

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

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:34 a.m. at Sims Park. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida; Bob White, sheriff,

Pasco County, FL; Al Cardenas, former chair, Republican Party of Florida; Mel R. Martinez, senatorial candidate in Florida; and Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan.

Remarks in The Villages, Florida October 19, 2004

The President. Thank you all for coming today. I am proud to be the first sitting President ever to have visited The Villages. The other ones missed out on a lot. Thanks for having me. Thanks for coming. This is a huge crowd, for which I am grateful. I told Jeb it looks like a beautiful day in The Villages. He said, "It's always a beautiful day in The Villages."

I'm traveling your State to ask for the vote. I think you got to get out amongst the people and say, "I want your vote." I'm going to give you some reasons to put me back into office. I also want your help. You need to go to your friends and neighbors. Tell them we have a duty in our free society to vote. When you get them headed to the polls, remind them, if they want a safer America, a stronger America, a better America, to put me and Dick Cheney back in office.

My one regret is that Laura is not with me today.

Audience members. Aw-w-w!

The President. I know, that's generally the reaction. [Laughter] I'm going to give you some reasons, as I said, to put me in, but perhaps the most important one of all is so that Laura is the First Lady for 4 more years. When I met her again—see, we went to the seventh grade together in San Jacinto Junior High in Midland, Texas. When I met her again, she was a public school librarian. I said, "Will you marry me?" She said, "Fine, just so long as I never have to give a speech." [Laugh-

ter] I said, "Okay, you got a deal." Fortunately, she did not hold me to that promise. She's giving a lot of speeches, and when she does, the American people see a strong, warm, compassionate, great First Lady.

I am proud of my runningmate, Dick Cheney. I readily concede, he does not have the waviest hair in the race. [Laughter] I did not pick him for his hairdo. [Laughter] I picked him because of his experience and sound judgment.

I am very proud of my brother, the Governor of Florida, Jeb Bush. He is a strong, consistent leader. You do not have to worry about him shifting his political thoughts because of a poll or a focus group. And when times were tough during the four hurricanes, Jeb led this State with resolve and compassion. Brother Marvin is with us today as well, and I want to thank Marv for coming. I love to be with my family. I get great strength from my faith, my family, and my friends.

I want to thank Carey Baker for his service, not only in the Armed Forces but in the statehouse. As I came up on the stage, Mrs. Baker informed me they'll be having a child tomorrow. [Laughter] Let's just make sure it's tomorrow. [Laughter]

I want to thank Congressman Cliff Stearns for his leadership in the House of Representatives. I appreciate the service of the State chief financial officer, Tom Gallagher. I want to thank all the other State and local officials who are here.

I want to thank Ralph Reed, the Bush-Cheney '04 southeast regional chair, for his leadership and friendship. I want to thank Carole Jean Jordan, who's the Republican Party Florida chairman. I want to thank all the people who are involved in grass-roots politics. I want to thank those of you who are putting up the signs. I want to thank those of you who are making the phone calls. With your help, there is no doubt in my mind, we will carry Florida again and win a great victory on November the 2d.

Finally, I want to thank my friend Mark Wills, the country singer who has been entertaining you today.

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

I enjoyed telling the people what I was going to do, during our three debates. Those were important debates because they showed the clear differences between my opponent and me. We have different records. We have very different plans for the future. My record is one of reforming education, of lowering taxes, of providing prescription drug coverage for our seniors, of improving homeland protections, and of waging an aggressive war against the ideologues of hate. I enjoyed the chance to lay out my vision for the future.

Instead of articulating a vision or a positive agenda for the future, the Senator, my opponent, is relying on a litany of complaints and an old-style scare tactic.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. As proven by his record and a series of contradictions in this campaign, my opponent will say anything he thinks will benefit him politically at the time. I will do what I have said I will do. We will keep the promise of Social Security for our seniors. And there will be

no draft, as long as I'm the President. On November the 2d, the people of America will reject the politics of fear and vote for an agenda of hope and opportunity and security.

When I came into office, the stock market had been in serious decline for 6 months. And then we headed into a recession. To help families and to 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 rates as fast as any in nearly 20 years. Today, the homeownership rate in America is at an alltime high. In the past 13 months, we've added more than 1.9 million new jobs. The unemployment rate in America is 5.4 percent, lower than the average rate of the 1970s, the 1980s, and the 1990s. The unemployment rate in Florida is 4.5 percent. This economy of ours is moving forward, and we're not going to go back to the days of tax and spend.

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 our job creators. That means we will do something about the frivolous lawsuits that plague our small-business owners.

