

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

tries to obscure his philosophy. Take health care. Once again, last night, with a straight face, the Senator tried to say his health care plan is not a Government plan. I could barely contain myself when I heard that. Yet 22 million people would enroll on a Government program under his plan. That would be 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. He claimed his position would help small business. It's not what the people who studied his plan say. They say his plan would be an overpriced albatross that would saddle small business with 225 new mandates.

I have a different view. I want to make health care more affordable and available by helping small businesses, not by saddling them with a bunch of regulations.

Once again, last night, with a straight face, the Senator said—well, shall we say, refined his answer on his proposed “global test.” That's the test he would administer before defending America. After trying to say it really wasn't a test at all, last night he once again defended his approach, saying, “I think it makes sense.” [*Laughter*] The Senator now says we'd have to pass some international truth standard. 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 my mom. [*Laughter*] They know I sometimes mangle the English language. [*Laughter*] I get that from my dad. [*Laughter*] Americans also know I tell you exactly what I'm going to do, and I keep my word.

When we came into office, the stock market had been in serious decline for 6 months and the American economy was sliding into a recession. To help families and get this economy growing again, I pledged to reduce taxes. I kept my word.

The results are clear. The recession was one of the shallowest in American history.

Over the last 3 years, our economy has grown at the fastest rate as any in nearly 20 years. The homeownership rate in America is at an alltime high. Farm and ranch incomes are up.

The past 13 months, we've added 1.9 million new jobs in America. The unemployment rate across our country is 5.4 percent, lower than the average of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. Here in Oregon, I understand that some of the areas are lagging behind, but we're making progress. This State has added more than 40,000 jobs since January of 2002. So long as somebody is looking for work and can't find a job, means we'll continue to expand the economy with pro-growth, pro-entrepreneur, pro-farmer, pro-small-business policies.

To make sure we can find job—people can find jobs here, America must be the best place in the world to do business. If you want jobs to create, you've got to be a good place to create jobs. That means we need less regulations on our small businesses. We need to do something about these frivolous lawsuits that are making it harder for our employers to expand the job base.

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. It encourages increased domestic production. To create jobs here in America, we must become less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

To protect jobs in communities in the West, we need to reduce the risk of devastating wildfires. That's why I was proud to work on and sign the Healthy Forests Restoration Act. Under this good law, we're clearing the underbrush that serves as fuel for fire. Because we acted, our forests are healthier, residents and small businesses are safer, and people across the West are better off.

My opponent says he's in touch with the West, but sometimes I think he means western Massachusetts. [Laughter] When the Healthy Forests bill came up in the Senate, it had the support of both Senators from Oregon, one Republican and one Democrat. It had the strong support of your Congressman. And Senator Kerry was against it.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. When I signed the Healthy Forests Act last December, he said, "We're taking a chainsaw to public forests."

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Now it's time to campaign in the West. He's kind of turning his position around a little bit. [Laughter] He's actually—he's now saying that he actually likes a lot of part of the law. I guess it's not only the wildfires that shift in the wind.

To create jobs, we need to reject economic isolationism and open up markets for U.S. products. Listen, we can compete with anybody, anytime, anywhere, so long as the rules are fair. To create jobs, we need to be wise about how we spend your money and keep your taxes low. My opponent has his own history on the economy. In 20 years as a Senator from Massachusetts, he's built the record of a Senator from Massachusetts. [Laughter] He's 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 he's served in the Senate. I think that qualifies as a pattern. He can run from his record, but he cannot hide.

You might remember the debate last Friday. The Senator looked in the camera and promised not to raise taxes on anyone who earns less than \$200,000 a year. The problem with that is to keep that promise, he must break all his other ones. His plan to raise taxes on the top two income brackets will raise about \$600 billion, but his spending promises will cost almost four times as much, more than 2.2 trillion.

That's with a "T." See, you can't have it both ways. To pay for all his promises, his spending promises, he's going to have to raise your taxes. The choice in this election is clear when it comes to taxes.

He's had a—tell your friends and neighbors he's had a history of voting to raise taxes, and he has promised to raise them in this campaign. And that's the kind of promise a Washington politician usually keeps. [Laughter]

I believe our families and our economy are better off when Americans keep more of what they earn. In a new term, I will work with the United States Congress to keep your taxes low.

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

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 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 exam before graduation. By raising the performance in our high schools and by expanding Pell grants for low- and middle-income families, we will help more Americans start their careers with a college diploma.

When I came into office, we had a problem with Medicare. Medicine was changing, but Medicare was not. For example, Medicare would pay tens of thousands of dollars

for a heart surgery but not one dime for the prescription drugs that might prevent the heart surgery from being needed in the first place. That didn't make any sense for our seniors. It didn't make any sense for our taxpayers. I pledged to bring Republicans and Democrats together to strengthen and modernize Medicare for our seniors, and I kept my word. Seniors are already getting discounts on medicine, and beginning in 2006, all seniors will be able to get prescription drug coverage under Medicare.

