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**Message to the Congress
Transmitting Notice of Intention To
Enter Into a Free Trade Agreement
With the Dominican Republic**

March 24, 2004

To the Congress of the United States:

Consistent with section 2105(a)(1)(A) of the Trade Act of 2002 (Public Law 107–210; the “Trade Act”), I am pleased to notify the Congress of my intent to enter into a free trade agreement (FTA) with the Government of the Dominican Republic.

This agreement will create new opportunities for America’s workers, farmers, businesses, and consumers by eliminating barriers to trade with the Dominican Republic, the largest economy in the Caribbean Basin. At the same time, it will help bring to the Dominican Republic expanded economic freedom and opportunity, and it will provide an opportunity for regional stability, democracy, and economic development through closer ties of commerce, investment, and friendship.

Consistent with the Trade Act, I am sending this notification at least 90 days in advance of entering into an agreement with the Dominican Republic. My Administration looks forward to working with the Congress in developing appropriate legislation to approve and implement this free trade agreement.

George W. Bush

The White House,
March 24, 2004.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 25. An original was not available for verification of the content of this message.

**Remarks in a Discussion on Job
Training and the Economy in
Nashua, New Hampshire**

March 25, 2004

Lucille Jordan. Mr. President, on behalf of the faculty, the administration, the students, and the great citizens of the great State of New Hampshire, I’d like to welcome you to our campus. Mr. President, thank you.

The President. Lucille, thanks. Thank you all. Thanks for having me. We’re going to have an interesting dialog today about jobs, job creators, and education, and how they all work together to make sure that this State remains competitive and a good place to find work.

Before we do so, though, I do want to thank you, Lucille, for—and your board and your faculty and your students—for welcoming me here. It’s not easy to have the President come. [Laughter] Seems like there’s a large entourage. But I appreciate it. And it’s going to be—I think you’re going to enjoy this. I know I am.

Participant. I’m planning on it. [Laughter]

The President. Good. I had the privilege today of riding from the airport in Manchester with your great Governor, Craig Benson. Appreciate you coming, Governor. I got to see the New Hampshire Government in action, because also in the car was the speaker, Gene Chandler, and the senate leader, Tom Eaton. I appreciate you all being here.

I know the State attorney general is here. Peter, where are you? Thanks for coming. Good to see you, sir. Got a lot of members of the State house and State senate here. I know that Senator Jane O’Hearn, who happens to be the chair of the senate education committee—Lucille told me to be especially nice to her. [Laughter] Thank you for coming.

I first want to tell you how optimistic I am about the future of the country. You know why? Because we’ve overcome a lot, when you think about it. In the last 3 years, this country has really been challenged. Our spirit has been challenged. Our economy has been challenged, and we’ve overcome them. We’re a great country, full of wonderful people, dedicated, hard-working people.

When I say the economy has overcome a lot, let me explain what I mean. We've been through a recession. That means things are going backwards. Ask any of these businessowners what it's like to be in a recession. They'll tell you it's plenty tough. It's hard to plan. It's hard to be optimistic when you don't have any growth. It's hard to find work during a recession.

As well we got attacked on September the 11th, and that affected our spirit. It affected our economy. Cheryl McGinnis is with us today. It affected her life. Her husband Tom was the pilot of American Airline Flight 11.

The Government has got a solemn duty to protect America. And that's why we created the Department of Homeland Security. That's why we put out the PATRIOT Act, so our FBI and CIA can share intelligence to make sure we know who's here to hurt us. That's why the great United States military is on the offensive against—[*applause*]. The best way to protect us is to stay on the offensive and to find terrorists before they try to harm us again, and they will. That's what they're trying to do. Our solemn duty is to protect America.

There's a commission going on in Washington, DC. It's a very important commission. It's a commission determined to look at the 8 months of my administration and the 8 years of the previous administration to determine what we can learn, what we can do to make sure we uphold our solemn duty. Had I known that the enemy was going to use airplanes to strike America, to attack us, I would have used every resource, every asset, every power of this Government to protect the American people.

There's a lot of good folks working to keep us safe. We overcame September the 11th because this Nation refused to be intimidated. We weren't going to let killers and assassins determine our course of life. It's a great nation because the people of America are resolute and strong and determined people.

