and compassion, reverence and integrity. In times of change, we’ll support the institutions that give our lives direction and purpose, our families, our schools, our religious congregations. We stand for 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 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 strengthening the intelligence services. We’re transforming the All-Volunteer Army, which will stay an all-volunteer army. We will stay on the offensive. We will strike

the terrorists abroad so we do not have to face them here at home. We will continue to work to spread liberty in the greater Middle East and around the world. And we’ll prevail.

Our strategy is succeeding. Think about the world the way it was prior to September the 11th. 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 weapons. Iraq was a gathering threat, and Al Qaida was largely unchallenged as it planned attacks.

Because we led, Afghanistan is an ally in the war on terror, and they’re having Presidential elections today; Pakistan is capturing terrorists; Saudi Arabia is making raids and arrests; Libya is dismantling its weapons program; the army of a free Iraq is fighting for freedom; and three-quarters of Al Qaida—three-quarters of key members and associates of Al Qaida have been brought to justice. America has led. Many have followed. And the world is safer.

This progress involved careful diplomacy, clear moral purpose, and some tough decisions. And the toughest came in Iraq. We knew Saddam Hussein’s record of aggression and support for terror. We knew he had harbored terrorists. We knew his long history of pursuing and using weapons of mass destruction. We knew that the biggest threat we face is if a terrorist group were able to attain weapons of mass destruction. And we knew that after September the 11th, it’s vital that we think differently about our security. We must take threats seriously before they fully materialize.

Saddam Hussein was a threat. I went to the Congress. They looked at the same intelligence I looked at. They remembered the same history of Saddam Hussein, and they concluded Saddam was a threat and authorized the use of force. My opponent was one of those who authorized the use of force.

Before the Commander in Chief commits troops into harm’s way, we must try

every option—every option—to solve a problem. I understand the consequences of sending people into combat. I know exactly what takes place. And so I went to the United Nations, hoping to solve this problem diplomatically. You know, they looked at the intelligence. They debated the issue, and they voted 15 to nothing, in the U.N. Security Council and said to Saddam Hussein, “Disclose, disarm, or face serious consequences.” That’s what they told him. I believe when international bodies speak, it must mean what it says. In order to make the peace, when you say something, you’d better mean it.

As he had for over a decade, Saddam Hussein wasn’t about to listen to the demands of the free world. As a matter of fact, the report that came out the other day showed he didn’t have the weapons we thought he had but, nevertheless, was gaming the system. He was using the Oil for Food Programme to weaken the sanctions. And you know why? Because he wanted to start his weapons programs up again. Saddam was a danger. He was a threat. We gave him a final chance. He ignored the demands of the free world. He deceived the inspectors. So I have a choice to make at this point: Do I trust the word of a madman and forget the lessons of September the 11th, or take action to defend our country? Given that choice, I will defend America every time.

Because we acted to defend ourselves, 50 million people now live in freedom. The world is seeing what’s happening in Afghanistan. Despite ongoing acts of violence, Iraq is moving toward free elections in January. Iraq has a strong Prime Minister and a National Council. We’re standing with the people in those countries because when America gives its word, America must keep its word.

And in standing with those people, we’re making our country safer. Free societies in the Middle East will be hopeful societies which no longer feed resentments and breed violence for export. Free societies

in the Middle East will fight terrorists instead of harboring them, and that makes us safer.

Our missions in Afghanistan and Iraq are clear. We will help the Afghan people and the Iraqi people by training them, so they can fight for their own freedom, so they can fight for the destiny of their people. We’ll help them get 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 United States military. I want to thank the veterans who are here for having set such a great example for those who wear the uniform. I want to thank the military families who are with us here today. I made a commitment to our families and to our troops: They will have the resources they need to complete their missions. That’s why I went to the Congress in September of 2003 and asked for \$87 billion of vital funding to support our troops in both Afghanistan and Iraq. We got great support there in the Congress, strong bipartisan support. As a matter of fact, only 12 United States Senators voted against the funding for our troops, 2 of whom are my opponent and his runningmate.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. When you’re out gathering up the vote, remind people of this fact: Only four Members of the United States Senate voted to authorize force and then voted against funding the troops—only four, two of whom are my opponent and his runningmate.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. So they asked him why. And he said, “Well”—in the most famous quote of the 2004 election, one that has befuddled millions of Americans, he said, “I actually did vote for the \$87 billion, before I voted against it.” They kept pressing him, and he’s given, I don’t know, six or seven answers. But one of the most interesting ones of all was he finally through

up his hands and said, "It's just a complicated matter." [Laughter] There's nothing complicated about supporting our troops in combat.

On national security, my opponent has a record of voting against the weapons systems that helped our country win the cold war. Right after the bombing in 1993, he voted to cut America's intelligence budget by \$7.5 billion. And now he says he wants a "global test"—

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. —before we take action to defend our security. Think about that. The problem is that the Senator can never pass his own test. [Laughter] In 1990, the United Nations Security Council passed a resolution supporting action to remove Saddam Hussein from Kuwait. The international community was united. Countries around the world joined that coalition. Yet in the United States Senate, after the Security Council resolution, Senator John Kerry voted no for the use of force. See, I have a different view. We'll do everything we can to solve problems before we commit our troops, and I'll continue to work with our friends and allies. But I will never allow other nations to veto America's national security decisions.

