

hemisphere, we have a moral obligation and a vital interest in helping the Central American economies and societies succeed. And therefore, CAFTA needs to be passed.

By strengthening democracy in the region, CAFTA will lead to greater security and stability. I appreciate so very much the hard work of the Central American leadership. I've had a chance to visit with these good folks. As a matter of fact, they've been coming to America quite often, and I've been going there sometimes. And that's important. That's what friends do. They strategize. They talk. The American people have got to understand, we've got friends in the leadership in Central America. And they're working hard to punish corruption and keep the streets safe. They're working hard to make sure they have a society that respects human rights and the rule of law. We're working together to nail the drug traffickers and terrorists and criminal gangs who feed on lawlessness and instability.

CAFTA will strengthen those who are taking on the forces of radicalism and violence in this hemisphere, and it will make our country more secure. As former Governor of a State that shares a long border with Mexico, I know first hand the importance of improving ties with our neighbors. It's really important that we've got strong ties in a neighborhood in which you live. I understand the importance of removing

trade barriers that make it difficult for our businesses and farmers to compete.

This bill that the House of Representatives will be voting on next week is pro-jobs, pro-growth, and pro-democracy. It is important that we pass this piece of legislation. And I want to thank you all for giving me a chance to come and talk about its importance. And I encourage you to keep doing what you're doing, is talking to Members of the United States Congress and remind them, set aside partisan politics for the good of the United States of America. It's in our economic interests, it's in our national security interests that the House of Representatives join the United States Senate and pass that CAFTA bill, which I'll proudly sign on behalf of America's workers and small businesses and those of us who love and cherish democracy.

May God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:12 a.m. at the Organization of American States. In his remarks, he referred to Raul Yzaguirre, former president and chief executive officer, National Council of LaRaza; Anne Alonzo, co-founder, Hispanic Alliance for Free Trade; and Secretary General Jose Miguel Insulza of the Organization of American States. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Statement on House of Representatives Passage of PATRIOT Act Reauthorization Legislation

July 21, 2005

I commend the House for voting to reauthorize provisions of the PATRIOT Act that are set to expire this year. The PATRIOT Act has enhanced information sharing between law enforcement and intelligence personnel, updated the law to adapt to changes in technology, and provided critical tools to investigate terrorists that have been

used for years in cases against organized crime and drug dealers. The PATRIOT Act is a key part of our efforts to combat terrorism and protect the American people, and the Congress needs to send me a bill soon that renews the act without weakening our ability to fight terror.

Remarks in a Visit With Senior Citizens in Atlanta, Georgia
July 22, 2005

The President. How are you? Say hello to my mother. How's everybody? So what are you doing here, Patty?

Patti Patterson. We're talking about the extra help application. I'm trying to get these guys to help me spread the word to anybody and everybody that they might know might be eligible for this extra help.

The President. Well, thank you. You know, sometimes when a person hears that their Medicare program is going to change, it creates a little anxiety. And what we need is people all around the country saying to a friend, "Just take a look at the new plan." I'm telling you, we're coming with a good plan for seniors. It's really going to help a lot of people.

So this is an effort to reach out to people all around the country—here in Atlanta and all around the country—to explain to people there are some new options in Medicare that will make their lives better. It's voluntary. If you like what you got, you can stay with what you got. If you're interested in the new ideas, we're out making sure people know those options are available.

I want to thank you for being interested in helping. This is going to require a lot of chatter, a lot of people talking to their neighbors, and a lot of people helping people understand what's available and the forums that are available and the programs that are available. And I want to thank you all for reaching out.

Ms. Patterson. Thank you.

The President. I brought somebody with me—[laughter]—my favorite senior citizen. [Laughter]

Former First Lady Barbara Bush. I have to be, I've got an almost 60-year-old son. [Laughter]

The President. We'd like to say hello to you. Thanks for doing this. This is a national effort that you're a part of.

Former First Lady Bush. Weren't you going to tell people they ought to ask doctors, lawyers, people they trust whether this is a good deal for them?

The President. Yes, I am.

Former First Lady Bush. Yes, you are. [Laughter]

The President. You ought to ask your people that you count on for advice, that this is a good deal. You know, for a lot of seniors, the prescription drug benefit is going to help change their lives in a positive way. Again, if you're happy with what you're getting from Medicare or your private insurance plan, nothing changes. That's what people have got to understand. But for a lot of folks, this new modernization of Medicare is going to provide some new benefits that are going to be incredibly important.

Former First Lady Bush. It saves them money.

The President. And save money, yes. See? That's why she's here—to remind me of what to say—[laughter]—and save their lives.

One of the things that's interesting about Medicare is that there's a new benefit that enables people to get preventative screenings early. If you now join Medicare, the first thing that happens is the Government will give you a screening to determine whether or not there's any illnesses or conditions that need to be addressed now. That's a change in Medicare. That seems to make sense to me. If you diagnose a problem early, it's easier to solve the problem. And then starting in January of next year, there's going to be a new prescription drug benefit. And seniors, by the way, will get more choices to choose from. But it's all voluntary. In other words, the Government is not saying, "You have to do this." The Government is saying, "These programs are available to you."