

The President's Radio Address

April 3, 2003

Good morning. This week, we received a powerful confirmation that America's economy is growing stronger. The Department of Labor reported that America added 308,000 jobs in March, the highest monthly job growth number since the spring of 2000. And since August, we've added over three-quarters-of-a-million new jobs in America. The unemployment rate has fallen from 6.3 percent last June, to 5.7 percent last month. Over the last year, the unemployment rate has fallen in 45 of the 50 States. This is good news for American workers and good news for American families.

Inflation is low, and interest rates and mortgage rates are near historic lows. Manufacturing activity is high. Worker productivity is high, which means rising wages for American families. After-tax disposable income is up 10 percent since the end of 2000. And more Americans own their own home than at any time in history. Our economy's momentum is building. People are finding jobs, and the Nation's future is bright. America's families and workers have reason to be optimistic.

Tax relief put this economy on the path to growth. Since 2001, we've cut tax rates for everyone who pays income taxes. We've reduced the marriage penalty in our Tax Code. We raised the child credit to \$1,000 per child, and we have reduced taxes on dividends and capital gains. This tax relief is critical because all workers are keeping more of what they earn, and small businesses, which create most of the new jobs in America, have the resources to expand and hire.

As our economy adds more jobs, we will need to make sure all Americans are prepared to take advantage of new opportunity. We must help current workers and future workers learn the skills they need today and in the years to come.

Our economy has increasing demand for workers with advanced skills, such as teachers, health care workers, and environmental engineers, but too many Americans do not have these kinds of skills. So on Monday, I will travel to North Carolina to propose reforms of our Federal job training system, to

give our workers the help they need. Better job training will mean better jobs for American workers.

We must also make sure our schools are preparing the next generation of workers. We've already taken action to improve our elementary schools with the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act. This good law is raising standards and hopes for all our children. But we must also address the needs of older students in high schools and colleges.

On Tuesday, I will travel to Arkansas, where I will propose ways to help high school students who are struggling in math and reading. I'll propose reforms that will strengthen vocational programs at our high schools, and I will propose more incentives for college students to take math and science, so America can continue to lead the world economy.

Over the past 3 years, our economy has overcome a lot of challenges, from stock market declines to recession to terrorist attacks to corporate scandals to war. Yet, our economy is moving forward, and jobs are being created steadily and increasingly. I'm optimistic about the future because I'm confident in the American worker and the American entrepreneur. And with the right policies in Washington, there are even brighter days ahead for American workers and American families.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 9:20 a.m. on April 2 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on April 3. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 2 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks on Job Training and the National Economy in Charlotte, North Carolina

April 5, 2004

Thanks a lot for the warm welcome. I tried to visit last February. [Laughter] That's when your fine mayor and Police Chief Stephens told me that they didn't think the Presidential motorcade would be an ideal way to

plow the streets. [Laughter] The weather is beautiful today. Thanks for the warm welcome. It is great to be here in the great State of North Carolina in such a vibrant part of your State, the great city of Charlotte.

I'm here to talk about an important subject, which is our economy and how we make sure people are properly trained for the jobs of the 21st century. It's an important stop on my way to throwing out that first pitch for the St. Louis Cardinals. I've been loosening up over the weekend. [Laughter] My wing isn't what it used to be. But opening day of baseball season is a pretty special day for a guy like me who loves the game. I'm looking forward to getting there with the good folks of St. Louis.

But I'm particularly interested in coming here to Central Piedmont Community College, for this reason: This place of higher learning is doing a fabulous job of helping men and women seek new opportunities. This is such a hopeful campus. It's a place where the future is brighter for people who come here. And I want to thank you for the hospitality. I want to thank the faculty for their dedication. I want to thank the staff for putting up with me and the entourage.

I met with some business leaders earlier who were touting the virtues of Piedmont Community College's ability to use their ideas and incorporate their ideas into curriculum so that the training programs train people for jobs which actually exist. And that's an important part of making sure our economy, which is in the strongest in the world today, remains the strongest in the world.

I want to thank Tony. He is an innovative leader. He was right, Mother is still the boss of the family—[laughter]—except Laura is the boss of my family. [Laughter] By the way, I don't know if you know this, but Tony married a school librarian. Beth is a school librarian. We both married above ourselves. [Laughter]

I appreciate so very much Secretary of Labor Elaine Chao, who's traveling with me today. She's a very capable member of my Cabinet. Her job is to make sure that the training programs in place enable people at the local level to succeed. That's what I'm going to talk about a little bit today, about

how to make sure that the monies we're spending actually fulfill their mission.

