

The President. Here's what I believe: I believe this man should be confirmed. I know him—I've known him for a long time. But more importantly, people from Mississippi have known him. Democrats and Republicans know him. And he needs to be confirmed, Ron [Ron Fournier, Associated Press]. This is a good, good, honorable citizen, and they're playing politics with him up there.

Q. Did you support in 1950—

The President. Hold on—

Q. Mr. President, you describe this as playing politics. But many Democrats believe there are serious civil rights issues involved; among them that when he was a member of the State Senate, Mr. Pickering voted twice to support the Mississippi Sovereignty Commission, which was a segregationist spy agency recognized by the State.

The President. All the allegations have been laid out. He has been confirmed unanimously by the United States Senate in the past. This is a good, honorable man who should be approved by the United States Senate. Otherwise we wouldn't have a Democrat attorney general, a very popular former Governor, Al Gore's brother-in-law, all of whom have stood up and said, the man needs to be confirmed.

Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:52 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Mike Moore, State attorney general, and former Gov. William Winter of Mississippi; and Frank W. Hunger, former Assistant Attorney General, Civil Division, and brother-in-law of former Vice President Albert Gore, Jr. Judge Pickering's nomination to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the Fifth Circuit was submitted May 25, 2001.

Remarks to the United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce

March 6, 2002

Hector, thank you. One of the best decisions I made was, I asked you to come and be the SBA Director. And he's doing a fine job. One of the reasons I asked Hector is because he understands that the role of Government is not to create wealth but to create

an environment in which entrepreneurs from all walks of life have a chance to succeed.

I'll never forget going to the Hispanic Chamber banquet in California, and I was given the information about the number of Latino-owned small businesses in the State of California. It was a staggering number, and I can remember telling friends of mine in Texas and other States what a magnificent statistic it is, to be able to read about the thousands of businesses started by Latinos, which means the American Dream is spreading her wings in every single neighborhood, which is precisely the vision I have for America. I want everybody who wants to start their own business to feel comfortable in doing so and have an opportunity to succeed in America. And Hector understands that.

I want to thank you all to the *Casa Blanca tambien*. I want to thank Fidel Vargas for being here. He's on the Social Security Commission; I put two Latinos on the Social Security Commission. The Social Security Commission spent a lot of time analyzing the Social Security System and came back with a solid recommendation of allowing younger workers, if they so choose, to have their own money invested in a personal savings account.

Again, I can't think of anything better for the future of our country than for people to own a piece of the future of America. After all, it is not the Government's money we're talking about; it is the workers' money. And I want to thank the hard work of Fidel *y los otros* and the Commission of the Social Security.

I want to thank George Herrera, the president of the Chamber, *el Presidente*. [Laughter] I want to thank Liz as well for being here, *y tambien mi abogado*. Al has been my lawyer since when I was the Governor. He's been *mi abogado cuando estoy el presidente*, and his advice has always been sound. He's really a smart guy and a very close friend.

And finally, I want to recognize Miguel Estrada. Miguel. Miguel is a really bright attorney who I've named to the U.S.—nominated to the U.S. Court of Appeals, DC Circuit. They're playing too much politics in the United States Senate on our judge nominees. This man deserves a hearing, and he deserves

a vote. This is a good, solid jurist who ought to be on that bench. And I'm calling on the United States Senate to move quickly on Miguel's nomination so that we can have a good, young Latino, smart, brilliant man represent our Nation. Thank you for being here, Miguel.

I first want to tell you that this is an incredible time for our country, and I want to assure you all, as leaders in your communities and moms and dads and as concerned citizens, that our Nation is doing everything we can to protect America, that we've got a homeland security strategy that is working with first-responders and bioterrorism, that we want to modernize our borders. We want to make sure we do everything to protect the American people, and we are.

