

Telephone Remarks to the March for Life

January 22, 2004

The President. Well, thank you very much, Nellie. I appreciate your kind introduction, and thank you for including me in this celebration of life. I'm calling you today from Roswell, New Mexico. And it sounds like you've got some people who know where Roswell is here in the audience.

I know that good folks have gathered there on The Mall from every corner of America to take part in the 31st March for Life. And I want you to pass on my best to each one of them in person, please, and tell them how much I appreciate their devotion to such a noble cause.

You believe, as I do, that every person, however frail or vulnerable, is a blessing. Each of us has a special dignity, a place and purpose in this world. And in the Declaration of Independence, our Founders stated this self-evident truth: The right to life does not come from government; it comes from the Creator of life.

During the past 3 years, we've made real progress toward building a culture of life in America. As President, I've signed the Born-Alive Infants Protection Act. I have signed legislation supporting maternity group homes. Working with the Congress, we have refused to spend taxpayers' money on international programs that promote abortion overseas. We're opposed to the destruction of embryos for stem cell research. And last November, it was my honor to sign into law a ban on the brutal procedure of partial-birth abortion.

Nellie, I want you to know that our administration is vigorously defending this law against those who would seek to overturn it in the courts. I also want you to know, without your hard work and dedication to the cause of life, these achievements would not have been possible.

But we all know there is still more to do. Earlier this week, I proposed that we double Federal funding for abstinence education programs. We will continue to support crisis pregnancy centers, adoption, parental notification laws, and the vital work of faith-based groups.

I strongly support the Unborn Victims of Violence Act, which the House Judiciary Committee approved yesterday. And now the entire Congress should act on this bill so I can sign it into law.

We'll also work with Congress to pass without delay a comprehensive and effective ban on human cloning. We can push the limits of medical science while maintaining the highest of ethical standards. Human life is a creation, not a commodity, and should not be used as research material for reckless experiments.

Above all, we must continue, with civility and respect, to remind our fellow citizens that all life is sacred and worthy of protection. I know, as you return to your communities, you will redouble your efforts to change hearts and minds one person at a time. And this is the way we will build a lasting culture of life, a compassionate society in which every child is born into a loving family and protected by law.

Ms. Gray. We pledge that to you, Mr. President.

The President. Thank you, Nellie. I appreciate so very much the opportunity to speak to you and the assembled crowd. May God bless you all, and may He continue to bless America. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:08 a.m. from Roswell, NM, to march participants on the National Mall in Washington, DC. In his remarks, he referred to Nellie J. Gray, president, March for Life Education and Defense Fund.

Remarks in Roswell, New Mexico

January 22, 2004

The President. Thank you all. Thanks for coming.

Audience member. We love you, President Bush!

The President. Thank you. It's nice to be back in New Mexico. I understand you had reports this morning of an unfamiliar aircraft. [Laughter] No worry, it was just me. [Laughter] It's good to be back here. The last time I came to Roswell, I wasn't on Air Force One. I was headed to Ruidoso from Midland. [Laughter] Roswell was what we call a watering stop. [Laughter] You've got great people

in this part of the State. I'm proud to be in this wonderful town. Thank you for inviting me.

I appreciate you showing up to hear me talk. If you listened to the State of the Union, I appreciate that. And I can assure you, it's not—I can assure you, I'm not going to be quite as windy. But I do have some things I want to share with you today. This Nation is called to great responsibilities, and we're meeting them all. The state of this Union is strong, and it is confident.

I'm proud to be here with the Corps of the New Mexico Military Institute, the West Point of the West. I appreciate the values instilled at this fine institution, of discipline and service and honor. I know many folks who have come to this fine place, some of them from Midland, Texas. I happen to have hired one, an alumnus of this school, for my Cabinet, Mr. Tony Principi, who is representing America's veterans so capably as the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

I want to thank the law enforcement and first-responders who are here with us. Thank you for wearing the uniform that says clearly you're willing to dedicate your lives to make your community a safer place. Thank you for being on the frontline of securing our homeland. I appreciate your service.

