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Remarks at the Power Center in Houston, Texas

September 12, 2003

The President. Thank you all very much. Be seated. Kirbyjon can tell it. [*Laughter*] Heck, I might sound inarticulate compared to him. [*Laughter*]

Reverend Caldwell. No, no.

The President. Yes. Let's see how to start here. First, it's glad to be back—I'm glad to be back to Texas. It's good to see some of my buddies. I'm looking at a man right here on the front row I went to the seventh grade with in Houston, Texas. I see my friend "Big Tuna" I used to play basketball with at the Y. I never forget my friends, and I've got a lot of friends here in Texas, and I'm thrilled to be with you. Thank you all for coming tonight.

But thank you for coming to support this wonderful program. You'll hear me say this a couple of times in what's going to be a short address. Pastor Caldwell said, "Speak all you want, but don't exceed 7 minutes." [*Laughter*]

I think the fact that people are willing to contribute money to save lives is a powerful testimony to the strength of America. I think that when people are willing to support a social entrepreneur like Kirbyjon Caldwell and the others at the Windsor Village Church who have heard a call and are out to save any life they can find that needs to be saved—the fact that you support them speaks to your heart as well. And so today I first want to say thanks. Thanks for contributing hard-earned money to make Houston, Texas, the best place it can be.

And I'm proud to be up here with my friend. Sometimes it's not easy to be the friend of George W. Bush—I know that—[*laughter*]—if you know what I mean. [*Laughter*] But let me tell you something. It's good to have a friend that I can call before a debate and say, "Do you mind saying a prayer?" It's good to have a friend to go with you to Ground Zero. He's not a political friend; he's a friend. He rises above that, that friendship. And it's good for this community to lift up a man like Kirbyjon Caldwell who acts for the best interests of all the citizens of this community. And I'm proud to call him friend.

And we both married above ourselves.

Reverend Caldwell. Amen.

The President. Yes, sir. Well, you don't need to "amen" it that loud, but—[*laughter*]. Laura sends her love to Kirbyjon and Suzette and to all our buddies here. She is a fantastic First Lady, by the way. I really lucked out. And she's doing great, she really is.

Suzette is a unique person. I just had had my picture taken with a group of Prayer Warriors organized by Suzette Caldwell. You know, it's a unique country, when you think about it, that people would pray for me. People I'll never know, people I'll never have a chance to say thank you to, pray for me. Suzette organized such a group, and I had a chance to say thank you to the group. But it shows the kind of person Suzette is. And I want to thank you for your friendship as well. I want to thank you for your prayers. I feel them, and it means a lot—it means a lot. And so, Suzette, I want to thank you for your friendship as well. It's great seeing your kids. They're little livewires, little—one of them is like a little Kirbyjon, you know—[*laughter*]—hard to control. [*Laughter*]

It's great to see Booker and Jean Caldwell as well. Kirbyjon and I both lucked out; we've got good, strong mothers. I hope you're still listening to yours, Kirbyjon. [*Laughter*] I'm listening to mine, I can assure you. [*Laughter*]

I'm traveling today with a great friend of Houston, Texas, a friend of mine, a man who has agreed to serve our community—communities all across the country as the Secretary of Education, Mr. Rod Paige. I like to remind people that when I was picking

the Cabinet, I wanted for the education man, somebody that had actually been an educator. We had enough theory in Washington. We wanted somebody that had actually done the job. And as you know, he did a great job as the superintendent of the Houston Independent School District. What I love about Rod is, he is willing to challenge the soft bigotry of low expectations. He raises the bar, and he's not afraid to measure to determine whether or not we're meeting those standards.

We passed a really important piece of legislation called the No Child Left Behind Act. And the way you make sure no child is left behind is, you raise standards. You hold people accountable. You correct problems before—early, before they're too late. I am absolutely convinced that under Rod's leadership at the Department of Education, it is less likely a child is going to be left behind in America. And I want to thank you for your service.

I know some of my running buddies from the State Government are here, Lieutenant Governor David Dewhurst and Railroad Commissioner Michael Williams. I want to thank you all for coming. I'm proud you're here. I know Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee is here, and I'm—there she is—and I'm honored that you're here. Thank you for coming, Congresswoman. I appreciate it. One thing about Sheila Jackson Lee is, when I see her, she's never afraid to offer up any advice. [*Laughter*] It's become a habit of ours, hasn't it? [*Laughter*]

I appreciate the fact that we've got two former Secretaries of Commerce here, one Houstonian, Bob Mosbacher, and new Texan Bill Daley. And I want to thank them both for coming. I appreciate them being here. I appreciate my friend Oxford. He's actually making a pretty good hand. Thanks for putting on this event. Great to see you.