But you've also got to understand my view, and it's this: that the best way to protect the American people is to find a terrorist wherever they hide and bring them to justice. You know, when this first got started, I told the American people that we would be in for a long and difficult struggle. And after nearly 6 months, the American people still understand that—that in order to fight for freedom, in order to win for freedom, we've got to be determined and strong and not relent. History has called this great Nation into action, and so long as I'm the President, I will pursue the opportunity to protect freedom, any time, anywhere.

And as you know, I've laid out a doctrine that said if you harbor a terrorist, you're just as guilty as the terrorist, and that's what the Taliban found out. And I like to remind my fellow Americans, not only am I proud of how our United States military has performed, that our military were not conquerors, they were liberators. We freed women and children from the clutches of one of the most barbaric regimes in the history of mankind. I cannot tell you how proud I am of our troops.

And obviously, there is still work to be done in the first theater in the war against terror. This is a—I told people, and I've been saying this for a long time, and I will continue to say so—Afghanistan is still a dangerous place. There are still people in Afghanistan who either want to disrupt the Karzai interim Government, want to make sure—or try to

cause Afghanistan to revert back to being a sanctuary for murderers and terrorists, so they can do one thing, and that is attack us again. And so as you know, our military, combined with the military of our friends and allies, including the Afghans, are still on the hunt.

And we encountered a large group of Al Qaida-type terrorists, and we're bringing them to justice. There's a fierce battle waging, and it's—but we're winning that battle. I'm so sad we lose life. My heart breaks when I think about the moms and dads or wives or children of those who have lost their life. But we defend freedom, and we're fighting for freedom, and we must continue to fight for freedom. And so where we find these killers, we'll bring them to justice.

This Nation is determined; we're united; we are patient; and we're resolved to defend the values we hold dear to our hearts. And that's the way it's going to be, so long as I'm the President of the United States.

I also want you to know we've got a lot of work to do at home. I was really proud earlier this year to travel the country touting the fact that I signed a significant piece of education legislation. It was a landmark piece of legislation. I don't remember the exact words I said when I spoke to the Hispanic Chamber in California in one of my first speeches, but I can assure you I talked about education because it is a passion of mine, and it was a passion of not only mine but of both Republicans and Democrats. I got a good bill on my desk because both people—leaders in both parties decided that there's something more important than political party in America, and that's the education of our children.

This is a really good piece of legislation because, first and foremost, it sets high standards and high expectations for every child, *por todos*. It refuses to accept a system that quits on children early. As you know, in some neighborhoods in America, it's so much easier just to move the kids through, so much easier to say, "You know, a Latino child can't read very well because his or her parents may not speak English, so let's just move them through the system." Those days have got to end if we want the American Dream to extend to all neighborhoods.

And so I signed a bill that says we're going to measure for every child. We want to know if every child can read or write and add and subtract. And if not, we'll correct the problems early, before it's too late. Every child matters in America, and no child will be left behind.

We put significant resources into Title I programs. But for money, we want results. We want to—because, you see, I believe every child can learn. I don't accept excuses that say certain children can't learn. Every child in America can learn.

Now, we also have passed power out of Washington, DC. I don't believe all the wisdom in the world exists in Washington. As a matter of fact, I think by empowering teachers and principals and parents and school districts, we're more likely to achieve a common objective, which is high standards for every single child.

I also have unleashed a reading initiative that I truly believe is going to change America for the better. I like to say reading is the new civil right. If you can't read, it's hard to understand other subjects; it's hard to excel; it's hard to be part of this fantastic future we have. And so we've spent a billion dollars on reading.

And I want to assure you that the reading programs are going to be aimed toward teaching that which works, not that which sounds good. There is a science to reading. We've got some of the best scientists in the world now analyzing what works for all kids. And so rather than just spending money, we're going to make sure we spend money on what works. And you mark my words, as we stay focused and energized on this important subject, more and more children will read. And as more and more children will read, more and more children will realize the fantastic future in America. And so I'm proud of this piece of work we've done.

I also want to thank you all for supporting tax relief. We cut taxes at exactly the right time. In order to encourage the economy to grow, it was very wise to give—let people keep their own money. Some up here don't understand that. They're reading the wrong textbook. You hear talk about making sure the tax relief doesn't continue. It's like raising taxes. You don't do that when times are slow;

you encourage the vitality of the private sector by letting people keep their own money.