I appreciate Lt. Gen. Robert Beckel for his greeting me here today. He was from the first graduating class of NMMI in 1959. He doesn't look that old. *[Laughter]* But he's had a distinguished service for our country. General, I appreciate what you're doing. Thank you for leading this fine institution.

I'm so proud to be up here with Pete Domenici. What a class act he is. He's an honorable man, an honorable man who cares deeply about New Mexico and all its citizens. He cares deeply about our country. He's a strong leader. He sets the pace in the United States Senate. He's taken the lead on a vital piece of legislation, the energy bill. This country needs an energy bill. We need an energy bill that makes sure our electricity system works well. We need an energy bill that encourages technologies that advance conservation. We need an energy bill that makes this country less dependent on foreign sources of energy. The Senator worked hard on this piece of legislation. I thought we had

it at the end of last year, and then it got stuck. We're going to unstick it for the good of the country.

Pete, I appreciate your friendship. Just one piece of advice: Just remember, it's the birds that's supposed to suffer, not the hunter. *[Laughter]*

I'm honored to be traveling today with your Congressman, Steve Pearce. He's what they call a freshman—that's first-year—but as a freshman, he's making a huge difference. Let me tell you something: You sent somebody up there from this part of the world who's effective and strong, who's not going to back down one inch from what he believes. And he's plenty capable, and he's making a difference. He worked hard on bills that matter to this part of the State, like the healthy forests bill—commonsense legislation. He worked to help on the defense appropriations bill for an amendment that says, "We can defend our country and, at the same time, conserve our resources in a wise way." No, he's an effective member of the United States Congress, and I'm proud to call him friend.

I'm proud to be traveling with Congresswoman Heather Wilson as well. She's over there, from Albuquerque. She's plenty capable. She's a distinguished Member of the United States Congress. She's a graduate of the U.S. Air Force Academy and reminded me coming in that General Beckel was one of her instructors. General, you did a heck of a job in preparing this good woman for public service. I'm proud to be working with my friend Heather Wilson. Thank you for coming.

I'm honored that the mayor came to see me. Mayor Owen, I appreciate you coming. My only advice is, fill the potholes. *[Laughter]*

I appreciate the business and community leaders who have come. I'm honored you all are here. You'll hear me talk about the strengths of our country. One of the strengths is that we're prosperous and getting more prosperous. That's a strength. One of the strengths is we've got a military that is second to none, and we aim to keep it that way. That's a strength as well. But that's not the strongest part of our country. The strongest part of the country is the people, because

of the hearts of the people of America. The compassion of America really defines the strength of America.

Today, when I landed at the airport, I met Amy Coppin. She is a senior at NMMI. She came to say hello because she is a mentor. She teaches children. She's taking time out of her busy life as a senior in college to make a difference in somebody's life. She's serving something greater than herself by loving a neighbor just like she would like to be loved herself. She is a soldier in the army of compassion.

When you hear me talk about the strength of America being the heart and soul of the people, what I'm talking about are the Amy Coppins of the world, and people in this crowd who are serving your community and your country by helping somebody who hurts.

One of the most profound initiatives I put out, I think, in order to help change America is for the Federal Government to welcome faith-based programs in delivery of essential services. I believe strongly that our Government should not discriminate against religious institutions. Quite the contrary: I believe we ought to welcome religious institutions into providing much-needed social services, because many of the problems of our society are problems of the heart. Many of the problems of society require a power greater than Government to help people realize the great potential of their lives.

Where's Amy? Amy didn't get a very good seat. Well—[laughter]—trust me; she's here. And I hope the cadets here follow her example, and as you go on to life, remember part of service to your country is to help somebody in need. And for those of you in this community who are a part of the army of compassion, thank you from the bottom of my heart. And for those of you who want to figure out how to contribute to our society, do so. Do so, and reach out a hand to somebody who might be hungry or homeless or lonely or hurt. The power of love in America is a power that will change our society, one soul at a time.

I hope you could tell last night and so far today that I'm incredibly optimistic about our Nation's future. And I've got reason to be. Not only do I know the character of the peo-

ple, I'm beginning to see some results in some important areas that say optimism defines the future of this country.