Genora Boykins, who's the chairperson of the CDC, I want to thank her for opening this event up. I thank my friend Jodi Jiles, who's the treasurer of the Community Development Corporation. I've known Jodi for a long time.

You know, I have had the chance to hear Kirbyjon preach, and he's a pretty darn good preacher. He reminds me of the preacher that got going one day, and about three-quarters of the way through the sermon, a guy was so moved on about pew three that he popped up and screamed, "Use me, Lord. Use me." The preacher plowed on through and finished up and didn't think anything of it until the next Sunday. About the same time in his sermon, this guy gets so moved—I'm sure some of you have been so moved by Kirbyjon that you think about popping up—this guy popped up again and he screamed, "Use me, Lord. Use me." After the service was over, the preacher sought the fellow out. He said, "Fine, I appreciate your willingness to help, and therefore, I suggest and would like for you to scrape and paint all the pews." The next Sunday the preacher is up there letting it go. The guy pops up and he says, "Use me, Lord. Use me, but in an advisory capacity." [*Laughter*]

I'm at the Power Center today because this place is full of doers, not advisers. This was once an empty Kmart building. It is now a building full of love. It was used to sell goods, and now it provides incredibly important services to help save lives.

I find it interesting that they named the center the Power Center. This—we're not talking about electricity in this power. We're talking about a higher power that caused this center to be. I find it also interesting that in the midst of this—or at least the last time I came, Suzette showed me the prayer facility right in the middle of the center. You had a bank. You've got a school, and you've got a women and children's clinic, the WIC program—it's a Government program. You've got some job training. You've got the Houston Community Center—Community College facility, I mean. But in the midst, there's a prayer center. People should realize that the reason why this program is successful is because the power in the Power Center comes from a higher calling, a higher source of power.

And the reason why I came to see the Power Center in the first place was twofold: One, I felt I had an obligation as the Governor of the State to support programs that were changing people's lives in a positive way; and secondly, I had heard that beyond good intentions there were good results here and that the Power Center was a unique

faith-based program. And it helped me develop a philosophy of government that I want to explain right quick to you.

And part of my reason I'm doing this is because I'm sending a message to the Congress at the same time. [*Laughter*] They might not be here, except for one very distinguished Congresswoman, but the TV cameras are here. It gives me a chance to speak directly to good social policy in America.

I saw people's lives changed because of faith. Right here at the Power Center is a good example. I saw the fact that with the proper application of the call to love a neighbor like you'd like—love yourself, with resources and social entrepreneurship, souls could change. And I recognized that, at the time in Texas and now nationally, that the absolute best way to make sure that the promise of America extends its reach into every neighborhood, the best way to help heal those who hurt is to bring all the resources of our country to bear. And the most powerful resource of all is the ability to transform lives through faith.

I don't talk about a particular faith. I believe the Lord can work through many faiths, whether it be the Christian faith, Jewish faith, Muslim faith, Hindu faith. When I speak of faith, I speak of all faiths, because there is a universal call, and that main universal call is to love your neighbor. It extends throughout all faith.

That's what the Power Center says to me. It's a living example of what is possible not only in Houston but in communities all around our country, because there are faith-based communities all around our country. There are churches on every corner. There are synagogues in every town. There are people of faith who have heard a call. It seems like to me, this society of ours must rally the people of faith. Amongst our plenty, there are people who hurt. There's addiction and loneliness, social problems that can only be cured by love.

I've been searching for that bill, by the way, ever since I've been in government, the bill that says you'll love somebody. Sheila Jackson will sponsor it, and I'll sign it. [*Laughter*] But there is no such bill. People don't get their inspiration to help a neighbor in need from government. They get their inspiration from a higher being. And yet, government has thwarted faith to be involved in our communities because of what they call the doctrine of separation of church and state. And that's a noble doctrine. The church should never be the state, and the state certainly should never be the church. But our Government must not fear the application of faith into solving social problems. We must not worry about people of faith receiving taxpayers' money to help people in need.

In my judgment, that doesn't obscure the line of church and state. It enhances the capacity of state to save lives by tapping into this fundamental powerful resource of ours, the heart and soul of the American people.

And yet in Washington, DC, there is an attitude that we should not welcome faith-based programs into the budgets of our Government. As a matter of fact, there are regulations that specifically prohibit faith-based programs from job training, for example, or Head Start or some housing programs. There is a fear that funding faith will somehow change the doctrine of church and state.

I completely disagree. The discrimination against faith-based programs at the Federal level prevents us from using all our resources to save lives. And for those who hurt, we need to use every resource we have. For those who are lonely, we need to use every resource. For those who are hungry, we need to use every resource. For those who look for housing, we need to use every resource. And so one of my missions is to work with people to end the discrimination in Washington, DC, against faith-based programs.

