

I welcome the continued close cooperation of the British and Irish Governments as they work toward the full implementation of the Good Friday agreement. The United States stands ready to assist their efforts. I appeal to everyone in Northern Ireland to recognize the great benefits that the agreement has already secured. The Good Friday agreement remains the best framework for a lasting peace in Northern Ireland.

**Remarks at a Dinner for
Congressional Candidate Thaddeus
McCotter in Dearborn, Michigan**

October 14, 2002

Thank you all. Congressman, thank you. I appreciate you all coming. I'm here to help the Republican Party. I'm here to help Dick Posthumus get elected. I'm here to make it clear that Thaddeus McCotter needs to be the next Congressman from this district.

Anybody who would name his son George—[laughter]—in this case, George T.—I appreciate the chance to meet the family. I want to thank the McCotters for coming. He's got a great wife and three wonderful children. I appreciate a man who has got his priorities straight, and that is his faith and his family and his country. And I appreciate you all coming to help him.

We had a big rally earlier today, and Thaddeus was there and so was the next Governor of the State of Michigan, Dick Posthumus. I told the folks in—I mean, there was a couple of thousand people there, and I told them that it's important to do what they are good at doing, which is put signs in the ground and dial the phones and put out the mailers. We're getting close to grassroots politics time.

For those of you who are involved in the grassroots of Michigan politics, I want to thank you for what you're going to do, not only what you have done but what's going to take place over the next couple of weeks, and that is to work hard to turn out a big vote. To turn out a vote for the next Governor, the next Congressman is really important. There's no doubt in my mind these two men are going to win, and they're only going to win with your help. So thanks for coming.

Thanks for your care about your State and your country.

I'm so grateful that my buddy the Governor of Michigan is here, John Engler. I appreciate his strong service to Michigan. We both did a very smart thing: We both married girls from Texas. [Laughter] We both married above ourselves. [Laughter] And speaking about girls from Texas, Laura sends her love to many of you here that we got to know during the course of our campaign. She's doing great. She's strong, and she's calm when she needs to be calm. She's a fabulous wife, a great mother, and she's doing a wonderful job as our First Lady. I'm really proud of her.

I want to thank the Members from the U.S. Congress who are here with us today. I particularly want to thank Mike Rogers for working hard to make sure this event was successful. Mike, thanks for your hard work, thanks for your support. I think Peter Hoekstra is here somewhere. I don't know if they let people in from the western part of the State or not? [Laughter] Where are you, Peter? Good to see you, Congressman. Thanks for coming—a fine U.S. Congressman. I know Vern Ehlers is here. Vern, I'm honored you're here. Thanks for coming. I appreciate—good to see you, sir. I think Joe Knollenberg is still here. I hope he is. Hey, Joe, thanks. I appreciate you, Congressman. Dave Camp, Congressman Camp is with us today, I think. Oh, hi, Dave. Thanks for coming.

I think that's all the members of the congressional team from Michigan that are here. I've got to tell you, they're fine Members of the Congress. I appreciate their friendship. I appreciate their strong support on key issues. We've had great success in the House of Representatives and a lot of it had to do with the leadership of the folks from Michigan. You're well represented. My call is to make sure they go back.

My call is to make sure we continue to hold the House. My call is to remind you it's important to have a Speaker like Denny Hastert, who will make a huge difference for the people of Michigan and the people of our country. And one way to do it is to not only reelect those who have already won but to make sure Thad McCotter gets elected

to the United States House as well—and Candice Miller.

I know the speaker of the house is here. I want to thank Rick Johnson for coming. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate your coming. In the limousine on the way here, the next Governor and I were talking about how the house races look great here in Michigan and that he looks forward to working with you, Mr. Speaker, and a good, solid Republican majority to do what's right for the people of Michigan.

I'm also honored that Betsy DeVos is here. Betsy, I appreciate your tireless work on behalf of the Republican Party. I appreciate you coming. Michael Kojaian, he's a wonderful friend and a good man who has been a hard worker to make sure events such as these are successful. And Michael, I appreciate you coming.

We've got a lot of work to do in Washington, DC. And that's why I'm so—want to be involved with these House races. We've got to make sure the country is a stronger country and a safer country and a better country. And to make sure America is a stronger country, we've got to work to make sure that people can find a job. You know, anytime there's a place where somebody is looking for work and can't find work, it is a problem, and we've got to deal with it.

But the best way to deal with it is to elect people to Congress who understand the role of Government. The role of Government is not to try to create wealth; the role of Government is to create an environment in which the entrepreneur can flourish, in which small businesses can grow to be big businesses, in which people feel comfortable risking capital. The people in the U.S. Congress from Michigan understand that. Thaddeus understands that. It's important to get him elected.