Let me talk about the economy, for starters. This economy is strong, and it is getting stronger. I tell you I'm optimistic not only because of the numbers; I'm optimistic because I remember where we have come from. In March of 2000, the stock market, which is an indicator of—sometimes an indicator of economic times to come, started to decline. And then we had a recession. In '01, the first quarter of '01 was recession, and that's negative growth. And when the economy is not growing, it's hard for people to find a job. And then we kind of got going, got things going. The Congress passed the stimulus package—I want to thank the Senator and the Members of Congress for working on that—and things started getting better.

And then we got hit by the enemy. And make no mistake about it, the enemy attack affected America. It affected the way I think about foreign policy because we can no longer take gathering threats for granted. If we see a threat gathering overseas, the lesson of September the 11th says we must pay attention to it. We just can't—and if it gets so bad, we've got to do something about it. We cannot assume that oceans protect us anymore. It affected our psychology in America. It also affected the economy. And things were beginning to get okay, and all of a sudden, the attack came, and it hurt us. It hurt us bad. But we recovered because America's strong. We recovered because the American people are strong.

And just as we were beginning to get our feet on the ground again, we had a problem with some of our fellow citizens telling the truth. We had corporate scandals. We had CEOs that did not understand what it meant to be a responsible citizen. If you've got responsibilities, you've got obligations. In a society that tries to promote responsibilities, there are certain obligations. If you're a mom or a dad, you have the obligation to love your child with all your heart. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you have the responsibility to tell the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And if you don't, there has to be a consequence. We passed tough

laws, and now people are beginning to—you begin to read what it means to have consequences for not telling the truth. And that's the way it should be.

And then we marched to war. I made the tough decision of war, and I want to thank the Members of Congress who made the tough vote on war. It's not easy, but we acted because of the lessons of September the 11th. We acted based upon the facts. We acted to make the country more secure and the world more free. But when you're marching to war, it's tough on the economy. For this reason, the message, march to war, is not conducive for optimistic investment. Marching to war is negative, not positive. It's hard to be optimistic about the future when you look on your TV screen and it says, "America is marching to war." Now we're marching to peace and freedom.

So I've seen firsthand, and you've seen firsthand, what this Nation and our economy has been through. Those are plenty high hurdles to cross, but we're crossing them. One reason we're crossing them is because the Congress and this administration acted boldly. We weren't afraid to act. We knew what to do. And we passed economic stimulus packages, which is a fancy word for giving people their money back. We acted on this principle. It was a principled decision. It was based upon this principle, that when you have more money in your pocket, you'll spend, save, or invest. And when you do so, it drives the whole economy forward. The American people are driving the economy forward.

But I want to warn you, the stimulus package we passed is set to expire. Congress, in order to get the bill out, had to expire certain of the provisions, one of which was the child credit, which went up from—went up to \$1,000, will decline to \$700. If Congress doesn't act, you get a tax increase if you have a child.

The marriage penalty, we wanted the code to say: We want marriage to work. If we believe in marriage, we ought to say so in the Tax Code. And so we began to phase back the marriage penalty. If Congress doesn't act, the marriage penalty goes back up.

See, we understand that if you're interested in job creation, you've got to stimulate

small business. Most new jobs are created by small-business owners in America. If you're a small-business owner, you know what I'm talking about. We stimulated small-business investment and, therefore, growth. If Congress doesn't act, small businesses will pay taxes.

We decreased the—well, we got rid of the death tax or put it on its way to extinction. We listened to New Mexico's farmers and ranchers and small-business owners that understand if you work all your life to build up an asset, you shouldn't be taxed twice. You shouldn't be taxed once as you're building up your asset and twice after you go on.

And then, in order to stimulate our economy, everybody got tax relief. You see, we didn't try to pick and choose who won and who lost. We said, "If there's going to be tax relief, let's be fair about it. If you pay taxes, you ought to get relief." If the Congress doesn't act, those taxes will go up. If the Congress doesn't act, the economy will suffer and people will make more taxes. Congress must make the tax relief they gave the people permanent.

