

freedom is the Almighty God's gift to each man and woman in this world.

I'm running again because I want to make sure hope and opportunity spread throughout the land, through good economic policy, through encouraging ownership for all people in our society. I'm running again because I hold certain values dear that I think are important for this country. And I'm running again because I fully understand the risks we face, and I have a strategy to protect the American people.

We're going to win on November the 2d, with your help. May God bless you. May God bless our great country. Thank you all for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:10 p.m. in the Rochester Aviation Hangar at Rochester International Airport. In his remarks, he referred to Mary Gutknecht, wife of Representative Gilbert W. Gutknecht; Gov. Tim Pawlenty of Minnesota; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarkawi; and Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan.

Remarks in a Discussion in Eau Claire, Wisconsin October 20, 2004

The President. Thank you all. Please be seated. Listen, thanks for coming today. It's good to be back here in Eau Claire, Wisconsin. We're getting closer and closer to voting time. I'm here to ask for your help. I saw—somebody has been helping—I saw a lot of signs up coming in. I want to thank you for putting up the signs. I know some of you are making phone calls, reminding your fellow citizen to go to the polls. I need your help. And with your help, we will carry Wisconsin and win a great victory in November.

So today I'm here to talk about reasons why I think your fellow citizens ought to put me in office for 4 more years. We're going to talk about some issues, and we've got some fellow citizens up here to help talk about the plans and policies of my administration.

Perhaps the most important reason for you to put me back in for 4 more years is so that Laura will be the First Lady for 4 more years. She sends her best. She's doing great. She was a public school librarian when I met her for the second time. The first time I ever met her, we were at San Jacinto Junior High, seventh grade,

in Midland, Texas. The second time I met her, she was a public school librarian. She said, "Fine, I'll marry you, but you have to make me a promise." I said, "What's that?" She said, "I never want to have to give a speech." [Laughter] Well, fortunately, she didn't hold me to that promise. [Laughter] She is giving a lot of speeches, and when she does, the American people see a warm, compassionate, strong First Lady.

I'm proud of my runningmate, Dick Cheney. He's doing a great job.

And I'm proud of my Cabinet Secretary for Health and Human Services; that would be former Governor Tommy Thompson. He's doing a great job. I like to tell the people of Wisconsin, you did a fine job of training him. He's a good man.

I want to thank the Redetzkes for letting us come here today, Don and Diana. I'm proud you—these are some of the products they manufacture here. I said, "How is your business doing?" He said, "Just fine." He said, "We've added 30 employees this year. We're thinking about adding more." There's an optimism around. Our policies are working. And I want to thank the

Redetzkes for letting us come and visit this important plant.

I want to thank Jack Voight, the State treasurer, for joining us today. Appreciate you being here, Mr. Treasurer. I want to thank Scott Walker from Milwaukee County. I'm proud Scott is here. I call him Scott W. I want to thank John Gard for joining us today. Speaker, where are you? Appreciate you, Speaker. Good to see you again. I've been in your State a lot, and he's been there all the time, for which I'm grateful.

I want to thank very much Dale Schultz for being here. He is a good man. I know him well. He will make a great Member of the United States Congress. And finally, Tim Michels. Good to see you, Tim—and Barbara. I know something about Barbaras. Thank you all for coming.

We've been through some challenges together in this country, really have been. And when you're out gathering up the vote, remind people about what this economy has been through. Six months prior to my arrival in Washington, the stock market was in serious decline, and that foretold a recession. And then we had some corporate scandals, and we passed tough laws, and we made it abundantly clear to people in this country that we will not tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America. We expect citizens to be responsible citizens.

And then we got attacked. We got attacked. And those attacks hurt us; they really did. And we responded to those attacks with good policy. We cut the taxes, and by cutting the taxes people had more money to spend and more money to invest. When you increase consumption and increase investment, the economy tends to grow. The recession we had was one of the shallowest in American history.