And then we found out we had some corporate leaders that didn't tell the truth. And it hurt us. It was another obstacle to overcome. You see, business numbers and accounting all depend upon honesty, and the fact that there were some in our society who

were irresponsible citizens and who didn't tell the truth, it cost a lot of people jobs. It hurt our confidence. It was yet another hurdle to overcome. We reacted strongly, I want you to know. We passed tough laws. Perhaps you've seen on your TV screens some of the people that forgot to be responsible citizens getting their day in court. The message is—should be loud and clear to people in the business world: We're not going to tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America.

Part of the war on terror is to—is broader than just Al Qaida. The war on terror encompasses other theaters as well. You see, the lesson of September the 11th is we must deal with threats before they fully materialize. You can't just see a threat and hope it goes away. That's the lesson of September the 11th. Remember, prior to September the 11th, we thought oceans could protect us. But the strategic calculations of America must shift in order to do our duty to keep this country safe.

I saw a threat; the Congress saw a threat; the United Nations Security Council saw a threat in the form of Saddam Hussein. He was not only a threat to people in the Middle East because of terrorist ties; he's a threat to America or anybody else who loved freedom. He's a threat to his own people. He had torture chambers and mass graves.

And so I went to the United Nations. I think you might remember that—[*laughter*—and said, "Deal with the guy. He's been out there for 11 years defying every time you have said, 'Disarm for the sake of peace, for the sake of freedom.' And he ignored it." And so I said, "We'll give him one more chance." And we did. The United Nations Security Council voted unanimously to say to Saddam, "Disarm, or face serious consequences." And he was defiant once again. And given the lessons of September the 11th, I had a choice: You either take the word of a madman, a guy who had gassed his own people at one point in time, or defend America. I'll defend our country every time. [*Applause*] Thank you all. Thanks.

During the runup to the liberation of Iraq, on our TV screens you see, "March to War." That's hard to the business world. It's hard for job creators. It's not a very—it's not—

you don't get a lot of confidence when you think your country is marching to war. War is negative. I did what I thought was right. Now we're marching to peace. But we overcame that part.

So we've been through recession, an attack, corporate scandals, and war. And yet our economy is growing and getting stronger. Part of it had to do, I think, with the policy of our administration, which is tax cuts. See, I believe that when you let somebody have more of their own money to spend or save, that person is likely to demand an additional good or a service. And when they demand a good or a service, the way our economy works, somebody will produce the good or a service. And when somebody produces the good or a service, somebody is a lot more likely to find work.

And so this tax stimulation came right at the right time. We cut the taxes on everybody. Sometimes in Washington, if you hear the tax debate, they say, "Well, this person deserves tax cuts and this one doesn't." It's kind of like picking and choosing winners and losers, which I don't think is good tax policy. My attitude is, if you pay taxes and you want tax relief, then everybody ought to get tax relief.

We increased the child credit to \$1,000 per child. That helps people raising their families. If you've got children, it helps a lot. Reduced the marriage penalty. It doesn't make much sense to penalize marriage in the Tax Code when you're trying to encourage marriage in society. I mean, marriage is a good thing, not a bad thing. Put the death tax on its way to extinction. If you're a small-business owner, you ought to be able to leave your assets to whomever you choose. You get taxed when you're growing your business, and you get taxed after you leave the Earth. And sometimes it's hard to pass on your assets to whoever you want. I mean, one of the ways to encourage entrepreneurship is to say, "Build your business and leave it—leave your assets to whomever, whether it's a business or a farm or a ranch." So we did some good things with the tax cut.

Let me tell you what else we did that relates to small business. Most of the new jobs in America are created by small-business owners. Seventy percent of small busi-

nesses—or new jobs are created by small businesses. And so most small businesses are Subchapter S corporations or sole proprietorships. Those are legal words for meaning they pay tax at the individual income tax rate. So when you cut the taxes on the individuals, you're really cutting taxes on small businesses around America. And if you're interested in job growth, it makes sense to allow small businesses to have more of their own capital so they can expand and grow and hire more people.

We also provided incentives in the Tax Code to allow small businesses to deduct up to \$100,000, as opposed to \$25,000. We had bonus depreciation plans available for investment. So we've made a difference, and the results are good. They really are good, when you think about it. And the unemployment rate here in this State is 4.1 percent. That's good, real good. The inflation is low. Interest rates are low. Homeownership is at the highest rate ever. That's positive for society. We want people owning things. We want people owning their own business. We want people owning their own home. By the way, minority homeownership rates are extraordinarily high in America, and that is really important too for our country. Manufacturing is increasing, and we've had job growth.

