

on this, that, or the other. And I still make decisions here. I just find that I can—it's a different perspective when I come here, out of Washington, DC, to a place like Crawford, Texas. I'm reminded of the great values of our beloved Texas and the values of faith and family and friendship that you find in places like Crawford.

So I never quit being the President; I just have got a different perspective about things. I might come to the same conclusion on decisions that I have to make, but I make them in a different environment. And this is a fabulous environment in which to make decisions and to meet with people.

We love it here. There's nothing better than to get up early in the morning and to go jogging across our ranch, see a couple of deer, talk to the turkeys—[laughter]—watch Barney chase them. [Laughter]

But we want to thank you for being good neighbors. We want to thank you all very much from the bottom of our heart for helping make our transitions to—back to home as smoothly as they have gone. We want you to know that one of these days, we'll be joining you in the coffee shop on a regular basis for eating lunch. In the meantime, we've got a job to do, and coming here really helps us do the job that you expect us to do.

So Laura and I thank you from the bottom of our heart. It's great to see you. We look forward to shaking every hand here and personally thanking you for all your hard work.

May God continue to bless America, and may God bless you and your families.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:15 a.m. at the Crawford Community Center. In his remarks, he referred to Mary Keltner, maintenance supervisor, Crawford Independent School District, who introduced the President.

## Remarks and an Exchange With Reporters in Crawford

August 16, 2002

### Baseball Labor Dispute

**The President.** Let me start off by saying the baseball owners and the baseball players must understand that if there is a stoppage, a work stoppage, a lot of fans are going to be furious, and I'm one. It is very important

for these people to get together. They can make every excuse in the book not to reach an accord. It is bad for them not to reach an accord. They need to keep working.

And I'll be glad to answer a couple of questions.

**Q.** Mr. President, you spoke—  
**The President.** Starting with you.

### Execution of Javier Suarez Medina/ Mexico-U.S. Relations

**Q.** Thank you, Mr. President. You spoke Tuesday with President Fox.

**The President.** Yes, I did.

**Q.** What did you tell him about the execution? And are you disappointed he's not coming?

**The President.** Well, first of all, I understand why he's not coming. He said that if the execution goes forward, he's not going to come.

**Q.** He told you that Tuesday?

**The President.** Yes, he did. And I said, "Well, we have laws here in America. We've got—the State of Texas has got a law." I said that there's going to be full recourse to the courts, which there was. And the Governor made the decision he made; the Supreme Court made the decision it made; and President Fox made the decision he made.

But I am confident that our friendship is strong, that we'll be able to work together to resolve common problems, and we'll have future discussions.

Michael [Mike Allen, Washington Post].

### Iraq

**Q.** Mr. President, not all Republicans seem sold on your intention to deal with dictators who gas their own people. What are you going to do to make that case more persuasively? Are you consulting with them? And what is your obligation of getting approval, not just consultation, with Congress?

**The President.** Yes, I appreciate that question. First of all, I am aware that some very intelligent people are expressing their opinions about Saddam Hussein and Iraq. I listen carefully to what they have to say.

There should be no doubt in anybody's mind, this man is thumbing his nose at the world, that he has gassed his own people, that he is trouble in his neighborhood, that

he desires weapons of mass destruction. I will use all the latest intelligence to make informed decisions about how best to keep the world at peace, how best to defend freedom for the long run.

We'll continue to consult. Listen, it's a healthy debate for people to express their opinion. People should be allowed to express their opinion. But America needs to know, I'll be making up my mind based upon the latest intelligence and how best to protect our own country, plus our friends and allies.

**Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill/  
National Economy**

**Q.** Mr. President, yesterday, Secretary O'Neill said that he is going to be—stop being so candid with his comments about the economy. And you just met with him on Wednesday—

**The President.** That's an interesting observation. [Laughter] Let me be honest with you. [Laughter]

**Q.** Did you suggest to him that maybe he should—

**The President.** No, I didn't. Listen, Paul O'Neill is doing a fine job as Secretary of Treasury. I don't know what prompted him to make that statement. I find him to be refreshingly candid. I appreciate his judgment. He's a man of great experience. He and I share an optimism about our country's future, and we do so based upon fact. Interest rates are low. Inflation is low. Productivity is up. We've got a lot of work to do.

And I started the process of bringing some fiscal discipline into Washington prior to the end of the August recess. I meant what I said. In my radio address today, I'm talking about fiscal discipline so that overspending doesn't serve as an anchor on any economic growth. I firmly believe that the trade bill I got is going to help create jobs. I know we need to have a terrorism insurance package so that we can get many of our construction workers working. So there are some things we need to do. The Secretary and I share a basic optimism about our future.

