

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:05 a.m. at the Thomas & Mack Center. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Kenny C. Guinn of Nevada; entertainer Lee Greenwood; Senator

Zell Miller of Georgia, who made the keynote address at the 2004 Republican National Convention; and Gov. George E. Pataki of New York.

Remarks in Reno, Nevada October 14, 2004

The President. Thank you all for coming out today. It's great to be back in Nevada. It's such a beautiful day. I'm proud to be here in the "Biggest Little City in the World." I'm really pleased to be in a place where the cowboy hats outnumber the suits.

Thank you all for coming. I'm here to ask for the vote. And I want your help. Tell your friends and neighbors to go to the polls on November the 2d. Everybody ought to vote in this country. And tell them if they want a safer America, a stronger America, and a better America to put me and Dick Cheney back in office.

I'm sorry Laura is not here.

Audience members. Aw-w-w!

The President. I know it. We were in Las Vegas earlier, and they had an AARP convention there. And the head of the AARP said, "Send your family's best speaker." [Laughter] So Laura went. [Laughter] You know, when I married her, I said—she said, "Fine, I'll marry you, just so long as I never have to give a speech." I said, "Okay, you've got a deal." [Laughter] Fortunately, she didn't hold me to that deal. When she speaks, America sees a compassionate, warm, great First Lady.

I'm proud of my runningmate, Dick Cheney. He's a fine man with good judgment and great experience. He's getting the job done for the American people. I'm proud to be introduced by a unique and strong and great American in John McCain. When he says he's for you, he's really for you. Las Vegas this morning, Reno right now, and then we're headed to Medford, Or-

egon. He's by my side. He's campaigning hard, and I'm proud to have his support.

And I'm proud of the job that Senator John Ensign is doing for the great State of Nevada. He's a really fine man. I want to thank Jim Gibbons for his service as well. Old Congressman Greg Walden from Oregon snuck across the State line. He's with us today. Thanks for coming, Greg. I appreciate you being here.

I'm really proud that Dema Guinn is with us, the first lady of the great State of Nevada. Thank for coming, Dema. I'm proud you're here. How about your attorney general, Brian Sandoval? What a class act he is. I want to thank Brian Krolicki, the State treasurer, for being with us today. I want to thank—Dean Heller is with us today. I'm proud he's here.

I want to thank all the State and local officials. But mainly, I want to thank the grassroots activists, the people who are putting up the signs, the people making the phone calls, the people turning out the vote. With your help, we'll carry Nevada and win a great victory in November.

I enjoyed the debate last night. You know, those debates clarify the differences in our record, our approach, and our plans for the future. I'm proud of my record. My opponent seemed to want to avoid talking about his. [Laughter] My record is one of lowering taxes, reforming education, providing prescription drug coverage to seniors, improving homeland protections, and waging an aggressive war against the ideologues of hate.

The Senator's record is 20 years of out-of-the-mainstream votes without many significant reforms or results. Our very different records are a window into what we believe and what we'll do for the next 4 years. The Senator believes in a bigger Federal Government. I believe in more freedom and more choices for individual Americans. The Senator believes Government should dictate. I believe you should decide.

Sometimes it's a little hard to tell exactly what he believes—[laughter]—as he tries to obscure his approach to Government. Take health care. Once again, last night, with a straight face—[laughter]—the Senator tried to say his health care plan is not a Government plan. [Laughter] I could barely contain myself. [Laughter] Yet 22 million new people would enroll on a Government program under his plan, the largest expansion of Government health care ever. Eighty percent of the newly insured on his plan would be placed on a Government program like Medicaid. The Senator claimed his plan would help small business, yet a study conducted by small-businesses groups concluded Senator Kerry's plan is an overpriced albatross that would saddle small businesses with 225 new mandates.

I have a different view. I want health care to be available and affordable by helping small businesses, not by saddling them with a bunch of new Government rules.

Once again last night, with a straight face, the Senator, shall we say, refined his answer on the proposed "global test" he would administer before acting to defend America. See, after trying to say it really wasn't a test at all, last night he once again defended his approach by saying, "I think it makes sense." Now he says we have to pass some international truth standard.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. The truth is, we should never turn America's national security decisions over to international bodies or leaders of other countries.

The last few years, the American people have gotten to know me. They know my blunt way of speaking. I get that from Mom. [Laughter] They know I sometimes mangle the English language. I get that from Dad. [Laughter] Americans also know I tell you exactly what I'm going to do, and I keep my word.