No, we're moving forward on health care, and there's much more to do. We need to make health care more affordable and available for all our people. We need a safety net for those with the greatest needs. I believe in community health centers, a place where the poor and the indigent can get primary and preventative care. In a new term, we'll make sure every poor county in America has a community health center. We need to do more to make sure poor children are fully subscribed in our programs for low-income families so they can get the health care they need.

We must do more to make sure health care is affordable. Most of the uninsured in America are employees of small businesses. Small businesses are having trouble affording health care. To help more workers get health care, we should allow small businesses to join together so they can buy insurance at the same discounts as big businesses can do. We must 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 they call their own.

To make sure health care is available and affordable, we've got to 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 drives good docs out of practice. You cannot be pro-patient and pro-doctor and pro-plaintiff-attorney at the same time. You have to choose. My opponent made his choice, and he put a plaintiff attorney on the ticket. I made my choice. I'm standing with the doctors and patients. I'm for medical liability reform—now.

The choice for health care is clear in this election. My opponent wants to move in the direction of Government-run health care. I believe health decisions should be made by patients and doctors, not by officials in Washington, DC.

I've set out policies that move America toward a positive and optimistic vision. I believe our country can be an ownership society. You know, there's an old saying: No one ever washes a rental car. [*Laughter*] A lot of wisdom in that statement. When you own something, you care about it. When you own something, you have a vital stake in the future of our country. 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 their own health care plan. We're providing—promoting homeownership. Listen, I love it when more and more people 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. Our Social Security system needs fixing. We'll keep the promise of Social Security to our seniors. You might remember the 2000 campaign, when they ran those ads that said, "If George W. gets in, the seniors won't get their checks." The seniors got their checks, and our seniors will continue to get checks. And the 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. We need to be worried about whether Social Security will be around when they need it. For their sake, we must strengthen Social Security by allowing younger workers to save some of their payroll taxes in a personal savings account that they can call their own, that the Government will not take away.

When it comes to Social Security, my opponent wants to maintain the status quo.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. That's unacceptable. He's against these Social Security reforms. He's against just about every reform that gives more authority and more control to the individual. 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 more bureaucracies. And there's a word for that attitude. It's called liberalism.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. He dismisses that as a label, but he must have seen it differently when he said to a newspaper, "I am a liberal and proud of it."

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. The nonpartisan National Journal magazine did a study and named him the most liberal Member of the United States Senate. That takes a lot of hard work. *[Laughter]* Another group known as the Americans for Democratic Action has given Senator Kerry a higher lifetime liberal rating than that given to Ted Kennedy. And 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 in policies that try to run their lives.

These are changing times, but in a time of change, some things do not change, the values we try to live by, courage and compassion, reverence and integrity. In changing times, we will 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 a strict interpretation of the law.

My opponent's words on these issues are a little muddy, but his record is pretty clear. He says he supports the institution of marriage, but he voted against the Defense of Marriage Act.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. He voted against the ban on partial-birth abortion.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. One time he called himself the candidate of conservative values, but he has described the Reagan years as a period of moral darkness.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

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

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

The President. 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 of 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're strengthening our intelligence. We're transforming our military. We will keep the All-Volunteer Army an all-volunteer army. We're staying on the offensive. We're striking the terrorists abroad so we do not have

to face them here at home. We will spread freedom and liberty. And we will 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 acted, because the United States of America led, Afghanistan is an ally in the war on 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 members and associates have been brought to justice.

In defending ourselves, we have freed 50 million people. Think about what happened recently in Afghanistan. It wasn't all that long ago that the country was ruled by brutal ideologues of hate who had a dark vision of the world. Young girls were not allowed to go to school—many young girls were not. Their moms, if they didn't toe the ideological line, were taken into the public square and whipped, sometimes killed in a sports stadium. Recently, thousands and thousands of Afghan citizens once under the rule of the Taliban voted in a Presidential election. The first voter in that election was a 19-year-old woman.

Iraq will have elections in January. We're standing with the people of Afghanistan and Iraq. When America gives its word, America must keep its word. And we're standing with them because we understand that 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 helps us keep the peace.

Our mission is clear. We'll help those countries train their armies and police

forces so the citizens of Afghanistan and Iraq can do the hard work of defending democracy. We will 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.

I see some folks who wear the uniform. Thank you for your service. I want to thank the veterans who are here for having set such a great example to those who wear the uniform. I want to thank the military families who have joined us today. I assure you, we'll keep the commitment I made to our troops and their loved ones. We'll make sure they have all the resources they need to complete their missions.

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

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. As you round up the vote, remind people of this fact: Only four United States Senators voted to authorize the use of force, and then voted against funding the troops, two of whom are my opponent and his runningmate.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. You might remember perhaps one of the most famous quotes of the 2004 campaign. When asked to explain his vote, my opponent said, "I actually did vote for the \$87 billion, before I voted against it."