Now, there's more to do, and we're not going to be satisfied until people who want to work can find a job. And so what are the things we can do? Well, one, we need an energy plan. It's hard to run a business; it's hard to be a manufacturer if you're worried about the reliability of energy. Ask somebody what it's like to run a business that requires energy and your energy bills spike up, or what was it like if you're worried about getting electricity at all, because the grid is antiquated. It wasn't all that long ago, like last summer, that much of the East Coast was affected because the grid is old.

We need an energy bill that encourages conservation, alternative sources of energy, a bill that modernizes the electricity system, and a bill that makes us less dependent on foreign sources of energy. In order to make sure jobs stay here at home, in order to make sure people can find work, we need to be competitive. That's what we need to be thinking about—how to make sure we can

do a better job of encouraging the entrepreneurial spirit to be strong so people create jobs in America. One way is good energy policy.

We need tort reform. If you're a businessowner—[*applause*]. You talk to any businessowner, and in most places, they're worried about junk lawsuits that run up the cost of doing business. When they spend more time fighting off a junk lawsuit, it means there's less time hiring somebody.

We need to worry about the cost of medicine. Listen, health care costs are going up. You ask any businessowner what it's like to run a small business, and they'll tell you, "One of my big fears is that I can't provide for my employees," they'll tell you, because the cost of health care is going up. There's a debate in Washington. There's a philosophical debate over who you want running the health care. There's some up there, good people, good, honest, decent Americans who say, "We want the Federal Government making all the health care decisions." I'm on the other side of that. I think we want consumers to be making—[*applause*].

There's some practical ways to do that. One, small businesses ought to be allowed to pool risk across jurisdictional lines so they can get the same purchasing power that big businesses have. Those are called association health care plans. Another interesting option for small businesses and employees is called health savings accounts; lets you put money in your health saving account tax-free, earn money tax-free, take money out tax-free. And you combine that with a major medical insurance policy, you've got yourself affordable health care, and it's good for small businesses. These are exciting options that are now developing in the marketplace, where the consumer has got more choice over the decisionmaking, as opposed to Government.

Finally, in order to make sure that the health care costs are reasonable, we need medical liability reform. I want to praise the Governor and the speaker and the senator for working on medical liability reform here in New Hampshire. We need national medical liability reform too.

There's three other things I want to talk about right quick. I promise you others are going to talk. You know how we are in Wash-

ington, once we get a mike—[*laughter*]*—it's hard to pry it out of our hands.*

Ms. Jordan. College presidents—

The President. Yes, college presidents. [*Laughter*]

The tax cuts are set to expire. The child credit goes down next year. The marriage penalty goes up, and the 10-percent bracket as part of the overall tax cuts changes to the bad. Now, Congress needs to make these permanent. They need to make sure that people have more money in their pocket. We're strong. We're getting stronger. There's more to do. It's hard to run a business if you're uncertain about what the Tax Code is going to look like, and we definitely want our consumers to have more money in their pockets as we're coming out of what has been a very difficult period of time. You've heard the challenges we've overcome. If they don't make these tax cuts permanent, it means they're raising taxes on people with families. It means they're raising taxes on people who are married. It means they're raising taxes on people who are in the 10-percent bracket. The tax cuts need to be permanent.

There is a temptation in Washington to say the solution to jobs uncertainty is to isolate America from the world. It's called economic isolationism, a sense that says, "Well, we're too pessimistic. We don't want to compete. As opposed to opening up markets, let's close markets, starting with our own." That is very dangerous for the New Hampshire economy. One in five jobs in New Hampshire depends upon exports. In other words, it depends upon the ability to get our goods into somebody else's market.

Presidents before me, both Republican and Democrat, had made the decision to make our markets relatively open compared to other countries, because it's good for U.S. consumers. You see, when consumers have got more choices and there's more competition, it gives you—it helps satisfy your demand at reasonable price.

And so the fundamental question is, do we keep our market open, or do we close it. My attitude is, we keep it open but make sure others open theirs too, see, and make sure the playing field is level. I've got great confidence in New Hampshire's workers. I've

got great confidence in New Hampshire's entrepreneurs. I've got great confidence in products that say "Made in the USA." And so do a lot of people who live in other lands. So let's sell. Let's have a—I'm going to continue what I've been doing and say, "You reduce your barriers, see? Ours are down; just treat us the same." One way to make sure jobs don't go overseas, and one sure way to make sure we're vibrant here at home is to insist that other people lower their barriers so we can compete. That's all we ask. Just give us a chance. America's—Americans can rise to the challenge. Trust me.