When I came to office, the stock market had been in serious decline for 6 months. The American economy was sliding into recession. To help families, to get this economy growing again, I pledged to reduce taxes. I kept my word, and the results are clear. The recession was one of the shallowest in American history. And over the last 3 years, America's economy has grown at the fastest rate of any major industrialized nation.

In the past 13 months, we've added more than 1.9 million new jobs. The unemployment rate in America is at 5.4 percent, below the average rate of the 1970s, the 1980s, and the 1990s. The unemployment rate in your State is 4 percent. Mining sector is strong. Farm and ranch income is up. Homeownership is at an alltime high in America. We're moving forward, and there's more to do.

To make sure quality jobs are created here in America, America must be the best place in the world to do business. That means less regulations on the job creators. That means we've got to do something about these frivolous lawsuits that make it hard to expand employment.

To create jobs, Congress needs to pass my energy plan. It encourages conservation. It encourages the use of renewables like ethanol and biodiesel. It encourages new technologies. It encourages clean coal technology and increased domestic production. To keep jobs here, we must become less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

To protect jobs and communities in the West, we need to reduce the risk of devastating wildfire. I was proud to sign the Health Forests Restoration Act. I want to thank the three Members of Congress for

working on that act. Under this good law, we're clearing the underbrush that serves as fuel for fires. Because we acted, our forests are healthier, residents and small businesses are safer, and people across the West are better off.

To create jobs here in America, we need to reject economic isolationism and open up markets around the world for U.S. products. America can compete with anybody, anytime, anywhere, so long as the rules are fair.

To create jobs, we've got to be wise about how we spend your money and keep your taxes low. My opponent has his own history on the economy—20 years as a Senator from Massachusetts, he's built a record of a Senator from Massachusetts. [Laughter] He voted to raise taxes 98 times.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. That's a vote for a tax increase about five times every year.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. I think that qualifies as a pattern. [Laughter] He can run from his record, but he cannot hide.

Now the Senator—he looked in the camera last Friday night and promised not to raise taxes for anyone who earns less than \$200,000 a year. The problem is, to keep that promise he would have to break almost all of his other ones. [Laughter] His plan to raise taxes on the top two income brackets would raise about \$600 billion, but his spending promises cost about 4 times that much—about 2.2 trillion. That's with a "T." [Laughter] See, you can't have it both ways. To pay for all his big spending promises he's made, he's going to have to raise your taxes.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. The choice in this election is clear when it comes to taxes. My opponent has a history of voting for higher taxes, and he's promised to raise them on the campaign trail, and that's a promise politicians usually keep.

I believe our families and our economy are better off when Americans keep more

of what they earn. In a new term, I'll work with Congress to keep your taxes low.

When I came into office, our public schools had been waiting decades for hopeful reform. Too many of our children were shuffled through schools, grade after grade, year after year, without learning the basics. I pledged to restore accountability to the schools and end the soft bigotry of low expectations, and I kept my word. We're now seeing results. Our children are making sustained gains in reading and math. We're closing the achievement gap for minority students. We're making progress for America's families. We will leave no child behind.

To make sure jobs are here and to build a more hopeful America, we must have the best prepared and most highly skilled workforce in the world. Most new jobs are filled by people with at least 2 years of college, yet only one in four of our students gets there. So we'll fund early intervention programs in our high schools to help at-risk students. We'll place a new focus on math and science. Over time, we'll require a rigorous examination before graduation. By raising performance in our high schools and expanding Pell grants for low- and middle-income families, we'll help more Americans start their career with a college diploma.

My opponent has a history on education issues, a history of doing almost nothing. [Laughter] The Senator has pledged to weaken the No Child Left Behind Act. He's proposed diluting the accountability standards and looking at measures like teacher attendance to judge whether students are learning. His proposals would undermine the high standards and accountability we worked hard to pass. We've moved beyond the old days of failure and mediocrity and low standards, and we're not going to go back.

When I came into office, we had a problem in Medicare. Medicine was changing, but Medicare wasn't. Think about this: Medicare would pay tens of thousands of dollars for a heart surgery but wouldn't pay

a dime for the prescription drugs that could prevent the heart surgery from being needed in the first place. That wasn't fair to seniors. It certainly wasn't fair to taxpayers. I brought Republicans and Democrats together to strengthen and modernize Medicare for our seniors. And I kept my word.