Now, things are looking pretty good. Third-quarter growth last year was the highest in 20 years. And home construction is high. And homeownership levels are high, and that's really important. We want people owning things in America, don't we? We want people owning their own home. There's nothing like owning your own home or your own business to have a vital stake in the future of this country. Productivity is high. We've got the best workforce in the world. Manufacturing activity is strong. Exports are on the rise. Jobs are increasing. We're doing well—we're doing well.

But we've got a new economy we're dealing with. And one of the things I addressed yesterday in Arizona was how do you make sure that as technology changes, people's skills change with it so they can find work. See, my attitude is, if somebody is looking for a job and can't find one, that says, no matter what the numbers look like, we still have got an issue in America. We want people working. We want people to be able to put food on the table.

Before I talk about how to make sure American workers are trained, I do want to

bring up a subject that I had addressed in the State of the Union and before, that I think it's important for me to continue to clarify for the American people. We've got people doing jobs in America that Americans won't do, and that's helpful to our economy. It's helpful that there are some people that are willing to do the work that others won't do. And I think we need to be honest about what's taking place in America. After all, we're a country of the rule of law, and we've got people breaking law. And the question is how best to bring what's happening to light in an honest and legal way.

My attitude is this—my attitude is: So long as there is a willing worker and an employer looking to hire somebody, we ought to have a system that allows for temporary work in America, in an honest, open way, in a way that talks to the values of our country. I oppose amnesty, loud and clear, because amnesty will encourage further illegal immigration. Amnesty rewards somebody for breaking the law. On the other hand, I do want to change a system that has ignored reality and allow willing employer to be matched with willing employee in an honest, open way.

We should not say to somebody who's working on a temporary-worker basis, "You get added—you get a special break when it comes to citizenship." You don't. You don't get a special break. But think about a system that has people working in the shadows of America. That's not the American way. That's not the way we do business in this country.

People are working who are trying to put food on the table for a family in Mexico. You've got to understand why they're here. They're motivated out of the deep love of their children and their wife. They're working just as hard as any other mom or dad do, for the same reason: They have an obligation and a responsibility. Those people need to be treated with respect. They need to be honored for their commitment to their families.

A temporary-worker plan that's honest and open will be good for this economy. It will also be good for the security of the country. We've got a lot of Border Patrol agents working hard to stop the flow of illegal immigration. I believe if we make the system open

and honest, it will help stop the flow of illegal immigration. It will cut down on those "coyotes" that are putting people in the back of these trailers and driving them across incredibly hot desert. It will stop—it will make sure that those who are working to secure our borders will focus on the true threats to America, the illegal drugs or the contraband or the potential terrorists that could be coming across our borders.

No, this plan makes sense. I call upon the Congress to do what is good for our economy, what is good for our security, and what is compassionate, and pass the temporary-worker plan.

I also want to talk about how to make sure American workers don't get left behind. By the way, that starts with making sure our public schools work. It starts by making sure our public schools teach the basics.

I went up to Washington, and thanks to Pete's help and to Heather's help and to Steve's, now, help, we passed—[laughter]—we passed the No Child Left Behind Act. Let me just tell you the principles behind that as plainly as I possibly can. Every one of us needs to challenge the soft bigotry of low expectations. We need to raise that bar. If you believe every child has got the capacity to learn, you need to raise the bar. I don't care what the color of skin of that child may be; everybody can learn. And that's the principle of No Child Left Behind. We raise the standards. We expect everybody to learn.

We've increased Federal education spending, particularly for poor students, dramatically. But now, for the first time, we're asking the question, "Are we meeting expectations?" In return for increased Federal spending, the Federal Government is saying to local districts, "Show us whether or not the children are learning to read and write and add and subtract." I don't think that's too much. I don't think it's too much to increase budgets and in return say, "What are the results?" If you believe every child can learn to read and write and add and subtract, then you're not afraid to ask the question: Are they learning to read and write and add and subtract?

