

Statement on the Creation of the United States-China Strategic Economic Dialogue

September 20, 2006

I am pleased to welcome the creation of the Strategic Economic Dialogue between the United States and China. My leading economic adviser, Secretary of the Treasury Henry Paulson, will chair the U.S. side of the dialog, with support from Allan Hubbard, the Director of my National Economic Council. Deborah Lehr will serve as Secretary Paulson's special envoy to the dialog. President Hu and I agree on the importance of maintaining strong and mutually beneficial U.S.-China economic rela-

tions and on the need to establish an overarching bilateral economic framework between our two countries. The Strategic Economic Dialogue will help us achieve those objectives.

The economies of the United States and China have been engines of global growth. We must ensure that citizens of both countries benefit equitably from our growing economic relationship and that we work together to address economic challenges and opportunities.

Letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives Transmitting Budget Amendments for the Federal Coordinator for Gulf Coast Rebuilding Office

September 20, 2006

Dear Mr. Speaker:

I ask the Congress to consider the enclosed FY 2007 Budget amendments for the Federal Coordinator for Gulf Coast Rebuilding Office in the Department of Homeland Security. The total discretionary

budget authority in my FY 2007 Budget would not be increased by this request.

The details of this proposal are set forth in the enclosed letter from the Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

Sincerely,

GEORGE W. BUSH

Remarks at a Reception for Congressional Candidate Gus Bilirakis in Tampa, Florida

September 21, 2006

Gus, thanks. There's nothing wrong with a son following in his father's footsteps, particularly when you've got such a good son as Gus Bilirakis. *[Laughter]* He's the right man for the United States Congress, and I appreciate you all coming to support him.

I've been looking for Brother. *[Laughter]* He claims he's working. *[Laughter]* But I

know he sends his best. He, like me, recognizes that Gus is the right man to serve you in the United States Congress. He really is. He's a good, decent, honorable, family-oriented man who will represent the interests of the folks down here. So Jeb sends his best.

But more importantly, so does Laura. *[Laughter]* Like me, Gus married well—

[laughter]—and it was my privilege to meet Eva and the four boys who are here. It's good to see you guys. Thanks for coming. Thanks for helping Dad get elected. He's going to need your help putting up those signs. And he's going to need the help of a family standing with him. And that's why it's important to have people who go to Washington, DC, who have prioritized their families. And the Bilirakis is a family-oriented group of folks. They understand that families are important for a stable society, and I'm proud to be here with Gus and all his friends.

Thank you all for coming. It's not easy to have a fundraiser this successful, it really isn't. And I know how much work it took, Gus, to convince this many people for coming. It's a good sign when you're running for Congress, Gus, and you get this many people to stand up and say, "We're willing to help you." And for those of you who have given, thanks. And for those of you who wonder if there's still more to do, there is. And so I urge you to think about putting up signs and getting on the telephone and turning out the votes. Go to your churches and places of worship, community centers, and remind people, when you've got somebody who is honest and decent and who shares the values of the people in Tampa, vote for him and send him to Washington, DC.

We not only married well, we share something else in common: We've got strong-willed mothers. [Laughter] And I'm glad to be here with Evelyn. The only difference between Ms. Bilirakis and my mother is, my mother's hair is white. [Laughter] Both of them speak their mind. As a matter of fact, when I ran into Miss Bilirakis earlier, she said to me—this is in Washington—she says, "My boy is running, and you get down there and help him as quickly as you can." [Laughter] Isn't that right? [Laughter] I'm proud to be with you. And thanks for serving. You married a good man. He served this district well, as will his son.

I'm proud to be here with Congresswoman Katherine Harris, running for the United States Senate. I want to thank Bing Kearney, who is the event chairman, and all the organizers. Appreciate you coming. Thanks for your help.

I'm looking forward to the campaign. I'm looking forward to reminding the American people there are significant differences in between what our party believes and what the other party believes. If there's a—it's easy to tell us apart. And the first place you can start is looking at taxes. There's a fundamental difference in this campaign and campaigns all across the country about who best to spend your money. We believe that the best people to spend your money is you. We believe that once you set priorities, it's important to have money in their pocket, because we know that when you save, invest, and spend, it helps this economy grow.

And so working with Members of the United States Congress, we passed the largest tax relief since Ronald Reagan was the President. We cut the taxes on everybody who pays income taxes. We doubled the child credit. We reduced the marriage penalty. We didn't think it made sense, by the way, to penalize marriage. We think in society, you ought to encourage marriage.