Okay, here we go. Two other things—I want to mention one other fellow before I get off here. Remind me, Larry, to mention you. *[Laughter]* I want to talk about education and the role of education to make sure jobs are here at home and that people can find work.

First, we've got to get it right at the elementary school level. We've got to make sure that every child learns to read and write and add and subtract. I'm a big believer in accountability, not because I want to punish—I don't see—if the goal is to teach every child to read at grade level by the third grade and keep him at grade level, I don't see how you can figure that out unless you measure.

Now, the people of New Hampshire ought to be running your own business. You don't want the Federal Government telling you how to run your schools. You want to be able to design your own accountability systems. But I would hope you would want government at all levels saying, "What are the results?"

And so we're spending record amounts of money at the Federal level, for particularly Title I students, which are poor students. And Senator Gregg, by the way, has been working hard for education matters. A good guy, I'm sure he would be here, but he's voting. *[Laughter]* But so we're asking the question, and we're going to get good results. See, accountability allows you to test your curriculum. Accountability lets you determine who needs help today, before it's too late. And one thing I'm not going to tolerate as your President—and you shouldn't tolerate as citizens—is just shuffling kids through the

system and hope they learn. Those days have got to end.

We've got remedial programs to help high school and junior high kids. Let's face it. Because there hasn't been accountability and hasn't been rigorous examinations of curriculum, some teachers need to be retrained, we're shuffling some kids through. And all of the sudden, they show up in high school, and they can't read. And so we need to have a focus on remedial education. I've asked Congress to put up some money to do just that, to help States and districts do that.

But I think one of the great and hopeful opportunities for the country is to utilize our community college systems to make sure that people are trained for the jobs which actually exist. Community colleges have got the capacity to be flexible in their curriculum. They don't stay stuck in a certain kind of course load. Community colleges are able to say to businesses, local businesses, "What do you need?" Local businesses say to community colleges, "This is what we need." Mayors and Chamber of Commerces are able to say to community colleges, "In order for us to track a certain type of business or jobs, here's what we need."

And so long as the community college has got able leadership, like educational entrepreneurs like Lucille, and are willing to be flexible, you can actually match people with the skills needed to work in the new jobs of the 21st century. Listen, our economy is changing. We're a productive workforce, and some people need to be retrained in order to be productive workers. And the community college is a great place to do so.

And that is what we're going to start talking about. But I mentioned Larry, Larry Jeffery. You probably don't know Larry. I didn't know him until I landed, and he was standing at the foot of Air Force One, the steps of Air Force One. He's here because he is a volunteer. He's a mentor. He teaches—he helps people learn what it's like to start your own business. We're going to talk to some people who have started their own business here today. It's heartening to know that a World War II vet, experienced businessperson, is willing to take time out of his life to mentor.

The reason I bring up—raise your hand, Larry, will you? There you go. That's him. The reason why I bring up Larry is because the strength of this country is the heart and souls of our citizens. You know, people say, "Well, America is strong because of our military"—and it's one reason, and by the way, we'll keep the military strong—or "We're strong because we're a prosperous nation, we're the largest economy in the world, and we've got a great spirit here." But we're really strong because we've got people who want to love their neighbor just like they'd like to be loved themselves.

I know it happens all over Nashua and the State of New Hampshire, where people get involved with church and synagogue and mosque in order to help a neighbor in need, or whether you go to your local civic group or whether you're a mentor. Listen, my call to you is, be like Larry. Take time out of your life and help change America, one heart and one soul at a time, and the country will be better off for it.

All right, here we go. Lucille says she's tired of me talking. *[Laughter]* Lucille is the president of the community college in which we sit. I have chosen this community college because she is doing exactly what I think a community college ought to do, which is to be practical in its application of education in order for people to be able to find a job. Explain to people how you're doing it.

Ms. Jordan. I will. But before I do that, with all due respect, I need to tell you that I have the best job in the United States as president of this college.

[Ms. Jordan made brief remarks.]

The President. Yes, let me ask you about this one program, the national emergency grants. What happens is, is that sometimes, under certain circumstances, when a business gets shut down, there is worker-training money available at the Federal level to go to community colleges to help retrain workers for jobs which exist. And I believe we—the Federal Government granted a national emergency grant to this college.