Our economy has been growing at rates as fast as any in nearly 20 years. We've added 1.9 million new jobs since August of 2003. The unemployment rate is at 5.4 percent. That's the national unemployment rate—lower than the average of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. And your unemployment

rate in Wisconsin is 4.8 percent. Think about that. When people go to the polls, I want them to remember the people of this State are working because of good policy. Farm income is up. Homeownership rates are at an alltime high. We're moving forward. We've overcome these challenges, and we're not going to go back to the days of tax and spend.

A good economic policy means good farm policy. I told the people when I was running, I understand that we've got to have good agricultural policy in this country. And the agricultural sector of our country is doing fine, is doing well. Income is up. As a matter of fact, farm income is at a record high under my administration.

Audience member. [Inaudible]

The President. We're going to talk to some farmers up here, but dairy farm income is up. We're selling more and more of Wisconsin crops overseas. See, to make sure this economy continues to grow, we've got to continue to open up markets for U.S. products. It's easy to say we're going to shut down markets, but shutting down markets will hurt you. See, when you've got more products to choose from as a consumer, you're likely to get that which you want at a better price and higher quality. That's how the market works. So shutting down our markets, which would hurt you—my policy is let's open up everybody else's markets. We can compete with anybody, anytime, anywhere, so long as the playing field is level.

And farm exports are at an alltime high. We want to be using Wisconsin farm products to feed the world. If you're good at something, let's promote it, and we're really good at growing corn and soybeans.

I signed a good farm bill which is helping the agricultural sector, and part of the farm bill is the conservation title, which encourages farmers and landowners to set aside land for wildlife restoration, for land protection. We're going to talk about somebody who knows what he's talking about when it comes to good conservation policy.

I tell everybody, "If you own the land, every day is Earth Day." If you make a living off the land, the best person to look after the land is the person making a living off of it, not some bureaucrat in Washington, DC.

Keeping jobs here means good energy policy. See, we've got to become less dependent on foreign sources of energy if we expect to keep this economy growing. And I submitted a plan to the United States Congress 2 years ago, and it's stuck, of course, because of politics. But it's a plan that encourages conservation. It's a plan that uses our technologies to be able to burn coal cleanly. It says we can explore for natural gas in environmentally friendly ways. But it also recognizes the valuable contribution that ethanol and biodiesel make to the energy mix here in America. Congress needs to pass that plan. We've got to become less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

To make sure jobs stay here, we've got to have less regulations on the job creators. To make sure jobs stay here, we've got to do something about these lawsuits that are making it hard for the small businesses all across our country. You see, these lawsuits make it hard for a small business to expand. They're tending to having to fight these lawsuits off and not hiring people.

To keep jobs here, we've got to be wise about how we spend your money and keep your taxes low. Taxes are an issue. I'm running against a fellow who's promised \$2.2 trillion in programs that cost—that's how much they cost the Government, 2.2 trillion. That's with a "T." That's a lot even for a Senator from Massachusetts. So they asked him how he was going to pay for it. He said, oh, he's just going to tax the rich, going to raise the top two brackets. Well, the only problem with that is it raises about 600 billion or 800 billion, depending on whose numbers you look at. In either case, it's far short of 2.2 trillion, so there's a gap. There's a gap between what he promised and how he's going to pay for

it. Guess who usually fills that gap? Yes, you do. You understand how tax policy works.

Let me tell you what else is wrong with raising the top two brackets. We're going to talk to some small-business owners. Most small businesses are Subchapter S corporations, limited liability corps. They pay tax at the individual income-tax rate. So you hear him talking about running up the taxes, taxing the rich—they're taxing the job creators.

And the third thing wrong with it, the rich hire lawyers and accountants for a reason: to slide the tab and stick you with it. We're not going to let him tax you; we're going to win Wisconsin and win on November the 2d.

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

The President. Thank you. Before we get to our guests here, I want to talk about a couple of other issues. We're in a changing world. Times are changing. And in a changing world, it helps to promote an ownership society in America to bring stability into people's lives. And I told you, homeownership rates are at an alltime high. We've got policies to continue to expand that. I can't tell you how it warms my heart to know more and more Americans from all walks of life are opening up the door where they live, saying, "Welcome to my home. Welcome to my piece of property."

