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The President. I offer a record of leadership and results in a time of challenge, and I ask for your vote.

If you believe that taxes should stay low so families can pay the bills and small businesses can expand and our economy can continue to create new jobs, I ask you, come stand with me.

If you believe in high standards for our public schools and parents and doctors—patients and doctors should be in charge of health care, I ask you, come stand with me.

If you believe that this Nation must honor the commitments of Medicare and strengthen Social Security for the next generation, I ask you, come stand with me.

If you believe that this Nation should honor family and marriage and make a place for the weak and vulnerable, I ask you, come stand with me.

If you believe America should fight the war on terror with all our might and lead with unwavering confidence in our ideals, I ask you, come stand with me.

If you are a Democrat who believes your great party has turned too far left in this year, I ask you, come stand with me.

If you are a minority citizen and you believe in free enterprise and good schools and the enduring values of family and faith, if you're tired of your vote being taken for granted, I ask you, come stand with me.

If you are a voter who believes that the President of the United States should say what he means and do what he says and keep his word, I ask you, come stand with me.

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

The President. When I traveled your State 4 years ago, I made this pledge, that if I got elected, I would uphold the honor and the dignity of the office to which I had been elected. With your help—*con su apoyo,* I will do so for 4 more years.

Gracias. Vamos a ganar. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:07 p.m. at the Coconut Grove Expo Center. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Jeb Bush and First Lady Columba Bush of Florida; Mel R. Martinez, senatorial candidate in Florida, and his wife, Kitty; Tom Gallagher, chief financial officer, Florida Department of Financial Services; Florida State Representative Marco Rubio; and President Fidel Castro of Cuba.

Remarks in Tampa, Florida

October 31, 2004

The President. Thank you all for coming. We really appreciate you coming out on a Sunday afternoon. I'm here to ask for your vote, and I'm here to ask for your help. Find your friends and neighbors and tell them we have a duty to vote, and get them going to the polls. Turn the Republicans out. Turn the independents out. Find discerning Democrats like my friend the former mayor of Tampa, who is a Bush supporter, Dick Greco, like Senator Zell Miller from Georgia. When you get them going to the polls, tell them, if they want a safer America, a stronger America, and a better America, to put me and Dick Cheney back in office.

Perhaps the most important reason why you should put me back in is so that Laura will be the First Lady for 4 more years.

Audience members. Laura! Laura! Laura!

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

I am proud of your Governor, my brother Jeb Bush. He is doing a fabulous job. We both share the same campaign consultant: Mother. [*Laughter*] My brother Marvin is with us too, and I want to thank Marv for coming. He's the good-looking one. [*Laughter*]

I'm proud to be introduced by General Norman Schwarzkopf, a great American and a great general. I want to thank his daughter, Jessica, for joining us today. I want to thank my friend Congressman Mike Bilirakis for being here today. I want to thank Congressman Adam Putnam for being here today. I want to thank the Lieutenant Governor and the attorney general for being with us today. I want to urge you, when you go to the polls, make sure you vote for Mel Martinez as the United States Senator. And I appreciate his

wife, Kitty, joining us. I want to thank my friend Mayor Greco for joining us. I want to thank Mel Tillis for being here. Mel, I'm proud you're here. Tino Martinez—how good does that get? Thanks for coming, Tino.

I want to thank all the grassroots activists who are here, the people putting up the signs, the people making the phone calls. I want to thank you for what you have done. I want to thank you for what you're going to do over the next 48 hours. You're going to turn out the vote. We'll win Florida again and win a great victory in November.

This election takes place in a time of great consequence. The person who sits in the Oval Office for the next 4 years will set the course in the war on terror and the direction of our economy. This country needs strong, determined, optimistic leadership, and I'm ready for the job.

My 4 years as your President have confirmed some lessons and taught me some new ones. I have learned to expect the unexpected because horror can arrive quietly—quickly on a quiet morning. I've learned firsthand how hard it is to send young men and women into battle, even when the cause is right. I'm grateful for the lessons I've learned from my parents: Respect every person; do your best; live every day to its fullest. And I've been strengthened by my faith and humbled by its reminder that every life is part of a larger story.

The American President must lead with clarity and purpose. As Presidents from Lincoln to Roosevelt to Reagan so clearly demonstrated, a President must not shift with the wind. The President has to make tough decisions and stand by them. The role of a President is not to follow the path of the latest polls. The role of the President is to lead based on principle, conviction, and conscience.

During these 4 years, I've learned that whatever your strengths are, you're going to need them. And whatever your shortcomings are, the people will notice them. [*Laughter*] Sometimes I am a little too blunt. I get that from my mother. Sometimes I mangle the English language. I get that from my father. But all the time, whether you agree with me or not, you know where I stand, what I believe, and where I'm going to lead.