This administration trusts local people. We know you can chart the path to excellence. Your decision is on how to get there. All we

want to know is, are you doing what we expect you to do? Are you just meeting those obligations? In the bill we passed, there's extra help for students who fall behind. Listen, when you find out a third grader is not reading at grade level, get him or her extra help. We provide money to do that. We don't want any child in America left behind. The bill we passed is a great piece of legislation for America's children.

There's more we need to do. I talked about making sure that some of the high school students who are falling behind in reading and math get a little extra help. We've got to make sure there's—literacy is the law of the land. I talked about making sure that we expand advance placement programs in certain low-income schools in order to keep raising that bar, Pell grants for students that take rigorous curriculum, in order to encourage excellence. We want to make sure our community college system is flexible and viable to help people find jobs that exist.

Yesterday I was in Arizona, and I reminded people that in the old days of workforce training, they said, "Just go train people." So we'd go out and train 1,000 hairdressers, and there might be 50 slots. But you'd have 950 well-trained hairdressers with nothing to do. Now the workforce program says, "Let's match up employers with the community college system to train people for jobs that actually exist, for jobs that work." So we've got \$250 million in the budget to go directly to community colleges, to invigorate the business communities and the community college, invigorate a joint strategy to help people find work.

Yesterday I sat with some folks on the stage. They were not student age, let's put it that way. They had worked for years. One woman worked for 15 years as a graphic designer. She's a single mom, by the way, and that's the toughest job in America. She was struggling to get ahead. She went back to the community college. She gained new skills, and in her first year in her new job, she's making more than she did after 15 years as a graphic designer.

Education—what I'm telling you is as the economy changes, there's tremendous opportunities for workers. We've just got to make sure the education system matches people with the skills necessary for the 21st

century. And that's what this administration is going to do.

No, I'm optimistic about this country, because I understand the character of the people. And I'm optimistic because I know we're doing the right things when it comes to educating our children and workers. I'm optimistic about the economy. I'm also optimistic because we're going to win the war on terror. The greatest responsibility of the Federal Government, and my first responsibility as your President, is to defend and protect America.

I remember talking to the country after September the 11th and reminding people that this would be a different kind of war we faced. Sometimes you'd see action, and sometimes you wouldn't; that we'd be on a manhunt to find the terrorists who destroyed us. It would require a different kind of attitude about chasing these people down. I also knew that time would pass and people would take the comfortable position of saying the dangers had passed as well. That's just not reality. I wish it was reality, but it's not reality. My job as your President is to be realistic, be open-eyed, to understand the lessons of September the 11th, 2001, to understand there's terrorists who still plot against us. By our will, by our steadfast determination, by our courage, we will prevail in the war—first war of the 21st century.

In the United States, where the war begun, we will continue our vital work to protecting American people, by protecting our ports and borders and safeguarding infrastructure, preparing for the worst. I mentioned the first-responders. I can't tell you how pleased I am with the coordination now between the Federal Government, the State Government, and local governments for preparing our homeland. I'm going to submit a budget to Congress next month which will include spending of \$30 billion for homeland security. That's—more than 30 billion—almost 3 times the amount that we were spending prior to September the 11th, 2001.

We understand our obligation in Washington. Our obligation is never to forget what happened on September the 11th. And our obligation is to support the homeland security people, those on the frontlines, to prepare for a potential threat.

I think it's very important for the country to understand the PATRIOT Act. See, that's an important part of fighting the war on terror. It's essential that the FBI and the CIA be able to share information if you want to whip the terrorists. See, it's a different kind of war. We're in a different era. We need to view law differently. We'll always protect our Constitution and safeguard individual rights, but our law enforcement, those who collect information and share information and expected to act on information, must be able to talk together.

Many of the tools in the PATRIOT Act have been used by law enforcement to chase down embezzlers and criminals. It is essential that those same tools be used in fighting against terrorists. We're in a different era. The PATRIOT Act is going to expire. The Congress needs to renew it for the sake of fighting the war on terror.

