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Remarks in Des Moines, Iowa

November 1, 2004

The President. Thank you all for coming. Thank you all. Senator, what I have learned is every day is a good day to be in Iowa. And I've really enjoyed campaigning in your State in 2000, now in 2004. And I'm here one more time to ask for your vote and ask for your help. I'm asking for you to go to your friends and neighbors and tell them we have a duty in our country to vote. Go to our fellow Republicans, wise independents, and discerning Democrats. And tell them, if they want a stronger America, a safer America, and a better America, to put me and Dick Cheney back in office.

Perhaps the most important reason why people should put me back in is so that Laura is the First Lady for 4 more years. I'm sorry she's not with me right now. She's working—[*laughter*]—thankfully, for me. [*Laughter*] She gives a lot of speeches, and when she speaks, the American people see a warm, compassionate, strong First Lady.

And I'm really proud of Barbara and Jenna. I want to thank them for joining up. I can't think of a better way to complete the last day of this campaign than to be campaigning with two girls I love. And guess who surprised me today? My sister, Dorothy, is with us. Thank you, Doro. I'm a lucky man. I've got a great family, and I love my family. I'm looking forward to working with them as we complete this campaign.

I've got a great Vice President too. I'm real proud of Dick Cheney. I don't want to offend anyone here who is follically challenged, but I readily concede the Vice President doesn't have the waviest hair in the race. But I know the people of Des Moines, Iowa, will be pleased to hear that I didn't pick him because of his hairdo. I picked him because of his judgment, and I picked him because of his experience. And he's getting the job done for the American people.

I can't tell you how proud I am to be able to work with your United States Senator Chuck Grassley. He's an accomplished, effective Senator for Iowa. He is really good at what he does. I know you're going to put him back into office. He is so good at what he does, I've got a job for him on the South Lawn of the White House—got a lot of grass. [*Laughter*] And we love Barbara Grassley too. Chuck's wife is a fine, fine woman.

I want to thank my friend Congressman Jim Nussle, the chairman of the Budget Committee in the House of Representatives, for coming today.

I want to thank the State auditor here. I want to thank the majority leader. I want to thank the Urbandale mayor. I want to thank all the State and local officials. I want to thank some candidates who are here. I want to thank Stan Thompson, who's running for the United States Congress. He's the right man for the job.

I want to thank all the grassroots activists who are here. I want to thank those of you who have been putting up the signs and making the phone calls. I want to thank you for all the work you've done over the past year to get ready for tomorrow. I want to thank Dave Roederer. I want to thank my friend Becky Beach.

I want to thank the—John Stone is with us. Thank you for coming, John. I'm proud you're here. How about Cael Sanderson, gold medalist—what a great ambassador for Iowa, a great ambassador for the United States.

I want to thank you for all you've done and what you're going to do over the next 24 hours. With your help, with your hard work, by turning out this vote, there is no doubt in my mind we will carry Iowa and win a great victory on Tuesday.

Tomorrow the people of this good State and the people of America go to the polls. I'm excited about Election Day. I'm looking forward to it, and I'm also optimistic about the future of this country. I see a brighter day and a more hopeful day. One of my favorite quotes was said 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's the side to see the day that is coming, not to see the day that is gone." During the course of this campaign, my opponent has spent much of it 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 this country. 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, where we achieve the peace we want for our children and our grandchildren. Tomorrow the people of this country have a chance to bring that better day by voting for strong and principled and optimistic leadership by voting for Bush-Cheney.

The American President must lead with clarity and purpose. The role of the President is not to follow the path of the latest polls. The role of the President is to lead based upon principle and conviction and conscience. During these 4 years, I have learned that whatever your strengths are, you're going to need them, and whatever your shortcomings are, people will notice them. [*Laughter*] Sometimes I'm a little too blunt. I get that from my mother. [*Laughter*] Sometimes I mangle the English language. [*Laughter*] I get that from my father. [*Laughter*] But at all times, whether you agree with me or not, you know where I stand, what I believe, and where I intend to lead.

This election comes down to five clear choices for America's families. The first clear choice concerns your family's budget. When I ran for President 4 years ago, I pledged to lower taxes for American families. I have kept my word. We doubled the child credit to help moms and dads. We reduced the marriage penalty. We believe the Tax Code ought to encourage, not penalize marriage. We reduced the taxes on everybody who pays taxes.

