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Statement on Congressional Action on Trade Promotion Authority Legislation

July 27, 2002

For nearly 10 years, America has lacked trade promotion authority and the ability to fully take advantage of trade opportunities. I commend the House and Senate conferees for their leadership in reaching a landmark agreement on TPA, which will open markets, expand opportunity, and create jobs for American workers and farmers. The House has shown a commitment to getting something done on behalf of the American people, and I urge the Senate to vote on this good bill before the Senate goes home for the August recess.

Remarks at West Ashley High School in Charleston, South Carolina

July 29, 2002

Thank you all very much. It's great to be back in Charleston. I want to thank you for taking time out of your day to come by and say hello. It's good to be back to the place where my mother graduated from high school. She must have learned there that if you ever get to be a mother, make sure you tell your oldest son what to do all the time. [*Laughter*] I'm still listening.

I am so honored that Tommy traveled down with me. You know, Tommy and I were fellow Governors. I knew he had a good record as the Governor of Wisconsin in helping move people from welfare to work. So that when I—one, I asked Tommy to join us as the Cabinet Secretary for the Department of Health and Human Services, because I know—I know his passion for helping people in need, and I know his philosophy. And so I want to thank Tommy for agreeing to leave the life he had there in Wisconsin and moving to Washington, DC, and serving our Nation with such class and such distinction. I appreciate you, Mr. Secretary.

I want to thank some of the members of the mighty South Carolina congressional delegation who have joined us here today, Congressmen Brown, Wilson, Graham, and DeMint, who represent your State with such class. And I appreciate you all coming. And it's good to see that my friend the Lieutenant Governor, Bob Peeler, is here with us as well. Thank you, Bob, appreciate you coming.

And I want to give a special thanks to Bob Olson, the principal of this high school. I know it's not easy to host a Presidential visit. The entourages are quite large. But you all have done a fabulous job. It's such an honor to be here in this high school. I want to thank you for—Bob, you and the teachers, all the folks who work here—for being involved in education. There's nothing more important to make sure that every single child in America gets a quality education.

I just had what they call a roundtable discussion about some of the programs that are taking place here in South Carolina, programs all aimed at helping people help themselves. I don't have time to go through all the stories, but there are some remarkable people that joined us today, those who have worked hard to get off welfare to succeed and those kind, compassionate souls who are helping them. And I want to thank the participants for coming today. I really appreciate our discussions.

I also met Steve Riggs, who is a volunteer here in South Carolina. He came out to Air Force One. Steve's job is to—as a volunteer is to work with the South Carolina military department, which reenacts moments of American history. Steve believes it's important to teach history—live history, or history that—through people wearing uniforms, so they can see history come to life. He believes it's important to teach our youngsters values that they can hold dear for the rest of their life. Steve decided to do this on his own. It didn't require any Government edict or any proclamation. He's a volunteer to make South Carolina the best State it can be. And I'm honored you're with us today, Steve. Thank you for coming.

The reason I like to talk about people like Steve—and many of the people I met this morning share the same concept that one person can do something to help change America, and each of us have got to be a person helping to change America. If you want to fight evil, if you want to join the war on terror, do some good in your society. If you want to send a message to the evil ones

who attacked us, one way to do so is to love your neighbor like you'd like to be loved yourself. And that's what's happening all across America.

I can't imagine what went through the mind of the enemy when they attacked us. They must have thought America and Americans were shallow people, so materialistic that when it came to defending something we hold dear, we'd just kind of file a lawsuit or, you know, wring our hands, be afraid of our shadows. But they didn't understand America, see. And they're learning a pretty tough lesson about this country: When it comes to the defense of our freedom, when it comes to defending that which we hold dear, we're plenty tough, and we're determined, and we will succeed.

Now, we're making progress on the war against terror. It's a different kind of war. Steve reenacts battles where there used to be infantries moving against infantries and artilleries moving against artilleries and flights of aircraft flying all over the—this is a different type of war. These folks are nothing but a bunch of coldblooded killers who—they'll send youngsters to their death, and they'll hide. And so this country, in order to protect America, is going to hunt them down, one person at a time, no matter how long it takes—one person at a time.

I know this is a great military town, and I want to thank all of you who have got loved ones in the United States military. Please pass on from their Commander in Chief that we're proud. We're proud of their service, and we're proud of their sacrifice.

We're making progress on our economy. The foundation for growth is strong in America. Interest rates are low. Inflation is low. Monetary policy is sound. Fiscal policy is sound. Productivity is up. And tomorrow I'm going to sign a bill that says as clearly as we can possibly say it out of Washington, DC—by the way, a bill supported by both Republicans and Democrats—that if you're a CEO and you think you can fudge the books in order to make yourself look better, we're going to find you; we're going to arrest you; and we're going to hold you to account.