We cut the taxes on capital and—capital gains and dividends to encourage investment. We understand the role of Government is not to create wealth but to create an environment in which the entrepreneurial spirit flourishes. We put the death tax on the road to extinction, because we want to help our small businesses and farmers. There should be no doubt in anybody's mind where we stand on cutting taxes.

And the Democrats in Washington have got a record of their own, and there should be no doubt in anybody's mind where they stand. When we first cut taxes back in 2001 to get this economy going, when we cut taxes to recover from a recession, when we cut taxes to make sure we recovered

from a corporate scandal, almost 85 percent of the House Democrats voted against it. When we cut taxes in 2003, nearly 95 percent of the House Democrats voted against you having more money in your pocket. And when we extended the key tax cuts earlier this year, more than 92 percent of the House Democrats voted against it. I think you're beginning to get a drift of their philosophy about your money.

One leading Democrat predicted this: He said the tax cuts would do nothing to create jobs. That's what they were saying when we said we were going to cut the taxes on the small-business owners and the working people to make sure you had more money in your pocket, which would stimulate job growth. And one of the leaders said, "No, that's not going to do anything to create jobs." Well, since those words were uttered in May of 2003, our economy has added nearly 5.7 million new jobs. That's more jobs than Canada, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Japan, all put together. This economy is strong because of progrowth economic policies.

You see, what our opponents don't understand is that the economy grows when you control more of your own money. The tax cuts we passed put more than a trillion dollars in the hands of American workers and families and businesses. And you used that money to help us become a strong economy, the world leader.

And now we've got a choice to make, and that's what elections are all about, giving the people clear choices. Do you want to keep your taxes low so we can keep the economy growing, or do we raise taxes and let the politicians in Washington try to grow the economy?

Gus has made his position clear, and so have I. We're going to let you keep more of your own money. But the Democrats have made their position clear too. I want you to remember, the last time they had control of the United States Congress back in 1993, they passed a massive tax increase. In the 13 years since then, they've worked

hard to sustain their record as the party of high taxes.

A majority of House Democrats have voted against reducing the marriage penalty not once, not twice, but 26 times. It's a clear record. A majority of House Democrats have voted against a higher child tax credit 19 times. It's a clear record. If they get control of the House of Representatives, they'll raise your taxes, and it will hurt our economy, and that's why we're not going to let them get control of the House of Representatives—and elect people like Gus Bilirakis.

Just this week, the top Democrat on the House tax-writing committee said this—it's important for the American people to know there's a difference in point of view; they just think differently, got different philosophies about to do—what to do with your money. Here's what the top Democrat said on the committee that's going to write—determine what happens to your taxes. He said, "I can't think of one of our tax cuts that should be extended."

That's one way of saying, they're going to raise your taxes, because, you see, if you don't extend the tax cuts, your taxes go up. They may not call it a tax increase; they may want you to think something different. But if they don't extend the tax cuts that are set to expire, the working people, the small-business owners, those who are struggling to put food on the table for their families, the taxes are going to go up.

Now, they're going to say—they may not tell you they're going to raise your taxes. They're just going to say they're just going to let the tax relief expire. That's like a boss who came in and said, "You know something, I'm going to let your last pay raise expire." [Laughter] We're not going to let it happen. We're going to make it clear the differences between our desire to keep your taxes low and their desire to run your taxes up. Good economic policy says, we got plenty of taxes in Washington, DC; let's make sure the entrepreneurs and

small businesses have enough money in their pocket to expand this job base so people can find work.

And I'm looking forward to talking about this until election day. I think it's a big issue. I think there are plenty of people across the country—Republicans, discerning Democrats, and wise independents—who understand they're paying plenty of taxes to Washington, DC. Oh, you'll hear this; they're going to say—and Gus, I'm sure you'll have to deal with this—they're going to say, "Look, we've got to raise your taxes to balance the budget." That's not the way Washington, DC, works. They will raise your taxes and figure out new ways to spend your money. The best way to balance the budget is to keep progrowth economic policies in place that are generating additional tax revenues into the Treasury and be wise about how we spend your money.

We've got to set clear priorities in Washington, DC, and the top priority is to make sure our troops will have what it takes to defend the United States of America.

There's a lot of issues. A lot of issues will be—I'll be working with Gus on. One issue, of course, is to make sure we diversify our energy supplies. We've got to make sure we get off of hydrocarbons as quickly as possible. But in the meantime, we'll be exploring for hydrocarbons, and we'll do so in an environmentally friendly way that protects the coast of the State of Florida. I told you that I would support reasonable limits, extended limits, about offshore drilling, and I've kept my word to the Governor. I've kept my word to the people of Florida, and I'm going to continue working with this Congressman to make sure that we have good, sane energy policy.