You hear a lot of talk about tax relief. Here's the page of the textbook that we've been reading in Washington, at least those of us who agreed with the tax relief plan. It says this: "If you let a person keep more of their own money, they're likely to demand a good or a service. And when they demand a good or a service in the marketplace, somebody is likely to produce the good or a service. And when somebody produces the good

or service, somebody is more likely to find work"—if you're interested in jobs.

The tax relief plan we passed in Washington came at the—exactly the right time. The country was in recession. We needed to stimulate the economy. We needed to get the economics of the country on the right track. We needed people to be able to find work. Tax relief was vital. Not only was the tax relief plan good for the creation of small business and the enhancement of the entrepreneurial spirit, the tax relief plan also recognized that we want to encourage marriage in families through the Tax Code, not discourage it, and we slashed the marriage penalty in the tax relief.

We also did one other thing that was helpful to the farmers of Michigan, the ranchers all across the country, the small-business owners, the entrepreneurs, the first time capitalists, and that is, we put the death tax on the way to extinction.

But we're still having to talk about the issue because the rules of the United States Senate are such that the tax relief plan that—it lasts for 10 years. And after 10 years, it reverts to—back to the way it was. And yes, 2001, it's like the Senate giveth, and the Senate taketh away. That's a hard one to explain in Crawford, Texas, or anywhere else, for that matter.

And so the issue really is, and Thaddeus understands this, for the sake of job creation, we need certainty in the Tax Code. For the sake of an expanding economy, we need to make sure that our entrepreneurs understand what's happening. For the sake of families, we need permanency. For the sake of people being able to pass their assets on to whom they want, we need permanency. The Congress needs to make the tax cuts permanent.

There are some other things that need to happen in Congress to make sure people can find work. We're debating a terrorism insurance bill. I'm not debating it. I'm watching the debate. I'm amazed that the debate is still going on. There are \$15 billion of construction projects which have been put on hold because people can't get terrorism insurance. The terrorists hit us; they raised the price of insurance. They made it basically extinct. And what the Congress needs to do

is serve as a backstop and serve as a guarantor for terrorism insurance to get these projects moving again.

If the enemy doesn't attack, it doesn't cost anything. If the enemy does attack, it'll help keep order in our economy. It makes sense. There are 300,000 hardhats' jobs waiting to go forward. For the sake of job creation, for the sake of getting good people to work, we need a terrorism insurance bill. We need a bill that rewards the hardhats and not the trial lawyers of America.

Traveling with me today is one of my finest Cabinet Secretaries—perhaps it's because he cut his teeth in Michigan politics—and that's Spence Abraham. I appreciate Spence coming. He's somewhere around. There he is, and Jane is with him, too, who's a fine, fine soul. Thanks for coming, Jane.

The reason I bring up Spence is because, one, I want to brag on him, what a good job he's doing. But also a job bill is an energy bill. A good energy bill will help with jobs. Spence has been working hard to get the Congress to come together to get an energy bill out that encourages conservation, encourages the use of renewables, that fires up new technologies necessary to achieve national objectives, which is less dependence on foreign sources of crude and cleaner air—things we believe can happen.

But he and I also agree we need to be—explore for more energy at home. And yet, there's talk—just like the terrorism insurance bill—all they're doing is talking. They need to get the bill to my desk for the sake of jobs and for the sake of national security. We need to have an energy bill in America. And Spence, I want to thank you for your hard work.

By the way, looking at Spence or just thinking about Spence—looking at him too—reminds me of why we need to take the Senate back. I've named really good people to the bench. One of my most awesome responsibilities and important responsibilities is to find good, honorable Americans who will serve as Federal judges, people who will use the bench to strictly interpret the Constitution, people who will not use the bench to rewrite law. We've got plenty of legislators in Washington.

And this Senate has done a lousy job with my nominees. The percentage of people confirmed is way below those confirmed under President Clinton or President Bush or President Reagan. They're playing politics. I named good, strong people up there, and they distort their records. The American people deserve better. The nominees for the bench I've named deserve better. For the sake of a good, sound judiciary, we need to change the United States Senate.

Congress is fixing to leave town, and the Senate doesn't have a budget. One of the things that can serve as an anchor to economic vitality is if the Congress overspends. They need to be mindful about whose money they spend in Washington. They're not spending the Government's money. They're spending your money. The Members of the House of Representatives who are with us tonight and Thaddeus understands that, that they spend the people's money, that we've got to set priorities, be wise about how we use the people's money.