To keep jobs here, Congress needs to pass my energy plan. It's a plan that encourages conservation, a plan that encourages renewables, encourages new technologies. It's a plan that recognizes we can explore for natural gas in environmentally friendly ways. We will not drill off the coast of Florida. It's a plan that uses clean coal technology. To keep jobs here in America, America must be less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

To create jobs, we need to reject economic isolationism. We've opened up our markets from products for overseas, and that is good for the American consumer. See, the market works this way. If you have more products to choose from, you're likely

to get that which you want at a better price and higher quality. So instead of shutting down our market, what we'll continue to do is open up other people's markets. I say to China, "You treat us the way we treat you." We can compete with anybody, anytime, anywhere, so long as the playing field is level.

To make sure this economy continues to grow, 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. In 20 years as a Senator from Massachusetts, he has built the record of a Senator from Massachusetts. *[Laughter]* He voted for higher taxes 98 times in his 20 years. That's about five times a year. I would call that a predictable pattern. *[Laughter]*

Now the Senator is promising not to raise taxes for anyone who earns less than \$200,000 a year. He said that with a straight face. *[Laughter]* The problem is, to keep that promise, he would have to break almost all of his other ones. He's made a lot of promises. He's promised over \$2.2 trillion a program—of new spending. He said he's going to raise the money by taxing the rich. You can't raise enough money by taxing the rich to raise 2.2 trillion. There is a gap, a gap between what he's promised and what he can raise. And guess who usually gets to fill the gap?

Audience members. We do!

The President. Yes. You've also heard that talk before about taxing the rich. The rich hire lawyers and accountants for a reason: to slip the bill and pass it on to you. We're not going to let him tax you; we're going to carry Florida and win on November the 2d.

When I came in this office, our public schools had been waiting decades for hopeful reform. Fortunately, you had a Governor who had been providing hopeful reform. But 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, and I kept my word. We're seeing the results. Our children are making sustained gains in reading and math. We're closing achievement gaps all across America. And we're not going to go back to the days of low standards and mediocrity in the public schools in America.

When we came into office, we had a problem with Medicare. Medicine was changing; Medicare was not. And let me give you an example. Many here understand what I'm talking about. Medicare would pay hundreds of thousands of dollars for heart surgery but not one 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 people on Medicare. It didn't make any sense for the taxpayers of the country. I pledged to bring Republicans and Democrats together to strengthen and modernize Medicare for our seniors. I kept my word. Seniors are getting discounts on medicine. And beginning in 2006, all seniors will be able to get prescription drug coverage under Medicare.

We have more work to do when it comes to moving forward with health care. I have practical plans to make sure health care is available and affordable. We need a safety net for those with the greatest need. I believe in community health centers, places where the poor and the indigent can get good preventative and primary care. In a new term, we'll make sure every poor county in America has a community health center. We will do more to make sure poor children are fully subscribed in our programs for low-income families.

Do you realize that half of the working uninsured work for small businesses? Small businesses are having trouble affording health care. In order to help our workers get health care, in order to help small businesses, we must allow small businesses to pool together, to join together, so they can buy insurance at the same discounts big companies are able to do. We will continue

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 they call their own.

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 and running good docs out of practice. By forcing doctors to practice defensive medicine, medical lawsuits cost the Government, and therefore you, about \$28 billion a year. Lawsuits drive up insurance premiums, which drive good doctors out of practice. I have met too many ob-gyns who are worried about being able to stay in practice. I have met too many of their patients, women who are worried about getting the health care they need.

See, you can't be pro-doctor, pro-patient, and pro-personal-injury-lawyer at the same time. You have to choose. My opponent made his choice, and he put a personal injury lawyer on the ticket. I made my choice. I'm standing with the docs and the patients. I am for medical liability reform—now.

And I urge you to vote for Mel Martinez in the Senate. He will join us in fighting for medical liability reform—now.

My opponent has a health care plan, a plan for bigger, more intrusive Government. The other day, he tried to tell the Americans that when it comes to his health care plan, and I quote, "The Government has nothing to do with it." I could barely contain myself. *[Laughter]* Facts are 8 out of 10 people who get health care under Senator Kerry's plan would be placed on a Government program. He said his plan helps small businesses, but yet, further study concluded that it is an overpriced albatross that would saddle small businesses with 225 new mandates.

I have a better idea. I want to help small businesses afford health care, not saddle them with new Government rules. The choice in this election is clear. 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. He can run, but he cannot hide.

I have set out policies that move this country toward a positive and optimistic vision. I believe our country can and must become 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 your country.

