

same spirit that's going to cause this bridge to get rebuilt.

The Governor and others have briefed me on the floods in Congressman Walz's district.

These floods come suddenly. People wake up and find their lives turned upside down. Water comes charging through their communities and really kind of wrecks the infrastructure. But what I have found, and the Congressmen and Senators have found the same thing, you can't wreck the spirit of people.

The job of the Federal Government is to get help moving as quickly as possible. I just talked to the Governor, who has processed the final and the necessary paperwork so that a flood of help can come down, Tim, to get these people realizing somebody cares about them.

I understand rural America pretty well. Sometimes people in rural America wonder whether or not the people in the cities think about them. I appreciate you coming to brief us, because I want those folks to understand, the President thinks about it; the Senators and the Governor have heard

about it, and they care about it. There's help that's available. We'd love to get the small businesses up and running, maybe help to get some shelter down there for people. I'm looking forward to making sure that the right people show up here on the ground. Secretary Peters has been the right person to coordinate this effort for the bridge, and we'll get somebody down here in charge to give your people in your district some hope.

There's no doubt in my mind that when I come back to see the bridge open that these communities will be up and running too, and that State football championship team you were talking about—[laughter]—will be winning games again.

Thank you all for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:53 p.m. in the Base Operations—Blue Room at the Minneapolis/St. Paul Air Reserve Station. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Timothy J. Pawlenty of Minnesota; and Mayor R.T. Rybak of Minneapolis, MN. He also referred to Public Law 110–56, approved August 6.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Community Leaders in Riverside, Missouri *August 22, 2007*

How is everybody doing? Thank you for joining me. I'm visiting with some of the area's finest citizens. We talked about businesses and opportunities and sports and culture. It's good to be with you. Thank you. I hope you leave here with the sense that I'm upbeat about the future of this

country. I believe strongly we can do anything we put our minds to do.

Thank you all for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:06 a.m. at the Corner Cafe.

Remarks at the Veterans of Foreign Wars National Convention in Kansas City, Missouri
August 22, 2007

Thank you all. Please be seated. It's good to be with you again. I understand you haven't had much of a problem attracting speakers. [*Laughter*]

I thank you for inviting me. I can understand why people want to come here. See, it's an honor to stand with the men and women of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. The VFW is one of our Nation's finest organizations. You belong to an elite group of Americans. You belong to a group of people who have defended America overseas. You have fought in places from Normandy to Iwo Jima to Pusan to Khe Sahn to Kuwait to Somalia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Iraq. You brought security to the American people. You brought hope to millions across the world.

As members of this proud organization, you are advocates for the rights of our military veterans, a model of community service, and a strong and important voice for a strong national defense. I thank you for your service. I thank you for what you've done for the United States of America.

I stand before you as a wartime President. I wish I didn't have to say that, but an enemy that attacked us on September the 11th, 2001, declared war on the United States of America. And war is what we're engaged in. The struggle has been called a clash of civilizations. In truth, it's a struggle for civilization. We fight for a free way of life against a new barbarism, an ideology whose followers have killed thousands on American soil and seek to kill again on even a greater scale.

We fight for the possibility that decent men and women across the broader Middle East can realize their destiny and raise up societies based on freedom and justice and personal dignity. And as long as I'm Commander in Chief, we will fight to win. I'm confident that we will prevail. I'm confident

we'll prevail because we have the greatest force for human liberation the world has ever known, the men and women of the United States Armed Forces.

For those of you who wear the uniform, nothing makes me more proud to say that I am your Commander in Chief. Thank you for volunteering in the service of the United States of America.

Now, I know some people doubt the universal appeal of liberty or worry that the Middle East isn't ready for it. Others believe that America's presence is destabilizing and that if the United States would just leave a place like Iraq, those who kill our troops or target civilians would no longer threaten us. Today I'm going to address these arguments. I'm going to describe why helping the young democracies of the Middle East stand up to violent Islamic extremists is the only realistic path to a safer world for the American people. I'm going to try to provide some historical perspective to show there is a precedent for the hard and necessary work we're doing and why I have such confidence in the fact that we'll be successful.

Before I do so, I want to thank the national commander-in-chief of the VFW and his wife Nancy. It's been a joy to work with Gary and the staff. As Gary said, "We don't necessarily agree a hundred percent of the time." I remember the old Lieutenant Governor of Texas, a Democrat, and I was a Republican Governor. He said, "Governor, if we agreed 100 percent of the time, one of us wouldn't be necessary." [*Laughter*]

But here's what we do agree on: We agree our veterans deserve the full support of the United States Government. We agree that those who—[*applause*]. That's why in this budget I submitted there's \$87 billion for the veterans. It's the highest