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Remarks in Toledo, Ohio

October 29, 2004

The President. Laura and I are so honored so many came out to say hello. We appreciate it very much. I'm honored—we thank you for taking time out of your day.

I've got something to tell you. I'm traveling Ohio a lot. I'm asking for the vote, and I'm asking for your help. We have a duty in this country to vote. You may have heard, the election is right around the corner. [*Laughter*] And I'm asking you, get your friends and neighbors to go to the polls. Make sure our fellow Republicans vote. Make sure independents vote. Find some discerning Democrats, and there's a lot across the State of Ohio. And get them headed to the polls and remind them, if they want a safer America, a stronger America, and a better America, to put me and Dick Cheney back in office.

One of the most important reasons why I think you ought to put me back into office is so that Laura is the First Lady for 4 more years.

Audience members. Laura! Laura! Laura!

The President. I don't want to offend anybody who is follically challenged, but I admit my great Vice President doesn't have the waviest hair in the race. [*Laughter*] The people of Toledo will be proud to know that I didn't pick him because of his hairdo. [*Laughter*] I picked him because of his judgment, his experience. He's getting the job done for the American people.

I want to thank Senator Mike DeWine for joining us today. I'm proud to call him friend. You're proud to call him Senator. I urge you to put George Voinovich back in the United States Senate. I want to thank your Governor for joining us. I want to thank Paul Gillmor, Congressman Paul Gillmor, for being here today. I want to thank Betty Montgomery for joining us. And I want to thank the next Congressman from the Ninth Congressional District, Larry Kaczala, for joining us.

I want to thank the Wil Gravatt Band. I want to thank the Anthony Wayne High Marching Generals for being here. I will try to keep my speech short so you can get home and do your homework.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. I want to thank the grassroots activists. I want to thank my friend Bernadette Noe and Tom Noe for their leadership in Lucas County. I remember our breakfast. She had me flipping pancakes. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank those of you who are putting up the signs and making the phone calls. I want to thank those of you who are working long hours. We're almost there. Election Day is almost here. I urge you to continue working to turn out that vote. With your help, we'll win Ohio again and win a great victory.

We've just got 4 days to go, and the voters have a clear choice between two very different candidates and different approaches and different records. You know where I stand, and sometimes, you even know where my opponent stands. [*Laughter*] We both have records. I'm proudly running on mine. My opponent has an interesting idea of how to win friends. During this campaign, he's insulted our allies and he questioned the good work of our troops in combat.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Earlier today, my opponent even insulted the American people, saying you need to, quote, "wake up."

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Well, the American people are awake. Their eyes are wide open. They are seeing more clearly every day the critical choices in this election: The Senator's failed, out-of-the-mainstream policies or my commitment to defend our country, to build our economy, and to uphold our bedrock values.

This election comes down to some clear choices, five clear choices for America's family. The first clear choice is the most important because it concerns the security of your family. All progress on every other issue depends on the safety of our citizens. This will be the first Presidential election since September the 11th, 2001. Americans will go to the polls in a time of war and ongoing threats unlike any we have faced before. The terrorists who killed thousands of innocent people are still dangerous, and they are determined.

The outcome of this election will set the direction of the war against terror. The most solemn duty of the American President is to protect the American people. If America shows uncertainty or weakness during these troubling times, the world will drift toward tragedy. This is not going to happen on my watch.

Since that terrible morning of September the 11th, we've fought the terrorists across the Earth, not for pride, not for power but because the lives of our citizens are at stake. Our strategy is clear. We're strengthening the protections for our homeland. We're reforming our intelligence capabilities. We are transforming the All-Volunteer Army. There will be no draft. We are determined. We are relentless. We are staying on the offensive. We're chasing the terrorists overseas so we do not have to face them here at home.

Because we led, Afghanistan is a free nation and an ally in the war on terror; Pakistan is capturing terrorist leaders; Saudi Arabia is making raids and arrests. Because we led, Libya is dismantling its weapons programs; the army of a free Iraq is fighting for freedom; and more than three-quarters of Al Qaida's key members and associates have been brought to justice. We have led. Many have joined. And America and the world are safer.