I appreciate so very much two Members from the United States Congress who have joined us. First, Congressman Richard Burr from North Carolina is with us—Richard. Richard is a good friend of mine. I appreciate him coming today. I also appreciate the Congressman from this district. Congressman Robin Hayes is with us, as well. We came down on Air Force One; we spent more time talking about fishing and hunting than we did anything else. [Laughter] Those were the good old days.

I appreciate my friend Mayor Pat McCrory, who's with us, the mayor of this great city. He's done such a fine job for Charlotte. Thank you for coming, Mayor.

I thank all the students who are here. I hope after this speech you leave with a hopeful—a sense of hope about the future of this country. I mean, you have—you're entering into an economy that is just so fantastic and exciting. And I just wish you all the best as you realize your dreams.

I met Laura Spencer today when I landed at the airport there. Where are you, Laura? There she is. Laura, thanks for coming. Laura—you probably have never heard of her before, but she is soldier in the army of compassion. She's a person who volunteers here at Central Piedmont in the Adult Basic Literacy Education program. She's a person who takes time out of her life to try to help somebody else. The reason I herald people like Laura is because the true strength of the country lies in the hearts and souls of our citizens. We're strong because we're militarily strong, and I'll keep it that way. We're strong because we're wealthy. But we're really strong because we've got people from all walks of life who are willing to love a neighbor just like they'd like to be loved themselves. If you want to serve your community and your Nation, find somebody to help. Mentor a child. Care for somebody who's lonely. Feed the hungry. Find shelter for the homeless, and you'll be doing a vital service to the future of our country. Laura, I'm proud of you. Thank you for the example, and thank you for what you do.

America's economy is getting stronger. I am optimistic about our future, not only because of what I see today but because of what I know we have overcome. Let me just review right quick the economic history of the last couple of years. First, when I came to office, the country was headed into a recession. That means we were going backwards. That means it's hard to find work if you're somebody who is looking for work. It means it's hard to make payroll if you're a small-business owner. It is a negative period. Fortunately, we cut taxes, which made this recession the shallowest—one of the shallowest in American economic history.

As we were beginning to recover from the recession, the enemy hit us. September the 11th, 2001, marked a new day in American history. It was a sad day. It was a different—we entered a different period on that day. It's a day in which we realized oceans could no longer protect us from enemies which hate what we stand for. These coldblooded killers came and attacked us because they hate freedom. They can't stand the things that we love here in America. And it hurt us. It hurt us economically. Our economy lost nearly one million jobs in the 3 months after we were attacked.

It changed how we must view foreign policy. Before the attack, we could see a threat that might be emerging overseas, and we could pick and choose whether or not we wanted to deal with it or not. Now when we see threats, we recognize that those emerging threats must be dealt with in order to protect ourselves. It changed the attitude of those of us involved with the most solemn duty of protecting the American people. On that day, I vowed that I would bring to justice those who inflicted harm on America.

We're on the offensive. We will stay on the offensive until this scourge to civilization is removed. It is important to stay on the offensive, using all our resources to bring these people to justice, because Al Qaida is wounded but not broken. They're still dangerous. We take them seriously, because I'm convinced they'd still like to inflict harm on America or Americans.

It's also that day—right after that day, I announced a doctrine that said, "If you harbor a terrorist or feed a terrorist, you're just

as guilty as the terrorist." It's very important for the American President to speak clearly and mean what he says. I meant what I said. The Taliban found out that I mean what I say. Afghanistan is now free of one of the most barbaric regimes in the history of mankind, and Al Qaida no longer has a safe haven in Afghanistan.

America refused to be intimidated by killers. And so we began to recover, and then we had another challenge we had to overcome. We discovered that some of our corporate citizens behaved irresponsibly. They didn't tell the truth to their shareholders or their employees. That shook our confidence. I worked with Congress, Members of both parties, to pass tough new law. And the message is now clear: We will not tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America. It was a challenge we overcame.

As I mentioned, September the 11th, 2001, taught a lesson that said, when we see a threat, that the country must take threats seriously before they fully materialize. That was one of the changes that was necessary in order to protect this country. I looked at the information on Iraq and—the intelligence—and saw a threat. The United States Congress looked at the same intelligence, and it saw a threat. My predecessor and the previous Congress looked at the same intelligence and made regime change in Iraq the policy of our Government. In other words, it saw a threat as well. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence, and it saw a threat.