**Supplemental Appropriations for First-  
Responders**

**Q.** Sir, the firefighters union is very upset about the money being withheld from the

supplemental, and they say that they would—are they misunderstanding?

**The President.** Well, let me first of all—I've got a strong commitment to not only firefighters but to first-responders, and here are the facts: The budget prior to September the 11th is about \$250 million; after September the 11th is over a billion. And my '03 request for first-responders is over \$3.5 billion. So the commitment is strong, and the commitment is there.

What they ought to be upset about is the fact that Congress tried to tie my hands. They said, "You've got to spend \$5 billion or none of the \$5 billion." And I chose not to spend the \$5 billion because, one, we didn't need to, and, two, it is important for this country to be fiscally disciplined as our economy begins to recover. And so there's no question in most people's minds that I've got a very strong commitment to firefighters and first-responders.

**President's Economic Forum**

**Q.** Mr. President, may I ask—if I may ask you about the economic forum, what's the most important new thing you learned? And, sir, is there anything at the top of your list, based on suggestions or ideas that you heard there?

**The President.** Michael, I am going to analyze and think about some of the suggestions so that when I announce them, it will be well thought out. It will be a part of a long-term plan. But there are some interesting ideas: expensing losses, increasing expenses of losses, accelerating the 401(k) contribution limits—in other words, making it easier for people to put more money in their 401(k)s quicker.

There's a lot of interesting talk about capital gains taxes, double taxation of dividends. There was certainly a very strong sentiment that we're on the right track when it comes to holding people to account who lie, steal, or cheat—lie, cheat, or steal—[laughter]—who defraud people by cooking the books. There was some strong sentiment from CEO and non-CEO alike.

I came away from that summit—that the small-business person feels constrained by tax policy and regulatory policy. And I was—

really appreciated the people coming. I thought it was a very good summit.

Last question, and then I've got to go.

**Q.** Thank you, Mr. President. Just to follow up on that, are you planning on producing a new economic package—

**The President.** Lie, cheat, or steal. [Laughter]

**Q.** Are you planning on producing a new economic package?

**The President.** We're thinking about it. We're thinking about all options. That's one of the things that came out of the meeting, was that some have urged us to think about additional measures to help economic growth, so I'm thinking about it.

But one thing that the Congress has got to do is pass laws that will make a—that we've already proposed, that will make a difference for job creation. One of them is terrorism insurance. Another one is pension reform. And that's very important. So Congress needs to do that when they get back.

And the other thing, of course, is Congress should not overspend. Look, I understand Washington. Every project sounds like it's needed. Every—every proposal is one that's got to be funded. And my job is to set the priorities, and I have set priorities. The war is a priority. Homeland defense is a priority. And then hold people to account if they don't accept those priorities, if they overspend. And I started that process by making a decision on the supplemental.

Thank you all. Hope you have a great day.

### **President's Vacation**

**Q.** Mr. President, how is the nature trail coming?

**The President.** Michael, is that a—you're not inviting yourself out there? [Laughter] It's coming great. Actually, I haven't been on the good side of a saw for a while. I've been out of the—out of the area, as you know. And today I'm going to—I've got another event here, and then Condi is coming down. I'm going to spend some time with her. I may be at—I may be sawing tomorrow. If I need an extra hand, I'll holler.

**Q.** I can outrun Scott [Scott Lindlaw, Associated Press]. [Laughter]

**The President.** I'll tell you what, he represented the press corps in fine fashion. It was an unbelievable effort.

**Q.** I found someone I could beat, sir, yesterday.

**The President.** Who's that?

**Q.** I'm not going to identify them. [Laughter]

**The President.** No, you represented—you represented your profession well. I tried to find the model citizen out of all the people I could have invited. I tried to find the one person that would represent the integrity of the press corps, somebody who represents those values that we hold dear, that the enemy is trying to attack, as a matter of fact, a free press. And I hope you agree with my judgment that Scott was the right man at the right place at the right time. It's that flexibility I need. [Laughter]

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:55 a.m. at the Crawford Community Center. In his remarks, he referred to Javier Suarez Medina, who was executed August 14 by the State of Texas for a 1989 murder conviction; President Vicente Fox of Mexico; President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; and National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

### **Proclamation 7583—National Health Center Week, 2002**

*August 16, 2002*

*By the President of the United States of America*

#### **A Proclamation**

America's community health centers are a vital part of our healthcare safety net, providing primary care services to uninsured, low-income families and individuals, regardless of their ability to pay.

Community health centers ensure that all citizens have access to medical treatment and preventative care. Each year, community, migrant, public housing, and homeless health centers serve more than 12 million citizens at over 3,300 delivery sites throughout urban and rural communities in all 50 States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Virgin Islands. These centers care for 1 of every 5 low-income children and 1