And part of our strategy is to spread liberty and peace. I believe in the transformational power of liberty to change societies. I want you to remind your sons and daughters what has taken place in a relatively quick period of time in Afghanistan. It wasn't all that long ago that young girls could not go to school or their mothers were taken into the public square and whipped and sometimes into a sports stadium and killed because of the barbaric vision of the Taliban. Because we acted in our self-interest, because we acted to uphold the doctrine which I laid out that said, "If you harbor a terrorist, you're equally as guilty as the terrorist," millions of people—millions of people in Afghanistan voted in a Presidential election. The first voter was a 19-year-old woman.

Free societies will be peaceful societies. Free societies will help us keep the peace. Iraq is going to have elections in January. Think how far that society has come from the days of mass graves and torture chambers. Freedom is on the march. I believe everybody yearns to be free. I believe people long for freedom. I believe this. I understand freedom is not America's gift to the world; freedom is the Almighty God's gift to each man and woman in this world.

A President must lead with consistency and strength. In a war, sometimes your tactics change but not your principles. Americans have seen how I do my job. Even when you might not agree with me, you know what I believe. You know where I stand, and you know where I'm going to lead our Nation. On good days and on bad days, when the polls are up or the polls are down, I am determined to protect the American people.

And I'll support our troops in harm's way. You know, I want to thank those who wear our Nation's uniform. I want to thank the military families who sacrifice on behalf of our Nation's freedom. I want to thank the veterans who have set such a great example to those who wear the uniform. And I assure you, we will keep the commitment we have made. Our troops will have what they need to complete their missions.

That's why I went to the Congress and asked for $87 billion of supplemental funding in September of 2003. And we received great bipartisan support for this necessary and critical funding. As a matter of fact, the support was so strong that only 12 Members of the United States Senate voted against the funding, 2 of whom were my opponent and his runningmate.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. But let me give you a more startling statistic, one that I would hope you would use as you're gathering up the vote: Four Members of the United States

Senate—only four—voted to authorize the use of force and then voted against the funding necessary to support our troops in combat. Two of those four were my opponent and his runningmate.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. So they asked him why he made that vote, and you might remember this quote. He said, "I actually did vote for the 87 billion, before I voted against it." Now, look, I haven't spent all that much time in Toledo, but I doubt I'm going to find many people who talk that way here in Toledo, Ohio.

He has given several answers about why he made the vote. Perhaps the most revealing was when he said, "The whole matter was a complicated matter." My fellow Americans, there is nothing complicated about supporting our troops in combat.

Senator Kerry's record on national security has a far deeper problem than election-year flip-flopping. On the largest national security issues of our time, he has been consistently wrong. When Ronald Reagan was confronting the Soviet Union at the height of the cold war, Senator Kerry said that President Reagan's policy of peace through strength was making America less safe.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Well, history has shown that Senator Kerry was wrong and President Reagan was right.

When former President Bush led a coalition against Saddam Hussein in 1991 because he had invaded Kuwait, Senator Kerry voted against the use of force to liberate Kuwait.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Well, history has shown that Senator Kerry was wrong and former President Bush was right.

In 1994, just one year after the first bombing of the World Trade Center, Senator Kerry proposed massive cuts in America's intelligence budget, so massive that even his Massachusetts colleague, Ted Kennedy, opposed them. [*Laughter*] History shows that Senator Kerry was wrong—and let's be fair about it—Senator Kennedy was right. [*Laughter*]

During the last 20 years in key moments of challenge and decision for America, Senator Kerry has chosen the position of weakness and inaction. With that record, he stands in opposition not just to me but to the great tradition of the Democratic Party. The party of Franklin Roosevelt, the party of Harry Truman, the party of John Kennedy is rightly remembered for confidence and resolve in times of war and hours of crisis. Senator Kerry has turned his back on "pay any price" and "bear any burden," and he's replaced those commitments with "wait and see" and "cut and run."

Many Democrats in this country do not recognize their party anymore. And today, I want to speak to every one of them: If you believe that America should lead with strength and purpose and confidence in our ideals, I would be honored to have your support, and I'm asking for your vote.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. In this campaign, there are big differences about how to protect America's families. One time in our debate, my opponent said America must submit to what he calls a "global test" before we commit force.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. I'm not making that up. [*Laughter*] I heard it. [*Laughter*] As far as I can tell, that means our country must get permission before we act in our own defense. As President, I'll always work with friends and allies. I'll always build coalitions. But I will never turn over America's national security decisions to leaders of other countries.