And so I had a choice to make after Saddam Hussein refused once again to disarm. That was, I went to the United Nations Security Council; I said, "We all see a threat. Let's do something about it, finally." And they agreed. They passed a resolution unanimously that said, "Disarm. Get rid of your weapons programs, or face serious consequences." That was the message that the members of the United Nations Security Council said, loud and clear.

Saddam Hussein once again defied the demands of the world. And so I had a choice: Do I take the word of a madman, do I trust a person who had used weapons of mass destruction on his own people, plus people in

the neighborhood, or do I take the steps necessary to defend the country? Given that choice, I will defend America every time. [Applause] Thank you.

We're still being challenged in Iraq, and the reason why is, a free Iraq will be a major defeat in the cause of terror. Terrorists can't stand freedom. They hate free societies. And yet, we know that free societies will be peaceful societies. We also believe that freedom is the Almighty's gift to every person in this world. It's one of the values that we hold dear. These killers don't have values. They want to shake our will, so we've got tough action in Iraq.

But we will stay the course. We will do what is right. We will make sure that a free Iraq emerges, not only for our own security but for the sake of free peoples everywhere. A free Iraq will change the Middle East. A free Iraq will make the world more peaceful. A free Iraq will make America more secure. We will not be shaken by thugs and terrorists.

The march to war was a difficult period for our economy. Marching to war is not positive. When you look on your TV screen and it says, "America is marching to war," and if you're somebody who is thinking about expanding your business, you may decide not to in the face of such a negative thought. And so the final hurdle we had to overcome in the last 3 years was the march to war. We're now marching to peace. But think what our economy has been through: a recession; an attack; corporate scandals; and a march to war. And yet we've overcome them all.

A lot of it has to do with the fact that this country is great and the people in this country are strong. The entrepreneurial spirit is vibrant. We've got the best workers in the world. Plus, I happen to think tax relief helped a lot. We based our decisions on this idea, that if a person has more money in their pocket—more of their own money in their pocket, by the way—they're likely to demand an additional good or a service. And when they demand an additional good or a service, somebody is likely to produce the good or a service. And when somebody produces the good or a service, somebody is more likely to keep their job and/or find a new job.

Also, a major part of the tax relief was some good policy that said, if you have a child, we want to help you raise your children. We've increased the child credit. We said that we want to encourage marriage in America, not discourage marriage, so we lessened the effects of the marriage penalty in the Tax Code.

We understood the important role of small business in hiring people. As a matter of fact, it's estimated that 70 percent of all new jobs are created by small businesses in America, so a key ingredient of the tax relief plan was to encourage small businesses. If you're a small business, you're likely to be a sole proprietorship or a Subchapter S corporation. Those are legal words for this: It says you pay tax at the individual income-tax rate. So when you reduce individual income taxes, you're really reducing taxes on small businesses as well. Plus, we created some incentives for investment. And it's paying off. It's paying off.

The entrepreneurial spirit is strong. One way to make sure to keep it strong is to say to our farmers and ranchers and small businesses that when you—after you built your business, you can leave it to whomever you want without the Federal Government getting in the way. We've got the death tax on the way to extinction. We need to make sure it's extinct forever, for the sake of—[applause].

And here's why I say it's working. We've had strong economic growth. This economy is growing. Inflation is low. Interest rates are low. Manufacturing activity is on the increase. Homeownership rates are the highest ever. Isn't that a wonderful thought? More people own their home than ever before. We have a minority homeownership gap in America, which we must close for the sake of the future. And now we've got more minorities, families, owning their own home than ever before. There's still a gap, but nevertheless, more people are owning their home. And we're working to close the gap. We want people owning something in this country. If you own your own home, own your own business, you've got a vital stake in the future of America.

And last week, we received confirmation that our economy is stronger. The Department of Labor reported the economy created 308,000 new jobs in March, more than three quarters of a million new jobs since August. That's good news. The economy is strong, and it's getting stronger. We've overcome the challenges from the past 3 years. Listen, most of those challenges would have cratered most economies—not America's economy, because the ingredients for growth are there. We've got visionary business leaders. We've got great, productive workers, and we've had good policy.

