

not a forecaster, and evidently there are not many good forecasters around.

**Q.** What kind of growth rate, sir, do we need to see to get Washington out of the fiscal straitjacket that it is in now?

**The President.** Well, you know, it's interesting—the question was, what kind of growth rate we need. I would put it this way: We need a new attitude, that in order to earn the confidence of the American people, Congress must set good priorities. And I know the Senator and I share the priorities of national defense and education. Those are our priorities, and we ought to meet those priorities.

There is a new attitude in Washington, DC. It used to be, let's see how much we can spend. Now it's going to be, let's show the American taxpayer we can be smart with taxpayers' money. And Congress is just going to have to adjust their appetites and realize they can't spend their way out of town. And I'm willing to work with them on that.

But we've got ample money to meet our priorities. Interestingly enough, if you'll look at the CBO revenue forecast and OMB's revenue forecasts, we're off by \$1 billion for the year 2002. There's only \$1 billion difference.

There's a lot of money coming into the Treasury of the United States: \$2.135 trillion is what we project; \$2.134 trillion is what CBO projects. Now, surely we can fit our desires and our appetites within those numbers without affecting the Social Security checks that go to the American people.

And I understand how politics works up here. There's always that scare tactic, trying to tell the American people that the budget process is going to lead them to not get their Social Security check. That's just ridiculous. It's just not right.

### **Social Security Surplus**

**Q.** Can you say definitively that you will veto any appropriations bill that taps into the Social Security surplus?

**The President.** I can say definitively, every Social Security recipient is going to get their check. And that's what the American people need to understand. And I can also say definitively, we've got ample money to meet our needs.

And I can thirdly say, tax relief was the absolute right thing to do to make sure our economy grows. What we ought to be thinking about is, how do we grow the economy of the United States? And the Senator is going to have some ideas, and I'm interested in listening to them.

But we took action. This economy started slowing down 12 months ago. And this administration saw a problem, and we worked with our friends and allies on the Hill, and we addressed it. And one half of the stimulus package is out the door for this year, and then, of course, there will be another part of the stimulus package kicking in in January of next year.

**Q.** [Inaudible]—address that one question?

**The President.** I addressed your question.

**Q.** Will you veto, or will you not?

**Q.** You're not changing policy there, though, are you? Would you veto a bill that dips into Social Security?

**The President.** I answered your question.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:40 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Vicente Fox of Mexico. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

### **Statement on Senator Phil Gramm's Decision Not To Seek Reelection**

*September 4, 2001*

The Senate is losing a principled leader with the decision of Phil Gramm to retire after over two decades of distinguished service to the people of Texas and America. Senator Gramm is a man of common sense and uncommon courage who bases decisions on principle and always fights for what he believes is right.

Senator Gramm has been a consistent and committed advocate of tax relief for working Americans, beginning with his work on President Reagan's tax cut in 1981 as a Member of the House of Representatives and continuing with his tireless efforts to pass this year's monumental tax relief package.

As chairman and ranking member of the Senate Banking Committee, Senator Gramm

has been responsible for major reforms, including the landmark Gramm-Leach-Bliley Financial Services Modernization Act.

Senator Gramm is a close friend and valued adviser, and I look forward to working closely with him during the remainder of his term.

Laura and I extend our thanks to Phil, Wendy, and their children, Marshall and Jeff, for their family's commitment to public service and wish them all the best in the future.

### **Remarks at a Welcoming Ceremony for President Vicente Fox of Mexico**

*September 5, 2001*

Mr. President, Mrs. Fox, members of the Mexican delegation, distinguished guests: On behalf of the American people, it is my honor to welcome you to the United States.

Mexico is the first country I visited as President. Today it is my privilege to welcome President Fox for the first state visit of my administration. This is a recognition that the United States has no more important relationship in the world than the one we have with Mexico.

The starting point of a sound foreign policy is to build a stable and prosperous neighborhood with good relations amongst neighbors. Good neighbors work together and benefit from each other's successes.

Mr. President, you are a Mexican patriot with a great vision for a great people, a vision of justice and prosperity. Your election signaled a new birth of freedom for Mexico and set an example for the entire world. The United States is proud to stand beside you as your partner and as your friend.

Our nations have an historic opportunity to build an authentic partnership grounded in trust and in freedom. Since 1994, the Free Trade Agreement amongst our two countries and Canada has created millions of jobs and lifted millions of lives. NAFTA stands as a model for the benefits that are possible when trade is open and free. Today, our two nations are working together to extend the benefits of free trade throughout our hemisphere and throughout the world.

Our common interests, however, extend far beyond commerce. We value the cultural

contributions each nation makes to each other. We treasure the family ties that bind so many millions of our citizens. We understand that the border we share is a vibrant region that unites us.

We understand that our two nations must work together in a spirit of respect and common purpose to seize opportunities and tackle challenges on the issues that affect the lives of our citizens, including migration, the environment, drugs, crime, corruption, and education. And both our Governments share a great project, a fully democratic Western Hemisphere that grows in prosperity and trades in freedom.

Some have described the century that just passed as the American Century. Now, we look forward. We have a chance to build a century of the Americas, in which all our people, North and South, find the blessings of liberty. This goal is worthy of our two great nations.

A Mexican proverb tells us that "*Que tiene un buen vecino tiene un buen amigo.*" "He who has a good neighbor has a good friend." Today, both our countries are committed to being good neighbors and good friends. Friends deal in good faith and disagree with respect. Friends stick together in good times and in bad.

Most of all, friends bring out the best in each other. Today, Mexico and the United States are bringing out the best in each other in commerce, in culture, and in our shared commitment to democratic values. We're building a relationship that is unique in the world, a relationship of unprecedented closeness and cooperation. And this visit is a milestone on that journey.

President Fox, in February you welcomed me in your home in Guanajuato. Today Laura and I and the American people are honored to welcome you and Mrs. Fox to the *Casa Blanca nuestro pais*. [Laughter]

Thank you for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:12 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House, where President Fox was accorded a formal welcome with full military honors. In his remarks, he referred to Martha Sahagun de Fox, wife of President Fox. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of President Fox.