

Remarks in Davenport, Iowa
October 25, 2004

The President. Thank you all. Thanks for coming. It is great to be back in the great city of Davenport, Iowa. Laura and I are—[*applause*]. Thanks for coming. You've lifted our spirits today. We really appreciate you being here.

We're heading down the stretch. I'm here to ask for your vote. I'm here to ask for your help. I need you to go to your friends and neighbors and remind them we have a duty in this great democracy to vote. Don't overlook discerning Democrats when you get people going to the polls, by the way, people like Senator Zell Miller. Remind your friends and neighbors if they want a safer country, a stronger country, and a better country, to put me and Dick Cheney back in office.

Laura and I were in the seventh grade together in San Jacinto Junior High, in Midland, Texas, and then we became re-acquainted. She was a public school librarian when I met her again. I said, "Will you marry me?" She said, "Fine, if you make me one promise." I said, "What is it?" "Promise me I'll never have to give a political speech." [*Laughter*] I said, "Okay, you've got a deal." [*Laughter*] Fortunately, she didn't hold me to that promise. She's giving a lot of speeches, and when she does, the American people see a strong, compassionate First Lady.

And I'm proud of my runningmate, Dick Cheney. You know, I'm looking around, and I can see a few folks out there have got the same hairstyle he does. [*Laughter*] I did not pick the Vice President because of his hairdo. [*Laughter*] And I admit, he doesn't have the waviest hair in the race. [*Laughter*] I picked him because he can get the job done for the American people.

How about Rudy? We love traveling with Rudy. Rudy is a great American. We woke up, and we had breakfast with Rudy and Judith at our place in Crawford. Then we

went to Greeley, Colorado. Then we went to the western part of your State, and we're finishing a great day here in Davenport. And I want to thank Rudy—I want to thank him for joining me. I appreciate his support.

So I was telling Laura, I said, "You know something, the South Lawn at the White House has got a lot of grass on it, and we need somebody to come and mow it." [*Laughter*] "I can't think of anybody better than the chairman, Chuck Grassley, to be mowing our lawn." What a good man Chuck Grassley is. He's a great United States Senator. I know you're proud of him.

And I'm proud of your Congressman, Jim Nussle, the budget chairman. He's watching your money like a hawk—eye. He's a good man. And I know you're proud of a Congressman who was raised right here, former Congressman. He moved up the road a little bit, but a man we call friend, and that's Congressman Jim Leach, and his wife, Deb, is here.

I want to thank all the grassroots activists who are here, the people putting up the signs, the people making the phone calls, the people organizing a rally just like this one. I want to thank you for what you have done and what you're going to do. With your hard work, with your help, we will carry Iowa and win a great victory on November the 2d.

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

The President. We have just 8 days to go in this campaign, and voters have a clear choice between two very different candidates with dramatically different approaches and different records. You know where I stand, and sometimes, you even know where my opponent stands. [*Laughter*] We both have records. I'm proudly running on mine. The Senator is running from his. [*Laughter*] And there's a reason

why. There is a mainstream in American politics, and my opponent sits on the far left bank. I'm a compassionate conservative and proudly so. In a time when our country has much to accomplish and much to offer, I proudly offer my record of reform and results.

This election comes down to five clear choices for America's families, five choices on issues of great consequence: your family's security; your family's budget; your quality of life; your retirement; and the bedrock values that are so critical to our country's future.

The first clear choice is the most important because it concerns the security of your family. All our progress on every other issue depends on the safety of our citizens. This will be the first Presidential election since September the 11th, 2001. Americans will go to the polls in a time of war and ongoing threats unlike any we have faced before. The terrorists who killed thousands are still dangerous, and they're determined. The outcome of this election will set the direction of the war against terror. 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've strengthened the protections for our homeland. We're reforming our intelligence capabilities. We're transforming our army. There will be no draft. We will keep the All-Volunteer Army. We are determined. We are relentless. We are staying on the offensive, and we're succeeding. The 9/11 Commission report said, "America is safer, not yet safe." More than three-quarters of Al Qaida's key members and associates have been brought to justice. The rest of them know we're on their trail.

