

Remarks at a Luncheon for Senatorial Candidate Pete Coors in Denver, Colorado

October 11, 2004

The President. Thank you all for coming. Thank you all for being here. I appreciate you coming. Nice to be back in Colorado. I've spent some quality time here in the past. I'm here asking for the vote. I'm here also asking—I'm here to say as clearly as I can say it, the right man for the United States Senate from the State of Colorado is Pete Coors.

And I want to thank you all for being here to help him. I like his judgment. I like his experience. I like his values. I like the fact that he is—will bring some commonsense to the Halls of the United States Senate. Oh, I might not get him to vote every way—every time the way I want him to—[*laughter*]*—*he's kind of an independent fellow. [*Laughter*] But I know I'll be able to count on him on the big issues.

Laura sends her best. We spent the evening in Crawford, which is a long way away from Washington, DC. [*Laughter*] And she is—she's resting up today, and she's going to take to the road tomorrow. She is a fabulous First Lady. I love her dearly. You know, when I met her she was a public school librarian. And she said, "Fine, I'll marry you"—after I asked her, of course—and she said, "just so long as I never have to give any speeches." [*Laughter*] I said, "You got a deal." [*Laughter*] Fortunately, she didn't hold me to that deal. She's speaking a lot, and the American people know her as a compassionate, warm, great First Lady.

And I'm proud of my runningmate, proud of Dick Cheney. I like to tell people, when he was debating John Edwards it was clear he didn't have the waviest hair on the platform. [*Laughter*] But I didn't pick him for his hair. [*Laughter*] I picked him because he's a man of great judgment, excellent experience, and he's doing a really good job as our Vice President.

And I appreciate Marilyn Coors for putting up with the race for the Senate. It's not easy when you're out there campaigning every day, but it's worthwhile, believe me. Public service, done the right way, is necessary for a good country. So thanks for doing what you're doing. It's good to see your mom, Pete. You and I share a strong-willed mother. [*Laughter*]

Pete's going to take the place of a good man in Ben Nighthorse Campbell. I like him. He's a good fellow, a good, solid citizen. And he'll serve side by side with another good man in Wayne Allard.

I appreciate your Governor. Bill Owens is doing a fine job. And Frances is one of our alltime favorites. Great to see you, Frances. Thank you for being here. I appreciate the fact that Congressman Joel Hefley is here, along with his wife, Lynn. Thanks for coming. That would be State Representative Lynn Hefley. Just don't challenge him in the primary sometime. [*Laughter*]

Audience member. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Yes, that's right.

Tom Tancredo and Jackie are with us. Thanks, Tom and Jackie. Thanks for coming. Beauprez is here somewhere. Oh, there he is, yes—and Claudia. Thank you all for coming. It's good to see you all. I appreciate you're here. Finally got out of town, didn't you? [*Laughter*]

I want to thank all the State leaders who are here. I want to thank Bruce Benson, the campaign chairman for Pete. I wish Greg Walcher all the best in his race for the Third District of Colorado. Where is he? There he is, good.

Listen, thank you all for coming. I'm going to give a speech a little later on this evening, so I don't want to get too repetitive. But it's really time to start ginning up these voter turnout organizations. It's

time to make sure that people understand we have an obligation in our society to vote. And I want to thank you all for helping to turn out that vote. It matters whether or not people show up to the polls. I mean, it—and I'm confident in this State. We'll carry Colorado again.

I'm heading toward our final debate. I enjoy the debates. It's an interesting experience. [Laughter] It gives a chance to share ideas and talk about the big differences. And there are big differences. He's a fellow that I think had some credibility problems in the debates. He said with a straight face that he'd only had one position on Iraq. [Laughter] I could barely contain myself. [Laughter]

Audience member. We noticed. [Laughter]

The President. You might remember, in the spring of 2003 as I ordered troops into harm's way, he said, "It was the right decision." Then when the political heat gets on, he says, "It was the wrong war." He can run from his positions, but he cannot hide.