In North Carolina, you've seen progress of your own here. First of all, I fully understand that there are people who hurt here. Industries like the textiles and the furniture manufacturers are struggling, and that is an issue that we've got to deal with. But there are incredibly positive signs as well. The housing industry in this State is strong. More people own a home here in North Carolina than before. The health care industry is strong. Biotechnology are strong. The unemployment rate is down in this State. You've got to be optimistic about your future here, because North Carolina is a great place to do business, and you need to keep it that way.

We have a strategy to make sure the economy stays strong. Let me share some of the ingredients of that strategy with you. First, in order for us to keep jobs at home, in order for us to make sure the job market expands, we've got to make sure the legal system is fair. Frivolous and junk lawsuits make it hard to expand the job base. The United States Congress must pass class-action lawsuit reform, asbestos reform, for the sake of creating new jobs. Tort reform is necessary.

The rising cost of health care makes it difficult to keep jobs at home and to expand the job base. There is a battle in Washington, DC. There's a philosophical argument over how to deal with the cost of health care. Some say that the Federal Government ought to run the health care system. I strongly disagree. We need to implement policies that put consumers in charge of health care.

There's some practical ways to deal with the rising cost of health care. One, we must allow small businesses to pool risk, just like

big businesses get to do, through association health care plans. See, when you pool risk, it means you can buy health insurance for your employees at a lower cost than if you have to go into the market by yourself. Secondly, we passed what's called health savings accounts. These are methodologies for holding down the cost of health care and putting consumers back in charge of health care decisions. Third, we need medical liability reform at the Federal level. Junk lawsuits are running up the cost of medicine for people all across this State.

Good trade policy is necessary to keep jobs at home. There's a tendency to say, "Gosh, the jobs are going overseas; therefore, let's isolate ourselves from the world." I think that's a mistake. Many small businesses rely upon being able to export. Farmers all across this country need to export their product. We're good at things, see. We're good at growing things. We're good at building things. And therefore, rather than isolate ourselves, we ought to take a different policy. We ought to make sure the playing field is level for our exporters.

Presidents before me, from both political parties, had made the decision to make our markets relatively open to products from around the world. It happens to be good for our consumers. If you're a consumer, when you've got more choice, more competition for your dollar, it means prices are better for you and quality is better. But what's happened in the past is that we haven't demanded the same openness in other markets. So rather than closing our market, what I think we ought to be doing is going to other countries and saying, "Look, we're going to treat you this way; you need to treat us the same way. You need to have that playing field level for U.S. products."

And we're sending a message. There's ways to do so. We took China to the World Trade Organization and said, "They're not treating our semiconductor manufacturers fairly. They're giving unfair tax breaks." In other words, the playing field is not level. So we're spending a lot of time leveling the playing field through enforcement and trade policy.

Last year, our customs and border agents seized over \$200 million worth of smuggled

textiles that were headed to this country. It's another way to make sure the playing field is level, to stop people and pirates and thieves from bringing products in that destroy our markets here at home—bring them in illegally—that destroy our markets here at home. I refuse to allow us to become isolated. I think pessimistic people are willing to isolate the country. My attitude is, give us a chance to compete, and we can outcompete anybody in the world.

In order to make sure the economy is strong, we need spending discipline in Washington. I've laid out a plan to cut the deficit in half over 5 years. It's going to require the United States Congress not to overspend, and I look forward to working with them.

Finally, another thing we need to do is, we need an energy policy in this country. If you're a person trying to—if you're a manufacturer who relies upon energy, it's awfully hard to expand your job base if you're worried about whether or not the electricity system that you rely upon is modern. It's hard to expand your job base if you rely upon natural gas. It's hard to rely upon sound energy when we're dependent on foreign sources of energy. In order to make sure that the economy stays strong and people can find work here at home, the Congress needs to pass the energy plan we submitted, which will encourage more conservation, which will encourage our electricity system to become modernized, but—which will allow us to use clean coal technologies and to explore for natural gas so we're less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

What I'm telling you is, is that in order for this job base to be secure, in order for people to be able to keep work here at home, America must be a good place to do business. It must be a reasonable place to do business. It must be a place where the entrepreneurial spirit remains strong.

Here in Washington, you'll hear a different set of opinions about this. There are people who believe we need to increase spending and need to therefore increase taxes. I think raising taxes at this point would be a disaster for our economy. It's the absolute wrong thing to do as our economy is beginning to recover. I feel quite the contrary. As a matter of fact, all the tax relief we passed, some of

which is set to expire next year, other parts set to expire later on in the decade—all that tax relief needs to be permanent.