We're moving forward on health care, and there's more to do. We need to make health care more affordable and more available for all our people. We'll have a safety net for those with the greatest need. I believe in community health centers, places where the poor and the indigent can get primary preventative care. In a new term, we'll make sure every poor county in America has a community health center. We'll do more to make sure poor children are fully subscribed in our programs for low-income families.

We'll do more to make sure health care is affordable. Most of the uninsured are employees of small businesses. Small businesses are having trouble affording health care. To help workers get the health care, we should allow small businesses to join together so they can buy insurance at the same discounts big companies can do. We've got to expand health savings accounts so workers and small businesses are able to pay lower premiums, and people can save tax-free in a health care account that they call their own.

And to make sure health care is available and affordable, we must do something about the junk lawsuits that are running up the cost of health care. By forcing doctors to practice defensive medicine, medical lawsuits cost the Government about \$28 billion a year. They cost our Nation's economy anywhere from 60 to 100 billion dollars a year. They drive up insurance premiums, which drive good doctors out of practice.

Today in Las Vegas, I met Dr. James Barber. Three years ago, Dr. Barber paid \$27,000 in insurance premiums as an ob-gyn in Henderson, Nevada. Last year's premiums would have been more than

\$100,000. So he had to stop delivering babies here, and he moved his practice to California. Because the medical liability laws in California have reasonable caps, that good doctor's premiums cost him about \$33,000 a year. I also met one of his former patients, Nicole Byrne. Nicole Byrne said that Dr. Barber saved her life during a previous pregnancy. Now she's pregnant again, and she's devastated that Dr. Barber will not be around to deliver her baby. Nicole and Dr. Barber understand you can't be pro-patient, pro-doctor, and pro-plaintiff-attorney at the same time. You have to choose. My opponent made his choice, and he put a personal injury lawyer on the ticket.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. I made my choice. I'm standing with the docs and the patients. I'm for medical liability reform—now. The choice is clear in this election. My opponent wants to move in the direction of Government-run health care. I believe the health decisions ought to be made by patients and doctors, not by officials in Washington, DC.

I've set out policies that move our country toward an optimistic and positive vision. I believe our country can become an ownership society. You know, there's an old saying that no one ever washes a rental car. [Laughter] There's a lot of wisdom in that statement. When you own something, you care about it; you have a vital stake in the future of our great country.

So we're encouraging entrepreneurship, because every time a small business is started, someone is achieving the American Dream. We're encouraging health savings accounts so people have the security of owning and managing their own health care. We're promoting homeownership. I love the fact that more citizens than ever are able to open up the door where they live and say, "Welcome to my home. Welcome to my piece of property."

In a new term, I'll take the next great step to build an ownership society by

strengthening Social Security. Now, listen, our Social Security system needs fixing. I want the seniors out here to hear me loud and clear: You'll get your check. I remember when I was running in 2000, they said, "If George W. gets elected, you won't get your Social Security check." You got your checks. You'll continue to get your check. When you hear them talk about reform, don't let them fool you and say you're not going to get your check. Baby boomers are in pretty good shape when it comes to the Social Security trust.

But we need to worry about our children and our grandchildren. They are understandably worried about whether Social Security will be around when they need it. And for their sake, we must strengthen Social Security by allowing younger workers to save some of their own payroll taxes in a personal savings account that will earn compounded rate of interest, an account that Washington cannot take away.

My opponent wants to maintain the status quo when it comes to Social Security.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. He's against these Social Security reforms. As a matter of fact, he's just about against about every other reform that gives more authority and control to individuals. On issue after issue, from Medicare without choices to schools with less accountability to higher taxes, he takes the side of more centralized control and bigger Government. There's a word for that attitude. It's called liberalism. [Laughter] My opponent dismisses that as a label. He must have seen it differently when he said to a newspaper, "I'm a liberal and proud of it." [Laughter]

Others have noticed. The nonpartisan National Journal magazine did a study and named him the most liberal Member of the United States Senate. That's hard work. [Laughter] A group known as the Americans for Democratic Action have given Senator Kerry a higher lifetime liberal rating than Ted Kennedy. That's an accomplishment. [Laughter]

I have a different record and a different philosophy. I don't believe in big Government, and I don't believe in indifferent Government. I'm a compassionate conservative. I believe in policies that empower people to improve their lives, not try to run their lives. We're helping men and women find the skills and tools necessary to prosper in a time of change. We're helping all Americans to have a future of dignity and independence, and that is how I will lead our country for 4 more years.

