

Remarks on Signing Agriculture Economic Assistance Legislation in Crawford, Texas

August 13, 2001

Please be seated. Thanks. I want to thank you all for coming. And I have the honor of signing a piece of legislation that was passed out of the House and the Senate in record time. It's a piece of legislation to provide economic assistance to the ag communities all across America. It's \$5.5 billion in total. This money is on top of the monies in the 2001 farm bill. And it's necessary. It's necessary for our ranchers and our farmers.

First, I want to thank my neighbors for coming. This is, I guess, maybe the first bill signing ceremony ever in Crawford, Texas. *[Laughter]* I don't think it will be the last. It's a meaningful piece of legislation for this part of the country because a lot of people make their living on the farm and on the ranch. And we want our families to be on the farms and ranch. After all, farm families represent the best of America. They represent the values that have made this country unique and different: values of love of family; values of respect for nature—I always tell people that every day is Earth Day when you own your farm, when you're working the land—values in understanding that there's some things beyond our control, that the Almighty controls the weather, sometimes in ways we like, and sometimes in ways we don't like; values of hard work; values of the entrepreneurial spirit; and values of private property. These are really important values that make America different and America unique, and values that we need to keep intact.

I'm worried about the fact that the ag economy suffers, because agriculture is a part of our national security mix. If we can't grow enough food to feed our people, we've got a problem. It will complicate our foreign policy, needless to say. Well, we've got to make sure our ag economy stays strong and healthy, and this supplemental is a way to help do that.

And so I want to thank you all for coming. I was hoping it would start raining in the middle of this little talk—*[laughter]*—and then I could take credit for it.

I think one of the things, as well, that I really appreciate about the Crawford area is the fact that there is a concept of neighborliness. People say, well—I go downtown, and I have a nice burger the other day with some people, and they say—they walk up and say, "I'm your neighbor." That's an important concept for our country because a neighbor means more than just somebody living next door to somebody else. A neighbor means that there's somebody around willing to help somebody.

I tell people all the time that the great strength of this country is in the fact that we've got such loving and decent people all across America who, when they find a neighbor in need, are willing to help out, are willing to help that neighbor. And that doesn't require any Government law; you can't pass a law that says, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor," or, "You will be neighborly." That's because America is full of just such decent people.

And so I want to welcome my neighbors, and I want to thank you all for coming. And it is my honor now to sign this piece of meaningful legislation that should make the lives of the people who farm and the people who ranch much better off.

May God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at noon at the Bush Ranch. H.R. 2213, approved August 13, was assigned Public Law No. 107-25.

Exchange With Reporters Following the Agriculture Economic Assistance Legislation Signing Ceremony in Crawford

August 13, 2001

Stem Cell Research/Macedonia

Q. Mr. President, some people in Congress are talking about passing legislation to allow stem cell research on embryos that are still in fertility clinics—

The President. I've said all I'm going to say for a while.

Q. Would you veto legislation like that?

The President. The statement I laid out is what I think is right for America. And any

piece of legislation that undermines what I think is right will be vetoed.

I don't know if you all know, but they signed a bill in Macedonia today, an agreement to work out the language, as well as the policing, and it's a good sign. But now they need to lay down their arms so we can implement the peace.

Visit of President Vladimir Putin of Russia

Q. Did you get any feedback from Mr. Rumsfeld's meeting with Mr. Putin?

The President. I haven't talked to him yet.

It's right here that Mr. Putin is going to come, right to Crawford, Texas, one of these days. I'm sure he'll love it.

Q. Where are they going to stay?

The President. We haven't worked out the logistics yet. [Laughter] Got any recommendations? Oh, where he's going to stay? He'll stay here. I thought you said where are "they" going to stay, meaning the thousand press that follow. [Laughter]

[At this point, there was a pause in the exchange.]

President's Vacation

Q. So what are you going to do for the rest of the day?

The President. Got a lot of friends coming in—and then get ready for my trip. Got some speeches to give tomorrow and Wednesday, in New Mexico. I've got to figure out what I'm going to say.

Stem Cell Research

Q. One more question on stem cells, if I may?

The President. You can ask it, but I've already answered it.