The other interesting thing about this history, besides the challenges we've overcome, is that we're in a period of historic economic change. This is a very interesting period of time. The economists call it a period of transition. I call it the beginnings of an innovation economy. It's an economy where technology is transforming just about every job. It's a very fascinating period of time.

For example, the average car today has 27 onboard computers. And in some cases, our cars have more raw computing power than that which was used to send the Apollo astronauts to the moon. Now, that's a pretty interesting thought, isn't it? Which means, if you're an automobile repair guy—*[laughter]*—you better know something about computers—*[laughter]*—or if you're an automobile manufacturer. In other words, this is the kind of sophisticated level that is necessary for our workers.

What I'm telling you just doesn't apply to the automobile manufacturing world. We've got people here—workers in this State and other States who hold jobs that didn't even exist a few decades ago: biological technicians; software engineers; desktop publishers; bioinformatic specialists. These are the jobs of the 21st century. And if you'd have said to somebody 30 years ago or 20 years ago, "Gosh, don't you look forward to being a bioinformatic specialist"—*[laughter]*—they'd have probably wondered what you were talking about.

Ninety percent of all scientific knowledge has been generated in the last 30 years. This is why we're in a period of such great innovation and possibility. That's how I view it, as a moment of fantastic possibility for America and our workforce.

And North Carolina is making advantage of this—taking advantage of the possibilities. Think about this: Six years ago, the largest export of this State was tobacco—just 6 years ago—and now it's computer equipment. That's an amazing transformation of an economy, isn't it? About 10 percent of the Americans who are employed in biotechnology work reside right here in North Carolina. That's a workforce that's beginning to change

quite dramatically. North Carolina has the world's greatest concentration of labs devoted to clinical testing of new medical technology and pharmaceuticals.

For an economy that was based upon tobacco and, to a certain extent, textiles, you're now on the leading edge of technological change. New industries are part of what's driving this economy forward across the country and certainly what's driving the North Carolina economy forward. And I congratulate you on that. It must be exciting to live in a State that is the center of innovation.

There's a reason why we're that way, by the way. The entrepreneurial spirit is really strong here. The role of Government is not to create wealth. The role of Government is to create an environment in which the entrepreneur is willing to take risk and be able to get a return on the risk taken. And we need to keep the entrepreneurial spirit alive and well across this country.

Secondly, our universities are a great place for people to learn. I mean, when you—there's a lot of—the main reason why people from around the world want to come here to study is because we're on the leading edge of change. We've got good, efficient capital markets. That means that when somebody has got a good idea, they've got good access to capital. And that's very important. We've got a flexible workforce, flexible work rules. These are all the ingredients as to why we stay on the leading edge of change.

But we still—we live in a competitive world, though. It's just—we should never take anything for granted. We shouldn't take our preeminence as the world's greatest economy for granted. We've constantly got to make sure the economic environment here is strong. We've got to make sure that we're innovative. I'm going to talk about an innovative way to make sure our workers get retrained here today. But I'm also going to talk about, in the next couple of weeks, economic growth and security through innovations on the information technology front, communications, and health care and energy. In other words, my job is to make sure the environment is such that we're constantly on the leading edge of change, so people can find good work.

Today and tomorrow I'm going to talk about the fact that we've got to prepare all Americans to succeed in this new economy. Today I'm going to talk about community colleges and the workforce training programs, and in Arkansas, I'm going to be talking about how to make sure our high school and Pell grant programs work properly.

Here's the challenge: You just heard me describe how your State has changed, and it's going to even change even faster as time goes on. And so, are we going to be able to make these opportunities available for your workers? That's the challenge we face. Technology is changing; can the workforce change with it? And that's the challenge.

High-tech companies created twice as many jobs as those in any other industries. By the way, it required a productive worker to work in those jobs. A productive worker also made two times the amount of money they were making before. In other words, when you're more productive, you're going to make more. Are we going to be able to use our education systems to be able to match a person's desire to work with the skills necessary to become employable? That's the challenge we face.