Ms. Jordan. Yes.

The President. And how's that going?

Ms. Jordan. Very well, very well.

The President. A plant shut down in Manchester.

Ms. Jordan. Yes, and actually I think our sister campus in Manchester is——

The President. Is handling most of it.

Ms. Jordan. ——really helping them out a great deal, not only in the English second language area but as well as helping them out gaining new skills in manufacturing and computer skills in programming. And it's a real success, very much so, credit to the president Tom Wisbey.

The President. The point I'm making is, is that you can be proactive and reactive, proactive to find a curriculum that works to attract jobs or if jobs expand, reactive to economic downturn for a particular company, and help people. And that's what the community colleges are good at. They're good at taking people and converting their skill base to a useful skill base.

I'll tell you a very interesting story. I went out to Mesa Community College in Arizona, and I met a lady who had been a graphic design artist, I think for 15 years. And she went back to the community college and went to a technically based program. I think it was a 6-month program, if I'm not mistaken. She got out and joined Cable One, and in her entry-level job, she made more, after having gone to 6 months of community college, than she had in her 15th year as a graphic design artist. In other words, the transference of skills, the ability to make a person more productive, raises pay.

And the community college system—if people are interested in the community college system, think about going back to school for a period of time to raise your pay, to raise your standard of living, to give yourself a better shot at making a living by being employed by companies who are vibrant, competitive, and 21st century companies.

Ms. Jordan. Absolutely.

The President. Is that what you find?

Ms. Jordan. I think another area too that we don't think about often in industry is the allied health industry. And one of the things that we've done in a partnership here in Nashua is Southern New Hampshire Medical Center. We did not have the money to open up a lab. They came to us and said, "Look, we have a nursing shortage. We want to open

it up to the public. We're going to open up a million-dollar lab on their west campus," and they did that. And as a result, we have new nurses in the field.

The President. You know, it's an interesting point. Again, if anybody's listening—[*laughter*—and you're trying to work, think about the health care field. In a lot of our States around the country, there is a shortage of health care workers. Now, it's going to require a desire to go back and get the skills necessary to go into the health care field. Government can't make you make the decision to be a—to work and to gain new skills, but we darn sure can open the door. And that's what we're here to talk about.

Let me talk about Mike for a second, if you don't mind. Mike Hills is a student. He is a—I can't wait for you to hear his story. If you'd look at Mike walking down the street, you'd say, "You don't look like a student to me." [*Laughter*]

Mike Hills. I hear it at the campus sometimes too.

The President. There you go. [*Laughter*] Tell us your story, Michael. Tell us what you're doing, why you're a student here. Give us a little sense of the background. Bring people up to date. There may be somebody listening who is wondering whether or not it is worthwhile to go back to a place like Nashua, New Hampshire Community Tech. How you're paying? Are you paying it out of your pocket? How you getting here?

Mr. Hills. Well, first, before I begin, Mr. President, I'd like to thank you for coming and having me here with you. I'd like to take a moment to introduce to you my brother Patrick and my—[*Laughter*]

The President. Patrick, how are you? Keep your remarks short, Patrick, will you? We've got—[*Laughter*]

Mr. Hills. —and my girlfriend, Nancy, who is sitting right next to me.

The President. I would suggest reversing the order next time, Michael. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Hills. Well, you know, they say blood is thicker than water.

The President. Yeah, right. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Hills. Well, as you know, I'm a 41-year-old student here at the college, and I started here in September 2003. Before I started here, I was in the retail business. I

sold everything from soup to nuts. You name it, I probably sold it. And I have two daughters at home, and as you know, raising two daughters becomes more expensive as they get older. [*Laughter*]

The President. Hair gets a little whiter too, doesn't it?

Mr. Hills. As you can see, yes.

[*Mr. Hills made brief remarks.*]

The President. Good. Can I ask you one more question? You remind me of old Larry over there, you know? [*Laughter*] That's good.

Mr. Hills. Thank you, sir.

The President. As I understand, you got a little help to come here?

Mr. Hills. Yes, I did, through financial aid, through Pell Grants, through Stafford loans. I also was awarded the Triple A scholarship, the American Motors Association, and also two upon graduating that will also enable me to be ASE-certified, which is the Automotive Service of Excellence, which is an accredited program. It's not mandatory, but it also makes you more marketable in your area. And I encourage anybody who is thinking about going back to school—let me tell you, dollars and cents make some sense.