As a result of these good policies, our economy is growing at rates as fast as any in nearly 20 years. Real after-tax income is up 10 percent since I've been the President. Homeownership in America is at an alltime high. More minority families own their home than ever before in our Nation's history. Small businesses are flourishing. We've added 1.9 million new jobs since September of 2003. 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. Farm income in Iowa is up, and the unemployment rate in this State is 4.7 percent. This economy of ours is strong, and it is getting stronger.

I have a message for the people of Iowa. We're going to open up foreign markets for Iowa corn and other products. We'll promote renewables like ethanol and biodiesel. We will keep this farm economy strong, and the people of Iowa can count on me to keep my word.

My opponent has an economic plan. I want you to remember he voted 98 times to increase taxes, in 20 years in the Senate. That is five times a year.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. That is a predictable pattern. [*Laughter*] That's a leading indicator. [*Laughter*] There's not enough to pay for all his promises. He's proposing $2.2 trillion, and he said he's only going to raise the top two brackets. See, that raises about 600, 800 billion, but that's far short of the 2.2 trillion he's promised. There is a tax gap. And given his past history, guess who is going to have to fill the tax gap?

Audience members. We are!

The President. The middle-income families of the America. The good news is, he's not going to be able to tax you; we're going to carry Iowa and win a great victory.

The second clear choice in this election involves the quality of life for our Nation's families. I believe every child can learn and every school must teach. I went to Washington to challenge the soft bigotry of low expectations and reform our public schools. I kept my word. We passed education reforms that bring high standards to the classrooms. Math and reading scores are now on the rise. We are closing the achievement gap by helping minority children. My vision for a new term is to build on these reforms and extend them to our high schools so 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'll expand health savings accounts. We'll allow small businesses to join together so they can buy insurance at the same discounts big companies are able to do. We'll help families in need, and we will do something about these junk lawsuits that are running up the cost of medicine and driving good docs—we're driving good docs out of practice.

My opponent and I disagree on this medical liability issue. I see it as a national problem that requires a national solution. He's

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'm standing with the doctors of Iowa. I'm standing with the patients of Iowa. I am for medical liability reform—now. In all we do to improve health care, we'll make sure the medical decisions are 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's proposing a big-Government health care plan. You might remember one of the debates, when they asked him about his health care plan, he looked in the camera and 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 end up on a Government health care plan under his vision. And that is the wrong prescription for American families.

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. With the help of Senator Grassley and with the help of Congressman Nussle, I kept my word. We have modernized Medicare for our seniors. And beginning in 2006, all seniors will be able to get prescription drug coverage under Medicare.

When you're out rounding up the votes here in Iowa, I want you to remember what that Medicare did for Iowa's rural hospitals. You might remember that issue about how the rural hospitals in this State were not being treated fairly. Because of the law I signed, because of the hard work of this Senator and this Congressman, Iowa's hospitals are now being treated fairly under Medicare.

My opponent voted against that Medicare bill that helped Iowa's hospitals and provided prescription drug coverage for our seniors. He's also said that he's going to do something to protect Social Security, except what he forgot to tell you is that he voted eight times to raise taxes on Social Security benefits.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. He can run from that record, but he cannot hide.

I know they're trying to scare some seniors, this being election time, about Social Security. But I have kept the promise of Social Security for our seniors. I will always keep the promise of Social Security for our seniors. And the Social Security trust is in pretty good shape for baby boomers like me and some others out there I see. [*Laughter*]

But we need to worry about our children and our grandchildren. We need to worry about whether the Social Security system will be there for them when they retire. That's 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 better rate of return than the trust, an account they call their own and the Government cannot take away.

The fourth clear choice in this election is on the values that are so crucial to keeping our families strong. I stand for marriage and family, which are the foundation of our society. I stand for a culture of life in which every person matters and every being counts. I was proud to sign the bill that banned 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 was part of an extreme minority that voted against the Defense of Marriage Act and voted against the ban on partial-birth abortion.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. There is a mainstream in American politics, and John Kerry sits on the far left bank. He can run from that 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 this country shows weakness or uncertainty during these troubled times, the world will

drift toward tragedy. This isn't going to happen on my watch.