We're not training enough people to fill the jobs of the 21st century. There is a skills gap. And if we don't adjust quickly and if we don't do smart things with the taxpayers' money, if we don't properly use our community colleges, for example, we're going to have a shortage of skilled workers in the decades to come. And if you've got a shortage of skilled workers in the decades to come, guess what's going to happen to America—we're no longer going to be on the leading edge of change. It's going to be hard for our children and grandchildren to find the kind of jobs that will be being generated in the world's economy.

And so that's what I want to talk to you about today. It requires, first of all, people's willingness to adapt. We've got to get it right early, by the way, in order to make sure we've got a workforce that's capable of filling the 21st century jobs. That's why I'm such a big believer in what we call the No Child Left Behind Act. It was an act that said, we'll spend more Federal money, particularly on

Title I students. Those are the poorest of students. But for the first time, we're going to ask whether or not the school systems are teaching children to read and write and add and subtract. It's really the basis of No Child Left Behind. It says, "Gosh, if you're going to get Federal money, it seems reasonable to ask the question whether or not there's results."

And the reason you ask that—I ask that question, at least, is because I believe every child can learn. I refuse to condemn inner-city black kids to failed school systems. I refuse to—[*applause*]. I don't like it when I hear stories of first-generation American families—the children of first-generation American families being just shuffled through because English isn't the primary language of their family. That's not right. I believe every child can learn. And so what we have said is, "In return for Federal money, we expect you, the State, to show us, to measure."

And by the way, there's money available for early childhood intervention programs. Like in third grade, if a child can't pass a simple reading comprehensive exam, that child needs help early, before it's too late. The best way to make sure we're competitive, by the way, one of the best ways to make sure we're competitive in the 21st century, is to get it right at the public school system. And the No Child Left Behind Act challenges the soft bigotry of low expectations.

As we focus on high schools, which I'll talk about tomorrow, and the Pell grant system for higher education, we've always got to remember that there are a lot of folks who are long past school age who need help and are interested. Government can't make somebody say, "I'm going to go get retrained." That's—impossible to do that. We can help people who want to be retrained.

I met Sharon Segee today. She is with us. She is—four years ago, she was a medical lab assistant at the local hospital. She got to the point where, as she put it, she was deadlocked. In other words, she wasn't satisfied with what was happening in her life. She put it this way; she said "I was making about as much as I was going to make, and I was doing all I was going to do." That's the definition of "deadlocked." She enrolled in a nursing

program here at Central Piedmont. She enrolled in the program. In other words, she said, "I'm going to do something about it. I'm tired of being deadlocked. I want to raise my standards. I want to raise my sights."

She went here with the help of the local hospital. I want to thank the local hospital for providing funds to help somebody who is desirous of gaining new skills to do so. She's now making more salary. She loves her career. She's thinking about getting a bachelor's degree. In other words, Sharon has made the decision that she wants to take advantage of what Piedmont has to offer so that she becomes a more productive worker. Remember, if you're more productive, you're going to make more money.

Sharon, I don't know where you are, but I want to—there you are. Thank you very much for coming. I appreciate it.

See, it's important for people listening here to realize that there's—that what Sharon has done is available for you as well; that if you want to improve yourself, there's a great opportunity to do so throughout the State of North Carolina. I know. I went to Forsythe Community College in Forsythe County—[*applause*]—there you go. It's good to see you all again. [*Laughter*] This is a part of the world that had been hit by the changing economy. Yet because the health care industry was so vibrant in that part of your State, there was a collaborative effort between the hospital and the community college, and now people that were once in the textile industry are now in the health care industry, making more money, I want you to know.

I met a woman named Stacey Leedom in Mesa Community College in Arizona. In other words, I've been going to community colleges all over the country. They're exciting places to visit, by the way, because there's so much innovation going on at the community college level. I met Stacey. She was a graphic artist for 15 years. And she decided to take technology classes at the Mesa Community College. She got a little help. There's Federal money, by the way, available; there's scholarship help. And now, after having gone to the technology course at the community college, she made more in her first year in her new job than she made in her 15th year

as a graphic design artist. When you become a more productive citizen, you're going to make more money for your family.

A more productive society is one that is more competitive. A productive society is one that allows us to stay on the leading edge of change. And a productive society is one that lifts the living standards of all Americans. And a good way to get more productive is to make sure worker training programs are vibrant and viable and available. That's what we're talking about.