I believe in the transformational power of liberty. I like to share with people some of my talks with Prime Minister Koizumi. He's the Prime Minister of Japan. I saw him in New York. I said, "You know, I'm going around America telling people that you and I talk. Do you mind if I share some of our conversation?" He said, "No." I didn't tell him I was going to tell you that Elvis is his favorite singer—[laughter]—was his favorite singer—is his favorite singer on CD. [Laughter]

The reason I bring him up is because it wasn't all that long ago that we were fighting Japan. My dad fought there. I'm sure your dads and granddads, probably somebody here was there himself. See, they were the enemy, the sworn enemy. After we won World War II, though, Harry Tru-

man believed in the power of liberty to transform an enemy into an ally. That's what he believed. A lot of people in this country doubted that, and you can understand why. There was a lot of bitterness toward the Japanese. A lot of people resented the fact that they were the enemy. But Harry Truman and other Americans stayed with that concept.

And today, because they believed in the power of liberty, Japan is a democracy, and I sit down at the table with Prime Minister Koizumi talking about the big issues of the day and talking about how to keep the peace we all want. Think about that. Someday, if we're resolved and steadfast and strong, Iraq will become a democracy. And someday, an American President will be sitting down with a duly elected leader of Iraq talking about the peace we all want. And our children and our grandchildren will grow up in a better world for it.

I believe millions plead in silence for liberty in the Middle East. I believe women in the Middle East want to grow up in a free society. I know they want to raise their children, their sons and daughters, so they can realize their dreams. I believe if given a chance, people in that part of the world will embrace the most honorable form of Government ever devised by man. I believe all these things because freedom is not America's gift to the world; freedom is the Almighty God's gift to each man and woman in this world.

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. This is a time when we need firm resolve, clear vision, and a deep faith in the values that makes us a great nation.

None of us will ever forget that week when one era ended and another began. I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers on September the 14th, 2001. It's a day I'll never forget. There were workers in hardhats yelling at me at the top of their

lungs, “Whatever it takes.” I remember seeing a man who had been in the rubble, looking for his buddy. He grabbed me by the arm, and he said, “Do not let me down.” Ever since that day, I wake up trying to do my best to protect this country. I will never relent in defending America, whatever it takes.

Four years ago, as I traveled this great State asking for the vote, I made a pledge that if you gave me a chance to serve, I would uphold the dignity and the honor of the office to which I had been elected. With your hard work, I will do so for 4 more years.

Remarks in Hobbs, New Mexico *October 11, 2004*

The President. Thank you all. Thanks for coming out. It’s nice to be back in a part of the world that I know very well. I was raised right around the corner. It’s good to be in a part of the world where the cowboy hats outnumber the ties. It’s good to be in a part of the world where people believe in their family and their faith and their country.

I want to thank all the people from Lea County, New Mexico, for coming here today. I’m proud you’re here. Thanks for organizing this great event. I want to thank the people from Eddy County who are here. When I was a little guy, I distinctly remember going to Carlsbad Caverns. I went with the Cub Scout troop. It just so happened the den mother was my mother. [Laughter] I think that’s when her hair started to go white. [Laughter] Appreciate the people from Chaves being here as well.

I want to thank my friends who’ve come over from the great State of Texas. I’m proud you all are here. I really appreciate the Flying Eagles from Hobbs being here. Thank you for being here in the band. Still

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

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:10 p.m. at Center City Park. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister John Howard of Australia; Gov. Tim Pawlenty of Minnesota; Senator Zell Miller of Georgia, who made the keynote address at the 2004 Republican National Convention; Prime Minister Ayad Allawi of the Iraqi Interim Government; and Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan. He also referred to the “Comprehensive Report of the Special Advisor to the DCI on Iraq’s WMD,” issued September 30.

play pretty good basketball? [Applause] Yes. That’s what I figured. [Laughter]

I’m here to ask for your vote. That’s what I’m here to do. By the way, I don’t know if you know this, but I’m the first sitting President to have ever visited Hobbs, New Mexico. I may just be the first sitting President to have visited, and the first person who’s the President who’s ever been here before he was President. [Laughter] All I can tell you is the other ones missed a lot by not coming to Hobbs, New Mexico.

I’m also here to ask for your help. You know, last time, in New Mexico, we lost by just a little over 600 votes. If every one of you all takes somebody to the polls come voting time, we’ll win. So I’m here to thank you for what you’re going to do. You’re going to convince our fellow citizens to do their duty and vote. And when you’re turning people out to the polls, don’t overlook discerning Democrats, people like Zell Miller who understands that if you want a safer America, a stronger America, and a better America, to put me and Dick Cheney back in office.