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. I suspect a lot of people in Jackson County, Oregon, don't speak that way. And they kept pressing him, and he had all kinds of different explanations. One of the most interesting was, he finally said, "It is a complicated matter." [*Laughter*] There's nothing complicated about supporting our troops in combat.

I believe in the transformational power of liberty. Let me tell you a story that will help make the point. One of our good friends is Prime Minister Koizumi of Japan. That doesn't sound unusual, probably, except for think about what life was like some 60 years ago with the Japanese. They were our mortal enemy. My dad fought against the Japanese. Senator McCain's dad fought against the Japanese. I'm confident there are people here whose dad or granddad saw combat against the Japanese. It was a tough war.

After we won the war, Harry S. Truman believed in the transformational power of liberty to convert an enemy into an ally, and so he worked to build a democracy in Japan. There were a lot of citizens here who, I'm confident, weren't very happy about that decision. "Why would you want to work with an enemy? The enemy can't possibly convert to a democracy. Too many of our lives were lost during the war." But we had great faith in the ability of liberty to transform a nation. And today, because of that faith, I sit down with Prime Minister Koizumi talking about the peace we all want, talking about how to deal with the issues of the world to make the world more peaceful.

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

I believe millions in the Middle East plead in silence for freedom. I believe women in the Middle East want to grow up in a free society and raise their children in freedom. I believe that if given a chance, the people of the Middle East 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 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. As John mentioned, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers on September the 14th, 2001. It is a day I will never forget. Workers in hardhats yelling at the top of their lungs, "Whatever it takes." A guy grabbed me by the arm, and he looked me in the eye, and he said, "Do not let me down." Ever since that day, I wake up working hard to figure out how best to protect America. I will never relent in defending the security of this country, whatever it takes.

Four years ago, when I traveled your beautiful State asking for the vote, I said 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 help, with your hard work, with your vote, I will do so for 4 more years.

Thanks for coming. May God bless. Thank you all very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:16 p.m. at the Jackson County Fairgrounds. In his remarks, he referred to Senator Zell Miller of Georgia, who made the keynote address at the 2004 Republican National Convention; and Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan.

Remarks in Cedar Rapids, Iowa
October 15, 2004

The President. It is great—thank you all. It is great to be back in Iowa. This isn't the first time we've been here. [Laughter] It's not going to be our last, either. I want to thank you for putting up the signs and doing the hard work. I want to thank you for what you're going to do over the next couple of weeks, and that is turn out the vote. There's no doubt in my mind, with your help, we will carry Iowa and win a great victory on the 2d of November.

And I just told the chairman—I call him the chairman. You call him Chuck. [Laughter] I said, "I got a job for him over the next 4 years." He said, "What's that?" I said, "Well, get those lawn mowers cranked up; there's a lot of grass on the South Lawn."

And tell your friends and neighbors, if they want a safer America, a stronger America, and a better America, to put me and Dick Cheney back in office.

The President. I'm pleased—

Audience member. [Inaudible]

The President. I'm pleased that Laura is traveling with me today. She is—we were in Las Vegas yesterday, and there was an important conference. The AARP was having a convention, and they said, "Send your best speaker over." So I went to the rally, and Laura went to the AARP. [Laughter] People have come to know her like I know her. She's warm. She's compassionate. She's a strong woman. She is a great First Lady.

I'm proud of my runningmate. Dick Cheney is doing a fine job. In the debate the other night, I admit he didn't have the waviest hair. [Laughter] I didn't pick him because of his hairdo. I picked him because of his experience, his judgment, and he's getting the job done for the American people.

I appreciate working with the chairman. He always talks about Iowa. Chuck Grassley is a good friend. He's a really good United

States Senator. And so is your Congressman, Jim Leach. I appreciate Jim. What a decent and honorable man Jim Leach is. And I'm proud that the chairman of the Budget Committee in the House of Representatives, Jim Nussle, is with us as well.

I want to thank the grassroots activists, all the people who are doing all the hard work. You never get thanked enough, and so here's my chance to thank you before election day. Keep putting up the signs. Keep making the phone calls. Turn out the vote, and we will win.

I enjoyed our debates. I enjoyed standing up there with my opponent, talking about our differences, and we have big differences. We have very different records and different plans for the future. My record is one of reforming education, of lowering taxes, of providing prescription drug coverage for seniors, for improving homeland protections, and for 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 to show for those 20 years. The records are important because our country faces many challenges, and the next President must recognize the need for reform and must be able to lead to achieve them.

On issue after issue, from jobs to health care to the need to strengthen Social Security, Senator Kerry's policies fail to recognize the changing realities of today's world and the need for fundamental reforms. In our final debate, when I talked about the vital link between education and jobs, the Senator didn't seem to get it. He said I switched away from jobs and started talking about education. No, good jobs start with good education. At a time when most new jobs require at least 2 years of college, I understand that one of the best ways to