My opponent says that September the 11th did not change him much at all. And that's clear in his policies. He believes that the war on terror is primarily a law enforcement and intelligence gathering operation. September the 11th changed me. I remember that day when I was at Ground Zero on September the 14th, 2001. I'll never forget the sights. I'll never forget the sounds. I remember the workers in hardhats yelling at me at the top of their lungs, "Whatever it takes." I remember the first-responder—I can't remember if he was a firefighter or a policeman—who came out of the rubble, and he grabbed me by the arm, and he looked me square in the eye, and he said, "Do not let me down." Ever since that day, I've gotten

up every morning thinking about how to better protect our country. I will never relent in defending America, whatever it takes.

The second clear choice in this election concerns your family budget. When I ran for President 4 years ago, I pledged to lower taxes for American families. And I kept my word. We doubled the child credit to $1,000 per child. We want to help the moms and dads of America do their duty. We reduced the marriage penalty. We believe the Tax Code ought to encourage marriage, not penalize marriage. We dropped the lowest bracket to 10 percent. We reduced income taxes for everybody who pays taxes. Real after-tax income is up 10 percent since I've been the President. That's money in your pocket. That's money you can spend.

I want you to remind your friends and neighbors that the stock market was in serious decline 6 months prior to my arrival in Washington. And then we had a recession, and we had some corporate scandals. We passed tough laws. We have made it abundantly clear we will not tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America.

The attacks of September the 11th cost us nearly a million jobs in the 3 months after that attack. But our economic policies are working. They have led us back to the path of growth and recovery. Our economy is growing at rates as fast as any in nearly 20 years. We've added 1.9 million new jobs in the last 13 months. Homeownership rates are at an alltime high. Minorities are owning their home at rates greater than ever before in our history. Farm income is up. The entrepreneurial spirit is strong in America. Small businesses are flourishing. The national unemployment rate is 5.4 percent. Let me put that in perspective for you: That's lower than the average rate of the 1970s, the 1980s, and the 1990s.

I know people are still struggling here in Ohio. I understand that. I've traveled your State a lot. I've spoken to people. But that doesn't mean we should get away from progrowth economic policies. Quite the contrary. We need to keep your taxes low. We need to do something about lawsuits. We need to do something about regulatory reform. To keep this economy going, I will empower our small businesses, our consumers, and American families by keeping the taxes low.

Speaking about taxes, my opponent has got some plans for your budget. He's going to take a big chunk out of it. He voted against the higher child tax credit, and he voted against the marriage penalty relief. He voted against lower taxes. If he'd have had his way, the average middle-class family would be paying 2,000 more dollars a year in taxes.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. That's probably not a lot for some of the folks in Washington. It's a lot for the folks in Toledo, Ohio. That means a lot to the people in this part of the world. That money helps moms and dads. It helps our families.

You know, he's been in the United States Senate for 20 years, and he's voted to raise taxes 98 times. That's five times for every year he's been in the Senate. I would call that a predictable pattern—[*laughter*]—a leading indicator. [*Laughter*] When a Senator does something that often, he really must like it. [*Laughter*] And he's proposed $2.2 trillion in new spending. That is trillion with a "T." That's a lot. That's a lot even for a Senator from Massachusetts. [*Laughter*]

So they asked him how he's going to pay for it. He said, well, he's going to tax the rich. You know, by raising the top two brackets, you're taxing small-business creators. Most small businesses pay tax at the individual income-tax rate. Seventy percent of new jobs in America are created by small businesses. It makes no sense to tax the job creators in America. Running up the tax is lousy economic policy.

Let me tell you what else is wrong, and you need to tell this to your friends and neighbors. He's proposed 2.2 trillion in new spending, but when you raise the top two brackets, you only raise between 600 and 800 billion. So there's a gap. I would like to call it a tax gap, a gap between what he's promised and what he can pay. And guess who usually fills the tax gap.

Audience member. We do!

The President. You do. The good news is, we're not going to let him tax you; we're going to carry Ohio and win on November the 2d.

The third clear choice in this election involves the quality of life for our families. A good education and quality health care are important to a successful life. As a candidate, I pledged to challenge the soft bigotry of low expectations by reforming our public schools. I kept my word. We passed strong education reforms in Washington. We're increasing spending, particularly for low-income students. But in return for increased spending, we're now asking whether or not a child can read or write and add and subtract. See, we realize—or we think every child can learn, and we expect every school to teach.