In order to make sure we're hopeful, we've got to promote ownership when it comes to health care accounts. See, health care is an issue in this campaign too. There is a fundamental divide.

My opponent is proposing bigger Government health care. Now, he looked in the TV cameras the other night and said no Government was involved. I could barely contain myself. *[Laughter]* I looked at the fine print of his plan. Eight out of ten get signed up to a Government health care plan. See, if you raise the Medicaid limits to 300 percent, it provides incentives for small-business owners to stop providing

insurance for their employees because the Government will pay for it. And so you're shifting people from the private sector to the public policy. And Government health care programs do not work. They may sound good, but they have failed in every country that has tried them. The quality of health care will decline. There will be rationing. If you end up as a line item in the Government budget, you can rest assured there will be Government controls over your health care.

I have a different point of view. We will take care of those who cannot help themselves through community and rural health centers. Those will be places where the poor and the indigent can get primary and preventative care. That's a good use of your taxpayers' money. It's best that people get care there and not in the emergency rooms of local hospitals. We will make sure that the program for children of low-income families is fully subscribed. That makes sense.

But to make sure health care is affordable, we ought to allow small businesses to pool risk, to join together so they can buy insurance at the same discounts that big businesses get to do.

To make sure health care is affordable, we will continue to expand health savings accounts, which will enable somebody to pay a low-premium, high-deductible major medical liability policy, coupled with a tax-free savings. These health care plans will reduce the cost of health care for the average citizen or the small business. They will be a health care plan in which the decision-maker is the owner of the health care plan. They're a health care plan that you own, you control, and you can take with you from job to job throughout your entire life. This is a way to make sure health care is more affordable.

Also to make sure health care is more available and affordable, we've got to do something about the junk lawsuits that are running up the cost of medicine. See, I looked at the cost to the Federal Govern-

ment on these lawsuits. Lawsuits cause doctors to have to practice defensive medicine. In other words, they're practicing medicine in anticipation of getting sued because there's so many suits, and that runs up the cost of health care. And the lawsuits run up the cost of premiums for docs, which run good docs out of business. I can't tell you the number of ob-gyns I've met who are anxious and upset by the fact that they, many times, cannot practice. And then you can imagine, if the ob-gyn can't practice, what it does to many pregnant women. It is stressful. It is not right. These lawsuits are a damage to our economy and to our society and to health care. You cannot be pro-doctor, pro-patient, and pro-personal-injury-lawyer at the same time. You have to choose. 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 for medical liability reform—now.

Let me talk about one other form of ownership, and that's Social Security. See, the job of a President is to solve problems, not to pass them on to future Presidents or future generations. At least that's what I think it is. I think you come to Washington, DC—if you see a problem, you solve it as best as you can. Now, others have chosen a different attitude. They just say, "We'll pass it on and let somebody else take care of it." We have a problem with Social Security.

Now, I remember the 2000 campaign, particularly here in Wisconsin, when they told the seniors, "If old George W. gets in, you're not going to get your check." You might remember that aspect of the 2000 campaign. *[Laughter]* Well, I want you to remind your friends and neighbors of all political parties, George W. got in, and our seniors got their checks. And our seniors will continue to get their checks. The seniors have nothing to worry about when it comes to the Social Security check. Neither do baby boomers like me.

But our children and our grandchildren have got a problem because of the nature of the Social Security system. There will be more recipients than payers. More baby boomers like me retire with not enough people putting money into the system, and therefore, the system is going to be in trouble for our children and our grandchildren.

In order to make sure our children and grandchildren have got a retirement system that works when they need it, we ought to allow younger workers to set aside some of their own payroll taxes in a personal savings account they call their own, a personal savings account that will earn a better rate of return than the current Social Security trust, a personal savings account that the Federal Government can never take away.