The President. There's money available. There's Pell Grants available. There's Trade Adjustment assistance available. There's national emergency grants available. You got to want it, now. You just can't say, "Okay, I think I'm going to gain skills just by thinking about it." People are going to have to seize the initiative. It's up to the individual, like Mike, but it's available. And that's why I'm so glad Mike is here to explain that even at 41 or, perhaps, especially at 41, there's great opportunities if you're willing to seize the moment.

Heather is with us, Heather Limanek. So Heather's working along. She's got one child. By the way, if the child credit is not made permanent, Heather pays more taxes next year. Just think about that now. [*Laughter*] So when—the Congress—I'm not worried about your Senators or your Congressmen, but there are some others you need to be thinking about. The people up there in Washington who say, "Oh, we're going to repeal the tax. We're going to tax the rich,"

that means they're going tax small-business owners. And if they don't make the child credit permanent, they're going to be taxing Heather right at the wrong time. So it's important for people to put a face with the consequences of bad tax policy.

Anyway, she's here—guess what happens? She's got a kid. She's working. She gets laid off in 2000, and then what happens?

[Heather Limanek, student, New Hampshire Community Technical College, and owner, Heather's Happenings, made brief remarks.]

The President. Yes, let me tell you something. That's great, a fantastic story. What a great story. She has a dream, goes back to school, and starts her own business. It happens all the time in America. The job of Government is to create an environment in which people are confident about chasing their dreams. It's really the thing that makes our economy so unique and vibrant, isn't it.

Heather gets laid off, gets kicked in the gut, I think you said. [Laughter] Stomach, yes. [Laughter] Anyway, and now she's a businessowner. Government can't guarantee success. That's up to Heather. And it's why she's staying in school, to learn the skills necessary to be as good a small-business owner as she can. But we darn sure can make the environment such that somebody like Heather feels comfortable about taking risks.

We're really proud of you. I love the story. It's what I love about our country, isn't it? Somebody can own something that she can call her own and make it work. You noticed she said, "I hope to be hiring people next summer." That's how it works in America.

By the way, speaking about people hiring somebody, David Dunfee is with us today. He is the president of D.G. O'Brien, Inc. Tell us about D.G. Who is D.G.?

[David Dunfee made brief remarks.]

The President. Yes, let me step in. He got him 175 employees, which is a good size company, but he's a Subchapter S corporation, which means he pays taxes at the individual income tax rate. So when you hear them in Washington talking about taxing the rich, that's the rich right there, see? That's who they're talking about. They're talking about taxing employers. If you're a small-

business owner and they're running up the top rates on you, you're taxing people who are creating jobs.

It makes no sense to be draining capital out of the economy, out of his coffers. He says he wants to expand this year. It means he's going to add more employees. If they're taking money away from this company, they're not going to be adding more employees. That's how the economy works. That is why I am so strong on making sure that the tax cuts are permanent.

Tell me—the other thing you noticed he said, because of the bonused appreciation—that's an accountant word for, we're trying to encourage you to buy equipment. That's what that means. What did you buy?

Mr. Dunfee. Last year, we spent about \$400,000 in capital equipment, anywhere from machine tools to computers to CAD stations. And this year, in part because of that tax credit, we're upping that 25 percent to \$500,000 and buying additional equipment to improve our productivity.

The President. You see, he makes a capital decision. In other words, he's going to go buy a machine. Somebody has got to build the machine. So when you said—when you heard me talk about increasing demand for a good or a service, it's precisely what I'm talking about. He increased demand last year for additional capital purchases by \$400,000. This year, he's going to make another \$500,000 of purchasing. Somebody has got to make those goods. And when somebody fills his order, it means a worker is more likely to retain a job or find a—or a worker is able to find a job. And that's how this economy works of ours. And that's what the decisionmaking process, not only by this company but by millions like him all across America, help define whether our economy is vibrant or not.

And I appreciate, Dave, your—taking on this business and being an employer. You notice the other thing he said, "The employees make it work." That's a great owner of a company and a great manager if he says—he gives the credit where credit belongs.

[Mr. Dunfee made further remarks.]