The main worker training program is called the Workforce Investment Act. That's the primary—[*applause*]. Yes, there you go. [*Laughter*] The program spends about \$4 billion a year in grants on States—to States. Money from those grants go to about 3,500 State and local one-stop centers around the country. Perhaps some of you who have been looking for work or help have gone to a one-stop center. They're smart things to do. See, those one-stop centers have been providing employment services, advice, job search assistance, resume writing. There's—people walk in and say, "Look, I need some help." They're kind of a decentralized approach to providing help for people, and that's very smart.

They also give workers individual training accounts, or what I call innovation training accounts, they can use to get job training. In other words, you take the money in your innovation training account, and you can go to a community college, just like Piedmont right here, or at a business or at a union hall or at other locales.

But last year, only about 206,000 workers obtained job training through this program. In other words, we've got a great Federal program where we spend \$4 billion—and admittedly, some of it goes to other services, but only 200,000 workers got trained. It says to me, we've got to do a better job of training more people with the money we spend. We've got to make the system work better.

One of my jobs as the President is to analyze programs and, if they're not doing the job they're supposed to do, is to redesign them so they do do the job they're supposed to do, so that we properly spend taxpayers' money. So today I want to talk about a plan to reform the job training programs, to the

WIA programs, to the Workforce Investment Act. And I believe we can double the number of workers who are going through the job training programs.

And let me tell you how we're going to do it. First, the Federal job training programs need to be—the money needs to be sent directly to the Governors. We don't want to Federalize the program, quite the opposite. We want the Governors—and let the Governors distribute the money to programs which actually are training people for jobs which exist.

Now, that sounds simple, but that's not the way it's working today, because the Federal Government, as a result of the laws passed by Congress, micromanaged the system. There's a series of programs, all of which have their own specifications—in other words, they tell the Governors and the States where to spend the money, what to spend the money on, the kind of system the Governors ought to set up—and as a result of micromanagement, miss opportunities for jobs which exist in the communities in which people are looking for work.

In other words, we need to make the system more flexible, more available to workers, and less dependent on foreign—on Federal rules, in order to make sure that the money gets to the people who need it most. So, step one is to change the system on how—the relationship between the Federal Government and the State government.

Two, we need to make sure that the States reduce the overhead costs connected with these job training programs. There's now a 15-percent cap on how much Federal job training money that States can spend on administrative overhead. That's positive. It seems to make sense. If you're going to spend money, a certain amount ought to go to setting the program up, and the rest of it goes to the people. But unfortunately, there's loopholes in the program. Too much Federal money is spent on things that have little to do with job training, such as management studies or travel. We want the money going to the people. That's what we want. It's okay to spend money to set the system up; we want as much money going to the people. We need to close the loophole. One of the reforms is to say, "The 15-percent cap is a

stringent cap. We mean what we say when we say we're going to limit the amount of money that can go to overhead." We believe that by making sure the cap is a strong cap on overhead money, we will save about \$300 million, which means an extra \$100,000—100,000 workers a year get trained.

Third, we need to require clear results of Federal tax dollars that go to training workers. In other words, if we're going to spend \$4 billion a year, we want to make sure we get results for the money. It's amazing what happens when you start to ask for results. The problem is, there are now 17 different goals involved in the training programs. If you've got 17 goals, there really are no goals, right? I mean, if you've got so many goals, it's really hard to measure. And so what we need to do is to make sure that people are judged—people who are spending your money are judged on what we care about. Job centers will report how many people they help find work. That makes sense as one of the goals. In other words, we've got money coming your way; tell us how many people have actually found a job, how much they earn on their jobs, and how long they stay on those jobs. That's what ought to be measured, and nothing else. And we ought to say, "Look, this is what the programs exist for, and these are the three goals we'll measure you on." And if the State doesn't make progress, then it only makes sense to take some of the money that is being sent to the States and send it directly to the job trainers, so that we actually do meet what we expect to have happen, and that is people being trained for the jobs which exist.

And finally, look, I recognize—there is a balance between the State role—the States have got a vital role to play—and between places like Piedmont. Piedmont does a fabulous job, and so do a lot of other community colleges, because their curriculum is flexible. They're just not stuck. They don't—you know, like some places get stuck, and they don't change. The community college system has the capability of change. One reason they change is because they listen to the job providers.

One of the things, if you talk to a leader in the community college, a good community college, they'll say, "I call in a group of busi-

ness leaders who are looking for workers and say, 'What skills do you need? If you're interested in hiring people, what can we do to help you? What kind of people are you looking for?'" And then they change the curriculum accordingly. I met with a small-business owner earlier. I think he said 75 people had gone through the Piedmont—through the campus. And he helped pay for the programs for worker training.