And as Tommy mentioned, we're making great progress on helping people help themselves, so they do not become dependent upon Government. We're helping people become independent people, so they can realize their full human potential.

The welfare reform is a true success story. Since the passage of the bill in 1996, welfare caseloads have dropped more than 50 percent. It's a remarkable achievement—50 percent fewer people on welfare. Today, 5.4 million fewer people live in poverty than in 1996; 2.8 million fewer children live in poverty. And that's positive for America. And an incredibly vital statistic is, the percentage of African Americans and children in poverty is the lowest ever.

The success of welfare reform is not in the numbers, however. The success of welfare reform is not in the caseloads cut. The success in welfare reform is the number of people whose lives have been changed in a positive way. That's the success. And we've got many success stories in South Carolina and all across the country. I'm sure there are some here who I haven't had a chance to meet.

Today I did meet Lushanda Bright. She talked about her life and her story. First of all, she had the toughest job in America, which is being a single mother. That's the hardest work in this country, by the way, is trying to raise your children on your own. And that's what she was doing. She was a 24-year-old at the time. She had two young children. She was on unemployment benefits, and they were about to run out in August. But she didn't just want a job. She wanted to do something better for herself and for her children. And so she hooked up with a group here, all aimed at helping people go from welfare to work, a group that came to be after the '96 law, because the Federal Government finally in its wisdom said, "We ought to trust the local people to help, the local people to design the programs that best work for South Carolina, people we're trying to help; that all knowledge isn't in Washington, DC. As a matter of fact, the more we trust the local people, the more likely it is that good programs will spring forward to help the Lushanda Brights of the world."

And such a program is called Moving Up. And they helped Lushanda. They asked what she wanted. They asked what they could do

to help. She enrolled in Northeastern Technical College. She completed several courses on medical insurance and billing—by the way, while working at a convenience store and being a mother of two. Today, she has a full time job at Marlboro Park Hospital. In the fall she's going back to school to continue her education. And here's what she had to say: "A whole lot has changed for me. My life has turned around. It was hard, but I went from having nothing and ended up with a job I love."

Lushanda, thank you for coming. Thank you for sharing with us. I appreciate you being here.

These are the human stories. These are stories which are repeated over and over again all across America because of a philosophy inherent in the 1996 welfare reform bill that says people can achieve, just give them a chance. Help people help themselves, and amazing things will happen in America.

I understand leaving welfare is not easy, but it's an essential step toward independence from Government. Work is the pathway to dignity and to freedom and to self-respect. The stories that you hear across America are a tribute to personal effort. They're a tribute to the organizations which help them, and they're a tribute to the businesses which employ the people who want help. They're a tribute to corporate America, which understands there is a responsibility not only to be honest about the books but a responsibility to help in the communities in which they exist by helping people who want to help themselves.

And so the welfare reform bill passed in '96 is a real success. And so the fundamental question facing the country and facing the Members of Congress is, what to do when the bill becomes—comes up for reauthorization. In other words, the way things work in Washington is, if you pass a law, sometimes it doesn't exist forever. In this case, this requires a reauthorization. And Congress has got to choose whether or not we will continue to reform to help people, or will law undermine the clear successes that have taken place since '96? That's the fundamental choice facing your elected Representatives.

I believe that compassionate welfare reform must move forward, to strengthen work, to insist upon work as one of the benchmarks for success, because I believe work increases somebody's self-worth and dignity. I know that the welfare bill, the reauthorization, needs to encourage marriage and family. In order to help people, we also have got to start with our youngsters early, and the welfare reform effort, the reauthorization, must support effective teen abstinence programs. I urge Congress to join me on these principles, these practical ways to help make America a better place.

Congress must always remember that when they write law, that we've got to trust the local folks as well, that one size doesn't fit all when it comes to trying to help people help themselves, that the more flexibility there is for people at the local level to design programs that work, the more likely it is we'll achieve national objectives, which is fewer people on welfare, more people working; fewer people despondent, more people hopeful; fewer people addicted, more people free—free to realize the great potential here in America.

And so we—and we made some work—made some progress. The House of Representatives, these Members here, stayed with us on a very important bill that—on the reauthorization bill which supports stronger work requirements.

Today, for example, on the average in the State—States require work of only about 5 percent of the adults on welfare. In other words, the goal is incredibly low. If you require work from only 5 percent of the adults on welfare, you're likely to achieve that objective. That means a lot of other people aren't working, and that's not right. Every State should be required within 5 years to have 70 percent of the people on welfare working.

That's not just a statistic, however. Inherent in the 70 percent number means that we've got to help people at the same time, that we've got to provide the resources, the flexibility—and the flexibility so we can help people find work. Programs like Moving Up work, and we've got to encourage programs such as that, not stifle them but encourage them.