The President. Yes, I think you need to look at health savings accounts, seriously. An

employer, for example, can buy a catastrophic plan with a high deductible, say \$1,000 deductible. It's a fairly inexpensive plan relative to the current plans on the market that you're probably buying. And then the employer and the employee can match on some basis, depending upon the nature of the company, a tax-free entry into the health savings account, out of which the consumer pays incidental medicals until you get up to \$1,000. But if you don't spend all \$1,000, you earn interest, tax free, and you can roll it over from one year to the next. In other words, you have a health savings account, and it makes sense because it puts the consumer in charge of health decisions. It also encourages people to make healthy decisions with their bodies, like walk and exercise and don't drink too much and quit smoking. There's a lot of serious things you can do to keep their health savings account vibrant because it's your money.

Anyway, I wish you would look at that. I think you'll find it to be some pretty interesting.

[*Mr. Dunfee made further remarks.*]

The President. Fiscal policy can determine pressure on interest rates. We've got a plan to cut the deficit in half. Let me talk about the deficit right quick. We have a deficit, and we've got a deficit because we were in a recession, for starters. A recession means less revenue is coming into the Treasury, and if you don't cut expenses, you don't get a deficit. We didn't cut expenses. As a matter of fact, we increased expenses, particularly in two areas—the military. If I put somebody in harm's way, they're going to get the best, as far as I'm concerned. [*Applause*]

Thank you all. Sit down, please. Yes, I appreciate you applauding our troops. That's who you're applauding.

But we can get the deficit down half. It's going to have to be tough on spending. And it's hard—appropriators are appropriators, and they take their title seriously. And so we're working with Congress to set priorities and to bring the deficit down, which will help, but Alan Greenspan has a lot to do with it. I'll tell—I'll pass it on. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Dunfee. The only other thing I ask you to do is, let's bury that death tax.

The President. Yes, I agree. Let me talk about the death tax again. If you noticed, early in his discussion, he said he was struggling with being a second-generation owner. I'll tell you what he was struggling with. He was struggling with, probably, the debt you had to borrow in order to have the assets passed on from one generation to the next. That's what happens.

There's a lot of small-business owners who, when they faced with paying a death tax, have to sell the business in order to do so. And it just doesn't make sense. It's just not—it's a bad tax. It discourages entrepreneurship. It makes it harder for this good man to make sure his business is vibrant so that he keeps people working here.

So when you heard me talk about the death tax being good for the entrepreneur—getting rid of the death tax being good for the entrepreneurial spirit. That's what I meant. I meant it encourages people. It makes it easier for the businessowner to decide to pass their assets on to kids, families, whoever—charitable trusts, whatever it may be—without the Government standing in between the decider and the person who benefits from the transfer of the company. That's what he's talking about.

It's important for small-business owners to make sure the death tax does not come back. Catch this, though. The way the law is written, the death tax comes back to life in 2011. So here we are—let's advance to 2010, and we're all alive. [*Laughter*] And the death tax has been scaled down, and all of a sudden, it pops back up to existence. Imagine what policy is going to be like. You talk about confusing. And you know, a lot of people are going to be—well, never mind how they're going to be thinking. I'm just telling you, it's bad law.

George, you are a—you weren't born here in this country, were you?

George Kassas. If you'd like me to.

The President. No, no. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Kassas. I was born in Lebanon, sir.

The President. So you're a first-generation American.

Mr. Kassas. Yes, sir.

The President. Welcome.

Mr. Kassas. Thank you. Thank you so much. Thank you.

The President. You weren't even born here, and you're the cofounder of a successful company. Is that an accurate assessment?

Mr. Kassas. Yes, sir.

The President. Well, then, why don't you just tell us about it?

Mr. Kassas. Okay. Thank you so much, sir, for the opportunity to be with you on this stage. And it's a great privilege and a distinct honor for me.

I'd like to avoid the mistake Mike made so I'd like to introduce my family first to you. [Laughter] That's Kristen, Juliet, Tony, and George.

The President. That wouldn't be—that's not George W., is it? [Laughter]

[Mr. Kassas, cofounder and executive vice president for operations and business development, Cedar Point Communications, made further remarks.]

The President. Let me stop you. George has got two employees in the year 2000. You'll have 116—is that right?

Mr. Kassas. Yes, if you add the 25, absolutely.

The President. By the end of '04, you'll have 116 employees. That's really good news, isn't it? Think about that. I'm glad you're doing well, and there are any—tax credit does need to be permanent.