The American President, in these times of danger, must lead with consistency and strength. In a war, sometimes your tactics change but not your principles. Americans have seen how I do my job. Even when you might not agree with me, you know what I believe and where I stand and what I intend to do. On good days and on bad days, whether the polls are up or the polls are down, I am determined to win the war on terror, and I will always support the men and women who wear the uniform.

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

The President. My opponent has taken a different approach. It's fair to say that consistency has not been his strong point. [Laughter] Senator Kerry says we're better off with Saddam Hussein out of power, except when he declares that removing Saddam has made us less safe. He stated in our second debate that he always believed Saddam was a threat, except a few questions later, when he said Saddam Hussein was not a threat. [Laughter] He says he was right when he voted to authorize the use of force against Saddam Hussein, but that I was wrong to use force against Saddam Hussein. [Laughter]

Now my opponent is throwing out the wild claim that he knows where bin Laden was in the fall of 2001, and that our military passed up the chance to get him in Tora Bora. This is unjustified criticism of our military commanders in the field. This is the worst kind of Monday morning quarterbacking. And it's what we've come to expect from my opponent during this campaign.

In fact, our Commander in Afghanistan, General Tommy Franks, recently wrote about Tora Bora, and he said, "The Senator's understanding of events does not square with reality." The General said that American Special Forces were actively involved in the search for the terrorists in Tora Bora and that intelligence reports at the time placed bin Laden in several countries.

Before Senator Kerry got into political difficulty and revised his views, he saw our actions in Tora Bora differently. In the fall of 2001, on national TV, he said this about Tora Bora, "I think we've been doing this pretty effectively, and we should continue to do it that way." At the time, the Senator said about Tora Bora, "I think we've been smart. I think the administration leadership has done it well, and we are on the right track." End quote. All I can say about that is, I am George W. Bush, and I approve of that message.

Senator Kerry's record on national security has a far deeper problem than election-year flip-flopping. On the largest national security issues of our time, he has been consistently wrong. When Ronald Reagan was confronting the Soviet Union at the height of the cold war, Senator Kerry said that President Reagan's policy of peace through strength was making America less safe.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. He voted against many weapons systems critical to our defense buildup. History has shown that Senator Kerry was wrong, and President Ronald Reagan was right.

When former President Bush led a coalition against Saddam Hussein in 1991, Senator Kerry voted against the use of force to liberate Kuwait.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. If his view had prevailed, Saddam Hussein today would dominate the Middle East and possess the world's most dangerous weapons. History has shown that Senator Kerry was wrong, and former President George Bush was right.

In 1994, just one year after the first bombing of the World Trade Center, Senator Kerry proposed massive cuts in America's intelligence budget.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. So massive that even his Massachusetts colleague, Ted Kennedy, opposed them. [Laughter] History has shown that Senator Kerry was wrong and—we've

got be fair—Senator Kennedy was right. [Laughter]

Just last year, American troops in Iraq and Afghanistan needed \$87 billion for important funding to help them complete their missions. First, my opponent said, "It would be irresponsible to vote against the troops." Then he voted against the troops.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. You might remember perhaps the most famous quote of the 2004 campaign. They asked him about his vote, and he said, "I actually did vote for the \$87 billion, right before I voted against it." History has shown that Senator Kerry was right, then wrong—[laughter]—then briefly right—[laughter]—then wrong again. [Laughter] Since then, he said, "The whole thing was a complicated matter." My fellow Americans, there's nothing complicated about supporting our troops in harm's way.