My opponent says he's for the status quo in Social Security. I think it—I don't think that's leadership. We have a problem. In a new term, I'm going to bring Republicans and Democrats together and solve the problem.

In times of change, some things do not change—now, while I'm here, I got something else I want to say, and then I want to talk to our guests here. [Laughter] The values we try to live by don't change, courage and compassion, reverence and integrity. We stand for a culture of life in which every person matters and every being counts. [Applause] Thank you all. We stand for marriage and family, which are the foundations of our society. We stand for judges who know the difference between personal opinion and the strict interpretation of the law. Go ahead and sit down.

And we stand for the second amendment to the United States Constitution, which gives every American individual the right to bear arms. And today I'm proud that Wayne LaPierre and Chris Cox from the National Rifle Association are with us. I appreciate you all coming. They have endorsed my candidacy for President of the United States, for which I'm grateful. I also am grateful for their gun safety programs

as well as their understanding that the best way to protect the American people is to firmly prosecute those who commit crimes with guns, to hold them to account, and bring them to justice.

With us today is Bill Bruins. Bill, thank you for coming. What do you do to make a living? Or do you make a living? [Laughter]

Bill Bruins. You'd have to check with my bookkeeper, my wife.

The President. That's true. [Laughter]

[At this point, Mr. Bruins made brief remarks.]

The President. By the way, they set up their farm as a limited liability corporation, which means, under Senator Kerry's plan, he's going to get a tax increase. See, he's part of the—when they raise those top two brackets, if you've got income over \$200,000 a year and you're a limited liability corp or a Subchapter S corp, you're taxed. I don't think it makes any sense to be taxing our farmers right now, as they're getting ready to make some money. I'd rather have him have the money so he can expand his farm.

How are you doing? Are you making a living?

Mr. Bruins. Yes, we are. It's been a good year. It's been a good year. Milk prices are strong. Beef prices are up. And it's just really exciting, the possibilities that we're looking at, given the climate that you've created here in Wisconsin.

The President. Well, thanks. We met back there. He asked about supporting the MILC Program. I do. I'm for the extension of the MILC Program, which would help the dairy farmers here in Wisconsin.

Mr. Bruins. Absolutely. That little program that you have endorsed and have endorsed extending has already put \$413 million in the pockets of dairy farmers in the State of Wisconsin.

The President. That's good, yes. Glad to help out. What else are you concerned about? I can tell you what you're concerned

about because you told me, but why don't you tell the people to make it look—[laughter].

Mr. Bruins. Well, because of your farm bill and the conservation provisions and the countercyclical payments that are provided with it, because of your lowering the taxes, and because of your continued commitment to making agriculture better, you have made a positive difference on agriculture in the State of Wisconsin. And as president of Wisconsin Farm Bureau, the largest farm organization in the State, I am endorsing you for a second term as President of the United States.

The President. Thank you very much. I accept. Thank you, I appreciate that. Thank you all. I was hoping that would come. [Laughter] I'm proud to get the Farm Bureau endorsement. It means a lot. It really does. In a State where it's heavily agricultural, that's a big endorsement to get, and I'm proud to receive it. Thank you, sir.

Doug Mueller is with us. Welcome. And what do you do to make a living?

Doug Mueller. I milk cows twice a day. We have a family corporation.

The President. Hopefully not by hand. [Laughter]

Mr. Mueller. No, sir, not anymore.

The President. I would say there's some new technology that's come along. [Laughter]

Mr. Mueller. And I'm not old enough that I ever milked cows by hand when I was younger, either.

The President. You boys have got big hands, though, I'll tell you. [Laughter] What's on your mind? Tell me—tell the folks what's on your mind about—

Mr. Mueller. Well, I think the energy policy is one thing that really can be a benefit to agriculture and the entire economy. The use of more—more use of ethanol, biodiesel I think is great for farmers all over the country. And the use of the ethanol, cleaner emissions and everything, too, has got to be positive for the country.