And not only that, I heard from many of you all about the unfairness of the death tax. And we've now put the death tax on its way to extinction. It's so important for people to be able to build up their own assets and their own businesses and have the capacity to pass that on to whoever they choose, a son or a daughter, without the Government getting in between the entrepreneur and the family member.

So we're making good progress. I think the economy is still—has still got problems. But we put the right fiscal policy in place. I still think we ought to do more. We ought to not only take care of those who have been unemployed because of 9/11; we ought to help them with their unemployment benefits as well as their health benefits. But I like to tell people Americans don't want an unemployment check; they want a permanent paycheck.

And there needs to be a stimulus bill. The House passed a good bill. Part of it was a small business incentive bill, recognizing that the small businesses create more new jobs in America than any other sector of our economy.

I want to continue to push for trade. I believe trade makes sense. Yesterday I made a tough decision on steel. But I will tell you, in order to be a free trade advocate, in order to be consistent on free trade, we better make sure we enforce the laws on our books. The two go hand in hand, free trade and fair trade. And so I obviously put a temporary plan in place to allow the steel industry to restructure. But I also want to remind you all I honored the agreement of NAFTA, so that Mexico and Canada are exempt.

And let me talk about Mexico right quick. My attitude toward Mexico is that I want Mexico to succeed. I want our neighbors to be successful. The best kind of neighborhood to live in is one where everybody is successful, and so our public policy ought to recognize Mexico as an incredibly important part of the American future. And therefore, I look forward to working with *el Presidente* Fox on how best to make sure our relationship is strong.

One thing we can do is doing what we're doing, which is encourage our economy to grow and to recover. That will help Mexico. But the other thing is to honor NAFTA, which I have done as the President. I did so in the steel decision yesterday. I will continue to do so because I believe NAFTA is not only good for Mexico; as importantly, it is good for American workers as well.

I believe—and I know we've made great progress. We've got a spirit of *amistad*. We've got a relationship that is open and strong. I told the Congress that I want to make sure that the Mexican citizen here is well respected, and we will. We respect people in our country. And one way to do that is to pass 245(i), which will allow for families to be reunited. If you believe in family values, if you understand the worth of family and the importance of family, let's get 245(i) out of the United States Congress and give me a chance to sign it.

I also want to talk about energy. Energy is incredibly vital for our economic vitality. And you've got to understand, as the President, somebody who's concerned about our national security as well, the fact that we import over 50 percent of our energy from around the world is an indication that we're not as strong from a national security perspective as we could be or should be. And so we need to have an energy plan, one that, on the one hand, encourages conservation and the modernization of our infrastructure, electricity infrastructure, but we've also got to explore for more energy. And we can do so in an environmentally friendly way, starting in Alaska, where there's a lot of oil and gas.

Those of you in California know full well that we had a little scare out there about a year—less than a year ago. And the State has responded by building more powerplants to increase the supply of energy, and that's good. Except what's interesting is, those plants are powered by natural gas. And the fundamental question is, where is that gas going to come from in the long term? We ought to be exploring for more natural gas, and a good place to start is Alaska.

I want you to know that Mexico imports gas from the United States. In other words—and it's a hemispheric issue, and we've got

to think long-term on behalf of the American citizens. And so I put out a comprehensive energy plan. It passed the House of Representatives; it needs to get out of the Senate and get to my desk, for the good of the national security of the country as well as for the good for jobs.

As you may know, I'm headed down to Mexico for my second visit since I've been the President, to Mexico. There's going to be a conference on development. I look forward to participating in that. I will proudly remind people that we are the most generous Nation in the world when it comes to helping developing nations.

I don't know if you know this—just for example, I was recently, as you know, in the Far East. And I reminded the people out there that we provide 300,000 tons of food to North Korean citizens. I'm not so sure the President or the head of North Korea gives us any credit for having provided the food, but we're a compassionate nation, and we should be proud of our record on helping people.