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

The President. In this time of change, some things do not change. These are the values we try to live by, courage and compassion, reverence and integrity. In the 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 counts and every being matters. 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.

My opponent's words on these issues are a little muddy, but his record is clear. [Laughter] He says he supports the institution of marriage, but he voted against the Defense of Marriage Act, which a bipartisan Congress overwhelmingly passed and which President Clinton signed. He voted against the ban on the brutal practice of partial-birth abortion.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. He calls himself the candidate of conservative values, but he described the Reagan years as a time of moral darkness.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. There is a mainstream in American politics, and my opponent sits on the left bank. He can run, but he cannot hide.

This election will also determine how America responds to the continuing danger of terrorism. The most solemn duty of the American 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.

Since that terrible morning, September the 11th, 2001, we have fought the terrorists across the Earth, not for pride, not for power, but because the lives of our citizens are at stake. Our strategy is clear. We'll defend the homeland. We'll strengthen our intelligence services. We'll transform the All-Volunteer Army—we'll keep the All-Volunteer Army an all-volunteer army. We're staying on the offensive. We'll strike the terrorists abroad so we do not have to face them here at home. We'll spread freedom and liberty. And we'll prevail.

Our strategy is succeeding. Think about the world as it was 3½ years ago. Afghanistan was the home base of Al Qaida. Pakistan was a transit point for terrorist groups. Saudi Arabia was fertile ground for terrorist fundraising. Libya was secretly pursuing nuclear weapons. Iraq was a dangerous place and a gathering threat. And Al Qaida was largely unchallenged as it planned attacks.

Because we led, Afghanistan is a free society and is an ally in fighting the war against terror; Pakistan is capturing terrorist leaders; Saudi Arabia is making raids and 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's key leaders and associates have been brought to justice.

Free societies in the Middle East will be hopeful societies which no longer feed resentments and breed violence for export. Free governments in the Middle East will fight terrorists instead of harboring them. And that's why I think it's so significant that because we defended ourselves, we liberated 50 million people in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Freedom helps us keep the peace. That's why it was so uplifting to see what took place in Afghanistan. Remember what that society was like. These people lived under the brutal darkness of the Taliban regime. Young girls weren't allowed to go to school. Their mothers were whipped in the public squares if they didn't toe the ideology of hate.

But because we acted, there's light in Afghanistan. Thousands and thousands of people voted in the Presidential elections. The first voter was a 19-year-old woman in Afghanistan. Iraq will have elections in January. Our mission is clear. We will help these countries train armies and police so they can do the hard work of defending freedom and democracy. We'll help them get on the path to stability 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 here for the sacrifices they have made. And I want to assure you, we'll keep our commitments to our troops. We will make sure they have the resources they need to complete their missions.

And that's why I went to the Congress in September of 2003 and asked for \$87 billion, supplemental request to help our troops in combat both in Afghanistan and Iraq. We received great bipartisan support. As a matter of fact, only 12 United States Senators voted against the funding request, 2 of whom are my opponent and his runningmate.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. When you're out rounding up the vote, remind people there's only 4 United States Senators who voted to authorize the use of force and then voted against the support of our troops——

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. —only 4 of 100, 2 of whom are my opponent and his runningmate.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. So they asked him how he could have made that vote. You might remember perhaps the most famous quote of the 2004 campaign, “I actually did vote for the \$87 billion, right before I voted against it.”

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. I suspect a lot of people in Reno don’t talk that way. [Laughter] He’s given several explanations since then. One of my favorites is, he said, “The whole thing is a complicated matter.” [Laughter] There’s nothing complicated about supporting our troops in harm’s way.

I believe in the transformational power of liberty. I want you to explain this to your friends and neighbors this way. One of my friends in the world is Prime Minister Koizumi of Japan. What’s interesting about that, it wasn’t all that long ago that Japan was a sworn enemy of the United States of America. My dad fought against the Japanese. John’s dad—I’m sure your dads and granddads did as well. They were our sworn enemy. But because Harry S. Truman, President of the United States then, believed in the power of liberty to transform an enemy into an ally, we worked to help Japan become a democracy. There were a lot of people in our country that didn’t agree with that. “Why bother? They’re the enemy. Why help them? They hurt my family.” There was a lot of reasons, a lot of pessimism that Japan couldn’t conceivably become a self-governing democracy. But she did.