The President. Yes, it is. See, it's interesting. What's happening is that we're spending money on research and development so that we can diversify away from old usage, old habits. We've got to get away from dependency upon crude oil coming in from overseas. And one way to do so is to better use ethanol and biodiesel. I mean, can you imagine someday a President sitting in the Oval Office, they come in and say, "On crops, we've got a great corn crop," and the first reaction is, "We're less dependent on foreign sources of energy." And so we're spending a lot of money on research and development to better use crops—soybeans, like biodiesel, as well as one of—in the State of the Union Address I talked about spending money to research—to develop a hydrogen-powered automobile.

I mean, technology is going to enable us to evolve away from our current energy usage. And one way to do so is through, as Doug mentioned, through the use of agricultural products. And there's more to learn, and there's more research to be done. And that's what we're promoting. But right now we're using ethanol in significant quantities, and it's helping our farmers.

What else?

Mr. Mueller. Thank you. And the death tax is an issue that is heavily on farmer and small-business owners' minds.

[Mr. Mueller made further remarks.]

The President. Let me talk about that right quick. It's an issue in this campaign. I suggested that the Members of the United States Senate vote to repeal the death tax forever. Of course, I couldn't get my opponent's vote. [Laughter] We got quite a few votes. As a matter of fact, we put the death tax on its way to extinction. The problem is it pops back up in 2011, which is going to make some interesting estate planning decisions at that point in time.

We need to get rid of the death tax totally. It's important for our small-business

owners and our farmers and ranchers to get rid of the death tax forever, so a person can pass their farm on from one generation to the next without losing the farm. People talk about—if you got your assets tied up in land and inventory, in his case, cows and equipment, and you have to pay high death taxes, there's nothing to liquidate except for the farm itself, and that's unfair. I believe a person shouldn't be taxed twice, once during life and once after life. And I believe a person ought to be able to pass their assets on to whomever they want to pass it on to.

Thank you, Doug.

Mr. Mueller. Thank you.

The President. Lee Christenson is with us.

Audience member. [Inaudible]

The President. You got a fan base out there. [Laughter] I first got to know him because he tied some bass fishing flies for me. The flies did better than the fisherman. I was fishing, but I wasn't catching. [Laughter] He's got an interesting story to tell when it comes to preserving land.

Lee Christenson. I have a small family farm that I live on in rural Eleva, Wisconsin, just south of Eau Claire, and I took it over in 1994 from my parents. And I've converted that farm from a dairy farm into kind of a wildlife preserve, where I've utilized a lot of the Government programs that you've helped us get going. The CRP program is just the greatest program in the world.

The President. Conservation Reserve Program.

Mr. Christenson. Yes, Conservation Reserve Program. And that program allows us to take the real highly erodible land, the steep lands that are marginal farmlands, and preserve them by putting them into trees, into prairie plantings, and into solid vegetative cover that keeps our streams a lot cleaner. And I've been able to get a WHIP, which is the Wildlife Habitat Improvement grant; EQUIP, which is the Environmental Quality Incentive Program

grant through the Government; all sorts of assistance, technical assistance from the Fish and Wildlife Service. In fact, on our farm, we've taken the ditches, plugged the ditches, pulled all the tiles out of the prior converted farm fields that historically were wetlands at one time, and now we've created, just on our little farm, over 15 acres of wetlands.

So, you know, that's great that you do that, and we're able to turn the tides and create wetlands, instead of having lost them in the past.

The President. Yes, see, one of the—we used to have a policy of no new net loss—no net loss. How could you have a new net loss—no net loss of wetlands. I've now changed that policy to an increase in the number of wetlands all across the country to 3 million acres. Here's part of the way we're able to do so.

[*Mr. Christenson made further remarks.*]

The President. See, good environmental policy doesn't mean you have to be a lawyer in Washington, DC. Good environmental policy brings conservation groups together, brings hunting and fishing groups together, brings local community together, brings local environments into play, brings farmers into play. It's a collaborative effort, so we all work together to achieve national goals such as better air, cleaner water, and more wildlife preserve areas. And we're doing that. We're making very solid progress with a commonsense way of approaching environmental issues.