Q. Well, I'll ask and——

The President. I answered it Thursday night, when I gave an address to the Nation.

Q. But sir, since then, some pro-life activists have said that you're——

The President. You know something? I gave the statement I thought was right. I spent a lot of time on the subject. I laid out the policy I think is right for America, and I'm not going to change my mind. I'm the kind of person that when I make up my mind, I'm not going to change it.

There are going to—people have got all kinds of opinions. I gave mine, and I gave it to the country. And it's a policy that's well thought out. Understand that there's a moral issue—moral issue, plus there's a chance that we can save people's lives. And I've laid out the path to do that.

President's Nature Trail

Q. How did you scratch your arms up?

The President. You know, I'm glad you noticed that. [Laughter] Working. Working. No, brush.

Q. Nature trail?

The President. Got the nature trail. One of these days we need to take you back there, so you can see it. It's beautiful.

Q. I'm free today.

Q. I'd love to go back there.

The President. It's beautiful. You won't believe it. As a matter of fact, this place, when you head out that way, there's a lot of canyons and creeks in the middle fork. You saw some of it when we crossed today, what it looks like when you get up in there.

Q. What's the trail like? Is it a loop or——

The President. No, no. Oh, my running trail?

Q. No, no, the nature trail.

The President. Oh, the nature trail is just built up into this canyon, this box canyon that's got a big overhang so that when the water is running, it's like a waterfall. We built a pathway up in there so that it's accessible to a lot of people.

Q. Place to bring guests, to go running?

The President. You can't run. I mean, it's the end of a canyon. You can run down there, then you walk up in there, and it's beautiful.

Q. What does building a trail entail? I mean, are you pulling out trees or are you——

The President. No, no. It means just building—getting old telephone poles and lying them on the ground, then filling in the dirt so that you——

Q. So you have this sort of pathway?

The President. Pathway, it's a pathway is what it is.

Argentine Economy

Q. Mr. President, do you favor additional loans to Argentina?

The President. We're watching the Argentinean situation every single day. Larry Lindsey and Paul O'Neill and the appropriate folks are meeting on it every single day. And one of the things I said that I thought we could do—first of all, we sent John Taylor down there, and he met with President de la Rúa, had a very good visit.

He delivered our administration's message, which is, they've got to implement the reforms that they recently passed through their legislature. One of the things we—and so we're exploring all options as to how to make sure that the message goes out that we've got—that we're watching the situation very carefully, that we urge Argentina implement reforms. As they do so, they will gain the confidence not only of our country but of a lot of folks who are concerned about it.

I spoke to King Juan Carlos of Spain the other day. He is very concerned. Spain has got more at stake in Argentina than even the United States does. And I told him that we're watching it, and we're very careful about it. And our hope is that the Argentineans will earn the confidence of the investor community by making—by implementing the legislation they passed.

But we're keeping an open mind on all options.

Nomination for Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

Q. Any chance you might have an announcement for us soon on the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff?

The President. Last time I hinted about doing something, everybody got the wrong message, and some of the flock were led astray. [Laughter] So I'm not going to hint anymore.

Q. Thank you. [Laughter]

The President. I know none of you—it was no misinformation at all.

President's Vacation

Q. No, I was asking if you're missing Washington?

The President. Am I?

Q. Yes.

The President. You know, I like Washington a lot. But I also like here. I tried to

explain to the people that are following me around that this is my home. You know, some people say, "Well, this is a vacation spot." Actually, this is our house and home; this is where we will live.

And I'm the kind of person that really values home, and I like my house. And Laura loves it, as well. So we really enjoy being here.

But I've got a job to do. Once this period of time ends and once Congress starts heading back to Washington, I'll start heading back, myself. In the meantime, we're getting airborne tomorrow, as you know. We're going to Colorado and New Mexico, and I've got a few other trips—a couple of other trips.

Q. Hint? [Laughter]

The President. No more hints.

Q. I think that was a hint. [Laughter]

The President. But I'm going to be moving around some, and it's good. One of the things I'm doing is heralding the values of the heartland. You know, it's important for folks to get outside of Washington, DC.

