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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.

Laura and I are pleased that your Governor, Bob Taft, and First Lady Hope Taft are with us today. Thank you all for coming.

Senator Mike DeWine is with us. Senator, thank you for being here. You need to put George Voinovich back in the United States Senate. I want to thank Congressman Pat Tiberi for his leadership. I want to thank Congressman Dave Hobson and Carolyn for being with us today. We're honored you are here. I want to thank my friend Deborah Pryce in the United States Congress, who is here.

I want to thank the Lieutenant Governor, who is with us. The Supreme Court of Ohio Chief Justice is with us. We've got a lot of State and local officials here. We are honored with your presence.

I want to thank all the grassroots activists who are here. I want to thank my friend Jo Ann Davidson and Doug Preisse. I want to thank you all, all of you who are making the phone calls, putting up the signs, and turning out the vote.

I'm here to not only ask for your vote; I'm here to ask for your help. I'm here to ask you to get your friends and neighbors to go to the polls. Turn out our fellow Republicans, fine independents, and discerning Democrats. Four days to go, and we're counting on your help. There's no doubt in my mind, with your help, we will carry Ohio again and win a great victory on Tuesday.

We have a clear choice—or you have a clear choice in this campaign, a clear choice between two very different candidates, dramatically 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 am proudly running on mine.

This election comes down to some clear choices for America's families. The first choice is the most important because it concerns the security of your family. All progress on every issue depends on the safety of our families. 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 determined to strike. 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 in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This will not happen on my watch.

Since that terrible morning, we have 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 have strengthened our homeland. We're reforming and strengthening our intelligence capabilities. We are transforming the All-Volunteer Army. There will be no draft. We are relentless. We are determined. We are staying on the offense. We're chasing the terrorists across the globe 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.

And we've got another asset at our disposal: freedom. We believe—I believe in the power of liberty. Think about what has happened in a short period of time. Young girls in Afghanistan couldn't go to school because the Taliban was so barbaric and backward. And if their mothers didn't toe the line of ideological hatred, they were taken into the public square and whipped and sometimes executed in a sports stadium. Because we acted in our own interests, because we acted to protect ourselves, because we upheld a doctrine that said, "If you harbor a terrorist, you're just as guilty as the terrorist," millions of people went to the polls to vote for the President of Afghanistan. The first voter was a 19-year-old woman.

Iraq will have elections in January. Think how far that country has come from the days of torture chambers and mass graves. Freedom is on the march. Freedom is taking place around this world, and America is more secure for it. I believe everybody longs to be free. I believe deep in everybody's soul, there's a yearning to live in a free society. I believe all these things because 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 has to lead our country 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 and where I stand and where I intend to lead this country. On good days and on bad days, whether the polls are up or the polls are down, I am determined to lead this Nation and win the war on terror.

And I will always support the United States military. I want to thank those who wear our Nation's uniform. I want to thank our military families who are here. I want to thank the veterans who have set such a great example for our military. And I want to assure our military and their families and our veterans, we will make sure our troops have that which they need to complete their missions.

That's why I went to the United States Congress and asked for $87 billion of supplemental funding, necessary funding to support our troops in harm's way. We got great bipartisan support for that request. Only 12 United States Senators voted against the funding for our troops, 2 of whom were my opponent and his runningmate.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. When you're out gathering the vote over the next 4 days, when you're rounding up people to go to the polls, remind them of this statistic: Only four Members of the United States Senate voted to authorize the use of force and then voted against providing the funding necessary for our troops in combat. Two of those four were my opponent and his runningmate.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. You might remember the most famous quote of the 2004 campaign. When asked about his vote on the $87 billion, Senator Kerry said, "I actually did vote for the 87 billion, before I voted against it."

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Now, I haven't spent a lot of time in Columbus, but I doubt we're going to find many people here who talk that way. [*Laughter*] He's given several explanations since about his $87 billion vote. Perhaps the most illustrative one of them all was when he said, "The whole thing was a complicated matter." [*Laughter*] My fellow citizens, there is nothing complicated about supporting our troops in combat.