You can't say that about my opponent.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. It is fair to say that consistency is not his long suit. I look at an issue and take a principled stand. My opponent looks at an issue and tries to take every side. And the people of Florida know the difference. And Tuesday, Florida will vote for strong, consistent, convicted—conviction and new—and our leadership. Florida will go to the polls and make sure that Bush-Cheney has got 4 more years.

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

The President. This election comes down to some clear choices on vital issues for American families. The first clear choice concerns your family budget. When I ran for President 4 years ago, I pledged to lower taxes for American families. I kept my word. We doubled the child credit. We reduced the marriage penalty. We dropped the lowest bracket to 10 percent so working families can have more money to spend. As a result of these policies, real after-tax income—that would be money in your pocket—is up by about 10 percent since I took office.

We've been through a lot. When you're out rounding up the vote, remind people that the stock market was in serious decline 6 months prior to my arrival. Then we had a recession and corporate scandals and the attack on our country that cost us a million jobs in 3 months.

But we acted. And because we acted, our economy is growing again. We're creating new jobs. 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. Homeownership rate is at an alltime high. More minority families own a home than ever before in our history. The entrepreneurial spirit is strong in America. Small businesses are flourishing. The national unemployment rate is 5.4 percent. That's lower than the average rate of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. And in Florida, the unemployment rate is 4.5 percent. This economy is strong, and it is getting stronger.

My opponent has an economic plan. It involves the promises he makes and the money he intends to take from you.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. He's got a record. He's got a record. He's voted to increase taxes 98 times in the 20 years he was in the Senate. That's five times every year he was in the Senate. That's a predictable pattern. That's a leading indicator. He's also promised $2.2 trillion in new Federal spending. That's trillion with a "T." That's a lot. That's a lot even for a Senator from Massachusetts.

They asked him how he's going to pay for it. He said, "Oh, don't worry, we'll just tax the rich." You have heard that before. The problem is, when you raise the top two brackets, you only raise between 600 and 800 billion dollars. That is far short of the 2.2 trillion he has promised. That's a tax gap. Given his record, guess who's going to get to fill the tax gap? You are. We're not going to let him tax you; we're going to carry Florida and win on November the 2d.

Second clear choice involves the quality of life for our Nation's families. I ran for President to challenge the soft bigotry of low expectations by reforming our public schools. I have kept my word. We passed education reforms to bring high standards to our classrooms. Reading and math scores are on the rise. We're closing the achievement gap by helping our minority students. My vision for a new term is to build on these reforms and extend them still to our high schools so that no child is left behind in America.

We'll continue to improve life for our families by making health care more affordable and available. We will expand health savings accounts so more small businesses can cover their workers and more families are able to save tax-free for health care accounts they manage and call their own. We will expand association health plans to help small businesses. They should be allowed to join together to share risk so they can buy insurance at the same discounts big companies do. We will expand community health centers to help the poor and the indigent, and we'll make sure every eligible child is enrolled in our low-income health insurance program.

And to make sure health care is available and affordable, we will do something about the junk lawsuits that are running good doctors out of practice and running up the cost of health care. I am for medical liability reform—now. In all we do to reform health care, the decisions will be made by doctors and patients, not by officials in Washington, DC.

My opponent has a different approach. He voted for education reform but now wants to weaken the accountability standards. He has proposed a big-Government health care plan. You might remember one of our debates when he looked square in the camera and said—when they asked him about his health care plan, he said, "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 plan. Eight million Americans would lose their private health insurance and end up on a Government program. He's voted against medical liability reform 10 times. He put a personal-injury trial lawyer on the ticket.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Federalizing health care is the wrong prescription for American families. He can run, but he cannot hide.

The third 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 drug coverage. I kept my word. Seniors are already getting discounts on medicine with drug discount cards. Low-income seniors are getting direct help to pay for prescription drugs. And beginning in 2006, all seniors will be able to get prescription drug coverage under Medicare.

My opponent has a record. He voted against the Medicare bill that included prescription drug coverage. Remind your friends and neighbors of that when they're headed to the polls. In this campaign, he promised to repeal the Medicare bill, and then he's promised to keep it. Sounds familiar, doesn't it?

Audience members. Flip-flop! Flip-flop! Flip-flop!

The President. He tries to scare seniors about their Social Security. But he forgot to mention he's the one who voted to tax Social Security benefits eight times.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. I have kept the promise of Social Security for our seniors, and I will always keep the promise of Social Security for our seniors.