I'm going to continue to work with this Congressman-to-be on making sure seniors have got prescription drugs that they can afford. You might remember, before I came into Washington, DC, Medicare was an important policy, but it was growing tired and old. Medicine was changing—there's a lot of doctors out here who know what I'm

talking about—Medicare wasn't changing with it. It was a system that just simply wasn't meeting the needs of our seniors. So I said to Congress, "Why don't we modernize Medicare; why don't we make sure that our seniors have got prescription drug coverage as a part of a modern Medicare system."

We worked hard; we got the legislation out. And now I'm going to make sure we work with the United States Congress, the new Congress after this election, to make sure the Medicare reforms we put in place that are benefiting seniors of all political parties all across the Nation don't get watered down by people who think the best way to run medicine is to have the Federal Government make every single decision.

I'm looking forward to working with Gus Bilirakis to make sure the good reforms we put in place to make sure every child gets a good education stays there. The No Child Left Behind Act is making a significant difference for the United States of America, and Congressman, I look forward to working with you on its reauthorization.

And I'm looking forward to working with this good man to keep the peace. This is a nation at war. And we've got to have people in the United States Congress who see the world the way it is, not the way we would like it to be. We can't afford to not be realistic about the world in which we live. The stakes are too high. There's an enemy that still wants to attack us. I wish I could report otherwise, but that is not the reality of the world in which we live. And therefore, the most important job the Congressman will have—will—to join with other Members of Congress and the administration to protect the United States of America.

If somebody is—associated with Al Qaida is making a phone call into the United States of America, we want to know why, so we can protect the United States against further attack. If somebody associated with terrorism is moving money around, we need to know why, so we can protect the

United States of America from attack. If there are walls that make it hard for intelligence gatherers and those charged with protecting this country, make it hard for them to communicate, we want to tear down those walls so we can protect the United States of America from attack. Our most important job in Washington is to protect you, and we'll do everything we can.

I remind people that the enemy has got to be right once, and we got to be right 100 percent of the time in order to protect us. So the best way to protect the United States of America is to stay on the offense and bring the enemy to justice before they come here and hurt us in America.

And that's exactly what we're doing. Every day, you just need to know, some of America's finest folks are on the offense. We're running down every lead possible. It's hard to plot and plan attacks against the United States when you're on the run. I need Members of Congress who understand that you can't negotiate with these folks; you can't hope that they change their mind; that the best way to protect the American people is to defeat them overseas so we do not have to face them here at home.

And the central front on this war on terror is Iraq. Now, I know some Americans say, "Well, it's not associated with the war on terror." Well, all I ask them to do is listen to what Usama bin Laden says when he calls Iraq the third—world war III. All I ask is that our fellow citizens be realistic about the world and listen to the words of senior Al Qaida when they say our objective is to—their objective is to run us out of the Middle East so they can topple moderate governments, so they could have energy resources at their disposal to inflict economic damage on those of us who refuse to kowtow to their demands, run us out of the Middle East so that they could achieve one of their objectives, which is the destruction of our close ally Israel.

Iraq is a central front in this war on terror, and we've got a plan to defeat the enemy. And it starts with answering to the will of 12 million brave Iraqis who said, when given a chance to vote, "We want to be free."

There's big debate about Saddam Hussein. My view is today as it was then; he was a threat. You see, after 9/11, we had to take threats seriously before they came home to hurt us. In order to protect this country—if you think the most important obligation of the Federal Government is to protect the country, then you must recognize that we do two things. One, if we find somebody harboring terrorists, we hold them to account, and we've got to take threats seriously before they come home to hurt us. Saddam Hussein was a threat.

And don't let people rewrite the history of the way the world was. He was a state sponsor of terror. He paid family of suiciders. He had attacked his neighbors. He had used weapons of mass destruction. He was a sworn enemy of the United States of America. And he had been given ample time to disclose, disarm, or face serious consequences by over a dozen United Nations Security Council resolutions. Getting rid of Saddam Hussein was the right thing to do, and the world is peaceful because of it. The world is more peaceful because of it.

And the world will be more peaceful when democracy takes hold in Iraq. And it's hard work. It's hard work because Al Qaida understands that democracies in the Middle East defeat their ideological vision of an extremist caliphate. It's hard because Saddamists are upset that they're no longer in power. It's hard because people are taking revenge for past history. But it's necessary work. It's necessary for our security.

If we were to leave before the mission was done, what kind of signal would that send to the extremists and radicals who want to harm either the United States or our close allies? What kind of signal would it send to the reformers and dreamers of

a better life, that the United States has lost its will? What kind of signal would it send to those who count on the United States for its leadership? Our credibility would be damaged. Our enemies would be emboldened.