He said with another straight face that when it comes to health care plan, and I quote, "The Government has nothing to do with it." Unbelievable statement. The facts are that 8 out of 10 people who get health care under Senator Kerry's plan would be placed on a Government program. He can run from his position, but he cannot hide.

And then he said—and then they asked him to look in the camera, and he promised not to raise taxes for anyone who earns less than \$200,000. The problem is, to keep that promise he'd have to break almost all his other ones. [Laughter] I'm looking forward to talking about taxes in this campaign. He's going to raise your taxes, pure and simple. Raising your taxes would be bad policy for our economy, bad policy as this economy is beginning to grow. He can run, but he cannot hide.

That's why these debates are important. You know, after listening to all his com-

plaints and his dour pessimism, it took all I could do not to make a face. [Laughter] Yes. No, I'm looking forward to it. We have a different philosophy, different way of looking at things. And one reason I'm hopeful that Pete wins—and I believe he will—is that we've got to put policies in place that keep the economy growing.

You know, when you're out there gathering up the vote, remind people of what we've been through. This economy has been through a lot. Six months prior to our arrival, the stock market was in serious decline. And then we had a recession, and then we had corporate scandals, and then we got attacked. And that attack on America cost us one million jobs in the 3 months after September the 11th.

We faced some serious obstacles, but because we acted, because we cut the taxes on the people, the recession was one of the shortest in American history. And our economy is growing, and it's getting stronger. And the fundamental question is, how do we keep it growing. It really is the issue, isn't it?

I think the best way to keep the economy growing is to make sure America is the best place in the world to do business. That means less regulations. That means less lawsuits. That means an energy plan that encourages conservation, spends money on renewables, and uses technology, but it's an energy plan as well that recognizes we can explore for natural gas in environmentally friendly ways. It's a plan that says in order to keep jobs here, we've got to be less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

I think trade is an issue in this campaign. I tell the American people we've opened up our markets to foreign products, which is 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 rather than shutting down our market and falling prey to economic isolationism, which I believe will

hurt jobs, I've got a different strategy, which is to go to places like China and say, "You treat us the way we treat you. You open up your markets." And we're doing that all around the world.

I believe Pete understands all this. I know he knows how to—that the role of Government is not to create wealth but an environment in which the entrepreneurial spirit flourishes. And the best way to do that is keep taxes low, regulations down, and do something about these trial lawyers that are running all over the business—[applause]. I don't think you can be pro-entrepreneur, pro-doctor, and pro-trial-lawyer at the same time. [Laughter] I think you have to choose. My opponent made his choice, and he put a trial lawyer on the ticket. I made my choice. I'm for legal reforms.

A more hopeful society is one in which we educate our people. It starts with making sure the youngsters can read, write, and add and subtract. I look forward to defending the No Child Left Behind Act. At the heart of the No Child Left Behind Act is my fervent belief that every child can learn in America. Think about a system where the expectations are so low that all they do is shuffle kids through, grade after grade, year after year, without teaching the basics. That's not good enough for this country.

See, when you hear me say we're going to challenge the soft bigotry of low expectations, what I'm saying is, is that the heart of my education reforms is the belief that everybody can learn, and we should expect everybody to learn. It's easy to quit on certain kids in American schools. You go into inner-city America, and it's easy to take a classroom full of the hard-to-educate and just move them through, or somebody's parent doesn't speak English as a first language. That's not the America I know. The America I know believes every child can learn.

And that's why we now have got, in return for increased Federal spending, a sys-

tem that says, "Why don't you measure early to determine whether or not a child can read, and if not, we'll correct the problems before it's too late." And we're closing an achievement gap in America, and I need Pete Coors up there to make sure we don't go back to the old days of mediocrity.