[*Mr. Christenson made further remarks.*]

The President. All right, I want to talk about one other thing. Thank you, sir. He doesn't hunt and fish all the time. You actually have a business.

Mr. Christenson. Yes, I forgot about that. [Laughter]

The President. What do you do?

Mr. Christenson. I have fun on the farm making wetlands and habitat and all that stuff, but I have to pay the bills. So I

have a small Subchapter S corporation with about 50 employees, and we collect deer hides all across the United States and export them to China. So we, you know, we're bringing some money back to the United States. And with these great tax breaks that we've had in the last few years, we've been able to buy more semis, more forklifts. We've put a lot of good people to work. We've hired more people. And the interest rates—my gosh, just look at what the interest rates have been the last few years. They've really, really helped us by being able to expand our credit lines and do a lot of beneficial things for business.

The President. See, the tax policy we passed, I want you to remember what it was, which my opponent voted against every aspect of the tax policy. We raised the child credit to help people's families. We reduced the marriage penalty. We believe we ought to encourage marriage, not discourage marriage through the Tax Code.

We said, "If you pay tax, you ought to get relief," instead of trying to pick and choose winners in the Tax Code. But we also provided incentives for small businesses to invest. If you invest as a small business, there is a—there's a benefit. You heard him say he bought forklifts. Good tax policy encourages certain behavior, and one of the behaviors we're trying to encourage is for people to invest more and to spend money, to spend capital, because when he buys a forklift, somebody has got to make the forklift. When somebody is making the forklift, it means somebody is going to get work. That's how the economy works. It ripples throughout the economy.

He says he's a Subchapter S corporation. He's adding jobs. It is bad policy to tax the job creators. Do you realize 70 percent of new jobs in America are created by small businesses just like this guy's? And my opponent, in order to pay for his promises, is, at the minimum, going to run up the taxes on about 900,000 Subchapter S and

LLC corporations, going to tax the job creators. That is lousy economic policy.

Let me talk about one other aspect of this campaign in your life, and that is how to make sure we keep America secure. The most solemn responsibility of the American President is to protect the American people. If we show uncertainty or weakness in this decade, this world of ours will drift toward tragedy. That's not going to happen on my watch.

I understand the world in which we live. This is an important issue in this campaign. Let me tell you some of the lessons I have learned about the post-September the 11th world in which we live. The first lesson is, we face an enemy that is ruthless and has no conscience. They will kill just like that, whether it be in airplanes on the World Trade Center or in a schoolhouse in the Caucasus region of the world. That's what they'll do, and therefore, you cannot negotiate with these people. You cannot hope for the best with these people. You can't say, "Well, oh, gosh, we'll change the way we conduct foreign policy and hope they change their ways." The only way to deal with them is to find them and bring them to justice before they hurt us again.

Secondly, this is a different kind of war than we're used to, and therefore, it's important to think differently about how to protect the American people. One way to do so is to make it very clear that if a country harbors a terrorist, they're just as guilty as the terrorist. And when the President says something, it is important that the President speak clearly, so everybody understands, and mean what he says.

And I meant what I said to the Taliban in Afghanistan. See, they were the ones harboring Al Qaida. Thousands of people were trained there. It's kind of the classic case of the host and the parasite—the Al Qaida was the parasite, and the host was becoming weaker and weaker and—in the sense that Al Qaida had free will, doing what they wanted to do inside the country. There was no restrictions whatsoever. And

they ignored our demands until the Taliban no longer is in power. We took them out of power, thanks to a great United States military.

I want the youngsters here to understand what has taken place. It's a phenomenal moment in history, phenomenal. See, it wasn't all that long ago—3½ years ago is hardly anything in the march of history—that the people in Afghanistan were living under a brutal reign of people whose vision is so dark and dim that it's hard for Americans to comprehend. And when you hear me talk about the ideologues of hate, I'm talking about the Taliban and the people like Al Qaida. Young girls were not allowed to go to school. See, that's their vision of the world. And if their moms didn't toe the line, they were taken into the public square and whipped, in some cases killed in the sports stadium. These people were grim.