The other problem we have, besides just outright regulations saying that you cannot use money for housing or Head Start or job training programs, is the fact that oftentimes groups that try to access Federal money—by the way, and the purpose of the money is to save lives, in many cases—the groups that apply have to change their board of directors in order to access the money, or have to take the cross off the wall, in the case of the Christian faith-based program. But it's hard to be a faith-based program if you can't practice faith. If the effectiveness of the program is based upon faith, our Government must allow that program to practice its faith.

You see, up to now, the question has been, what is the process? My question is, what are the results? If we're saving lives, if the Salvation Army is doing what it does so very well, we ought to welcome programs that succeed. We ought to say, "You're welcome into the fabric, the social fabric, of America in changing lives."

So that's what we're off to do. And I have signed an Executive order—Presidents sign Executive orders. [*Laughter*] It says that we'll have a level playing field for faith-based programs when they apply for Federal money. I've got offices in each Cabinet set up to make sure that the faith-based programs have a friendly ear when they come to apply, that they're not facing the same old bureaucratic morass, that they get a welcoming ear. Rod has got one in his office. HUD has got one. Social—Cabinets have got them in their offices because I want people who have got a good idea about how to change somebody's life to have a sympathetic ear in Washington, DC.

I want people to know that you ought to come. Not only are people allowed to come and make their case and to get help on grantmaking, but we also assure them that, in reverse, the Government is not going to force them to change their habits and change their ways and change their basic reason for existing.

And we're beginning to make some progress. Slowly but surely, we're changing the culture. We'll finalize new regulations later this month that will open up a lot of money available to faith-based programs. And that's important, because it means that we'll do a better job of encouraging the neighborhood healers to fulfill their mission.

Obviously, not all money will be Federal money. That would be bad for the fabric of America. That's why you're here, see. That's why I came. I want to encourage private foundations not to discriminate against faith-based programs. I want to encourage individuals to give. But what I'm also telling you is that the Federal Government needs to take an active role, in my judgment.

Let me tell you some of the kinds of things that are taking place, and hopefully this will stimulate other thought for others who may want to try to compete for taxpayers' money to help save lives. The Department of Health and Human Services recently awarded $7 million of grants to 15 faith-based groups who support abstinence education. One of the grants, for nearly $500,000, a new grant, went to A Woman's Concern. It's a group of faith-based health centers in the Boston area. It seems like it makes sense to me that when you're trying to help people make right choices, that you ask people of faith to be included in the process. This won't be a punitive—it wouldn't be punitive education. It would be education done out of the kindness of somebody's heart. Faith-based programs work.

We've got a—the Department of Labor has awarded $21 million to faith-based groups for job training. I asked Kirbyjon on the way in from Ellington Field, I said, "Are you able to access Federal money for your job training program?" He said, "I didn't know we were able to." Well, you will be able to. What's wrong with having faith-based programs? What's wrong with having a church be able to reach out to a prisoner, somebody who just got out of prison, somebody who's desperate for love? What's wrong with a church, a place of love, surrounding that soul and at the same time having a job training program to help them? I'll tell you what's wrong with it. Nothing's wrong with it. And the Federal Government ought to welcome faith-based programs to help save lives.

In East Harlem, the Exodus Transitional Community is using grants from Labor and Justice to help released prisoners get a job. That's the kind of thing I'm talking about. Exodus helped 252 people last year. This year, with the new grant, they'll help 375. And that may not sound like a lot because there's a lot of prisoners. But think about if there was Exodus programs or Exodus-type programs all over. Instead of 375, we'll be talking about 375 times thousands. And then all of a sudden, souls who were once lost are then found. People who thought they didn't have hope can find hope.

HUD, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, is supporting faith-based groups like Uplift Fourth Ward. You may have heard about the program. The Rose of Sharon Missionary Baptist Church

in Houston runs it. Uplift Fourth Ward, the folks in it—there you go. [*Laughter*] I'm glad you invited somebody, Kirbyjon—[*laughter*]—from Uplift Fourth Ward. It is a chance to rehabilitate historic buildings and provide safe and affordable housing to low-income seniors. Who says housing programs have to be done out of the old traditional construction company? Why can't housing companies be started out of faith-based institutions?

There's program after program that have started—but we're just starting, is my point to you. Congress needs to hear the call. Congress needs to not thwart efforts. You see, my attitude is, if a faith-based program provides help to anybody in need regardless of their religion, we should not fear that program. My view is, is that the program ought to stand on its own. The money won't go for proselytizing. The money will go to the social service intended for that program.