You cannot solve a problem unless you diagnose the problem, and we are diagnosing and solving problems all across America. Our test scores in reading and math are up. We are closing a achievement gap for minority students all across America. And we're not going to go back to the old days of mediocrity and low expectations in our Nation's schoolrooms.

We will continue to work to make sure health care is available and affordable. We'll make sure health care is available by expanding community health centers so the poor and the indigent can get good primary and preventative care in places other than your emergency rooms. We're going to make sure that children of low-income families are subscribed to our health programs. We want to make sure people get health care in America that can't afford it. We also want to make sure it's affordable. Most of the uninsured work for small businesses. Small businesses ought to be allowed to join together, to spread risk, so they can buy insurance at the same discount that big companies are able to do.

We will expand health savings accounts, which will help our families and our small businesses. And to make sure health care is available and affordable in this good State, we will do something about the frivolous lawsuits that are running up the cost of health care and running doctors out of business.

I was campaigning in Canton the other day, and I met two docs who are no longer practicing medicine because their premiums got so high because of the lawsuits. I have met too many ob-gyns who are leaving practice because of the lawsuits. And I have met too many young expectant moms who are concerned about their health care because they don't have a doc close by. And that's not right for America. This is a national problem that requires a national solution. You cannot be pro-doctor, pro-patient and pro-personal-injury-trial-lawyer at the same time. My opponent has made his choice. He voted against medical liability reform 10 times in the Senate, and he put a personal-injury trial lawyer on the ticket.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. I have made my choice. I'm standing with the doctors of Ohio. I'm standing with the patients of Ohio. I'm standing with the families of Ohio. I'm for medical liability reform.

My opponent has got a different point of view when it comes to health care. You might remember one of the debates when they asked him about his health care plan, and he said, with a straight face, "The Government doesn't have anything to do with it." I could barely contain myself. [*Laughter*] The Government has got a lot to do with it. Eighty percent of the people would be signed up to a Government program under his vision. When you make it easier for people to sign up for Medicaid, it means the small-business owners will stop writing insurance for their employees because the Government is going to. That moves people from the private sector to the public sector. Now, when the Government starts writing the checks when it comes to health care, they start making the rules when it comes to health care. And when they start making the rules when it comes to health care, they start making the decisions for you when it comes to health care and they make decisions for your doctors when it comes to health care. The wrong prescription for American families is to federalize health care.

In all we do to improve health care for our families, we'll make sure the decisions are made by doctors and patients, not by officials in Washington, DC.

The fourth clear choice in this election involves your retirement. Our Nation has made a solemn commitment to America's seniors on Social Security and Medicare. When I ran for President 4 years ago, I promised to keep

that commitment and improve Medicare by adding prescription drugs. I kept my word.

We got the job done for our seniors. Medicare needed to be modernized. Medicare would pay thousands of dollars for a heart surgery but not one dime for the prescription drugs that might prevent the heart surgery from being needed in the first place. That didn't make any sense to people on Medicare. And so I brought Republicans together and Democrats together. I signed a Medicare law. And beginning in 2006, all seniors will be able to get prescription drug coverage under Medicare. And we will keep our promise of Social Security for our seniors. And we'll strengthen Social Security for generations to come.

Now, you might remember the 2000 campaign, when they were running the ads and the fliers and the mailers that said, "If George W. gets elected, our seniors will not get their checks." Well, as you gather up the vote, please remind your friends and neighbors that George W. did get elected, and the seniors got their checks. And the seniors will continue to get their checks. And baby boomers like me and a couple other people I see out there, we'll get our checks.

But we need to worry about our children and our grandchildren. We need to worry about whether the Social Security system will be there when they need it. And that's why I believe younger workers ought to be able to take some of their own payroll taxes and set up a personal savings account, a personal savings account that will earn a better rate of return, a personal savings account they call their own, a personal savings account the Government cannot take away.

My opponent's taken a different approach on this issue. He said he's going to protect Social Security. I want you to remind your friends and neighbors that he has voted eight times for higher taxes on Social Security benefits. He can run from his record, but he cannot hide.

And when it comes to the young generation, he's offered nothing. The job of a President is to confront problems, not pass them on to future generations and future Presidents. In a new term, I'll bring people together and make sure the Social Security system is strong for generations to come.

