

you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart and all your soul. If you're concerned about the quality of education in your community, you're responsible for doing something about it. If you are a CEO in America, you're responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And in this new responsibility, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourselves.

Things are changing in America to the better. We can see a culture of service and responsibility growing around us. I started what we call the USA Freedom Corps to encourage Americans to extend a compassionate hand to neighbors in need. And the response has been fantastic. People are signing up. People want to serve something greater than themselves.

Our charities and our faith-based institutions are strong and they're vibrant, bringing important help to people who hurt. Police-men and firefighters and people who wear our Nation's uniform are reminding us what it means to sacrifice for something greater than yourself. Once again, the children of America believe in heroes, because they see them every day.

In these challenging times, the world has seen the resolve and the courage of America. And I've been privileged to see the compassion and the character of the American people. All the tests of the last 2½ years have come to the right nation. We're a strong country, and we use that strength to defend the peace. We're an optimistic country, confident in ourselves and in ideals bigger than ourselves.

Abroad, we seek to lift whole nations by spreading freedom. And at home, we seek to lift up lives by spreading opportunity to every corner of America. This is the work that history has set before us, and we welcome it. And we know that for our country and for our cause, the best days lie ahead.

Thank you for coming. May God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:30 p.m. at the San Diego Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Brad Freeman, California State finance chairman, and Mercer Reynolds, national finance chairman, Bush-Cheney '04, Inc.; Gerald Parsky, chairman, Team California, California Re-

publican Party; and Mayor Dick Murphy of San Diego.

Exchange With Reporters in Thousand Oaks, California

August 15, 2003

Q. Do you have time for a couple of questions?

The President. Yes, I'll answer a couple of questions.

North American Power Blackout/Energy Legislation

Q. Can you update us on the situation back East, what you've heard, whether there's been any progress toward finding out what possibly caused the blackout?

The President. Yes, it's going to take a while, I think. But we will find out what caused the blackout, and we'll deal with it. I view it as a wake-up call. You know, I've been concerned that our infrastructure—the delivery system is old and antiquated. And I think this is an indication of the fact that we need to modernize the electricity grid.

So it's a good opportunity for us to analyze what went wrong and to deal with it. We don't know yet what went wrong, but we will.

Q. There's a bill pending in Congress, the energy bill, that's pretty broad in scope. There's also a piece of that bill that's smaller that would fix this particular problem. Would you urge Congress to act on that?

The President. Yes, I think what we need to do is take a look at what went wrong, analyze the problem, and come up with a solution. And I think it's very important—I'm going to say this down here in the remarks—the people in New York and in the Northeast and in parts of the Midwest were—showed the great character of America in very difficult circumstances. The people responded in calm fashion. They worked hard to help their neighbors in need, and they showed the rest of the country and the world the true mettle of the American people.

As I said yesterday, I'm most pleased by the fact that we've got a—our emergency response was good. They acted well. And I doubt that would have happened—the response would have been this good—prior to

September the 11th. But the creation of the Homeland Security Department, coupled with the modernization of communications between State and local and Federal officials, really enabled the system to work well. And now we've got to figure out how to make the electricity system have the redundancy necessary so that if there is an outage like there has been throughout our history, that it doesn't affect as many people as it did in the past.

Q. Sir, are you worried, though, that power still isn't restored to so many millions of people and may not be through the weekend?

The President. Well, I think, you know—listen, everybody is working hard to get it restored as quickly as possible. I think it's going to take a while to get 100 of the power up and running. And that's why it's important for our citizens who have got electricity in the Northeast and the Midwest would be wise about how they use the electricity. They must conserve, because the more conservation there is now, the more likely it is their neighbor is going to end up having electricity in a quicker fashion.

Q. In recent weeks, you have mentioned several times the need to pass your comprehensive energy plan. Is there anything in there that would have helped or mitigated this?

The President. Well, I think part of the plan recognizes that the grid needs to be modernized, the delivery systems need to be modernized. And obviously something like this isn't going to happen overnight. But it is—it begins to address the problem, that this particular incident has made abundantly clear to the American people that we've got an antiquated system, and now we've got to figure out what went wrong and how to address it. And I'm confident we will.

Q. You said yesterday that while you've made some offers of Federal assistance, the States and locals didn't really seem to need much help; they had it under control. Is that still the situation?

The President. Actually, as I understand it, as of this morning, at about 5:30 a.m. Pacific Coast time, there was a request for a generator by New York City from the Department of Defense, which we're now working on delivering.

Look, for example, Tommy Thompson started calling around to hospitals and asking, did everybody get what they need? And Tom Ridge was calling, which made it clear—abundantly clear—that where we had assets that could help, we're more than willing to help. This is a national problem, and the Federal Government has got a responsibility to help local and State officials. As far as I know, the one specific request to date was this generator.

Thank you all.

NOTE: The exchange began at 8:35 a.m. at the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.

August 9

In the morning, at the Bush Ranch in Crawford, TX, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President hosted a barbecue for Bush-Cheney '04, Inc., fund-raisers at a neighboring ranch in Crawford.

August 11

In the morning, the President had intelligence and national security briefings aboard Air Force One en route to Tucson, AZ. Upon his arrival in Tucson, he greeted USA Freedom Corps volunteer Deborah Toland. Later, he traveled to Coronado National Forest. En route, he took an aerial tour of areas damaged by wildfire near Summerhaven, AZ.

Later in the morning, the President traveled to Denver, CO, where he greeted USA Freedom Corps volunteer Phoung Nguyen.