I believe we ought to empower people to be able to make choices on where they receive their help. I can't think of anything more vital in America than to have a program aimed at changing drug addiction in America and a program that will allow faith-based programs to be an integral part of helping somebody kick alcohol and drugs. I say that because I know firsthand what it takes to quit drinking, and it takes something other than a textbook or a manual. If you change a person's heart, you can change their life.

Our society must not fear the use of faith to solve life's problems. We must welcome faith, and Congress must not block these important initiatives. There are lives to be saved. There are soldiers in the army of compassion ready to save them, and the Federal Government ought to be on the side of the soldiers in the armies of compassion.

We'll continue working on the Compassionate Capital Fund. I've asked for $100 million this year. It's a way to help startup social entrepreneurs learn how to apply for grants. It gives people ways to fulfill their mission, to realize their dreams. I believe we ought to have a national mentoring program, particularly for children whose mom and dad may be in a prison, for junior high students. I've asked for $450 million. I hope Congress funds it. I just told you about my view on drug rehabilitation. Look, when we find suffering in our society today, we can't turn away.

And just as an aside, we can't turn away overseas, either. I'm proud of the United States of America. This great Nation is going to spend $15 billion over the next 5 years in the important work of human rescue by providing medicine and help to millions and millions of men, women, and children suffering from AIDS on the continent of Africa.

I'm incredibly proud of our country. We're a really strong nation. We need to be strong. We're at a war with people who hate America, and I'll keep us strong militarily. We'll be strong to meet the challenges. We'll continue to push for freedom and peace overseas. The world is going to be peaceful, thanks to the United States of America. America will be more secure, thanks to the focus and strength of the American people.

But at home, we need to work to save lives as well. A secure America is a hopeful America. A secure America is an educated America. A secure America is a place where people realize the American Dream is meant for them as much as it is meant for me.

People say, "Well, your country's strong." I say, "Yes, we are, but you don't really understand the strength of America. It's the hearts and souls of our citizens." That's the true strength of this country. The Power Center tapped into that strength. Your contributions tonight recognize that strength and support it. And our Government must stand side by side with that strength as well.

I'm incredibly optimistic about our country and its future. I've seen firsthand the great character of the American people. And it's that character, it's that determination, it is that optimism that allows me to boldly predict: America will overcome any problem she faces, abroad and here at home.

Thank you all for coming. May God bless you, and may God bless our country.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:49 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Rev. Kirbyjon H. Caldwell, senior pastor, Windsor Village United Methodist Church, his wife Suzette, and his parents Booker and Jean Caldwell; Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst of Texas; Michael L. Williams, chair, Texas Railroad Commission; and Genora Boykins, chairperson of the board, and Jodi Jiles, treasurer, Pyramid Community Development Corp. This

item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Proclamation 7703—National Historically Black Colleges and Universities Week, 2003

September 12, 2003

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Historically Black Colleges and Universities have a distinguished past and an important future in providing higher education for Americans throughout our country. As we celebrate National Historically Black Colleges and Universities Week, we recognize these institutions for their dedication to academic excellence. And we reaffirm our Nation's commitment to equal educational opportunities for all Americans.

Since the mid 1800s, Historically Black Colleges and Universities have provided superb education and training to many Americans. And these schools opened the door to African Americans when other doors were shamefully barred. Since their inception, these schools have furthered the development of young people who went on to become leaders in government, business, education, science, the military, law, and many other fields. Graduates of Historically Black Colleges and Universities have made great contributions to America, and continue to serve as role models for all Americans.

The struggles and many successes of America's Historically Black Colleges and Universities are the struggles and successes of our Nation. Today, our Nation's 105 Historically Black Colleges and Universities are building on their commitment to excellence and their integral position within our higher education system. Our Nation must continue to support these schools for the sake of our students and our future.

In 2002, I signed an Executive Order supporting the White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities to help find new ways to strengthen these schools. My Administration also has sought to increase fiscal year 2004 funding for Historically Black Colleges and Universities by 5 percent, requesting more than $224 million. In addition, the President's Board of Advisors on Historically Black Colleges and Universities is helping these colleges and universities benefit from Federal programs, obtain private-sector support for their endowments, and build private-sector partnerships to strengthen faculty development and cooperative research.

America's Historically Black Colleges and Universities have a proud and storied tradition. America recognizes and salutes their history and achievements and will work for their continued success.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim September 14 through September 20, 2003, as National Historically Black Colleges and Universities Week. I call upon public officials, educators, librarians, and all the people of the United States to observe this week with appropriate ceremonies, activities, and programs as we demonstrate our appreciation for these important institutions and their many successful graduates.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twelfth day of September, in the year of our Lord two thousand three, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-eighth.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 1:44 p.m., September 15, 2003]

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Proclamation 7704—Small Business Week, 2003

September 12, 2003

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

The success of small businesses in America reflects the innovation, determination, and