I then go to Peru, and I look forward to working with the Andean nations not only on issues of trade but on the cultivation of coca leaves for drugs. But I'll also remind them that so long as there's a demand for drugs, somebody's going to supply them. And it's a two-way street; that, one, we'll help reduce supply, but we in our Nation have an obligation to work with our young to reduce the demand. We must tell them clearly that drugs can ruin their life. We must educate the youth about the dangers of drug use. We must reduce demand if we expect our neighborhood to help clean up drugs.

And then I'm going to El Salvador to meet with the Central American nations. We've got the beginnings of a free trade pact with them. President Flores is going to be the host, a remarkable young leader. Like Peru and Mexico, these are strong democracies; they're continuing to reform their process. It's important for me to herald the fact that they are embracing democratic institutions which make their country so much stronger and so much more vibrant. So I'm really looking forward to spending time in the neighborhood.

I believe the best foreign policy begins in making sure your own neighborhood is free and democratic and peaceful. So I'm looking forward to spending time there as well.

You know, I like to remind people that I truly believe that out of this evil that was done on us on September the 11th will come some great good. I believe that. I believe if we stay the course and are strong and determined, and if the Congress passes the Defense budget I sent up there, which prioritizes national defense to make sure our military gets all the best equipment and best training possible, that we'll have the staying power to make the world more peaceful. And I believe it will be if we're strong, and we will be strong.

I also know that at home that people are taking an assessment of what's important in life. And I believe as a result of that, some positive things will happen. I think the culture can begin to change from one that has said in the past, if it feels good, go ahead and do it, to a culture that says, each of us are responsible for the decisions we make in life—the responsibility era, where moms and dads are responsible for loving their children.

The most important job any American will ever have, if you're fortunate enough to have a child, is to love your child. But it goes beyond that, where neighbors will love neighbors. I tell my fellow citizens that if you're interested in fighting—joining the war against terror, do some good. I mean, if you really want to stand squarely in the face of evil, help a neighbor in need, mentor a child, help a shut-in, you know, support your schools, give to charity, help to start a faith-based group that will help change people's hearts.

It's this—it's the collection of the kindness of America. It's the collection of all the acts of kindness that take place which not only define our Nation but will stand squarely in the face of evil. And it's happening, and I'm so proud of the way the American people have responded. Many in this room have as well, and I want to thank you for that.

I do believe that America understands there's a new responsibility, that this is a new era, that, on the one hand, we've got to be diligent and alert, and on the other hand,

we can make a difference in people's lives. After all, it was Flight 93 that set a new tone for America. People on an airline thought they were going on a business trip or thought they were going home. They heard the Nation's Capital was under attack. They got on their telephones. They told their wives they loved them. They said a prayer, and they sacrificed their life to save somebody else's.

To me, that's one of the most defining events of September 11th and on. It shows me what a great nation we have. It reminds me of the character of the American people. And that's why we're so unique, not because of our Government but because of our people.

Thank you for coming to Washington, and God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:30 p.m. in Presidential Hall in the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Elizabeth Lisboa-Farrow, chair, United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce; Counsel to the President Alberto R. Gonzales; Chairman Hamid Karzai of the Interim Authority of Afghanistan; General Secretary Kim Chong-il of North Korea; and President Francisco Flores Perez of El Salvador. The President also referred to Title I of the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 (Public Law No. 103-382), which amended Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (Public Law No. 89-10); and section 245(i) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, whose provisions expired April 30, 2001.

Statement on Proposed Legislation To Provide Protections Against Genetic Discrimination

March 6, 2002

I applaud Senators Snowe, Frist, and Jeffords for introducing their bill today to prohibit discrimination in health insurance and employment based solely on an individual's genetic predisposition to a future disease. The bill provides strong protections against genetic discrimination that are fair, reasonable, and consistent with existing laws. I look forward to working with Congress in a bipartisan manner to pass legislation to assure