We'll protect the homeland. The best way to protect America, however, is to go on the offensive, stay on the offensive, and bring the terrorists to justice. I said in the speech the other night, two-thirds of known Al Qaida leaders have been captured or killed. We're making progress against them. The rest of them are hiding. They think they are, but they cannot escape the justice of America. We've got thousands of troops, thousands of brave soldiers. We're chasing them, one by one. We're on an international manhunt for those who would do harm to America or for anybody else who loves freedom. One by one, we'll bring them to justice. There is no hole deep enough to hide from America.

Not only are we after Al Qaida, we will continue to confront regimes that harbor or support terrorists, regimes that could supply them with weapons of mass destruction. The United States and our allies refuse to live under the shadow of this ultimate danger, refuse to be in a position where—to find ourselves in a position where terrorists could show up with weapons of mass murder. Our obligation is, defend our country. Our obligation is to be clear-eyed about the threats, and our obligation is to deal with them.

I laid down a doctrine early on that said, "If you harbor a terrorist, if you feed a terrorist, if you hide a terrorist, you're just as guilty as the terrorist." One of the lessons

that people can pick up in this part of the world is, when you say something, you better mean it. That's particularly true in diplomacy. If you say something, you better mean it. I meant it, and the Taliban found out what we meant.

Afghanistan was the primary training base for Al Qaida. That's where the killers were learning the skills necessary to destroy innocent life. And we gave the Taliban a chance, and then they, of course, rejected—rejected the ultimatum I laid out. And so they no longer exist, thanks to the United States military and our friends and allies.

This barbaric regime is no more, and the people of Afghanistan are better off for it. You see, America loves freedom, but we understand that freedom is not America's gift to the world. It's the Almighty God's gift to each man and woman in this world. We love the fact that people in Afghanistan are now free. Remember, prior to our arrival, the Taliban wouldn't even let young girls go to school, and today, they do. They have written a constitution; the people of Afghanistan have written a constitution which is—guarantees free elections, freedom, full participation in government by women. Things are changing. Freedom is powerful. The people of Afghanistan are opening up health care centers and new businesses. Times are changing, because they have been liberated. America is safer because the Taliban doesn't exist. America is safer because Afghanistan is now free, and we stand strongly with the freedom-lovers in Afghanistan.

I made a tough decision, with the Congress' support, to remove Saddam Hussein from power, and we did. And the world is safer; America is more secure; and the world is more free because we got rid of Saddam Hussein. This brutal dictator attacked his neighbors, used weapons of mass destruction against his own people, plotted, was devious. He tortured Iraqis. We discovered mass graves of thousands of men and women and children. He had torture rooms for somebody who spoke out against him.

Saddam Hussein was found in a hole, hiding. Saddam Hussein, the once all-powerful tyrant who used his brutal dictatorship to intimidate and destroy lives, will no longer be

able to do so in Iraq. He sits in a prison cell, and the Iraqi people are free.

Fifty-five of the top officials, former officials in that regime—of the 55, 45 have been captured or killed. The other 10 have got to be nervous. [*Laughter*] They're out there. They're out there trying to shake our will. See, these people are murderers. They'll take innocent life to try to convince others that freedom isn't worth it. They will kill indiscriminately—they don't care who—to try to shake our confidence, to try to get in the heads of the American people. They don't understand America. America will never be intimidated by thugs and assassins.

We're making progress. It's important for you to know that we're on the offensive in Iraq. As I said the other night, we're leading over 1,600 patrols a day, 180 raids every week. I mean, we're chasing them down. We're bringing them and foreign terrorists to justice there, so we don't have to face them in America. We're bringing them there because we understand freedom is vital for our future, freedom in Iraq is vital for our future.

I'm pleased with the progress we're making with the Iraqi citizens who are interested in running their own country. I met with the Acting President of the Governing Council, Adnan Pachachi. He sat next to Laura during the State of the Union. By the way—let me digress—I'm really glad I married a west Texas woman. She is a fabulous, fabulous—she's great. She's doing well, and she sends her love. [*Applause*] You Texans, calm down. [*Laughter*] You know the reputation you have here in eastern New Mexico. [*Laughter*]

Anyway, she was sitting next to Acting President Pachachi—

Audience member. We can't hear you.