But I also know the job of a President is to confront problems, not to pass them on to future Presidents and future generations. That's why in a new term, I'll work with members of both political parties to make sure the Social Security system is strengthened for a younger generation to come.

The fourth clear choice in this election is on the values that are crucial to keeping our families strong. I stand for marriage and family, which are the foundations of our society. I stand for a culture of life in which every person matters and every being counts. And I proudly signed the ban on partial-birth abortions. I stand for the appointment of Federal judges who know the difference between personal opinion and the strict interpretation of the law.

On these issues, my opponent and I are miles apart. He said he would only appoint judges who pass a liberal litmus test. He was part of the extreme minority who voted against the Defense of Marriage Act. He voted against the ban on partial-birth abortion. There is a mainstream in American politics, and John Kerry sits on the far left bank. He can run from that liberal record, but he cannot hide.

The final choice in this election is the most important of all because it concerns the security of your family. All progress on every other issue depends on the safety of our citizens. 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.

Our strategy is clear. We're strengthening our homeland. We're reforming and strengthening the intelligence capabilities. We will transform our military. There will be no draft. The All-Volunteer Army will remain an all-volunteer army. We are steadfast. We are determined. We are staying on the offensive so we do not have to face the terrorists here at home.

And we're making progress. Afghanistan is an ally in the war on terror. Pakistan and Saudi Arabia are making raids and arrests. Libya is dismantling its weapons program. The army of a free Iraq is fighting for freedom. Al Qaida no longer controls territory like it did in Afghanistan. We have shut down its camps. We are systematically destroying the Al Qaida network across the world. More than three-quarters of Al Qaida's key members and associates have been brought to justice. And the rest of them know we're on their trail.

My opponent has taken a different approach—except when he hadn't. [*Laughter*] Consistency is not his long suit, as I mentioned. Senator Kerry says we're better off with Saddam out of power—except when he said that removing Saddam made us less safe. He said in our second debate that he always believed Saddam was a threat—except, a few questions later, when he insisted Saddam Hussein was not a threat. He says he was right when he voted to authorize the use force against Saddam Hussein but I was wrong to use force against Saddam Hussein.

The problems with—the problem with my opponent's record on national security are deeper than election-year reversals. For 20 years, on the largest national security issues of our time, he has been consistently wrong. During the cold war, Senator Kerry voted against critical weapons systems and opposed President Reagan's policy of peace through strength. History has shown that Senator Kerry was wrong and President Ronald Reagan was right.

When President—when former President Bush assembled an international coalition led by General Norman Schwarzkopf to drive Saddam Hussein from Kuwait, 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.

One year after the first bombing of the World Trade Center, the Senator proposed massive cuts in America's intelligence. The cuts were so extreme that even his fellow Massachusetts Senator, Ted Kennedy, voted against them. History has shown that Senator Kerry was wrong and—let's be fair—Senator Kennedy was right.

I know there are some members of the military with us today, and I want to thank you for your dedication. I want to thank you for your service. I want to thank the military families who are with us today. And I want to thank the veterans who have joined us today. I want to thank our veterans for having set such a great example to those who wear our Nation's uniform. And I want to assure you like I've assured families all across our country, we will make sure our troops have that which they need to complete their missions.

That is why I went to the United States Congress last September—September of 2003—and asked for $87 billion in funding to support our troops in both Afghanistan and Iraq. On national TV, my opponent said it would be irresponsible to vote against the troops. And then he did the irresponsible thing and he voted against the funding for our troops.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. And then he entered the flip-flop hall of fame by saying, quote, "I actually did vote for the 87 billion, right before I voted against it."

Audience members. Flip-flop! Flip-flop! Flip-flop!

The President. He's given several answers since then, but perhaps the most illustrative is when he said, "The whole thing is a complicated matter." My fellow Americans, there's nothing complicated about supporting our troops in combat.

We have a difference of opinion on how to protect our families. You might remember in one of the debates, my opponent said there must be a "global test" before we commit troops.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. I'm not making that up. I heard him loud and clear. As far as I can tell, that means America must submit to the will of others before we defend ourselves. Listen, I'll work to build alliances. I will strengthen our coalitions. But I will never turn over America's national security decisions to leaders of other countries.

My opponent was—recently said that September the 11th didn't change him much at all. Well, September the 11th changed me. It changed my outlook about what we need to do to protect the American people. I remember standing in the ruins of the Twin Towers on September the 14th, 2001. I remember the sights and sounds of that day. There were workers in hardhats yelling at me at the top of their lungs, "Whatever it takes." I remember the man who grabbed me by the arm. He looked me square in the eye, and he said, "Do not let me down." Ever since that day, I wake up every morning trying to better figure—figure out how to better protect the American people. I will never relent in defending our country, whatever it takes.