But because we acted in our own self-interest, because we acted to uphold doctrine and make this world a safer place and to protect the American people, millions of Afghan citizens went to the polls to vote for a President of their country. The first voter was a 19-year-old woman at the polls. It's amazing. Because we acted in our self-interest, the poor people living in that country have been liberated from the clutches. They no longer live in darkness. They live in light, because freedom is on the march.

And that's important for our long-term security. It's important because free societies are peaceful societies. A free society will become an ally in the war on terror. A free society will set an incredibly hopeful example for others who long for freedom.

Thirdly, when we see a threat, we've got to deal with it. You know, we used to think oceans could protect us. We'd see a threat overseas, and if we didn't deal with it, it could be okay because it wouldn't come home to hurt us. That all changed on September the 11th.

I saw a threat with Saddam Hussein. I saw a threat because he was a sworn enemy of the United States. I saw a threat because we had been at war with him. I saw a threat because he invaded his neighborhood. I saw a threat because he was shooting missiles at our airplanes who were trying to enforce the world's sanctions. I saw a threat—he paid suicide bombers; he harbored Abu Nidal and Abu Abbas. Terrorist Zarqawi was in and out of his country. I saw a threat because he had used weapons of mass destruction. Saddam Hussein was a threat.

The Congress looked at the same intelligence I looked at and concluded he was a threat. My opponent looked at the very same intelligence, the very same data, and concluded that Saddam Hussein was a threat and voted to authorize his removal. Now, before the President ever commits troops into harm's way—listen, I understand the consequences. To commit our troops is the last option for me. To put somebody in harm's way is the very last choice, not the first, second, or third. It is the last. And so I went to the United Nations in hopes that diplomacy would solve the threat. And as—they passed a resolution 15 to nothing, and Saddam Hussein just ignored it, just like he had done 16 different resolutions.

You know, we didn't find the stockpiles we thought we found—that we thought we would find, that everybody thought we'd find. But we did find that he had the capability to restart a weapons programs—he still hated us—that he was using the Oil for Food Programme to game the system, to get the world to look the other way, to get rid of the sanctions so he could restart his programs. The biggest danger we face is a terrorist network ending up with weapons of mass destruction. Knowing what I know today, I would have made the same decision. [Applause] Thank you.

My opponent was recently interviewed, and he said September the 11th, in quotes, his words, "did not change me much at

all.” See, and it’s reflected in his attitude and his policies. He says, “Well, this is just a intelligence and law enforcement matter.” No, this is a matter that requires all the assets of the United States of America in order to protect you.

He said that Iraq is a “diversion” from the war on terror. That’s a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of the world in which we live, and it’s a dangerous misunderstanding. Mr. Zarqawi, who is fighting us in Iraq, was in Afghanistan, in terror training camps. He then got run out of Afghanistan because of us and moved to Iraq. He then was working with a poisons factory in northern Iraq. And now we’ve got him on the run inside of Iraq, and he’s fighting us. And he says this is a diversion? Does he think if we weren’t in Iraq that Mr. Zarqawi would become a peaceful citizen of the world? *[Laughter]* He’s a dangerous man. He hates what we stand for. He intends to inflict harm. It is best we defeat Zarqawi in Iraq so we do not have to face him here at home.

You cannot win a war when you don’t believe we’re fighting one, and that’s my opponent. The most solemn duty of the American President is to protect the American people. If we show uncertainty or weakness in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. It’s not going to happen on my watch.