During the last 20 years, in key moments of challenge and decision for America, Senator Kerry has chosen a position of weakness and inaction. With that record, he stands in opposition not just to me but to the great tradition of the Democratic Party. The party of Franklin Roosevelt and Harry Truman and John Kennedy is rightly remembered for confidence and resolve in times of war and hours of crisis. Senator Kerry has turned his back on "pay any price" and "bear any burden." And he's replaced those commitments with "wait and see" and "cut and run." Many Democrats in this country do not recognize their party anymore. And today I want to speak to every one of them. If you believe that America should lead with strength and purpose and confidence in our ideals, I would be honored to have your support, and I'm asking for your vote.

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

The President. The second clear choice in this election concerns your family's budget. When I ran for President 4 years ago, I pledged to lower taxes for American families, and I kept my word. I enjoyed

working with Chairman Chuck Grassley to keep a pledge I made. We doubled the child credit to \$1,000 per child. We reduced the marriage penalty. The Tax Code should encourage marriage, not penalize marriage. We dropped the lowest bracket to 10 percent so working families could keep more of their paychecks. We reduced taxes for everybody who pays taxes. After-tax income is up—that's money in your pocket to spend—it's up by about 10 percent since I became your President.

I want you to remind your friends and neighbors what this economy has been through. Six months prior to our arrival in Washington, DC, the stock market was in serious decline. And then we faced the recession and corporate scandals and the attacks of September the 11th, 2001, which cost us about a million jobs in the 3 months after that fateful day.

But our economic policies have put us back on the road to growth. Our economy is growing at rates as fast as any in nearly 20 years. The homeownership rate is at an alltime high. Our farmers are making a good living. The entrepreneurial spirit is strong. Small businesses are flourishing all across our country. We've added more than 1.9 million new jobs in the last 13 months. The national unemployment rate is 5.4 percent, lower than the average rate of the 1970s, the 1980s, and the 1990s. The unemployment rate in the great State of Iowa is 4.7 percent. This economy is strong, and it is getting stronger.

My opponent has very different plans for your budget—for your family's budget, and that's to take a big chunk out of it.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. You tell your friends and neighbors, he voted against the child credit, marriage penalty relief, lower tax rates. If his vote had prevailed, an average middle-class family would be paying \$2,000 more a year to the Federal Government.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. It's part of a pattern. He's been in the United States Senate for 20

years, and he's voted for tax increases 98 times. That's about five times every year. That's predictable. When a Senator does something that often, he must really enjoy it. [*Laughter*] During his campaign, he's made a lot of big promises—big spending promises too. He's promised \$2.2 trillion of new spending. That's trillion with a "T." That's a lot even for a Senator from Massachusetts. [*Laughter*]

So they asked him, "How are you going to pay for it?" He said, "Oh, we'll just tax the rich." You've heard that before, haven't you? When you run up the top two brackets, one, he's taxing a lot of small businesses. Seventy percent of job—new jobs in America are created by small businesses. Most small businesses pay individual income-tax rates. And when you're running up the taxes, you're taxing the job creators, and that is bad economic policy. When you raise the top two brackets, you raise between 600 billion and 800 billion dollars. That's far short of the 2.2 trillion. There is a gap. And guess who usually pays that gap?

Audience members. We do!

The President. You do. The good news is, we're going to carry Iowa. We're going to win on November the 2d, and he's not going to tax you.

The third clear choice in this election involves the quality of life for our Nation's families. A good education and quality health care are important to a successful life. When I ran for President 4 years ago, I promised to challenge the soft bigotry of low expectations in every school in America, and I kept my word. We passed good reforms. The No Child Left Behind Act has raised standards. It believes in local control of schools. Schools are now more accountable. Our children are learning to read and write and add and subtract. We're closing achievement gaps all across this country for minority students. We'll build on these reforms. We'll extend high standards to our high schools, so that no child is left behind in America.