The fifth clear choice in this election is on the values that are so crucial to keeping our families strong. I stand for the appointment of Federal judges who know the difference between personal opinion and the strict interpretation of the law. I stand for marriage and family, which are the foundations of our society. I will promote a culture of life, and I proudly signed the ban on partial-birth abortion.

My opponent's taken a different point of view. He voted against the Defense of Marriage Act. He voted against the ban on partial-birth abortion.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. And at one time in this campaign, he actually said the heart and soul of America can be found in Hollywood.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Most families do not look to Hollywood as a source of values. The heart and soul of America is found in caring communities like Toledo, Ohio.

All these choices make this one of the most important elections in our history. The security and prosperity of our country are at stake. The health and education for our families and our children are at stake. The direction of our culture is at stake. The decision is in the best of hands. It's in the hands of the American people. It's in your hands.

Our country is a strong country. It is a great country. I see a great day coming for all Americans. One of my favorite quotes is from a fellow Texan named Tom Lea. And he said, "Sarah and I live on the east side of the mountain. It is the sunrise side, not the sunset side. It is the side to see the day that is coming, not to see the day that is gone." In the course of this campaign, my opponent has spent much of the campaign talking about the day that is gone. I'm talking about the day that is coming, a prosperous day, a hopeful day, a compassionate day, and a day when we can achieve the peace we so long for for our children and our grandchildren.

When I campaigned across Ohio 4 years ago, I made this pledge, that if I was elected, I would uphold the honor and the dignity of the office. With your help, with your hard work, I will do so for 4 more years.

Thanks for coming. God bless. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:30 p.m. at the SeaGate Convention Centre. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Bob Taft and Auditor of State Betty Montgomery of Ohio; Bernadette Restivo Noe, chairman, Lucas County Republican Party, and her husband, Tom; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Remarks on Departure From Toledo

October 29, 2004

Al Jazeera Videotape of Usama bin Laden

Earlier today I was informed of the tape that is now being analyzed by America's intelligence community. Let me make this very clear: Americans will not be intimidated or influenced by an enemy of our country. I'm sure Senator Kerry agrees with this.

I also want to say to the American people that we're at war with these terrorists, and I am confident that we will prevail.

Thank you very much. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:53 p.m. at Toledo Express Airport. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Statement on Signing the Ronald W. Reagan National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2005

October 29, 2004

Protecting the American people is my most solemn responsibility, and a superior U.S. military is essential to that effort and to fighting and winning the global war on terrorism. The Defense Authorization Act of 2005 will continue to strengthen our security and ensure that our troops are the best paid, best trained, and best equipped fighting force in the world.

We have increased military pay by over 20 percent since I came into office, and this legislation includes the fourth consecutive pay raise for our service men and women. It funds more protective equipment like body armor and reinforced Humvees to keep our troops as safe as possible.

This bill also continues the transformation of our military and funds the technology and advanced weapons systems we need. And it keeps our commitment to our troops, military retirees, reservists, and their families by ensuring they get the health, housing, and other benefits that they deserve. This bill will help us continue to strengthen our all-volunteer military.

NOTE: H.R. 4200, approved October 28, was assigned Public Law No. 108–375. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Remarks in Columbus, Ohio

October 29, 2004

The President. Thank you all. Thanks for coming. Thank you all for being here. Thank you all for coming. Laura and I are honored so many of you came out to say hello. You've lifted our spirits.

I also want to thank Governor Schwarzenegger for coming. It's such an honor to have him here in Columbus and campaigning on my behalf. You know, he and I share some things in common. We both married well. [*Laughter*] We both have trouble speaking the English language. [*Laughter*] We both got big biceps. [*Laughter*] Well, two out of three ain't bad. [*Laughter*]

It's great to be back in Columbus. I don't know if you know this or not, but my grandfather was raised here. So why don't you send a home boy back to Washington? We love campaigning in your State. Ohio is a wonderful place. I'm campaigning hard to let people know that I've got an agenda for 4 more years.

Perhaps the most important reason why you ought to put me back into office is so that Laura is the First Lady for 4 more years.

I'm proud of my runningmate, Dick Cheney. I readily concede that he does not have the waviest hair in the race. You'll be happy to hear I didn't pick him because of his hairdo. [*Laughter*] I picked him because he's a man of sound judgment, excellent experience. He's getting the job done for the American people.