That's why we'll continue to encourage ownership. Every time a small business is started, someone is achieving the American Dream. That's why we're encouraging health savings accounts, so people have the security of owning their own health care plan. That's why we'll continue to spread the ownership of homes all across America. I love it when more and more people from all walks of life open up the door where they live and say, "Welcome to my home. Welcome to my piece of property."

In a new term, we'll take the next step toward building an ownership society by strengthening Social Security. Now, let me remind you of something that took place in the 2000 campaign. They said in those political ads that, "If George W. gets elected, our seniors will not get their Social Security checks." You might remember those ads. I want you to remind your friends and neighbors, they got their checks. Nobody is going to take away the checks of those who are now on Social Security. And baby boomers like me, we're in pretty good shape when it comes to Social Security.

But we need to worry about our children and our grandchildren. We need to make sure Social Security is available for them. That is why I believe younger workers ought to be allowed to take some of their own payroll taxes and put it in a personal savings account that will earn better interest, a personal savings account they can

call their own, an account the Government cannot take away.

My opponent wants to maintain the status quo when it comes to Social Security. That is unacceptable for younger Americans. I believe a President should solve problems, not pass them on to future generations or future Presidents. On issue after issue, from Medicare without choices to schools with less accountability to higher taxes on working Americans, my opponent takes the side of more centralized control and bigger Government.

There's a word for that attitude. It's called liberalism.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. He dismisses it as simply a label. He must have seen it differently when he told a newspaper, "I am a liberal and proud of it." Don't take my word for it. Take the word of the nonpartisan National Journal magazine that did a study of voting records and named him the most liberal Member of the United States Senate. That takes a lot of hard work. [*Laughter*] It's hard to be more liberal than the likes of Ted Kennedy. He can run, but he cannot hide.

I have a very different record and a different philosophy. I do not believe in big Government, and I do not believe that Government should be indifferent. I am a compassionate conservative. I believe in policies that empower people to improve their lives, not try to run their lives. I believe we should help men and women find the skills and tools needed 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 Nation 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, the values we try to live by, courage and compassion, reverence and integrity. In a time of change, we must support the institutions that give our lives direction and purpose, our fami-

lies, our schools, our places of worship. 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 the strict interpretation of the law.

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're defending the homeland. We're reforming and strengthening our intelligence capabilities. We're transforming our military so the All-Volunteer Army will remain an all-volunteer army. We're staying on the offensive. We will strike 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 the way it was some 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, because the United States of America was firm in our resolve, Afghanistan is free and is now 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.

We're standing with the people in Afghanistan and Iraq. I want the youngsters here to understand how profound history has changed because of the actions we took to defend ourselves. Think about Afghanistan. It wasn't all that long ago that the Taliban ran that country. These ideologues of hatred would not even allow young girls to go to school, and their mothers were taken into the public square and whipped if they didn't toe their line. Because we acted, because we upheld doctrine that said, "If you harbor a terrorist, you're equally as guilty as the terrorist," millions of citizens went to vote in a Presidential election. The first voter in Afghanistan for the election of a President was a 19-year-old woman. Freedom is on the march. Freedom is on the march in a part of world that no one ever dreamt would be free.

In Iraq, there will be Presidential elections in several months. Think how far that country has come from the days of torture rooms and mass graves. No, we're standing with those people. When American gives its word, America must keep its word. And we're standing with them. 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 the terrorists instead of harboring them. And that will help us keep the peace.

Our strategy and our mission in Afghanistan and Iraq should be clear. We'll train the armies and the police in those countries so the people of Afghanistan and the people of Iraq can do the hard work of defending their freedom. We will get those countries on the path of stability and democracy as quickly as possible, and then our troops will come home with the honor they have earned.

I am proud to be the Commander in Chief of 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.

The single most important responsibility is to make sure our military has all the tools and resources they need to complete their missions. That's why I went to the United States Congress in September of 2003 and asked for \$87 billion of funding to support our troops in combat. I was very pleased with the overwhelming bipartisan support for that initiative. The support was so strong that only 12 Members of the United States Senate voted against the funding, 2 of whom were my opponent and his runningmate.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. As you're out gathering the vote, remind people of this startling fact: There were only four Members of the United States Senate who voted to authorize the use of force and then voted against funding our troops in harm's way—only four members—two of whom were my opponent and his runningmate.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. You might remember his famous quote when they asked him about his vote, he said, "I actually did vote for the \$87 billion, right before I voted against it."

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Sunday was the one-year anniversary of Senator Kerry's vote against funding for our troops. My opponent's many and conflicting positions on this issue are a case study into why his contradictions call into question his credibility and his ability to lead our Nation.