We will use all our assets to protect the American people. We will wage a comprehensive strategy to protect you. Perhaps the biggest asset we have of all is freedom. I believe in the power of liberty to transform nations. Free nations do not breed resentment and export terror. Free nations become allies in the war on terror.

Think about what's happening in Afghanistan in a relatively brief period of time. I want the youngsters to hear what life was like in that country 3½ years ago. Young girls couldn't go to school. And if their mothers didn't toe the line of the ideologues of hate, they were taken into the public square and whipped and sometimes killed in a sports stadium.

Because we acted in our self-defense, because we upheld a doctrine that I clearly laid out that said, "If you harbor a terrorist, you're equally as guilty as the terrorist," millions of citizens in Afghanistan voted in a Presidential election. And the first voter was a 19-year-old woman.

Iraq is dangerous. It's dangerous because Iraq is heading toward a free society. There will be Presidential elections in January. Think how far that country has come from the days of torture chambers and mass graves. Freedom is on the march, and America is more secure for it. I believe that everybody yearns to be free. Freedom is not America's gift to the world. Freedom is the Almighty God's gift to each man and woman in this world.

These are historic times, and there is a lot at stake in this election. The future and safety—the future safety and prosperity of America are on the ballot. Ultimately, this election

comes down to who do you trust—who do you trust to lead this Nation? I offer a record of leadership and results at a time of threat and challenge.

If you believe that taxes should stay low so families can pay their bills and small businesses can create new jobs, I ask you, come stand with me.

If you believe in high standards for our public schools, I ask you, come stand with me.

If you believe patients and doctors should be in charge of the health care system, I ask you, come stand with me.

If you believe that this Nation must honor the commitments of Medicare and strengthen Social Security for the generations to come, I ask you, come stand with me.

If you believe that this Nation should honor marriage and family and make a place for the weak and the vulnerable, I ask you to come stand with me.

If you believe America should fight the war on terror with all our might and lead with unwavering confidence in our ideals, I ask you to come stand with me.

If you are a Democrat who believes your party has turned too far to the left this year, I ask you to come stand with me.

If you're a minority citizen and you believe in free enterprise and good schools and the enduring values of faith and family, if you are tired of your vote being taken for granted, I ask you to come stand with me.

And if you are a voter who believes that the American President should say what he means and do what he says and keep his word, I ask you to come stand with me.

Four years ago, when I traveled your State, I made this pledge, that if I won the election, I would uphold the honor and the dignity of the office to which I had been elected. With your help, with your hard work, I will do so for 4 more years.

Thanks for coming. On to victory. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:35 p.m. at Legends Field. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Jeb Bush, Lt. Gov. Toni Jennings, and State Attorney General Charlie Crist of Florida; Mel R. Martinez, senatorial candidate in Florida, and his wife, Kitty; country music entertainer Mel Tillis; Tino Martinez, first baseman, Tampa Bay Devil Rays, Major League Baseball; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Remarks in Gainesville, Florida

October 31, 2004

The President. Thank you all. Thank you all for coming. So Jeb said, "Why don't we go to Gainesville? Maybe a couple hundred will show up and say hello." I said, "Well, I'm more than willing to go." I can't thank you all enough for coming. Thanks for taking time out of your Sunday afternoon. You're lifting our spirits, and we appreciate it.

I'm here to ask for your vote and your help. I'm here to ask you to take your friends and neighbors to the polls. Remind them we have a duty in our free country to vote. We have an obligation, in my judgment, to participate in our democratic system. Now, when you're lining up votes, of course look for our fellow Republicans and independents, but don't forget to get discerning Democrats to go to the polls, people like Senator Zell Miller from right north of here. And when you get them headed to the polls, remind them, if they want a safer America, a stronger America, and a better America, to put me and Dick Cheney back in office.

Perhaps the most important reason of all to put me back in is so that Laura is the First Lady for 4 more years.

Audience members. Laura! Laura! Laura!

The President. I'm proud of my runningmate, Dick Cheney. I don't want to offend anybody here who's follically challenged, but I readily concede my runningmate doesn't have the waviest hair in the race. [*Laughter*] But I suspect the people of north-central Florida are going to be pleased to know 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'm proud of brother Jeb. What a great Governor, and what a great brother. Jeb and I share the same campaign consultant: Mother. [*Laughter*] And my brother Marvin is with us too. I'm proud Marv is here. Thanks for coming, Marvin. I love my family, and I'm glad that—I'm a fortunate man to have such a great family.