We're constantly changing tactics, but our strategy has not changed. We will help the Iraqis build a military where they can defend their freedom. We will help them build the institutions necessary for a free society to work. We will do our job and stand by the people of Iraq, and the world will be better for it when democracy takes hold.

You know, people ask me all the time—people ask me all the time, you know—they say, “What do you mean, when democracy takes hold? Do you think—really think people in the Middle East want to be free?” And the answer is, absolutely. We believe in the United States and the universality of freedom. I personally believe there's an Almighty, and I think a great gift from that Almighty is the desire in everybody's soul to be free. I'm not talking about just American Methodists. I believe in everybody's soul is the desire to be free. And I know that when you look at history, liberty has got the capacity to defeat resentment and ideologies of hate.

You know, one of the stories I like to share with people is my experience with the Prime Minister of Japan, Prime Minister Koizumi. You might remember, I had an interesting trip. [Laughter] He and I went down to Elvis's place. [Laughter] Went down there for a couple of reasons: One, I had never been to Elvis's place, and I'd like to go, you know. I thought it would be kind of fun. [Laughter] More importantly, he wanted to go. [Laughter] He loves Elvis. [Laughter] He can sing all the songs, you know—[laughter]—collects the memorabilia.

But I also wanted to send a signal to the American people about what's possible when liberty takes hold. A fellow came through the line recently here, and he said,

“My grandfather served on the USS *San Jacinto* with your dad.” They were in the Pacific Ocean, young guys who had been called into action because the Japanese had attacked us, and we were in a brutal war with Japan—a really tough war.

The hatred for—of America for Japan was intense, and so intense, you can imagine how people would react if somebody had stood up and said, “I predict, someday, an American President and the Japanese Prime Minister would be going to, you know, a singer's house.” [Laughter] They would have run him out of town, probably, you know. [Laughter]

But that's, in fact, what happened. And when we were on the airplane going down from Washington to Memphis, we were talking about keeping the peace. The Prime Minister of a country with which we were at war, a brutal war—young kids went off and never came home, unbelievable devastation and destruction in that war, a war ended by massive bombing—the Prime Minister of that country and the President of the United States were talking about peace. We were talking about North Korea, what we could do together to keep the peace. We were talking about the need to help this young democracy in the heart of the Middle East succeed so it could defeat an ideology of hatred. We were talking about how democracy has got the capacity to defeat the conditions that create resentment and hopelessness that cause young men to decide to become suicide bombers.

It's an amazing lesson of history, isn't it? It strikes me as so ironic, in a way, that my dad fought the Japanese, and his son sits down with the Prime Minister of the same country to keep the peace. What happened was, Japan adopted a Japanese-style democracy. Liberty has got the unbelievable capacity to convert enemies into allies, to change nations from hopelessness to hope. Someday, an American President will be sitting down talking to duly elected leaders of the Middle East about how to

keep the peace, and a generation of American children will be better off for it.

And those are the stakes. We're in the great ideological struggle of the 21st century. It's a struggle playing out now in the Middle East between decent, honorable people who want something better for their children than war and turbulence versus extremists and radicals who use terrorism and murder to create fear. And the United States must lead in this ideological struggle to achieve the peace we all want.

And so I'm proud to stand with a man who sees the world the way it is; a person who understands that this great country has got responsibilities not only to protect our-

selves but responsibilities to lay the foundation for peace for generations to come.

It's an exciting time to be representing the greatest nation on the face of the Earth. You'll like it up there, Gus. [*Laughter*] And I hope you all work hard to make sure he gets there. Thanks for coming. May God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:36 p.m. at Raymond James Stadium. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida; Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Remarks on Senate Action on Military Commissions Legislation in Orlando, Florida

September 21, 2006

I want to thank the Members of the United States Senate for working with my administration to meet our top legislative priority, and that is a law that will help us crack the terror network and to save American lives.

I had a single test for the pending legislation, and that's this: Would the CIA operators tell me whether they could go forward with the program, that is a program to question detainees to be able to get information to protect the American people? I'm pleased to say that this agreement preserves the most single—most potent tool we have in protecting America and foiling terrorist attacks, and that is the CIA program to question the world's most dangerous terrorists and to get their secrets.

The measure also creates military commissions that will bring these ruthless killers to justice. In short, the agreement clears the way to do what the American people expect us to do: to capture terrorists, to detain terrorists, to question terrorists, and then to try them. I hope the Congress will send me legislation before it wraps up their business next week.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:04 p.m. at the Ritz-Carlton Orlando. In his remarks, he referred to S. 3930. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.