And here's what I mean by work—that means 40 hours a week. Now, I fully understand some people need help, and so as part of the 40-hour workweek, 16 of those hours can be hours spent on job training or education, on skills, on going to courses which help on changing skills. It is so important that we have high standards, flexibility, but also recognize that people need help. People that want to work, and on welfare, many times don't understand how to even get started. Many of them haven't even graduated from high school. And that's why the proposal also recognizes that an adolescent mom, for example, can meet her work requirements and still be helped, by attending high school.

There are some in our society who are addicted. They might want to work, but they've got to deal with their addiction first. And so part of the work requirements can be 3 months in full-time drug rehabilitation programs.

The point is, is that we've got to give people the tools necessary to improve their lives and at the same time understand how important work is in freeing people from the clutches of our Government. And Congress must hear that message when it comes to work.

It is also important to understand that a more hopeful society is one in which we encourage strong marriages and families. I understand building and preserving a family is not always possible; I know that. But it should be a national goal. We ought to aspire for what's best, and what's best is for our families to remain intact.

All you've got to hear is from the man I met today, Patrick, talk about the fatherhood initiative. He talked in compelling terms about what it's like to have dads want to be a dad and, when Dad is reunited with their families, how vital and how real that person's life becomes and, more importantly, how hopeful the life becomes for the children. He works for the Sisters of Charity Foundation on the Fatherhood Initiative. There are such initiatives throughout our society—many in the faith community, by the way—initiatives that ought to be supported by the Federal Government.

And so, therefore, the bill that the House passed, that I proposed—in my budget, I have $300 million on an annual basis to support education programs and counseling programs, out of the faith community and out of the charitable community and out of the government community, all aimed at encouraging marriage, all aimed at helping couples to build and sustain healthy marriage in our society. Families are important for our children. Families are important for American women and American men. Families are important for America.

In order to help people help themselves, I strongly believe that we must encourage teen abstinence programs. We've got to help people understand that, one, it's okay to abstain, and secondly, having a baby out of wedlock early in life is going to make it awfully tough—awfully tough on the child, awfully tough on the mom. We've got to make it clear that we've got a health issue when it comes to sexually transmitted disease, and that we've got to deal with it in an upfront way with our youngsters.

You know, I've heard all the talk about the abstinence programs and this, that, and the other. But let me just be perfectly plain. If you're worried about teenage pregnancy or if you're worried about sexually transmitted disease, abstinence works every single time.

The citizens of this State understand—which is what I said—citizens, by the way, from all walks of life understand what I just said. You've got one of the finest teen abstinence education programs in the Nation. A lot of States are turning to you for advice. You know this, that when our children face a choice between exercising self-restraint and engaging in harmful behavior, the Government should not be neutral.

People say, "Well, do you have enough money in the budget to meet your goal?" Well, the budget I submitted and the one passed by the House spends $17 billion a year on welfare for 2003. Now, that's the same amount that was spent in '96, but the difference is, the caseloads have dropped by half. So you've got the same amount of money with half the clientele, which means there's a—like, for example, on the average, across the country, $16,000 per family will be spent on helping people help themselves, as opposed to $7,000 in 1996. Here in the State of South Carolina, the amount of

money per family would double from '96 to today, from $4,200 to $10,700 per family to help. No, there's ample money in the budget, because of the successes of the past, because there's fewer people to help. If you keep the funding constant, you've got more money to help. And so that shouldn't be an excuse for people not to move forward with a reform package that works.

Now, the Senate is writing a bill, and I want to share with you some of my thoughts about the bill that the Senate is writing. First, I believe the bill is a retreat from the success. I believe they're not moving forward. I believe, if the bill goes through the way they've written it, it's going to go back—we're going to go backward here in America. And the bill would hurt the very people we're trying to help.

For example, the bill that passed the Senate Finance Committee has so many work exceptions that it would result in many fewer welfare recipients moving from welfare to work. There are so many exceptions, so many loopholes, so many ways out of holding people to high standards, that fewer people would actually be moving from welfare to work. And that's not right. That hurts our fellow Americans. There are so many loopholes that a State could meet its work requirement without having even one person working at a job.

Now, let me give you an example. Under the way they're kind of writing it right now, out of the Senate Finance Committee, some people could spend their entire 5 years—there's a 5-year work requirement—on welfare, going to college. Now, that's not my view of helping people become independent. And it's certainly not my view of understanding the importance of work and helping people achieve the dignity necessary so they can live a free life, free from Government control.