And we'll continue to improve lives for our families by making health care more affordable and accessible. We'll expand health savings accounts so more small businesses can cover their workers and more families are able to get health care accounts they can manage and call their own. We will help our small businesses afford health insurance by allowing them to pool together so they can buy insurance at the same discounts that big companies are able to do. We will expand community health centers and rural health centers to help the poor and the indigent. We'll make sure every eligible child is enrolled in our Government's low-income health insurance program.

And to make sure health care is available and affordable, we will do something about these frivolous lawsuits that are running up the cost of medicine. I've met too many ob-gyns around this Nation that are having trouble practicing medicine because the lawsuits are running up their premiums and driving them out of business. I've met too many pregnant women who are worried about the quality of the health care they're receiving because their ob-gyn can't practice in the local community. This is a national problem that requires a national solution. You cannot be pro-doctor and pro-patient and pro-trial-lawyer at the same time. You have to make a choice. My opponent made his choice, and he put a personal-injury trial lawyer on the ticket.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. I made my choice. I have made my choice. I'm standing with the doctors, and I'm standing with the patients. I'm for medical liability reform—now.

My opponent has a different point of view when it comes to schools and health care. He voted for the No Child Left Behind Act but now wants to weaken the accountability standards. For example, he's proposed including measures like teacher attendance to judge whether a student can read or write or add and subtract. We need to keep high standards in our schools.

We've got to expect the best for the children. And he voted against health savings accounts. He opposes association health plans. He voted 10 times against medical liability reform. He can run from his record, but he cannot hide.

No, he's laid out a plan for health care, and it would be a big-Government health care plan. Eighty percent of the people who get coverage under his proposal would be enrolled in a Government program. Now, listen, I remember those debates when he looked right in the camera with a straight face and said, "The Government has nothing to do with it." I could barely contain myself. *[Laughter]* The Government has got a lot to do with it. It's a plan that will lead us down the road to Federal control of health care. In all we do to improve health care, we will make sure the decisions are made by doctors and patients, not by officials in Washington, DC.

The fourth clear choice in this election involves your retirement. Our Nation has made a solemn commitment to America's seniors on Social Security and Medicare. When I ran for President 4 years ago, I promised to keep that commitment and improve Medicare by adding prescription drug coverage. I kept my word. I want you to remember the history on Medicare. Leaders in both political parties have talked about strengthening and modernizing Medicare for years. We got the job done. And I want to thank Chairman Chuck Grassley for his hard work on this issue. Seniors are getting discounts on medicine with drug discount cards. Low-income seniors are getting \$600 of help this year and \$600 of help next year. And beginning in 2006, all seniors will be able to get prescription drug coverage under Medicare.

Here we have another difference in this campaign. My opponent voted against the Medicare bill that included prescription drug coverage, even though it was supported by AARP and other seniors groups. In this campaign, he said, "If I'm President,

we're going to repeal that phony bill." Then he went on to say, "No, I don't want to repeal it." [Laughter] Sounds familiar. [Laughter] As your President for the next 4 years, I will defend the reforms we have worked so hard to pass and keep the promise of Medicare for America's seniors. And I will keep the promise of Social Security for our seniors, and we will strengthen Social Security for generations to come.

Now, I want to remind you all what took place in the 2000 election and may be taking place in this election already, and that is that every—every campaign cycle it seems like somebody is trying to scare our seniors. See, in 2000, they said, "If George W. gets elected, our seniors will not get their checks." As you're out rounding up the votes, I want you to remind people, George W. did get elected, and our seniors did get their checks. And I plan on getting reelected, and our seniors will continue to get their checks. And baby boomers like me, we're 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 worry about whether or not a retirement system—a viable retirement system in Social Security will be there when they need it. And that's 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 a better rate of return, an account they own, an account the Government cannot take away.

My opponent takes a different approach. He said he talks about protecting Social Security, but he's the only candidate in this race who has voted eight times for higher taxes on Social Security benefits.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. He might not want us to remind him of that. He can run, but he cannot hide.