The President. I can hear you. [*Laughter*]

And I met with him prior—in the Oval Office prior to the State of the Union. I was pleased with his vision, his understanding of freedom. The Oval Office is an interesting place to meet, particularly, people who are beginning to struggle with democracy and freedom because it's a reminder that the institutions, at least in this country, are always bigger than the people. Sometime we've got an all-right President; sometimes he's not all right. But the Presidency itself exists. It's a reminder of the power of institutions in a

free society, that institutions in a free society are always bigger than the people, and he understood that.

And they're working hard. The Iraqi people are taking the brunt of most of these killings that are taking place. They also understand it's their responsibility to secure the country, so we've increased in large number the number of police and people who are willing to help secure the country. More Iraqis are now coming forward. They realize the killings that are taking place—sometimes maybe by foreign terrorists, obviously sometimes by former Ba'athist officials—will stop the march to freedom. They want to be free. You've got to understand, these people, like you and I, love freedom. It's in everybody's heart, and Pachachi understands that, and so does the Governing Council.

Freedom is happening in Iraq. And you've got to understand why it's important. Freedom in the heart of the Middle East, freedom and democracy in the place that has bred resentment and terror, is in our national interests. A free Iraq will help change the world. A free Iraq will help change a neighborhood that needs to be changed. A free Iraq will make it easier for our children to grow up in a peaceful society.

People say, "What are you doing in the long term? We know what you're doing in the short term. We can hear you and see you; you're sending troops after the killers. What about the long-term plan against terrorists?" Free societies do not breed terrorism. Free societies are peaceful nations. What we're doing for the long term, we're promoting freedom.

The world is changing for the better. The world is getting more free and peaceful and less dangerous. Recently, Muammar Qadhafi made a wise decision to show and get rid of his weapons of mass destruction programs. The British Government and the American Government worked for 9 months to convince in negotiations with Qadhafi about what to do with his programs. You want to remember, I want to contrast that with the 12 years of diplomacy that took place at the United Nations when nothing happened. I mean, we had resolution after resolution after resolution just totally ignored by Saddam Hussein—sometimes not ignored but

played with, is a better way to describe it. Nine months of intense discussions with Qadhafi worked because the word of the country—word of this country matters. When you say something, you better believe it. People now trust the word of America. People now understand.

And we're not doing this work alone. I just told you that Great Britain was very much involved with the intense discussions with Colonel Qadhafi. And I appreciate my friend Prime Minister Blair and the people he assigned to—people he assigned to the task. We're working together with people. And that's positive. We're working together with people who love freedom and understand the stakes of the war against terror, people who clearly see a future that's peaceful and positive but understand sometimes you have to make the tough choice to get there. You have to do the hard things to achieve a positive vision of peace and freedom.

There are 34 nations that have joined us in Iraq. That's too long to list. The Senator might fall out on me if I start trying to read them all. [*Laughter*] Thirty-four—[*laughter*]
—34 nations stand with us in that country. Thirty-seven nations in NATO are contributing to joint efforts in Afghanistan. I've worked hard to bring people along. I meet with foreign leaders all the time to explain the intentions of America, to talk about what we see in the future.

There is a difference, however, between leading a coalition of nations and shutting down efforts because a few object. It's a big difference. It's the difference between being willing to gather a group of like-minded nations and lead the world towards freedom and peace or allowing some to object and, therefore, nothing happens. That's not the way this administration functions. As I said the other night, we will never seek a permission slip to defend the American people.

This war, this new war of the 21st century, has fallen hardest on our military. And I want to thank those of you who have got relatives in the United States military. And if you do, please tell them the Commander in Chief is really proud of their service.

We mourn for the fallen. We send our prayers to their loved ones, and we thank them for their service. I also want to thank

the Guard and Reserve members from around the country—but particularly, now that I'm in New Mexico, from New Mexico—who have served our country so ably and so well.

We've also got thousands of service men and women who are based in this State, at Kirtland and Cannon and Holloman Air Force Bases. The people in the military from this State have done and continue to do vital work on the war against terror. And like everyone who serves in uniform today, you are making this Nation grateful and proud.