And as a result of that, I sit down at the table today with Prime Minister Koizumi talking about the peace we all want. He’s an ally.

And someday, an American President will be sitting down with a duly elected leader of Iraq, talking about keeping the peace in the Middle East, and our children and our grandchildren will be better off for it.

I believe that millions in the Middle East plead in silence for their freedom. I believe women in the Middle East want to grow up in a free society. I believe if given a chance, the people in that region 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 is not one of those times. This is a time that requires firm resolve, clear vision, and the 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. September the 14th, 2001, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers. It’s a day I will never forget. There were workers in hardhats there yelling at me at the top of their lungs, “Whatever it takes.” I remember trying to console the folks coming out of the rubble. A guy grabbed me by the arm, and he said, “Do not let me down.” Ever since that day, I wake up trying to figure out how best to protect our country. I will never relent in defending America, whatever it takes.

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

God bless. Thank you for coming. On to victory. I appreciate you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:41 p.m. at Rancho San Rafael Park. In his remarks, he referred to Dema Guinn, wife of Gov. Kenny C. Guinn of Nevada; State Attorney General Brian Sandoval, State Treasurer Brian K. Krolicki, and Secretary of State Dean Heller of Nevada; and Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan.

Remarks in Central Point, Oregon
October 14, 2004

The President. Thank you all very much. It's great to be back in Oregon. It's great to be back in Jackson County, Oregon. Laura and I are staying at the Jacksonville Inn tonight. Last President to stay there was Rutherford B. Hayes. [Laughter] I understand Rutherford complained about the tab. [Laughter] I'm not going to. We're thrilled to be here.

I want to thank not only you all coming from Jackson County, I want to thank the folks from the Klamath Basin who are here as well. It's great to be in a part of the world where the boots outnumber the suits.

I've come to ask for your vote, and I'm here to ask for your help. Tell your friends and neighbors we have a duty in our country to vote. Head them to the polls, Republicans and independents and discerning Democrats like Zell Miller. And when you get them heading to the polls, tell them if they want a safer America, a stronger America, and a better America to put me and Dick Cheney back into office.

I am keeping great company with the First Lady. She is—we were in Las Vegas earlier today, and they had the AARP convention, and so they said, "Why don't you send your best speaker to that convention." So Laura spoke there, and I went to the rally. [Laughter] She was a public school librarian when I met her again. We went to the seventh grade together at San Jacinto Junior High in Midland, Texas.

Audience members. Aw-w-w!

The President. Yes, how about that? [Laughter] And she said, "Fine, I'll marry you. I just never want to have to give a speech." I said, "Okay, you've got a deal." Fortunately, she didn't hold me to the deal, and the people of America see a compassionate, decent, strong woman when she gets up and gives a speech.

I'm proud of my runningmate, Dick Cheney. He's a good, strong man. I'm proud

to be up here with a fine American, a great friend, John McCain. I thank you, John, for coming. We have a lot of fun traveling together. It makes a big difference that he's campaigning for me. I can't thank him enough for doing so.

I'm also proud to be up on the stage with a fine United States Senator in Gordon Smith. We're real fond of Greg Walden and Mylene, his wife. You're well represented in the Halls of Congress by Greg. He's a good, solid man. All he does is talk about water—[laughter]—and forests and the people of this district.

I want to thank all the other State and local officials. I want to thank the grassroots activists who are here, the people who are putting up the signs and turning out the vote. With your help, we'll carry Oregon and win a great victory in November.

I enjoyed the debate last night. You know, these debates clarify the differences in our records, our approaches, and our plans for the future. I'm proud of my record. My opponent seemed to want to avoid talking about his. [Laughter] My record is one of lowering taxes, of reforming education, providing prescription drug coverage to seniors, improving our homeland protections, and waging an aggressive war against the ideologues of hate.

The Senator's record is 20 years of out-of-the-mainstream votes without many significant reforms or results. Our very different records are a window into what we believe and what we do—we'll do for the next 4 years. That's why these debates are important. See, the Senator believes in a bigger Government. I believe in more freedom and choices for the citizens of this country. The Senator believes Government ought to dictate. I believe you ought to decide.

And sometimes it's a little hard to tell exactly what he believes. [Laughter] He