The third lesson—fourth lesson is when we put somebody in harm’s way, they deserve the full support of our Government. And that’s why I went to the United States Congress and asked for \$87 billion of very important funding, funding to support our troops in combat. And we received great support, strong bipartisan support. I want you to tell your friends and neighbors of this startling statistic. Of the 100 Members of the United States Senate, only 4 voted to authorize the use of force and then did not vote for the funding to support the troops in combat, 2 of whom are my opponent and his runningmate.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. They asked him, they said, “How did you make that vote?” He said, “Well, I actually did vote for the \$87 billion, right before I voted against it.” It may be the most famous quote of the 2004 campaign. They then kept pressing him and pressing him, and he finally said, “The whole thing is a complicated matter.” There is nothing complicated about supporting the men and women who wear the United States uniform in harm’s way. *[Applause]* Thank you all.

I want to thank the family members of our military who are here. I want to thank the veterans who are here who have set such a great example for those who wear the uniform.

I want to share one more thing with you that I think is important for you to know about me. I believe in the power of liberty to transform societies. Let me tell you what I mean by that. Perhaps an example is the best way to make my point. Laura and I have a great friend in Prime Minister Koizumi of Japan. We like him. He’s a fun guy to be around. He’s a good friend. I saw him in New York at the United Nations in early September. I said, “You know, I’m talking about you when I get out there on the campaign trail. I hope you don’t mind.” He said, “Fine, go ahead and talk about me.” I didn’t ask him permission to tell you what I’m about to tell you, and that is, Elvis is his favorite singer—truthfully—*[laughter]*—and “High Noon” is his favorite movie. *[Laughter]*

Anyway, so, you know, it doesn’t sound that—must not sound—to some it probably doesn’t sound that profound that the Prime Minister of Japan and I are friends. But remember this part of history: 60 years ago, they were the sworn enemy of the United States of America. We were at war with the Japanese. And a lot of relatives of yours, I’m confident, fought in that war. My dad did, and other dads and granddads did as well. And it was a tough war, and we lost a lot of folks.

Yet, after we won the war, President Harry S. Truman believed in the power of liberty to transform an enemy into an ally. That's what he believed. So did a lot of other Americans. A lot of other Americans didn't agree with him, though. Why help the enemy? And the enemy couldn't become a democracy. You know, there was a lot of excuses and a lot of pessimism about the helping the Japanese. But fortunately, they stuck to it. Japan became a democracy. And today I sit down at the table with Prime Minister Koizumi, talking about how to keep the peace we all want, talking about keeping the peace.

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

I believe people in the Middle East want to live in freedom. That's what I believe. The people of Afghanistan showed what freedom can mean. Do you realize women stood in line for hours waiting to vote, after having lived in a society where they had no rights. And they stood in line to vote, even though the Taliban were threatening them with death and destruction. People want to be free. I believe women in the greater Middle East want to live in a free society. I believe moms and dads want to raise their children 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.

It's the last time I'm going to be in Eau Claire before the election, but I do want to thank you for coming. And when I campaigned in your State in 2000, 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, we will carry Wisconsin, and I will do so for 4 more years.

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

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:49 p.m. at J&D Manufacturing. In his remarks, he referred to Don and Diana Redetzke, founders, J&D Manufacturing; Milwaukee County Executive Scott K. Walker; John Gard, speaker, Wisconsin State Assembly; Dale Schultz, candidate in Wisconsin's Third Congressional District; Tim Michels, senatorial candidate in Wisconsin, and his wife, Barbara; Wayne LaPierre, Jr., executive vice president and chief executive officer, and Chris W. Cox, Institute for Legislative Action executive director, National Rifle Association; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi; and Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan.

Statement on Signing the Belarus Democracy Act of 2004 *October 20, 2004*

The Belarus Democracy Act of 2004, which I signed into law earlier today, will help the cause of freedom in Belarus. This bipartisan legislation demonstrates America's deep concern over events in Belarus and a commitment to sustain those Belarusians who must labor in the shadows to return freedom to their country.

At a time when freedom is advancing around the world, Aleksandr Lukashenko and his Government are turning Belarus into a regime of repression in the heart of Europe, its Government isolated from its neighbors and its people isolated from each other. We will work with our allies and partners to assist those seeking to return Belarus to its rightful place among