

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:05 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Kathleen Babineaux Blanco of Louisiana.

Remarks to the Community in Poplarville, Mississippi

September 5, 2005

[The President's remarks are joined in progress.]

—out of this despair is going to come a vibrant coast. It's—again, I understand if you're saying to yourself, "Well, it's hard for me to realize what George W. is saying, because I've seen the rubble and I know what has happened to my neighbors." But I'd like to come back down here in about 2 years and walk your streets and see how vital this part of the world is going to be.

I can't wait to join you in the joy of welcoming neighbors back into neighborhoods, and small businesses up and running, and cutting those ribbons that somebody is creating new jobs. That's what I think is going to happen.

I just want you to know that when I'm thinking about how we can help this part of the world, Mississippi is on my mind. Mississippi is a part of the future of this country, and part of that future is to help you get back up on your feet. And I'm confident that your United States Senator Trent Lott, if I don't say it loud enough, he will. [Laughter] He'll remind us. But I appreciate you taking time out of your day.

And by the way, I'm traveling with good company. My wife, Laura, is with me too.

Let me conclude by asking for God's blessings on you all and your families and friends, and let you know we're here for the long term. I understand. I understand the damage. I understand the devastation. I understand the destruction. I understand how long it's going to take. And we're with you. That's what I want you to know. God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:12 p.m. at Pearl River Community College. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks Following a Cabinet Meeting and an Exchange With Reporters

September 6, 2005

The President. Thank you all for coming. My message to the Cabinet this morning is this: This administration is not going to rest until every life can be saved, until families are reconnected, until this recovery is complete. Our goals—our immediate goals are these: We want to complete the search-and-recovery; we want to restore essential services; we want to drain the water in the affected areas and begin removing debris; we want to—and are assessing public health and safety matters.

I've asked the Vice President to go down to the affected region on Thursday. He will go down to assess our recovery efforts. He will help me determine whether or not we're meeting these goals. He'll work with Secretary Chertoff and others to make sure that we remove any obstacles, bureaucratic obstacles that may be preventing us from achieving our goals. In other words, bureaucracy is not going to stand in the way of getting the job done for the people.

I was briefed on plans to immediately help our folks, plans to reconnect families, plans to make sure health care is available. And Secretary Leavitt gave me a good brief—plans on housing, both immediate and long-term housing. Most importantly, I was briefed by members of my Cabinet about how we're going to make sure that people who are owed a Social Security check, get their Social Security check. At the center in Baton Rouge I went to yesterday, I remember clearly a person saying, "When am I going to get my Social Security check?" And it's important to note, people understand we have a strategy to make sure the benefits that are due are going to get to them.

Now, we understand people are scattered out across the country, but we have an obligation to make sure that whether a veteran's benefit or an unemployment benefit or a Social Security benefit gets to these people. And so we have a strategy in place, and we're going to implement that strategy—to find people who are in those shelters or in