

I have said repeatedly that all options are on the table for strengthening Social Security, with the exception of raising the payroll tax rate. I'm willing to listen to any good idea. And I will work in good faith with Members of Congress from both parties on this issue.

Some in Washington want to deny that Social Security has a problem, but the American people know better, and you have the power to determine the outcome of this debate. I encourage all Americans, particularly our younger workers, who have so much at stake, to ask your elected leaders what they intend to do to keep the promise of Social Security alive in the 21st century. Saving Social Security will not be

easy, but if you make clear that you expect your leaders to confront problems head on, not pass them on to future generations, I am confident that we will put aside partisan politics in Washington and meet our duty to you, the American people.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 8:20 a.m. on February 25 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on February 26. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 25 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

## Remarks at a Dinner for the National Governors Association Conference February 27, 2005

It's always a pleasure to host the Nation's Governors here in Washington. Laura and I are proud to have you here for our first state dinner of my second term.

It's a joyous occasion, even made more so by the fact that I learned that the Blancos, Governor Blanco and her husband, are celebrating their 40th wedding anniversary tonight.

Ever since a former Governor of Virginia, Thomas Jefferson, lived in this house, many of our Presidents have first served as Governors. And there's a reason why. The experience of running a State government, of pulling together a capable team, of setting an agenda and working with an elected legislative body, is critical to the success of any administration.

My 6 years as Governor of Texas have been invaluable to me as I carry out my duties as the Presidency. And because I know firsthand how—the valuable experience Governors get, I've asked a lot to serve in my Cabinet. I had six Governors in my first Cabinet. I am pleased that Mike

Johanns—Johanns—[laughter]—and Mike Leavitt—[laughter]—have agreed to serve in my second term. I'm proud you guys are here.

When our Founders devised our Federal system two centuries ago, they recognized, in Jefferson's words, that "our country is too large to have all its affairs directed by a single government." The President and the Governors are partners in our great enterprise, and that means we share great responsibilities. Together, we'll work to secure our homeland, to protect our environment, to strengthen our economy. Together, we will work to ensure that every child gets a good education and good health care. And together, we'll work to make sure that we care for those in our society who hurt and who need help. I'm proud of our work together during the last 4 years. I look forward to working with you for the next 4 years.

I want to ask you to join me in a toast to our partners, the Governors and the administration, in building a more perfect

Union. To the Governors of the United States.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:06 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Kathleen Babineaux Blanco of Louisiana and her hus-

band, Raymond Blanco; Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns and his wife, Stephanie Johanns; and Health and Human Services Secretary Michael O. Leavitt and his wife, Jacalyn S. Leavitt. The transcript of these remarks was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 28.

## Remarks to the National Governors Association Conference February 28, 2005

*The President.* Thank you. Please be seated. Didn't take you long to get back. [Laughter] Hope you enjoyed that as much as I did last night. It was—Marvin was great.

I'd like to have a few—I'll make a few opening comments, and then I'll be glad to field some questions. First, I want to thank Governor Warner and Governor Huckabee for leading the NGA; I appreciate the job you've done. I thought the messaging in our local newspapers here was very positive: "Governors coming together to try to figure out how to solve common problems." It's a good message for all of us here in Washington to hear. This town can be fairly bitter at times, and I remember fondly my days of working with people in both parties to try to get positive things done for my State. I hope that the spirit in which you all have come to Washington spreads throughout the Nation's Capital.

I appreciate the members of my Cabinet who are here. Your name is?

*Secretary of Agriculture Mike Johanns.* Johanns. [Laughter]

*The President.* It takes a while to get to know every member of the Cabinet. [Laughter] And Mike Leavitt and Chertoff—oh, there you are. Good, yes. I appreciate—I hope you find these folks as candid and as bright as I have found them. I really appreciate all three members of my Cabinet willing to come and serve in Washington. As you know, your administra-

tion can be defined by who you surround yourself with, and I've surrounded myself with good, capable people—and I hope you found that to be the case—candid, open people that are interested in working with our Governors.

And we've had some challenges that we have faced together. Our economy, as you know, got rocked by a recession and then an attack and corporate scandals. But I'm pleased to know that your budgets are improving, that revenues are on the rise. That's because the economy is growing, and we're adding jobs. And the fundamental question is, how do we keep the economic growth alive? I spend a lot of time thinking about that here in Washington. I brought some ideas forward to the Congress, such as making sure the tax relief that we passed is permanent, that people are able to predict their tax rates in a better way so that they can plan. Part of making sure the entrepreneurial spirit is strong is so there's a kind of certainty. And we're working with Congress to make sure there's certainty.

The Tax Code, itself, needs to be reformed. I think the Tax Code is one that inhibits the flow of capital and growth. And so I've called upon former Senators Mack and Breaux to bring forth some ideas about how to simplify the Tax Code to make it more entrepreneurial-friendly. That report should come out this summer. It will be an interesting challenge, but it's one that