And I appreciate their families. I appreciate the moms and dads, husbands and wives who are staying at home as their loved one goes off to defend America and to spread freedom. Their loved ones sacrifice, and so do the families. America's military families are steadfast and strong. Not only should we show them the gratitude, but we need to make them this promise: Your loved one will have the resources you need to fight and win the war on terror.

It's an honor to be here in Roswell. I'm optimistic about the future. I'm optimistic about the future for a lot of reasons, but the main reason is, I'm optimistic about the future because I understand the country. I know the values of America. I know the decency of our people. I know the willingness of the American citizen to serve a cause greater than themselves.

It's the great strength of America. It's an unbelievably great country we have, because the people are so strong, so resilient, so compassionate, and so decent. We believe values in our heart that we just won't change. We believe everybody has dignity, everybody has worth. We believe in freedom. We believe people yearn for freedom. We have an obligation to unleash freedom in the world, and we're not afraid to lead. This country stands strongly on the values that make us great, and we're not the least bit afraid of sharing those values in a world that needs peace and freedom.

I'm proud to be here. I'm proud to lead the greatest nation on the face of the Earth. I'm proud to be in front of some of the great citizens of America. May God bless you all, and may God continue to bless our great country.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:24 a.m. at the Roswell Convention and Civic Center. In his remarks, he referred to Lt. Gen. Robert D. Beckel, USAF (ret.), superintendent, New Mexico Military Institute; Mayor Bill B. Owen of Roswell, NM; Col. Muammar Abu Minyar al-Qadhafi, leader of Libya; and Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Exchange With Reporters in Roswell, New Mexico

January 22, 2004

President's Visit to Roswell

The President. I need some ribs.

Q. Mr. President, how are you?

The President. I'm hungry, and I'm going to order some ribs.

Q. What would you like?

The President. Whatever you think I'd like.

Homeland Security

Q. Sir, on homeland security, critics would say you simply haven't spent enough to keep the country secure.

The President. My job is to secure the homeland, and that's exactly what we're going to do. But I'm here to take somebody's order. That would be you, Stretch [Richard Keil, Bloomberg News]—what would you like? Put some of your high-priced money right here to try to help the local economy. You get paid a lot of money, you ought to be buying some food here. It's part of how the economy grows. You've got plenty of money in your pocket, and when you spend it, it drives the economy forward. So what would you like to eat?

Q. Right behind you, whatever you order.

Nuthin' Fancy Cafe

The President. I'm ordering ribs. David [David Gregory, NBC News], do you need a rib?

Q. But Mr. President—

The President. Stretch, thank you, this is not a press conference. This is my chance to help this lady put some money in her pocket. Let me explain how the economy works. When you spend money to buy food, it helps

this lady's business. It makes it more likely somebody is going to find work. So instead of asking questions, answer mine: Are you going to buy some food?

Q. Yes.

The President. Okay, good. What would you like?

Q. Ribs.

The President. Ribs? Good. Let's order up some ribs.

Q. What do you think of the Democratic field, sir?

The President. See, his job is to ask questions; he thinks my job is to answer every question he asks. I'm here to help this restaurant by buying some food. Terry [Terry Moran, ABC News], would you like something?

Q. An answer.

Q. Can we buy some questions?

The President. Obviously these people—they make a lot of money, and they're not going to spend much. I'm not saying they're overpaid; they're just not spending any money.

Q. Do you think it's all going to come down to national security, sir, this election?

The President. One of the things David does, he asks a lot of questions, and they're good, generally.

NOTE: The exchange began at 11:25 a.m. at the Nuthin' Fancy Cafe. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Statement on Senate Passage of the "Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2004"

January 22, 2004

I am pleased that the Senate has passed the omnibus budget bill, which fulfills important commitments like AIDS relief, education and DC school choice, veterans health care, law enforcement, and other priorities.

This bill stays within the spending limits I proposed, which is necessary as we work to cut the deficit in half over the next 5 years. I will continue to work with the Congress to focus on priorities, cut wasteful spending, and be wise with the people's money. I look forward to signing this bill into law.