Listen, without a budget, there's no telling what's going to happen in Washington, DC. Every idea up there sounds like a brilliant idea. The problem is, every brilliant idea costs billions of dollars. For the sake of job creation, for the sake of economic security in this country, the United States Congress must be wise with the people's money. They must fund the priorities, and they must not overspend.

I want you all to know, I look forward to working with the Congress to get some things done. I hope the Congress responds. They've got 4 days before they go home. They can help with the jobs. And I won't rest so long as people are looking for work. I'm an optimistic fellow because I know that the fundamentals are strong. Interest rates are low. Inflation is low. We've got the highest productivity rates in a long time. We've got great workers. The entrepreneurial spirit is strong. But there are people who hurt. And so long as people hurt, I'm going to be—I'm going to be paying attention to the economy and doing anything I can to help people find work.

We did make a great stride, by the way, toward increasing confidence in our economy. You know, we had a recession, and then

we had the enemy attack. And then we had one other attack on the confidence of the American people. We had some citizens in our country who felt like they didn't need to tell the truth when it came to corporate numbers. We had some people who forgot the awesome responsibility of being a chief executive officer or a chief financial officer. I worked with Members of the House in both political parties. I had the honor of signing the most comprehensive corporate reform bill—corporate reform legislation since Franklin Roosevelt was the President.

And the message is pretty simple and very profound. If you find yourself in a position of responsibility, we expect you to tell the truth. We expect you to treat your employees and your shareholders with respect. If you think you're going to find easy money in the American system, all you're going to end up doing is finding hard time.

The other thing I'm going to think about—I think about a lot, constantly about, and that Thaddeus and I and other Members will be working on, is how to secure the homeland of America. The enemy is active, and they hate. The attacks in Indonesia that needlessly killed hundreds of people serve as a stark reminder that there's still an enemy which kills with impunity, an enemy which does not value innocent life. The attacks on the French vessel in Yemen shows there's an enemy willing to use any kind of device to attack those of us who love freedom. They're active. They're resilient, and they continue to hate.

And they hate because of what we love. We love freedom. We love the fact that in this great country people can worship an almighty God any way they see fit. We love that. We love the fact that people can have honest, open political discourse in a free society. We love free press. We love everything about freedom, and we're not changing.

And so long as we love freedom, as much as we love freedom, the enemy will try to hurt America and hurt our friends and hurt our allies. And so our biggest job is to secure the homeland. It's to do everything we can, to use every resource at our fingertips to protect the American people from potential harm.

You need to know, there's a lot of really good folks at the Federal level who are doing just that, and good folks at the State and local level as well. I mean, anytime we're getting a hint, we're moving on it. Anytime we're getting a suggestion that somebody might be thinking about doing something to America, we're responding, within the U.S. Constitution. We hold that document sacred.

But we're responding. We're disrupting. We're denying. We're sharing intelligence better than ever before. The doctrine that says, "You're either with the United States, or you're against us," still stands. It's a doctrine which is even more important today, perhaps, than right after September the 11th, because the attacks go on. We cannot do this war alone. We constantly remind other nations that if they love freedom like we love freedom, they'll be under attack.

I went to the United States Congress to ask them to help me create a Department of Homeland Security. I did so because I want to be in a position where I can assure the American people, we're doing everything in our power to protect America. The House responded quickly. After a good, solid debate, the House came with a really good piece of legislation.

The Senate is stuck. The Senate is stuck because some Members feel like it's the Senate duty to micromanage the process. They have passed a law that—or they think they're going to pass a law—they won't, but they're trying to pass the law—it's why the President has a veto pen—that will have a thick book of bureaucratic regulations and hamstringing the capacity of this administration and future administrations to respond to potential terrorist threats.

I'll give you two examples of what I'm talking about, so you'll understand the debate. One, customs agents ought to be wearing radiological detection devices. They ought to wear those, so that if somebody is trying to sneak a weapons of mass destruction into the country, somebody on duty will have a device indicating that a weapon of mass destruction is coming in. We proposed that. The union representing the workers said, "No, we're not going to have that. You can't have mandatory use of a radiological detection device. It must

be voluntary, otherwise we're going to take you to collective bargaining."

We don't have time to bargain collectively over an issue like that. I believe in collective bargaining for people. I believe they ought to be able to go to unions if they want to. But for the sake of national security, some of these rules need to be put aside. Some of the work rules that will make it difficult for us to be able to protect the American people.

Every President since Jimmy Carter has the capacity to suspend collective bargaining for national security purposes. And yet, here we are at war, and the Senate is debating a bill, and they now want to take that power away from this President. And that's not right. I need to be able to put the right people at the right place with the right equipment at the right time to protect America. And the Senate must understand that.