Unfortunately, my opponent, tonight, continued to say things he knows are not true, accusing our military of passing up a chance to get Usama bin Laden in Tora Bora. As the commander in charge of that operation, Tommy Franks, has said, "It's simply not the case." It's the worst kind of Monday morning quarterbacking. It is especially shameful in the light of a new tape from America's enemy. Our commander in Afghanistan, Tommy Franks, recently said, "The Senator's understanding of events does not square with reality." General Franks said America's Special Forces were actively involved in the search for the terrorists in Tora Bora. And intelligence reports at the time placed bin Laden in any of several different countries. As General Franks said, "If we'd ever known where bin Laden was, we would have gotten him."

Before Senator Kerry got into political difficulty and revised his views, he saw our actions in Tora Bora differently. In the fall of 2001, on national TV, he said, quote, "I think we have been doing this pretty effectively, and we should continue to do it that way." Senator Kerry also went on to say about Tora Bora on national TV, "I think we've been smart. I think the administration leadership has done it well, and we are on the right track." I couldn't have said it better myself.

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. History has shown that Senator Kerry was wrong and President Ronald Reagan was right.

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

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. 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.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. History has shown that Senator Kerry was wrong—and we have got to be fair—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."

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Many Democrats in this country do not recognize their party anymore, and today, I want to speak to every once 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 am asking for your vote.

We have a difference of opinion. We have a difference of opinion how—as how to protect our families. My opponent said America must submit to what he calls a "global test" before we commit our troops.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. I'm not making that up. [*Laughter*] He was standing about three yards away when he said it. I couldn't believe it either. As far as I tell, that means our country must get permission before we act in our own defense. As President, I'll build on alliances. We'll continue to work with our friends and allies, but I will never turn over America's national security decisions to leaders of other countries.

We have a difference of opinion as to how to protect you on this crucial issue. My opponent said that September the 11th did not change him much at all. September the 11th changed me a lot. I'll never forget the day I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers on September the 14th, 2001. I'll never forget the sights and sounds of that day, the workers in hardhats who were yelling at me at the top of their lungs, "Whatever it takes." The worker came out of the rubble—policeman or a fireman, I'm not sure which one—who grabbed me by the arm. He looked me square in the eye. He said, "Do not let me down." From that day forward, I get up every morning thinking about how to better protect our families. I will never relent in defending America, whatever it takes.

The second clear choice in this election concerns your family's budget. When I ran for President 4 years ago, I pledged to lower taxes for America's families. I kept my word. We doubled the child credit to $1,000 per child to help moms and dads. We reduced the marriage penalty. We believe the Tax Code ought to encourage, not penalize marriage. We dropped the lowest tax bracket to 10 percent. We reduced income taxes on everybody who pays income taxes.

I want you to remind your friends and neighbors about this fact: When I came into office, the stock market had been in serious decline for 6 months; and we faced a recession and corporate scandals; and the attacks of September the 11th cost us about a million jobs in the 3 months after that fateful day.

But our economic policies are working. Because we increased consumption and encouraged investment, our economy is growing at rates as fast as any in nearly 20 years. We added 1.9 million new jobs in the last 13 months. The entrepreneurial spirit in America is strong. Small businesses are flourishing all across Ohio. Farm income is up in Ohio. The homeownership rate is at an alltime high. More minority families own a home than ever before in our Nation's history. 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 fully understand there are still people hurting in the great State of Ohio, but we're heading in the right direction. Your unemployment rate dropped from 6.3 percent to 6 percent in the month of September, and we added 5,500 new jobs. We're headed in the right direction.

My opponent has plans for your family budget. He intends to take a big chunk out of it.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. He voted against the higher child tax credit. He voted against marriage penalty relief. He voted against lower taxes. If he'd have had his way, the average American family would be paying $2,000 more in Federal taxes.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. That may not sound like a lot to some of them in Washington, but it's a lot for families right here in Columbus, Ohio. It helps moms and dads. It helps the small-business owners. You know, my opponent has been in the Senate for 20 years and he voted to raise taxes 98 times.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. That's five times for every year in the Senate. I'd call that a predictable pattern, a leading indicator. During this campaign, he's also made a lot of promises. He's promised $2.2 trillion in new Federal spending. That's trillion with a "T." That's a lot even for a Senator from Massachusetts.