In other words, the community college system is a flexible program. It's adaptable to meet the needs of the local communities. And so the fourth proposal is to provide Federal job training money directly to community colleges. And that was part of the Jobs for the 21st Century Initiative I outlined. It's \$250 million additional to go to community colleges directly, to help create partnerships with job providers and the community college systems around the country. We believe this will help train up to an additional 100,000 people a year.

In other words, these are four reforms that will help meet the needs of this country as we go into the 21st century. This economy is changing. First of all, it's growing, and as it grows, it changes. And so what we need to do is adapt our systems and the programs we've got in place to help meet the needs of our people. It's a legitimate role of the Federal Government, is to help people who want to help themselves.

We've got people from all walks of life who say, "Gosh, I'm stuck. I see the new jobs being created, but I don't have the skills necessary. This is an innovative world we live in, but I'm not—I don't have the skills necessary to be an innovative worker. And I want to improve myself. Where do I go? Where can I find help?" Well, taxpayers' money is helping people do that. We just want to make sure the taxpayers' money we're spending is actually working to the maximum extent possible.

I think we have an obligation to help people help themselves. I love the stories of people who are willing to go back to the community college because they feel frustrated. They realize their job—they could be doing

better. There's nothing better than an innovative person seizing the moment. And a vibrant society is one that makes the community college system accessible to those who have made the determination to improve their lot and improve their lives.

When people decide to become a better worker, they're helping our economy. As more workers become retrained for the jobs of the 21st century, it will help us stay on the leading edge of technological change in the world. As our workforce gets retrained—listen, we've got great workers; they just need the skills necessary to be able to compete. And as this labor force becomes more educated and more skilled for the jobs of the 21st century, we'll stay the leading country in the world. And that's what we want. We want to be the leader in the world, because when you're in the leader of the world, the standard of living for your people rises. We want the American Dream to shine brightly.

Listen, we've been through a lot in this country. We've been through an amazing period of time, and we're strong and getting stronger. You know why? Because the American people are great. The American people are strong, determined, resolved. They are willing to rise to any challenge. And it is my honor to lead a country full of such wonderful people.

May God bless you all. May God bless our country.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:15 a.m. at Central Piedmont Community College-Central Campus. In his remarks, he referred to Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Chief Darrel Stephens; and P. Anthony Zeiss, president, Central Piedmont Community College, and his wife, Beth. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks to the Travel Pool and an Exchange With Reporters in Charlotte

April 5, 2004

Visit With Family of U.S. Soldier Killed in Iraq

The President. I just met with Specialist Chris Hill's family from North Carolina. You know, I told the family how much we appre-

ciated his sacrifice—he was killed in Iraq—and assured him that we would stay the course, that a free Iraq was very important for peace in the world, long-term peace, and that we're being challenged in Iraq because there are people there that hate freedom. But the family was pleased to hear that we—its son would not have died in vain. And that's an important message that I wanted to share with you today.

Let me ask you a couple of questions. Who is the AP person?

Q. I am.

The President. You are?

Q. Sir, in regard to—

The President. Who are you talking to?

Deadline for Transfer of Iraqi Sovereignty/Situation in Iraq

Q. Mr. President, in regard to the June 30th deadline, is there a chance that that would be moved back?

The President. No, the intention is to make sure the deadline remains the same. I believe we can transfer authority by June 30th. We're working toward that day. We're obviously constantly in touch with Jerry Bremer on the transfer of sovereignty. The United Nations is over there now. The United Nations representative is there now to work on the—on a—on to whom we transfer sovereignty. I mean, in other words, it's one thing to decide to transfer. We're now in the process of deciding what the entity will look like to whom we will transfer sovereignty. But no, the date remains firm.

Stretch [Richard Keil, Bloomberg News].

Q. Mr. President, are you concerned at all that events like we've seen over the last week in Iraq are going to make it tougher to meet that deadline or increase pressure from the U.N. or anyone else?

The President. Well, I think there's—my judgment is, is that the closer we come to the deadline, the more likely it is people will challenge our will. In other words, it provides a convenient excuse to attack. In this particular incident, with Sadr, this is one person who is deciding that rather than allow democracy to flourish, he's going to exercise force. And we just can't let it stand. As I understand, the CPA today announced a warrant for his arrest. This is one person—this