I hope we get a good bill. They're going home in 4 days. I expect there to be a bill. I look forward to continuing to work, but I want you to know that I'm not only speaking for this administration, I'm speaking for future administrations. It doesn't make any sense for the Department of Homeland Security not to have that—for me to have the capacity to deal with the home—the Department of Homeland Security in the same way that I can deal with the Department of Agriculture. And so I expect the Senate to finish the debate and get a bill. Hopefully we can get it out of conference before you go home. It's important.

The best way to protect the homeland is to find this enemy, wherever he hides, and bring him to justice, to hunt them down one by one. I say "hunt them down one by one" because that's the nature of the war we're in. In the old days you'd go after platoons or battalions or aircraft or fleets. They don't have fleets. They don't have battalions. They've got coldblooded killers who hide in caves. They hijack a wonderful religion, and they send youngsters to their suicidal deaths. But you've got to know, there's not a cave deep enough for the justice of America. There's not a corner of the world in which we're not going to shine light, because we love our freedom, because we believe in the

values, and we hold those—of America, and hold them dear to our heart.

We're making progress. We are. We've done a heck of a lot of work, made good progress at dismantling the Al Qaida terrorist network. After all, they used to run a country. We liberated that country. We freed a country from the clutches of one of the most barbaric regimes in the history of mankind. And thanks to the United States and our friends and allies—and thanks to the United States and friends and allies, many young girls now go to school for the first time.

I remind you of that because our country never has the intention of conquering anybody. We believe in freedom for all people. We believe in freeing people, if possible. So we're liberators in this case, and we'll always be liberators. Because our coalition is strong, I would say we've hauled in—arrested or however you want to put it—a couple of thousand of Al Qaida. Some of them are former leaders. Abu Zubaydah was one of the top three leaders in the organization. Like number weren't as lucky; they met a different kind of fate. But they're no longer a problem.

We're slowly but surely rounding them up. The other day we got this guy, bin al-Shibh. He popped his head up. [*Laughter*] He's not a problem. Slowly but surely—and I'm not giving up. There's not a calendar on my desk that says, okay, on this day, you quit. That's just not the way I think. I understand the task. I know the threats. The threats should be vivid in everybody's mind when you see the pictures of the devastation, the size of the bomb crater, the absolute needless murder that took place in Indonesia.

I asked Congress for a significant increase in defense spending. I appreciate that. I appreciate the fact that the House voted on it. The Senate voted on it. They need to get that to my desk. The House voted on the conference. The Senate needs to get it to my desk before they go home.

And the reason I did is because I feel strongly about this. Any time we put our kids into harm's way, they've got to have the best pay, the best training, and the best possible equipment. I also wanted to send a message to friend and foe that we're in this deal for

the long pull, that when it comes to defending our freedom, it doesn't matter how long it takes. When it comes to protecting America and innocent life, there is no timeline, friends, that there's just not a quitting date until I'm absolutely certain that America is secure.

I believe the enemy, they just didn't know what they were up to when they hit us. They probably—guys sitting there, saying, “They're so materialistic, so self-absorbed, so selfish that they might file a lawsuit or two.” [Laughter] They didn't understand America. They just don't understand what we're made out of. They don't understand our fiber. They don't understand our courage. They don't understand what we love.

My job is not only to protect America today but to anticipate problems as well. And obviously I started a significant and important debate about Iraq. I did because I—because I understand the threat of Iraq. This is a country that said he would have no weapons of mass destruction, and he does. This is a country that has defied the United Nations 11 straight years, 16 different resolutions. He's completely ignored the international body. This is a country who has made it clear, he'd like to have a nuclear weapon. And when our inspectors—or the inspectors went into the country right after the Gulf war, it was estimated that they were months away from having a nuclear weapon. This is a country that hates America, hates the people in the neighborhood. This is a country which has invaded two countries, unprovoked. This is a country, the leadership of which has actually used weapons of mass destruction on its own people, on citizens who disagreed with him. This is a country who gassed its neighbors. This is a dangerous man.

Prior to September the 11th, 2001, we thought two oceans would protect us. We thought we could kind of step back, and say, “This may be somebody else's problem, in another part of the world, and we may or may not deal with it.” After September the 11th, we've entered into a new era and a new war. This is a man that we know has had connections with Al Qaida. This is a man who, in my judgment, would like to use Al Qaida as a forward army. And this is a man

that we must deal with for the sake of peace, for the sake of our children's peace.