What I'm interested in people knowing is to connect, when you talk about the entrepreneurial spirit in small businesses, with job creation. This one company alone that was a dream in this guy's brain has now added employment of 117. It happens all over America. There's a lot of Georges in this world. [Laughter] There's a lot of entrepreneurs who dream big dreams and who work hard to achieve it. And the job of our society, in order to be competitive and to keep jobs here, is to make sure that entrepreneurial spirit is strong with good policy. And that's what we're talking about.

What else you got to say?

Mr. Kassas. Mr. President, this year and well into future years, we will be exporting our product to many customers around the world, starting this summer. And what does that mean? It means that every time we export, we grow the company; we add jobs; we

invest in our capital equipment. It's just as simple as that.

The President. Yes, well, I appreciate you understanding that. He is talking about—see, what he needs to be talking to me about is to make sure that the markets he wants to export into don't have a bunch of trade barriers and tariffs. See, what George wants from his Government is to say, "Don't shut it down here. Open it up over there." Just give him a chance to compete. We've got to reject economic isolationism in America. We've got to be bold and confident. We've got to believe in our people. We've got to believe the Georges of the world can compete anywhere if just given a chance to do so.

So when you hear me talking about trade policy, that's what I'm talking about. I'm talking about giving our entrepreneurs a chance to compete on a level playing field. And if you give Americans a chance to compete on a level playing field, we'll win just about every time.

Listen, I want to thank you all for coming. I hope you have found the conversations with your fellow citizens as stimulating, as interesting as I have. I mean, one of the things that's—I like to remind people, I'm an optimistic person. And the reason I'm an optimistic person is I listen to these kind of stories all the time, doers and dreamers and achievers, people who honor their family, people who love their country more than anything else. It is such an honor to be with you all. I'm so glad you're here.

Thank you for what you're doing. Thank you for being such great Americans. And may God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:21 p.m. at New Hampshire Community Technical College at Nashua/Claremont. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Craig Benson and State Attorney General Peter W. Heed of New Hampshire; Gene Chandler, speaker, New Hampshire State house of representatives; Thomas R. Eaton, president, New Hampshire State senate; and New Hampshire State Senator Jane O'Hearn. Discussion participant Lucille Jordan referred to Thomas Wisbey, president, New Hampshire Community Technical College Manchester. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

Statement on Senate Passage of the “Unborn Victims of Violence Act”

March 25, 2004

I applaud the Senate for passing the “Unborn Victims of Violence Act” today by a strong bipartisan vote. We must continue to build a culture of life in our country, a compassionate society in which every child is welcomed in life and protected by law.

Pregnant women who have been harmed by violence, and their families, know that there are two victims—the mother and the unborn child—and both victims should be protected by Federal law.

I look forward to signing this important legislation into law.

Statement on House of Representatives Passage of Budget Legislation

March 25, 2004

I commend the House for passing a responsible budget that advances our three highest priorities: defending America, winning the war on terror, and promoting growth and job creation, while cutting the deficit in half within 5 years. I am also pleased that this moves us closer to making the tax relief for America’s workers and families permanent.

I urge the House and Senate to reach agreement quickly and pass a budget based on my principles of funding what’s necessary to protect America and keep our economy growing, while restraining spending elsewhere.

Proclamation 7764—Greek Independence Day: A National Day of Celebration of Greek and American Democracy, 2004

March 25, 2004

*By the President of the United States
of America*

A Proclamation

The love of liberty that helped shape our Constitution has deep roots in the spirit of

ancient Greece. As we observe Greek Independence Day, we celebrate the timeless democratic principles that all freedom-loving people cherish.

To continue to strengthen and spread liberty around the world, the values and traditions of democracy must be passed on to each new generation. In 1821, our Nation supported the cause of Greek independence when the brave men and women of Greece began their long struggle for liberty. This struggle continued through the end of World War II. On the anniversary of the Greek Declaration of Independence, we honor the courage of these proud patriots and celebrate our nations’ shared commitment to democracy.

Today, Greece and America are strong allies and strategic partners in the great struggles for liberty and the global war on terror. We are working together to bring a fair and lasting settlement to Cyprus. We look forward to a future of continued friendship and collaboration between our two great nations as we advance peace and democracy in the world.

In celebrating Greek Independence Day, we are also grateful for the many ways Greek Americans have enriched our communities and strengthened our country.

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 March 25, 2004, as Greek Independence Day: A National Day of Celebration of Greek and American Democracy. I call upon all Americans to observe this day with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-fifth day of March, in the year of our Lord two thousand four, 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, 10:38 a.m., March 26, 2004]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on March 29.