Our strategy is clear. We've strengthened protections for the homeland. We are reforming and strengthening our intelligence-gathering capabilities. We are transforming our military. There will be no draft. We'll keep the All-Volunteer Army an all-volunteer army. We are relentless. We are determined to protect this country. We're staying on the offensive. We will fight the terrorists abroad so we do not have to face them here at home.

We're succeeding. Afghanistan is an ally in the war on terror. Pakistan and Saudi Arabia are making raids and capturing terrorist leaders. Libya is dismantling its weapons programs. The army of a free Iraq is defending freedom. And Al Qaida no longer controls Afghanistan. We've shut down camps there, and we are systematically destroying the Al Qaida network across the world.

And we're able to do so because we have a great United States military, and I want to thank those who wear our Nation's uniform. I want to thank the loved ones of those who wear our Nation's uniform, and I want to thank the veterans who are here, who have set such a great example to those who wear our Nation's uniform. And I want to assure you, we will keep our commitments to make sure our troops have all they need to complete their missions.

That is why I went to the Congress in September of 2003, and asked for $87 billion in supplemental funding. It was a very important request. At first, my opponent said, "It would be irresponsible to vote against the funding for the troops." Then his poll numbers began to decline, 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. [*Laughter*] And as he entered, as he entered, he said this: "I actually did vote for the 87 billion, right before I voted against it." [*Laughter*] He's given several explanations on that vote since then, but I think the most revealing is when he said, "The whole thing is a complicated matter." [*Laughter*] My fellow Americans, there's nothing complicated about supporting our troops in combat.

It is important for our fellow citizens to know the facts. See, the problems with Senator Kerry's record on national security are deeper than election-year reversals. For 20 years, on the largest national security issues, he's been consistently wrong. During the cold war, Senator Kerry voted against critical weapons systems and opposed President Ronald Reagan's policy of peace through strength. History has shown that Senator Kerry was wrong and President Ronald Reagan was right.

When former President Bush assembled an international coalition to drive Saddam Hussein from Kuwait, Senator Kerry voted against the use of force to liberate Kuwait. History has shown that Senator Kerry was wrong and former President Bush was right.

Only a year after the first bombing of the World Trade Center, the Senator proposed massive cuts in America's intelligence, cuts so extreme that even his fellow Senator from Massachusetts, Ted Kennedy, would not support them. History has shown that Senator Kerry was wrong and—we have got to be fair—Senator Kennedy was right. [*Laughter*]

We have differences of opinion as to how to protect the American people. My opponent believes that America must submit to what he calls a "global test."

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. I'm not making that up. [*Laughter*] I heard him say it—[*laughter*]—in the debate. As far as I can tell, my opponent's "global test" means that America must get permission in order to defend ourselves. I will work with our allies, and I will strengthen our alliances, but I will never turn over America's national security decisions to leaders of other countries.

We have a difference of opinion as to better—how to better protect America. My opponent has said September the 11th didn't change him much at all. Well, it changed me. I'll never forget the day I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers, September the 14th, 2001. There were workers in hardhats there yelling at me at the top of their lungs, "Whatever it takes." I remember the man who came out of the rubble, and he grabbed me by the arm, and he looked me 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.

For the next 4 years, we'll use every asset at our disposal to protect the American people. The strongest asset we have is to spread freedom. Free nations do not breed resentments and export terror. Free nations become allies in the war on terror. Free nations will help us keep the peace that we want for our children and our grandchildren. I believe in the power of liberty to transform society.

Think about what's happened in a brief period of time in Afghanistan. It wasn't all that long ago that that country was the home base of Al Qaida, and young girls were not allowed to go to school because the Taliban were so backward and so dark in their vision. And if their mothers did not toe the line, they were taken in the public square and whipped and sometimes shot in a sports stadium. But because we acted to protect ourselves, because we upheld a doctrine that I laid out for the world that "If you harbor at terrorist, you're equally as guilty as the terrorist," millions of people went to the polls to vote for the President of Afghanistan. And the first voter was a 19-year-old woman. Think about that. Freedom is a powerful force to transform society.

Iraq is dangerous. It is dangerous because democracy is advancing. But think of how far that country has come from the days of torture chambers and mass graves and the brutal reign of a tyrant who hated America. They will be having Presidential elections in January. Freedom is on the march, and we're more secure for it. I believe everybody yearns to be free.