Washington is a great town; it's got a lot going on. Obviously, there's a lot of action when the Congress is meeting. But the strength of the country is in our heartland. And tomorrow I'm going to be talking about character education—same in New Mexico. I'm also going to be talking about small-business ownership. Today I talked about the agricultural sector. It's what makes America great, and I think it's important for me to get out amongst the people as best as a President can.

American Values

Q. I don't mean to sound flip, but are those values that you like to extol less prevalent on the coast and more prevalent—

The President. No, not at all. Listen, the values are very prevalent throughout America. It's just that my house is not on the coast; my house is in Texas. I'm a Texan. This is where I was raised; this is where I'm going to retire; this is where I'll pass away, in Texas.

There's a lot of people, wonderful people that live on the coast of the country. They've got great family values; they care just as much about teaching children right from wrong as anybody else. California is one of the huge agricultural States. Don't get me

wrong; I happen to be here; this is where we're anchored.

To me, to be out on the land helps a President keep perspective. You know, I haven't been a President all that long, but I can assure you, perspective is important. Get used to it, because this is where I'm coming back to, as well.

Legislative Agenda

Q. Thinking of a telecommute, sir?

The President. Actually, we have that potential and have used it since I've been here, where I've gotten on a video conference with some of my staff, and it works great. But no, I need to be there in Washington, obviously. We've got enough of a staff here to keep me busy. But when Congress comes back, I'll be there ready to welcome them and encourage them to get moving on some legislation.

One piece of legislation they'll be working on is the new farm bill. Another piece of legislation they need to get moving is the education bill. We've got a great opportunity to get a faith-based initiative going. We got it out of the House and had a good meeting with Senator Lieberman and Senator Santorum on how to get the bill moving out of the Senate.

We got a Patients' Bill of Rights, finally, for the first time. It looks like we're making some progress on a Patients' Bill of Rights. It's going to be in conference when we get back, so we've got a lot of work to do, and I look forward to Congress getting the job done.

Q. Are you anticipating some battles with the Senate?

The President. Oh, I never anticipate battles. [Laughter] I'll stand my ground and do what I think is right. That's what the people elected me to do. I'm confident, if there is the willingness to work with the White House in the Senate, we'll get a lot done. If people go up there just wanting to fight, then not much will get done, but we've already had that period. It's time to get rid of that business, out of Washington, and let's have a spirit of cooperation.

I'm confident we'll get a lot done, and I believe we will. So I go back to Washington with a can-do attitude, that we can do a lot of good for the American people and at the

same time, by the way, make sure we've got a good budget that doesn't get busted by folks that feel compelled to appropriate beyond the confines of a budget.

Most Americans expect—when you set a budget, expect people to meet the budget. And that's what I'm going to expect, as the President. I'm going to say, "Look, you all come back, and here's your budget. Don't spend beyond the budget." That will help the country, that will help our economy recover, by the way, by showing some fiscal discipline.

I've got to go. I've given you a lot more than you deserve. [Laughter]

NOTE: The exchange began at 12:04 p.m. at the Bush Ranch. In his remarks, the President referred to President Fernando de la Rúa of Argentina. H.R. 2213, approved August 13, was assigned Public Law. No. 107-25. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Remarks on a Trail Tour and an Exchange With Reporters in Rocky Mountain National Park, Colorado August 14, 2001

The President. One of the things it's important for people to understand, that through good management of our forests we can prevent forest fires. I appreciate Secretary Norton's work on this. I want to thank you all for helping show America that we can do a better job of maintaining our natural resources.

We can thin these out and make them less prone to fire, and that's what we're going to see happen right now. I appreciate you giving me a chance to come by.

Superintendent Jones. And we're very proud of your support for the national parks.

The President. I'm a big supporter. We've got \$5 billion—nearly \$5 billion in the budget for 5 years to make sure these parks are accessible to all Americans. Fran is in charge of the national park system. She is very smart and capable.

Director Mainella. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Otherwise, you wouldn't have been named. [Laughter]

Director Mainella. Thank you. I knew that. [Laughter]