September of 2003, as the \$87 billion funding package was being debated in Congress, he said on national TV, "It would be irresponsible to abandon our troops by voting against it"—his words. And yet one month later, he did exactly that irresponsible thing. He voted against the funding. And so we say, why? What happened to change the Senator's mind so abruptly in one month? Well, his opponent in the

Democrat primary, Howard Dean, was gaining ground as an antiwar candidate. Senator Kerry apparently decided supporting the troops, even while in harm's way, was not as important as shoring up his own political position.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. At a time of a great threat to our country, at a time of great challenge in the world, the Commander in Chief must stand on principle, not on the shifting sands of political convenience.

We have big differences when it comes to how to protect America. You might remember in one of the debates Senator Kerry proposed that we must pass a "global test" before we defend ourselves.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. I didn't make that up. I was standing right there. I heard him. [*Laughter*] The problem with the "global test" is that the Senator can never pass it. And that's dangerous in the world in which we live. I say he can't because remember 1990; the United Nations Security Council passed a resolution supporting action to remove Saddam Hussein from Kuwait. The international community was united. Countries throughout the world joined the coalition. And yet even after United Nations approval, Senator Kerry voted against the authorization for the use of force. He says removing Saddam Hussein was a "mistake," during one of the debates.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. He said—well, here's how he would have solved the problem. He would have asked the United Nations to pass another United Nations Security Council resolution.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Precisely what Saddam Hussein wanted to hear, another resolution. Had the Senator had his way; Saddam Hussein not only would be sitting in a palace; he would have occupied Kuwait. And the world would be dangerous for it. America

is better off with Saddam Hussein sitting in a prison cell.

I'll work to build alliances. We'll work to make sure our coalition remains strong. But I will never turn over America's national security decisions to leaders of other countries.

I believe in the transformational power of liberty. I'll tell you what I mean by that. One of our friends in the international community is the Prime Minister of Japan, Koizumi. I saw him at the United Nations and said, "You know, I'm talking about you everywhere you go across the country." I said, "I hope you don't mind." He said, "No." I didn't tell him I was going to tell you, though, that his favorite singer was Elvis. [*Laughter*] Shows we're getting to know each other quite well. Doesn't seem like much, does it, that the head of Japan is a friend. But think about the history. Wasn't all that long ago, 60 years ago, that we were at war with the Japanese. Perhaps some here in the crowd was in that war. My dad—our dad was fighting the Japanese. I guarantee you people had relatives fighting the Japanese who are here. They were the sworn enemy of the United States of America.

After we won that war, Harry S. Truman, President of the United States, along with other Americans, believed in the power of liberty to transform an enemy into an ally. And there was a lot of skepticism about that. You can imagine why. "Japan conceivably becoming a democracy," people would ask. "Why do we worry about an enemy that has upset so many families in America?" But people believed, and as a result of people having firm belief, I sit down now at the table with the Prime Minister of Japan, talking about the peace we all want.

Someday, an American President will be sitting down with the 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 live in a free society. I believe the mothers and the fathers of the Middle East want to bring their children up in a free and peaceful world. 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 a deep faith in the values that makes this a great nation.

None of us will ever forget that week when one era ended and another began. On September the 14th, 2001, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers. It's a day I will never forget. I will never forget the voices of those in hardhats yelling at me at the top of their lungs, "Whatever it takes." I will never forget the look in the

man's eyes as he 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.

Four years ago, when I traveled your great State, 4 years ago, when I came to The Villages, for that matter, I made this 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 help, I will do so for 4 more years.

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

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:25 p.m. at the Lake Sumter Landing Market Square. In his remarks, he referred to Florida State Representative Carey Baker and his wife, Lori; Mel R. Martinez, senatorial candidate in Florida; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; and Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan.

Statement on the Anniversary of the Allied Landing on Leyte Island *October 19, 2004*

On October 20, we commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Allied landing on Leyte Island's shores, a pivotal moment in the history of the War in the Pacific and in the human struggle for liberty. The Leyte landing is a central event in the long history of friendship between the peoples of the Philippines and the United States.

This year we are privileged that American, Filipino, and Australian veterans once again stand on the very beach where they fought for the liberation of the Philippines six decades ago. Many of those brave Allied soldiers made the ultimate sacrifice on

these shores in the cause of freedom. MacArthur, Osmena, Romulo, and all those heroes commemorated in bronze on Leyte's shores were tenacious and brave.

Veterans of the Leyte landing: Know that we will continue to recognize this date as a day to draw renewed inspiration from your courage and sacrifice in the cause of freedom. We will pass on to our children what your great generation has passed to us, a world where liberty is the right of all humankind, and where men and women will remain vigilant in its defense.