I believe that moms and dads around the world want to raise their children in free societies. I understand freedom is not America's gift to the world, but I do understand freedom is the Almighty God's gift to each man and woman in this world.

My fellow citizens, these are historic times, and a lot is at stake in this election. The future safety and prosperity are on the ballot. Ultimately, though, this election comes down to, who do you trust? Who do you trust to protect you?

Audience members. You!

The President. Who do you trust to spread prosperity?

Audience members. You!

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

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

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

If you believe this Nation must honor the commitment of Medicare and strengthen Social Security for generations to come, I ask you to 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, 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 are a minority citizen and you believe in free enterprise and good schools and the enduring values of family and faith, and 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 President of the United States 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 great State asking for the vote, I made this pledge, that if elected, I would uphold the honor and the dignity of the office. With your help, with your hard work, we will carry Iowa, and I will do so for next 4 years.

Thank you all for coming. God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2 p.m. at the Iowa State Fairgrounds. In his remarks, he referred to Iowa State Auditor David A. Vaudt; Chuck Gipp, majority leader, Iowa House of Representatives; Mayor Brad Zaun of Urbandale, IA; Stan Thompson, candidate for Congress in Iowa's Third Congressional District; David Roederer, Iowa State chairman, and Becky Beach, Iowa State steering designee, Bush-Cheney '04, Inc.; country music

entertainer John Stone; Cael Sanderson, 2004 Olympic gold medalist, freestyle wrestling; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Remarks in Sioux City, Iowa

November 1, 2004

The President. Thank you all. Thank you all for coming. We are honored to be in Sioux land. Thanks for coming. It's good to be in a part of the world where the cowboy hats outnumber the ties. Senator Grassley is right. Laura and I feel right at home with folks like you all, and thanks for coming out to lift our spirits. We're coming down the stretch. I'm here to ask for your vote, I'm here to ask for your help.

I'd like you to get your friends and neighbors to go to the polls tomorrow. Turn out our fellow Republicans, wise independents, and discerning Democrats. 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.

Perhaps the most important reason of all that I should be reelected is so that Laura is the First Lady for 4 more years. And there's nothing better than coming down the stretch in a Presidential campaign with two women I love, our daughters Barbara and Jenna.

I'm proud of my runningmate, Dick Cheney. I don't want to offend anybody here who is follically challenged, but I readily concede that Vice President Cheney does not have the waviest hair in the race. [*Laughter*] But I'm confident that you'll appreciate the fact I didn't pick him because of his hairdo. I picked him because of his judgment. I picked him because of his experience.

I'm proud to call Chuck Grassley friend. I know you're proud to call him United States Senator. He's a really fine Senator, and we have done a lot of work together. I—it's important that he remain the chairman of the Finance Committee, and one way to make sure he remains the chairman of the Finance Committee is for the people of South Dakota to elect John Thune to the United States Senate. I know John Thune, and there's no doubt in my mind that he will make a great United States Senator for the people of South Dakota. I want to thank Congressman Steve King from the great State of Iowa for being here.

I want to thank Sioux City Mayor Dave Ferris for being here today. I know the mayor didn't ask me for any advice, but I'm going to give him some. Fill the potholes. [*Laughter*] Mr. Mayor, thank you for your service. Mr. Mayor, I appreciate it.

I want to thank the speaker of the house, Christopher Rants. I want to thank all the State and local officials. I want to thank my friend Ricky Skaggs for being here, and his band. But most of all, I want to thank you all. Thanks for coming. Thanks for what you have done and thanks for what you're going to do as we come down the stretch, putting up the signs and making the phone calls and turning out the votes. No doubt in my mind, we'll carry Iowa and win a great victory in November.

I am excited about this election, and I am optimistic about the future of our country. I see a brighter day and a more hopeful America. One of my favorite sayings comes from 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." During the course of this campaign, my opponent has spent much of the time talking about the day that is gone. I'm talking about the day that's coming.

I see a great day coming for America. I see a day where prosperity reaches every corner of our country. 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, where we achieve the peace we want for our children and our grandchildren. And tomorrow, the people of America have a chance to bring that better day by voting for strong, confident, optimistic leadership by voting for Bush-Cheney.

The American President must lead with clarity and purpose. The role of the President is not to follow the path of the latest polls. The role of the President is to lead based upon principle, conviction, and conscience.

During the last 4 years, I've learned that whatever your strengths are, you are going