I'm also—I'm not happy with the fact that they reduced the amount of money by a third, available to promote healthy marriage. That doesn't make sense to me. As a matter of fact, some of the money that they believe they ought to be spent on so-called family building will go to programs that have nothing to do with promoting marriage.

On top of that, the Senate bill is weak on the budget. In other words, they're saying, "We've got to spend a bunch more money in order to make us feel better and make things work better." We don't need that. What we need is focus on what works, focus on reforms, focus on flexibility, focus on elevating the programs that have been proven over the last years to help people. We need a welfare bill that's strong on work, not weak on work, strong on marriage, and a welfare bill that's good for the taxpayers. And the Senate needs to do the right thing in order to help with these reforms.

And finally, encouraging work and supporting families and effective teen abstinence program is not enough. That's not enough. They're not enough. We need more. An abandoned child needs something larger and more important than welfare reform. She needs a loving mentor. She needs somebody who is willing to put their arm around a child and say, "I love you. What can I do to help you?" People who struggle with addiction or who are victimized by abuse need more than a check. They need personal support and concern and care and compassion.

This city is known as the Holy City because of your many churches. It's also known as the Holy City because of the many good deeds done by the citizens here, charities and faith-based groups. What we must understand in our society, faith-based programs and charities fill needs that no welfare system can fill, fill the needs that no matter—[*applause*]—the programs fill the needs that no carefully designed program out of Washington, DC, can meet. Government can hand out money, but it cannot put hope into people's hearts. It cannot put faith into people's lives.

I'm a strong proponent of the faith-based groups in America, because they're reclaiming America one block at a time. They're helping save one life at a time. They understand the power of changing a person's heart is a way to freedom and independence and to better behavior. No, our Government should not fear faith-based programs in America; we ought to welcome them.

Faith-based programs ought to be treated equally with nonfaith-based programs. We ought not to ask the question, "Who?" We

ought to ask the question, "What works?" If your program is a faith-based program and it changes people's lives and they become less addicted, we ought to say thank you, and you can have equal access to money, and you don't even have to change your mission. We understand the power of faith in our society, and we ought to welcome it.

I understand the strength of America. The strength of America is our people. It's not our Government. It's the people. And ours is a compassionate and decent nation. You know, I said earlier, out of the evil done to us will come some good. People in America understand that we're into a different era, we're heading into a different culture. It's one that says, "Serving something greater than yourself is an important part of being an American." It's a lesson that came through on Flight 93. People flew an airplane in the ground to save other's lives.

That example is one that I think is going to stand like a beacon for future generations to understand what it means to be an American. It means that you, of course, make a living for your family. But it also means that when you find a neighbor in need, you love that person. It also means that while one of us can't do everything, each of us can do something to change America, one soul at a time.

Out of the evil done to America will come incredible good, because our fellow citizens have taken a step back, taken an assessment of what's important in life, and realized serving our Nation means helping somebody in need. The old culture used to say, "If it feels good, just go ahead and do it, and if you've got a problem, blame somebody else." I sense a new change in America, where each of us understands we're responsible for the decisions we make in life. Each of us are responsible for loving our children, if we're fortunate enough to be a mom or a dad, loving our children with all our heart and all our soul. And each of us understands that in order to be a patriotic American, we must love our neighbor like we'd like to be loved ourself, help a fellow American in need.

And that's happening all across our country. I want to thank those of you who are doing just that. I want to thank you for hearing the call. I want to thank you for setting an example. I want to thank you for being a part of the greatest country on the face of the Earth.

May God bless you all, and may God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11 a.m. in the school's gymnasium. In his remarks, he referred to Patrick J. Patterson, program assistant, Sisters of Charity Foundation. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks at a Luncheon for Gubernatorial Candidate Mark Sanford in Charleston

July 29, 2002

The President. Well, thank you, Governor. [*Laughter*] I want to thank you all for coming. I'm really glad to be back in South Carolina. I've got a lot of fond memories here, if you know what I mean. [*Laughter*] And we've got a lot of friends here, too. It's a great State. After all, it's the State where my mother went to high school.

But it's an honor to be here to work for the next Governor of the State of South Carolina. I want to thank you all very much for supporting Mark. You know that when you find a good one, you've got to help him, and you've found a good one in Mark Sanford.

I particularly thank those who are going to put up the signs and lick the envelopes and make all the phone calls, those tireless workers at the grassroots level who can decide the fate of an election. You've got a vibrant Republican Party here in South Carolina. You've got a lot of folks who never get thanked enough. And so not only do I want to thank those who have helped Mark financially, I want to thank those of you who are going to put some shoe leather out there to work hard to make sure that you turn out the vote next November. It's important for our country; it's important for this State that this good man become the next Governor of the State of South Carolina.

And I love a family man. They started coming through the photo op line; I never thought the Sanford kids were going to stop.