Military option is my last choice. It's not my—it's the last thing I want to do, is commit our military. My first choice is for Saddam Hussein to do what he said he would do, and after 11 years, disarm. I doubt he's going to do that, but it's his choice to make. See, he gets to make the choice. The United Nations needs to make a choice, whether it will be the League of Nations or the United Nations, whether it will be an empty debating society or a group of countries who have got the capacity and the will and the backbone to help keep the peace. Their choice to make. I hope this happens peacefully. I hope he disarms. But for the sake of our future, for the sake of peace itself, if need be, the United States will lead a strong coalition of freedom-loving nations and disarm Saddam Hussein.

At the same time that we work to make America stronger and safer, we've got to make sure we work to make America better. We have an opportunity to challenge some of the problems that we face in our society. First, it starts with making sure every child gets educated. I appreciate Thaddeus' and your next Governor's focus on education. I mean every child, not just a few, not just a handful, not just those in nice districts—every single child.

I believe every child can learn. I hope you believe every child can learn. And then together we can challenge what I call the soft bigotry of low expectations. See, when you lower the bar, when you think certain kids can't learn, you're going to get lousy results. I also strongly believe that in return for Federal money, you need to show us whether or not the children are learning. You need to show us whether a child can read and write and add and subtract. And if so, we'll praise the teachers and thank them. We need to thank our teachers. But when we find children trapped in schools which will not teach and schools which will not change, you better have you a President and a Governor who's willing to challenge the status quo. No child should be left behind in America.

I want to work with Thaddeus to make sure that some of our promises are kept, particularly those to our seniors. Medicine is

modern. Medicare is not modern. Medicine has changed. Medicare hasn't changed. And for the sake of our seniors, we need to change Medicare so it's modern and includes prescription drugs. And I look forward to working with the members of the Congress.

Oh, there's some things Congress can do to make America a better place, but the most powerful instrument for change, the best way to make America a better place is to unleash the great strength of our country. And the great strength of America is the hearts and souls of the American people. If you want to fight evil in America, love your neighbor just like you'd like to be loved yourself. If you want to help change the country, if you want to be a part of eliminating the pockets of despair and loneliness, put your arm around somebody who hurts, and say, "I love you."

Today we welcomed a young kid, a 22-year-old boy there at the rally, who was a mentor. He is a part of the army of compassion in America. He is doing his part to change America one heart, one conscience, one soul at a time.

You see, one of the things I appreciate about our political party is, we understand the limitations of Government. Government can hand out money, but Government cannot put hope in people's hearts. Government cannot put a sense of purpose in people's lives. That happens when loving soul interfaces with loving soul.

The enemy hit us, but out of the evil done to America is coming a—is coming the revival of an American spirit, which understands—where we all understand serving something greater than ourself in life is a part of being an American, that being a patriot is more than just putting your hand over your heart, being a patriot is helping somebody in need. We can change America one soul at a time, we can, as our fellow Americans do their duty, to find the new patriotism.

Perhaps the greatest example of what I'm talking about and the most vivid example and an example which I think will last through the ages, is what happened on Flight 93. The guy was on a plane ride, flying across the country. Their loved ones tell them the plane is being used as a weapon. They recognize what must happen. They told their loved

ones goodbye. They said a prayer. A guy said, "Let's roll," and they drove the plane in the ground to serve something greater than themselves.

No, the American spirit is alive, and it's strong. And as a result, we will overcome the evil done to America. No, the enemy hit us, but they didn't know who they were hitting. They hit a nation which is more committed to peace than ever before and a nation which is committed to making sure this country is hopeful and optimistic and bright for every citizen who is fortunate enough to live in this great land.

I want to thank you all for coming. You just need to know this about me: I believe there's any—we can accomplish anything set before us, because I know this is the finest country, full of the greatest people on the face of the Earth.

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

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:01 p.m. in the Presidential Ballroom at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Rita McCotter, wife of candidate Thaddeus McCotter, and their children, George, Timothy, and Emilia; dinner chairs Betsy DeVos and Michael Kojaian; Jane Abraham, wife of Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham; Ramzi bin al-Shibh, an Al Qaida operative suspected of helping to plan the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, who was captured in Karachi, Pakistan; President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; and volunteer Lenwood "Lenny" Compton, Jr. Candidate Thaddeus McCotter introduced the President.

Remarks at the White House Conference on Minority Homeownership

October 15, 2002

Well, thanks for the warm welcome. Thank you for being here today. I appreciate your attendance to this very important conference. You see, we want everybody in America to own their own home. That's what we want. This is—an ownership society is a compassionate society.

More and more people own their homes in America today. Two-thirds of all Americans own their homes. Yet, we have a problem here in America because fewer than half