

seen the spirit of service and compassion renewed in our country. We've all seen our Nation unite in common purpose when it mattered most.

We will need all these qualities for the work ahead. We have a war to win, and the world is counting on us to lead the cause of freedom and peace. We have a duty to spread opportunity to every part of this country. This is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it, and we know that for our country, the best days lie ahead.

May God bless you. Thank you for coming. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:30 p.m. at the Marriott Wardman Park Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Alex G. Spanos and Manuel N. Stamatakis, event co-chairmen, Bush-Cheney '04, Inc.; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

### **Remarks on Signing the Unborn Victims of Violence Act of 2004**

*April 1, 2004*

Thank you for coming. Thank you all. Please be seated. Thanks for the warm welcome. [*Laughter*] Welcome to the people's house, the White House. I'm pleased that you all could be here for the first bill signing ceremony of the year 2004.

The Unborn Victims of Violence Act provides that, under Federal law, any person who causes death or injury to a child in the womb shall be charged with a separate offense, in addition to any charges relating to the mother. As of today, the law of our Nation will acknowledge the plain fact that crimes of violence against a pregnant woman often have two victims. And therefore, in those cases, there are two offenses to be punished. Under this law, those who direct violence toward a pregnant woman will answer for the full extent of the harm they have done and for all the crimes they have committed.

I appreciate Members of the United States Congress who have joined us today. Majority Leader Bill Frist is with us from the Senate. Thank you for coming. Majority Leader Tom DeLay of the House of Representatives, Members from both political parties have joined us. I appreciate the Members on stage

here. House bill sponsor Congresswoman Melissa Hart from Pennsylvania is with us. Senate sponsor Senator Mike DeWine from Ohio is with us. And the chairmen of the Judiciary Committees, Senator Orrin Hatch and Congressman Jim Sensenbrenner, are with us as well. Thank you all. I appreciate those in attendance today from across the country who have worked hard to get this bill passed.

I also want to thank Sharon Rocha and her husband, Ron Grantski, for joining us today. This act of Congress addresses tragic losses such as Sharon and Ron have known. They have laid to rest their daughter Laci, a beautiful young woman who was joyfully awaiting the arrival of a new son. They have also laid to rest that child, a boy named Conner, who was waiting to be born when his life too was taken. His little soul never saw light, but he was loved, and he is remembered. And his name is forever joined with that of his mom in this statute, which is also known as Laci and Conner's law. All who knew Laci Peterson have mourned two deaths, and the law cannot look away and pretend there was just one.

Each of these families on this stage has lost a child or a grandchild or both. Carol and Buford Lyons, Tracy Marciniak-Seavers, Stephanie Alberts, Cynthia Warner, I thank you all for your courage for coming today.

As these and the other families understand, any time an expectant mother is a victim of violence, two lives are in the balance, each deserving protection and each deserving justice. If the crime is murder and the unborn child's life ends, justice demands a full accounting under the law.

Until today, the Federal Criminal Code had been silent on the injury or death of a child in cases of violence against a pregnant woman. This omission in the law has led to clear injustices. The death of an innocent unborn child has too often been treated as a detail in one crime but not a crime in itself. Police and prosecutors had been to crime scenes and have shared the grief of families but have so often been unable to seek justice for the full offense. The American people as well have learned of these cases, and they urged action. The swift bipartisan passage of this bill through Congress this year indicates

a strong consensus that the suffering of two victims can never equal only one offense.

The moral concern of humanity extends to those unborn children who are harmed or killed in crimes against their mothers. And now, the protection of Federal law extends to those children as well. With this action, we widen the circle of compassion and inclusion in our society, and we reaffirm that the United States of America is building a culture of life.

It is now my honor to sign the Unborn Victims of Violence Act of 2004.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:57 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. H.R. 1997, approved April 1, was assigned Public Law No. 108-212.

### Remarks at a National Republican Congressional Committee Dinner

April 1, 2004

Thank you all very much. Thanks for the warm welcome. Whew! [Laughter] Go ahead and have a seat. Thank you. I am honored you all are here. I appreciate such a warm welcome. It's good to be with so many friends from the NRCC. By ensuring that we have a Republican majority in the House, you're helping our confident and hopeful agenda; that's what you're doing. You've had great success in the last couple of years. And all of us who represent the people are grateful for your hard work.

As a former House candidate—[laughter]—I have tremendous respect for anybody who runs for the Congress. My campaign back in 1978 in the 19th Congressional District didn't turn out the way I hoped. As a matter of fact, walking in here, I saw the guy who beat me. [Laughter] There he is. [Laughter] I had a great time, though. It was really an interesting campaign. I was campaigning right after Laura and I got married, so it was like an extended honeymoon. [Laughter] We learned a lot about each other as we drove across west Texas. Laura likes to say I even convinced her to vote for me. [Laughter] Unfortunately, I didn't convince enough people. [Laughter] I put my political career on hold for about 15 years, but I like to think things worked out all right.

This year, I'm looking forward to campaigning with a man who did win in his race for the Congress in 1978 and five times after that. Dick Cheney was a fine United States Congressman from Wyoming. He was by far the best Congressman from Wyoming. [Laughter] Dick Cheney is the finest Vice President our Nation has ever had, and I'm proud to have him on the ticket with me. When Dick came to Congress, the House held 277 Democrats and only 158 Republicans. Things are a lot different today, and the country is better off for it.

Thanks to your generosity and hard work, we have a strong Republican majority. And with your help, we intend to increase the Republican majority in 2004. Mr. Speaker, I can't tell you what a joy it is to work with you. Denny Hastert is solid as a rock. He's a man of his word. He's a kind and decent person. He's a man of enormous accomplishment. Denny Hastert needs to remain the Speaker of the House of Representatives for the good of the country.

I wasn't Denny's first choice to speak here; Laura was. [Laughter] Mr. Speaker, she sends her love to you and to all our friends out here. By the way, Laura is a fabulous First Lady for our country.

I appreciate Congressman Tom Reynolds, the chairman of the NRCC. Thank you, Tommy, for your good work. The chairman of the spring dinner is Congressman Jerry Lewis from California. Jerry, you did a fabulous job. Thank you, sir.

I'm proud of the job my fellow Texan is doing as the majority leader of the House of Representatives, Tom DeLay. He's a great majority leader. We enjoy working with the whip, Roy Blunt from Missouri, who is doing a good job of counting those votes.

I see the conference chair is with us tonight, Congresswoman Deborah Pryce from Ohio. Thank you for coming. The vice chair, Jack Kingston from Georgia, is with us tonight. Jack, thank you. The conference secretary, Congressman John Doolittle from California; Congressman Chris Cox, the policy chair from California, is with us as well. Thank you, Chris.

And finally, the only other Congressman I'm going to mention tonight is my friend