So they asked him, "How are you going to pay for it?" And he said, "Oh, we'll just tax the rich." You've heard that before. Be wary. See, you raise, when you run up the top two brackets, between 600 and 800 billion dollars. That is far short of the 2.2 trillion he's promised. I would call that a tax gap. That's the gap between what he's promised and what he says he can deliver. And guess who usually gets to fill the tax gap?

Audience members. We do!

The President. Yes, you do. The good news is, he is not going to tax you; we're going to carry Ohio and win a great victory.

Third—the third clear choice in this election involves the quality of life for our Nation's families. A good education and quality health care are important to a successful life. As candidate for President, I pledged to end the soft bigotry of low expectations by reforming our public schools. I kept my word. We passed good education reforms. We believe every child can learn, and we expect every child, every school to teach. We increased Federal spending. But in return for Federal increases, we now expect State and local jurisdictions to measure. We understand you cannot solve a problem until you diagnose the problem. And we are diagnosing and we are solving problems all across America. Test scores are up in reading and math. We're closing an achievement gap for minority students. And we will not go back to the days of low expectations and mediocrity in our classrooms.

We'll continue to improve life for our families by making health care affordable and accessible. We'll make sure the poor and the indigent get good health care in community health centers. We'll make sure our program for children of low-income families is fully subscribed. To make sure health care is affordable, we must allow small businesses to join together across jurisdictional boundaries so they can buy insurance at the same discounts big companies are able to do. We will expand health savings accounts to help our small businesses and our families.

And to make sure health care is available and affordable for citizens of Ohio, we will do something about the frivolous lawsuits that are running up the cost of health care. I have met too many ob-gyns who are having to leave practice because of increased premiums due to lawsuits. I have met too many expectant moms who are deeply concerned about getting the health care they need. This litigation problem is a national problem. 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 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 families of Ohio. I'm for medical liability reform.

Senator Kerry has got a different idea about health care. You might remember in the debate when he looked square in the camera and he said about his health care

plan, "The Government didn'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 who are signed up under his program end up on a Government plan. If you make it easier for people to be on Medicaid, it is likely small-business owners will drop insurance for their employees because the Government will provide it. See, you're moving people from the private sector to Government plans. When the Government writes the check, the Government makes the rules. And when the Government is making the rules about your health care, the Government starts making decisions for you and they make decisions for your doctors. The wrong prescription for American families is to federalize our health care. In all we do to improve our family's health care, we will make sure the decisions are made by doctors and patients, not by officials in Washington, DC.

The fourth clear choice 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 drug coverage. I kept my word. Medicare needed to be changed. See, we would pay thousands of dollars for a heart surgery but not one dime for the prescription drugs that could prevent the heart surgery from being needed in the first place. That didn't make any sense to our seniors. So I brought Republicans and Democrats together. We modernized Medicare for our seniors, and beginning in 2006, seniors will get prescription drug coverage under Medicare.

And we'll keep the promise of Social Security for our seniors, and we will strengthen Social Security for generations to come. Now, you might remember the 2000 campaign when they started running those ads and putting out the leaflets and flyers that said this to our seniors: "If George W. gets elected, our seniors will not get their checks." So when you're out there rounding up the vote, when you're working hard over the next 4 days, remind your friends and neighbors that George W. did get elected, and the seniors did get their checks. And our seniors will continue to get their checks. And baby boomers like me and Arnold—[*laughter*]—we're in pretty good shape when it comes to Social Security.

But we need to worry about our children and our grandchildren. We need to worry about whether Social Security will be there for them. And that is why I believe younger workers ought to be allowed to take some of their payroll taxes and set up a personal savings account, an account that earns a greater rate of interest, an account you own and an account the Government can never take away.

My opponent takes a different approach. You know, he said he's going to protect Social Security. But tell your friends and neighbors that he voted eight times for higher taxes on Social Security benefits.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Like on other issues, he can run, but he cannot hide.

