

Kendrick opened his home to family members in need, and he returned to school as soon as possible. Today this good man is graduating at the top of his class, and he hopes to attend law school one day. Here is what Kendrick said: "I'd be doggoned if I was going to let Hurricane Katrina stop me. I thought, 'You started school when you were blind, and you can overcome this hurricane.'" Kendrick is right, and today we honor his inspiring example.

That same optimism is present in many of the graduates today, and so many others across the gulf coast. And optimism is justified. There is going to be a day when communities across Mississippi sparkle with new homes and businesses bustle with customers and this college is filled with more students than ever before. I plan to return one day to the Biloxi neighborhood I visited on my first trip and see beautiful homes with children playing in the yards. Across this entire region devastated by the storm, new vitality will emerge from the rubble,

and cities from Mobile to Biloxi to New Orleans will be whole again.

It's going to take time for that vision to be realized, and it will demand the skill and knowledge and character of all of you. Yet you can leave this college with confidence in your future and with certainty that you're not going to work alone. In these trying months, we have been aided by a Power that lightens our struggles, reveals our hidden strength, and helps conquer all suffering and loss. We can never know God's plan, but we can trust in His wisdom and in His grace. And we can be certain that with His help, the great State of Mississippi will rise again.

Congratulations to the class of 2006. May God bless you, and may God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:29 p.m. in Mississippi Coast Coliseum. In his remarks, he referred to Willis Lott, president, Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College; and Mayor A.J. Holloway of Biloxi, MS.

Statement on Senate Passage of Tax Legislation

May 11, 2006

I applaud the Senate for passing important tax relief that will help keep our economy strong and growing. This legislation prevents an enormous tax hike that the American people do not want and would not welcome. The bill will extend policies that have helped our economy flourish. We have had 18 straight quarters of growth,

including 4.8 percent growth in the last quarter, and the unemployment rate is 4.7 percent. I appreciate the Senate leadership and Chairman Grassley for their hard work on behalf of American taxpayers and small businesses, and I look forward to signing this important legislation into law.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Military and Diplomatic Leaders

May 12, 2006

I've just completed a second meeting with former Secretaries of State and former

Secretaries of Defense on Iraq. We also discussed the broader Middle East as well.