No, there's a lot more we can do. On health care—we'll have intermediate programs for at-risk kids in high schools and emphasize math and science, keep raising the bar, expand Pell grants for low- and middle-income families, to make sure more of our kids are able to start their careers with a college diploma. I'm a big believer in community colleges, to be able to use the community college system to be able to train workers for the jobs which actually exist. I mean, if we want to be competitive in the 21st century, we've got to be right about education. And this administration has got us headed in the right direction, and we're not going to go backwards.

Health care is an issue. Health care is a big issue in the country. I like to tell people I went up there to solve problems and not just shuffle them on to other Presidents. And so I took on the Medicare issue. It was called "Medi-scare" for a long period of time. You talked about it, and you got whipped at the polls. But that's not my style. My style is to take on issues head on. And Medicare wasn't meeting the obligations to our seniors. It just wasn't. Medicine was being modernized, and Medicare was stuck.

Let me give you an example—and I'll continue to cite these kind of examples in our forums. We would pay thousands of dollars for a heart surgery in Medicare but not a single dime for the prescription drugs that could prevent the heart surgery from being needed in the first place. That did not make any sense for our seniors. It certainly didn't make any sense for our taxpayers. So we worked with Congress, and we've now strengthened and modernized Medicare. Seniors will get prescription drug

coverage in the year 2006, and the health care for our seniors will vastly improve.

But inherent in the new Medicare reform is my basic belief that our seniors as well as all people in America ought to have more choices when it comes to health care. One of the key reforms was to make sure that seniors were able to choose different plans to be able to meet their needs. And that's the fundamental difference between me and my opponent. I told you, he said the other day with a straight face the Government doesn't have anything to do with his health care. That's wrong. He's going to expand Medicaid. That's a Government program. My fundamental—my health care plan addresses the fundamentals, which is availability and affordability.

Now, look, we need to take care of the poor in America, and that's why I'm for expansion of community health centers so the poor and the indigent can get good preventative care, good primary care in places other than emergency rooms in the hospitals. And I believe we ought to make sure our children—low-income children's health care programs are fully subscribed to. These are commonsense ways to take care of people who cannot help themselves.

But when it comes to overall health care, it's a vital mistake to increase the role of the Federal Government. That's why I'm for association health plans, to allow small businesses to pool together so they can buy insurance at the same discounts big businesses can. I'm for expanding health savings accounts, which enable workers and small businesses to pay low premium—buy low-premium catastrophic plans and, at the same time, set aside money on a tax-free basis. Many of the young in America are uninsured because they can't find insurance that fits their needs. A health savings account will allow a young worker to be able to design his or her own health care program that he or she can save money tax-free and take from job to job.

And finally, in order to make sure that health care works, we've got to do some-

thing about the lawsuits. I'm telling you, these lawsuits are driving good docs out of business and driving up the cost of health care. It's a big issue. It is a big issue, and it's one that resonates. And my opponent got up there and said he's for it. My only question is, why didn't you vote for it when it was on the floor of the United States Senate? He's trying to run, but we're not going to let him hide. [Laughter]

I think values are an important part of this campaign—values for the Presidency as well as values for the Senate race. You know, in changing times—and they do change—it's important to have people understand certain things don't change, like the values we try to live by, courage and compassion, reverence and integrity. I believe we ought to stand for a culture of life in which every person matters and every being counts. We need to stand up for institutions like marriage and family, which are the foundations of our society. And I need Pete in the United States Senate to make sure that my judges are confirmed, judges who will make decisions not based upon personal opinion but the strict interpretation of the law.

And the other issue, of course, is how to make the world a safer place, what to do to protect this country. Our most solemn duty is to protect the American people. I'll tell people tonight like I've been telling them all over the country, if we show uncertainty or weakness in this decade, this world will drift toward tragedy. This isn't going to happen on my watch. We will—

Audience member. We're with you, Mr. President!

