

so I call upon Congress to be realistic and reasonable and raise that cap.

We'll educate our kids. That's the goal. Of course, we want every job that's ever generated in America filled by Americans, but that's not the reality today. In order for 3M to remain competitive, in order for this job base to remain strong, in order for us to be a leader in innovation, we got to be wise about letting kids come here who've got the skill sets needed to fill the jobs that help us remain the leader in the world.

And so what I'm telling you is, is that I'm an optimistic guy about America's future because I believe in our system, and I believe in the people. The Government's role is to make sure that we're a flexible economy. Its role is to make sure that we apply our resources properly to make sure we're an innovative economy. And certainly, a very vital role at all levels of government is to make sure our children have the skill sets necessary to fill the jobs that will inevitably come in this changing world.

My belief is that we should not fear the future; we should shape it. America has a vital role to play as a leader. And the policies I just outlined will help us remain the leader that I think most Americans want us to be.

I appreciate 3M's leadership. I appreciate you employing so many people. I appreciate you making this a good place for people to come to work. I could tell it just in the pride of the voices of the researchers I met. Thanks for making this an environment where innovation succeeds and people are able to realize their full human capacity.

God bless you all, and may God continue to bless our country.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:50 a.m. at 3M Corporate Headquarters. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Tim Pawlenty of Minnesota, and his wife, Mary; Lt. Gov. Carol Molnau of Minnesota; George W. Buckley, chairman, president, and chief executive officer, 3M; and President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva of Brazil. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Statement on Negotiation of a Free Trade Agreement With South Korea

February 2, 2006

The United States and the Republic of Korea have a strong alliance and are bound together by common values and a deep desire to expand freedom, peace, and prosperity throughout Asia and the world. Today we seek to deepen the ties between our nations by negotiating a comprehensive U.S.-Republic of Korea Free Trade Agreement.

A Free Trade Agreement with the Republic of Korea will provide important economic, political, and strategic benefits to both countries and build on America's engagement in Asia. The Republic of Korea is our seventh largest trading partner and seventh largest export market, and this Free Trade Agreement advances our commitment to opening markets and expanding opportunities for America's farmers, ranchers, workers, and businesses.

Remarks in a Discussion on American Competitiveness in Rio Rancho, New Mexico

February 3, 2006

The President. Thank you all. Thanks for the warm welcome. Thanks for the Mexican food last night, Pete. [*Laughter*] I hope you picked up the tab. [*Laughter*] Laura and I are thrilled to be here. This is going to be an interesting discussion. What you're watching—what you'll watch is a way to talk about how to put good policy in place, not only through my voice but through the voices of many who are living exactly the strategy that we want to implement for the rest of the country.

So, first of all, I want to welcome my wife, Laura. We don't get to travel that much—

The First Lady. Together.

The President. Together. We both were raised in west Texas and occasionally slipped across the border there to go to New Mexico. And every time we did, we were better for it. [*Laughter*] It's a great State.

Do you want to have a few words?