And he's offered nothing for the next generation when it comes to Social Security. The job of the President is to confront problems, not to pass them on to future Presidents and future generations. In a new term, I will bring people together so that we modernize and strengthen Social Security for generations to come.

The final choice in this election is on the values that are crucial to keeping our families strong. I believe marriage is a sacred institution. I will promote a culture of life and proudly signed the ban on partial-birth abortion. And I stand for the appointment of Federal judges who know the difference between personal opinion and the strict interpretation of the law.

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 of our families is at stake. The education of our children is at stake. And the direction of our culture is at stake. And the decision is in the best of hands. The decision is in the hands of the American people.

One of my favorite quotes was written by a fellow Texan named Tom Lea. 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."

My opponent has spent much of this campaign talking about the day that is gone. I'm talking about the day that's coming.

I see a day where prosperity reaches every corner of America. I see a day where every child is able to read and write and add and subtract. I see a day in which this world becomes more peaceful and we're able to achieve the peace we all dream for for our children and our grandchildren.

When I campaigned across your State in 2000, I made you this pledge, that if I got elected, I would uphold the honor and the integrity of the office. With your help, with your hard work, I will do so for 4 more years.

God bless. Thanks for coming. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:27 p.m. at the Nationwide Arena. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger of California; Gov. Bob Taft of Ohio and his wife, Hope; Carolyn Hobson, wife of Congressman David Hobson; Lt. Gov. Jennette B. Bradley of Ohio; Chief Justice Thomas J. Moyer of the Supreme Court of Ohio; Jo Ann Davidson, Ohio Valley regional chairman, Bush-Cheney '04, Inc.; Doug Preisse, chairman, Franklin County Republican Party Executive Committee; Gen. Tommy R. Franks, USA, (Ret.), former combatant commander, U.S. Central Command; Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Remarks in Grand Rapids, Michigan

October 30, 2004

The President. Thank you all for coming. Thanks for taking time out of your Saturday morning to come by and say hello. Laura and I are honored to be back in western Michigan. You've lifted our spirits. We're proud to be in a home of a fine former President, President Gerald Ford, and a great First Lady in Betty Ford. I know you honor their service to our country, as do Laura and I. We're here to ask for your vote, and I'm here to ask for your help.

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

The President. We're close to voting time. We have a duty in our country to vote. In our free society, we have an obligation, I think, to go to the polls and express our opinions. So I'm here to ask you to convince your friends and neighbors to do their duty. Make sure our fellow Republicans go to the polls. Make sure independents go to the polls. Make sure discerning Democrats go to the polls. And when you get them headed to the polls, remind them, if they want a safer America and a stronger America and a better America, to put me and Dick Cheney back in office.

I enjoy traveling our country. I enjoy talking to the people. I love to tell the people what I am going to do for the next 4 years. Perhaps the most important reason to put me in, though, is to make sure Laura is the First Lady for 4 more years.

Audience members. Laura! Laura! Laura!

The President. I am proud of my runningmate, Dick Cheney. I readily concede he does not have the waviest hair in this race. [*Laughter*] But I know the people of western Michigan will be pleased to hear I didn't pick him because of his hairdo. I picked him because of his judgment. I picked him because of his experience. He's getting the job done for the American people.

I want to thank my friend Betsy DeVos for her leadership and her community spirit. I want to thank the DeVos family for joining us today.

I want to thank my friend Congressman Peter Hoekstra for joining us today. Pete, I'm glad you're here; his wife, Diane, is here; other family members are here. I look forward to working with the chairman of a really important committee to make sure our intelligence gathering works, to make sure America can stay secure. Appreciate your service, Pete. I want to thank Congressman Vern Ehlers for joining us today. Congressman, we're proud you're here. Thank you for representing this district with such distinction and honor.

I want to thank the attorney general, Mike Cox, and Secretary of State Terri Lynn Land for joining us.

I want to thank all the local and State officials who are here. I want to thank all the people who have thrown their hat in the ring and are running for office.