The President. Thank you. We will continue to work to protect this homeland. You know, we've got to be right 100 percent of the time. The enemy has got to be right once, and that's a challenge we face. So Pete will be working on smart ways to make sure the intelligence system works better and make sure the information flows

between our different law enforcement agencies is not disrupted. That's why I believe we need to renew the PATRIOT Act. We'll make sure the ports and borders are protected as well as they can be. But the best way to defeat the terrorists is to stay on the offense. We got to beat them overseas so we don't have to face them here at home.

We have a fundamental difference in this campaign. My opponent says it's all about law enforcement and intelligence. This war on terror requires all of the might of the United States of America in order to protect the American people. Let me tell you some of the things I've learned since I've been your President. One, you cannot negotiate with these people, these ideologues of hate. You cannot hope for the best, you know, "Well, maybe if we only say some nice things, they'll change their mind." That's not how they think. The only way to deal with them is to find them and bring them to justice before they hurt us again.

And we're making progress. We're making progress because three-quarters of Al Qaida's—and their associates have been brought to justice. And as we speak, we're on the hunt, and we'll keep the pressure on them, unrelenting pressure to protect you.

Secondly, this is a new kind of war. It's different from what we're used to. And when we find somebody who harbors these people, they must be held to account as well. Now, let me tell you something about the Presidency. When you say something, you better mean what you say. And when I told the Taliban that they need to get rid of Al Qaida, I meant what I said. And when they didn't, we sent troops in and liberated the people of Afghanistan. In liberating the people of Afghanistan, we made ourselves safer. Remember, Al Qaida was training in Afghanistan. It was like they were the parasite, and the Taliban was a weak host. And the strategy of these ideologues of hate is to eventually take over

the host. They had just about done it. And so we're safer.

We've also done something different as well—we've accomplished something else as well, and that is, in protecting our own security, we've helped establish a democracy. One of the most remarkable things happened this past weekend. Think about what life was like for people under the Taliban. Young girls couldn't go to school. Their mothers were whipped in the public square if they didn't toe the line on this barbaric vision of mankind. Some were executed in sports stadiums. And yesterday—or 2 days ago, people showed up to vote for the President of that country. And the first voter—the first voter was a 19-year-old girl. Isn't that fantastic?

It's in our interests that freedom spread. Freedom is powerful. If just given a chance, freedom is a powerful notion. Everybody wants to be free, I think. I believe freedom is God's gift to every man and woman in this world. At the heart of much of what I say to the American people is that belief.

And then we went into Iraq. The biggest threat facing America is that a terrorist network like Al Qaida could end up with weapons of mass destruction. If you think the carnage was bad with airplanes, imagine what it would be with a weapon of mass destruction. And I saw a threat. Well, the second lesson of September the 11th is that when we see a threat, we must deal with it before it comes to hurt us. Remember the old days of prior to September the 11th. If we saw a threat, we felt safe, because oceans seemed to protect us. That's all changed. It's essential your President understand that, and we just can't hope threats go away. We must deal with them.

And so I saw a threat in Saddam. Remember, I went to the Congress, and the Congress saw the same threat. My opponent saw the same intelligence I saw and voted to authorize the use of force, something he's not too clear about these days. *[Laughter]*

And I went to the United Nations because committing our troops into harm's way is the last option for the President. I fully understand the consequences of war. You know, I wish I never had to commit troops. I was hoping diplomacy would work. But as it had for over a decade, diplomacy failed. The United Nations passed resolution after resolution after resolution, and Saddam just ignored them. I think it is reflective of my opponent's point of view when he says, "Well, what we should have done was passed another resolution"—[laughter]—precisely what Saddam was hoping would happen. He was hoping the world would turn away.

Listen, we didn't find any weapons when we got in there. We all thought there would be weapons. But let me tell you what we did find. We found that he had the capability and the intent and the expertise to reconstitute his weapons programs and, as the Duelfer report pointed out, that he was gaming the Oil for Food Programme, trying to influence governments to get rid of the sanctions which were already weakening, for one reason: to reconstitute his weapons. Knowing what I know today, I would have made the same decision, and the world is better off without Saddam.