And when it comes to a younger generation, he offered nothing, no reforms. The job of the President is to confront problems, not to pass them on to future Presi-

dents and future generations. I will bring Republicans and Democrats together to make sure Social Security is viable for a younger generation of Americans.

And the fifth and final clear choice in this election is on the values that are so crucial to keeping America's families strong. And here, my opponent and I are miles apart. I stand for the appointment of Federal judges who know the difference between personal opinion and the strict interpretation of the law. I believe marriage is a sacred commitment. Marriage is a pillar of civilization, and I will defend it. This is not a partisan issue. When Congress passed the Defense of Marriage Act, which defined marriage as a union of a man and a woman, the vast majority of Democrats supported it, and the bill was signed by my predecessor.

But Senator Kerry was part of an out-of-the-mainstream minority that voted against the Defense of Marriage Act.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. I believe that reasonable people can find common ground on the difficult issues. Republicans and Democrats, many citizens on both sides of the life issue came together and agreed we should ban the brutal practice of partial-birth abortion. I proudly signed that bill.

Senator Kerry was part of the out-of-the-mainstream minority that voted against the ban.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. He also voted against parental notification laws. He voted against the Unborn Victims of Violence Act. I'll continue to reach out to Americans of every belief and move this goodhearted Nation toward a culture of life.

My opponent has said that the heart and soul of America can be found in Hollywood.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. I know. Most American families do not look to Hollywood for a source of values. [Laughter] The heart and

soul of America is found in caring and loving communities like Davenport, Iowa.

All these choices make this one of the most important elections in our history. The security and prosperity of our country, the health and education for our families, the retirement of our seniors, and the direction of our culture are all at stake. And the decision is in the best of hands; it's in the hands of the American people.

I see a great day coming for America. One of my favorite quotes was written by a fellow Texan named Tom Lea. He said, "Sarah and I live on the east side of the mountain. It's the sunrise side, not the sunset side. It is the side to see the day that is coming, not to see the day that has gone." My opponent has spent much of this campaign talking about the day that has gone. I'm talking about the day that's coming.

You know, we have been through a lot together over the past years. Because we've done the hard work of climbing the mountain, we can see the valley below. We'll protect our families. We'll build on their prosperity. We'll defend our Nation's deep-

est values. We'll spread freedom in the world, and as we do, we'll achieve the peace we all long for.

When I traveled your State in 2000, asking for the vote, first in the caucuses and then in the general election, I made this pledge: I pledged that I would uphold the honor and the integrity 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 5:30 p.m. at the RiverCenter. In his remarks, he referred to Senator Zell Miller of Georgia, who made the keynote address at the 2004 Republican National Convention; former Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani of New York City, and his wife, Judith; Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; and Gen. Tommy R. Franks, USA (Ret.), former combatant commander, U.S. Central Command. He also referred to the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States (9/11 Commission).

Remarks in Onalaska, Wisconsin October 26, 2004

The President. Thank you all. What a great way to spend a Tuesday, and that's to be on a bus traveling throughout the great State of Wisconsin. Thank you all for coming out to say hello. It's such an honor to be here. Laura and I are—our spirits are lifted up because so many have come out to say hello. We're honored you are here. I'm here to ask for your vote. I'm here to ask for your help. There's no doubt in my mind, if we turn out our vote in Wisconsin, we'll win a great victory on November the 2d.

I don't know if you know the history of me and Laura. We were in the seventh

grade together in San Jacinto Junior High in Midland, Texas, and then we became reacquainted years later when she was a public school librarian. And I asked her to marry me—I'm sure some of you can relate to this. She said, "Fine, but make me a promise." I said, "What is it?" "Well, promise me I'll never have to give a political speech." [Laughter] I said, "Okay, you've got a deal." [Laughter] Fortunately, she didn't hold me to that promise. She's giving a lot of speeches, and when she does the American people see a warm, compassionate, great First Lady. I have been traveling your State a lot, talking about the