And we're making progress. We're headed toward elections in January. Think about how far that society has come from the days of a brutal tyrant. I told the story about the seven men that came to see me in the Oval Office. I think I said it at the convention. These guys walk in, and they've all had their right hands cut off by Saddam Hussein and an X carved in their forehead. I'll tell you why. The currency had gone down. The Iraqi dinar had gone down, and he needed a scapegoat in order to, I guess, justify to other people who were watching that he wasn't at fault. So he plucked these small-business merchants out of society.

I asked one of them, I said, "Why you?" He said, well, he was a jeweler, and he

happened to sell gold—or sell dinars to buy euros to buy gold in order to use to make jewelry. It was just a bad day for him to have made that transition—transaction. So Saddam pulls him out, cuts off his hand, carves an X into his forehead, and charges him for the operation. This is Saddam Hussein. This is the kind of person that used to run that country.

Fortunately for them, citizens from around the world, including people in Houston, Texas, saw their plight, flew them to Houston, and they have a new hand put on, free. What a contrast between a society as brutal as that run by Saddam and a compassionate society like the United States of America.

The terrorists are fighting us in Iraq because they cannot stand the thought of a free society in their midst. The fight in Iraq is integral to the war on terror. It's an essential battle. And by being resolved and firm, we will succeed in Iraq. And when we do, the world will be better off.

A couple other points I want to make, and then we'll liberate you. [Laughter] First, anytime we put our troops into harm's way, they need to have the full support of the Government. And we got good support in September of 2003 for the \$87 billion supplemental request. And I'm telling you, this money was vital. It provided important resources for troops in harm's way, not only in Iraq, in Afghanistan. Twelve Members of the Senate voted against it. Four Members of the Senate voted to authorize the use of force and not to fund the troops, two of whom were my opponent and his runningmate. I think that is illustrative. I think it's a statement about this race for the Presidency.

And so was his answer to the first time he got asked the question, "I actually did vote for the \$87 billion, before I voted against it." It's an astounding answer. [Laughter] But it's been one of seven explanations—[laughter]—as to why. One of

them was, "The whole thing is a complicated matter." There's nothing complicated about supporting our troops in harm's way. I will continue, as your Commander in Chief, to make sure our troops have the best.

I tell people about my relationship with Prime Minister Koizumi. I just did so in Hobbs, New Mexico, and I'm going to do so tonight here in Denver. I'm going to do so tomorrow in Colorado Springs, for a reason—because I want people to understand what liberty can do to societies. I tell people I believe in the transformational power of liberty. The best way to make the case is to explain that one of my friends, with whom I deal, is the Prime Minister of Japan, Koizumi. I saw him in New York, and I said, "Listen, I'm telling everybody in the country about you. Do you mind if I continue doing it?" He said, "Fine." Of course, what I didn't ask him, if I could tell you that his favorite singer was Elvis. [*Laughter*] The guy's a good guy. I like him a lot.

But it wasn't all that long ago that we were fighting the Japanese. We were at war. They were the sworn enemy of America. My dad fought them. I'm sure your dads and granddads did as well. After we won, Harry S. Truman believed in the transformational power of liberty, that liberty can convert an enemy into an ally. He believed that. There was a lot of skeptics who said that couldn't happen. You can understand why. We had just fought them. Many lives had been changed as a result of the carnage of World War II. I'm sure a lot of moms and dads say, "Why even think about it. Why worry about it?"

But Harry Truman had that belief, as did a lot of other Americans. And so after the war was over, we worked with Japan to help them build a democracy. And today, I sit down at the table with Prime Minister

Koizumi, talking about the big issues confronting the world, talking about how to keep the peace we all want. Think about that. Sixty years or so after we had fought these people, I now sit down with the leader of their country talking about peace, talking about North Korea, talking about helping Iraq, talking about fighting terror, all aimed at keeping the peace.

Someday, an American President and a duly elected leader of Iraq will be sitting down at the table talking about the peace in the greater Middle East, talking about how to help women in the greater Middle East realize a free society, talking about how others have a chance to realize the great benefits of democracy.

That's what's happened. These are historic times. The world is changing for the better. I told the people in my convention speech, we've done the hard work and climbed the mountain; we see the valley below. It's a valley of peace, based upon freedom and liberty. And make no mistake about it—make no mistake about it—if this country has the right leadership and the right determination and the will to succeed, we will. And future generations of Americans will be better off for it.

Thanks for coming. God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:24 p.m. at the Wings Over the Rockies Air and Space Museum. In his remarks, he referred to Marilyn Coors, wife of senatorial candidate Pete Coors; Gov. Bill Owens of Colorado and his wife, Frances; Jackie Tancred, wife of Representative Tom Tancred; Claudia Beauprez, wife of Representative Bob Beauprez; Charles Duelfer, Special Advisor to the Director of Central Intelligence; 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 Morrison, Colorado
October 11, 2004

The President. Thank you all for coming. Thank you all for being here. Go ahead and be seated. Thanks for coming. It's nice to be in a part of the world where the cowboy hats outnumber the ties.

Tommy and I were both raised in Midland, Texas. He went to Alamo Junior High, and I went to San Jacinto Junior High. So we're standing here, and he says to me, "This doesn't look like where we were raised." [*Laughter*] What a beautiful part of the world. Thanks for coming out to say hello.

I've come back to this beautiful part of our country to ask for the vote, and I'm here to ask for your help as well. We're getting close to voting time here in America. And I'm asking you to get your friends and neighbors to go to the polls. I'm asking you to find people from all walks of life to vote. As you get people to go to the polls, don't overlook discerning Democrats. Like you, they want a safer America, a stronger America, and a better America. There is no doubt with your help, we'll carry Colorado again and win a great victory in November.

I wish Laura was here. When I asked her to marry me, she said, "Fine, just as long as I never have to give a speech." [*Laughter*] I said, "Okay, you got a deal." Fortunately, she didn't hold me to the promise. She's given a lot of speeches. The American people see a compassionate, warm, great First Lady in Laura Bush. She didn't make it, but Jenna did. I'm proud of our daughters, Barbara and Jenna.

I'm also proud of my runningmate, Dick Cheney. He did a great job at his debate. You know, he didn't have the prettiest hair there at the debate. [*Laughter*] I didn't pick him for his hairdo. I picked him because of his judgment and his experience and his ability to get the job done for the American people.

I'm proud to be introduced by a great American, Tommy Franks. He'll go down in history as one of America's great generals. America is more secure and the world is better off because of the generalship of General Tommy Franks. And I'm proud his wife, Cathy, is with him too.

I want to thank my friend Mike Shanahan for being up on stage with me. I appreciate him taking the time. I said, "You got any suggestions?" He said, "Yes, stay on the offense." I appreciate Peggy coming. I want to thank all the Bronco players who are here today. Congratulations on a great victory this weekend.

I'm proud to call your Governor my friend, Bill Owens. He's doing a great job for Colorado. And I want to thank the fine first lady of Colorado, Frances, for being here as well.

Two Members of the United States Congress with us today, Bob Beauprez and Tom Tancredo. I appreciate their service. Thank you all for coming.

I'm proud to be with the next United States Senator from Colorado, Pete Coors.
Audience members. Pete! Pete! Pete!

The President. I want to thank my friend Gwyn Dieter. She's the Bush-Cheney W Stands for Women chairman.

Appreciate Collin Raye being here. I want to thank all the grassroots activists. Thank you for what you have done, and thank you for what you're going to do to turn out the vote.

I'm on my way to the third and final debate. We had a good debate last Friday. These debates have highlighted the clear differences between the Senator and me on issues ranging from jobs to taxes to health care to the war on terror. Much as he's strived to obscure it, on issue after issue my opponent has shown why he has earned his ranking as the most liberal Member of the United States Senate.