

Week Ending Friday, July 23, 2004

Remarks in Beckley, West Virginia

July 16, 2004

The President. Thank you all.

Audience members. Four more years!
Four more years! Four more years!

The President. Thank you all very much. Thank you all. What an honor to be here. Thanks for inviting me. And thanks for coming. Turns out I'm the first sitting President to visit the great town of Beckley, West Virginia. I don't know what the other Presidents were thinking—this is a beautiful place.

And I'm so glad to be here. Listen, I'm here to ask for your vote. I've got more to do for our great country, and I'm here to ask for your help. What you need to do is to call your friends and neighbors up and make sure they're registered to vote. Tell them they have a duty here in this great country to participate in democracy. And when you get them headed to the polls, you might just tell them that George Bush and Dick Cheney are ready to lead this country for 4 more years. With your help, I was proud to carry the great State of West Virginia in 2000, and with your help, we'll carry it in 2004.

My only regret is that Laura is not with me today.

Audience members. Aw-w-w!

The President. That's generally the reaction. [Laughter] Kind of, why don't you stay home and let her carry the load. [Laughter] The reason why is she's a great First Lady and a fabulous woman. I'm going to give you a lot of reasons why you need to put me back in office for 4 more years, but perhaps the most important one of all is so that Laura will be the First Lady for 4 more years.

She's not here, but one of our daughters is with us. Barbara is traveling with me today, and I'm so proud of Barbara. Thanks for coming, darling.

I appreciate very much Congresswoman Shelley Moore Capito. I appreciate her serv-

ice. I appreciate her friendship. She's a breath of fresh air in the United States Congress.

I want to thank all the State and local officials who are here. I appreciate you coming. I appreciate the great hospitality.

I want to thank Susan Landis. I met Susan at the airport today. The reason I did is because she is an active volunteer in your community. You know, the strength of America is in our hearts and souls, and Susan represents the thousands in this part of the world who take time out of their lives to volunteer. She volunteers for Make It Shine beautification project. She works in food pantries. She represents the best of the country. Thanks for coming, Susan.

And when you're taking people to the polls, or when you're trying to convince them to vote for us, remind them of this: The last 3½ years have brought serious challenges, and we have given serious answers.

Remind them that we came to office with a stock market in decline and an economy headed into a recession. But we acted. We delivered historic tax relief. And over the past 3 years, America has the fastest growing economy of any major industrialized nation.

We saw war and grief arrive on a quiet September morning, so we pursued the terrorist enemy across the world. We have captured or killed many key leaders of the Al Qaida network. And we will stay on the hunt until justice is served and America is safe.

Audience members. U.S.A.! U.S.A.! U.S.A.!

The President. We confronted the dangers of state-sponsored terror and the spread of weapons of mass destruction, so we acted against two of the most violent and dangerous regimes on earth. We liberated over 50 million people. Once again, America is proud to lead the armies of liberation.

I'm running with a really good man, Dick Cheney. When we came to office, the military was underfunded and underappreciated,

so we gave our Armed Forces the resource and respect they deserve. And today, no one can question the skill and the strength and the spirit of the United States military.

These accomplishments are important to the security and prosperity of America. You see, it is the President's job to confront problems, not to pass them on to future Presidents and future generations. The President has to make hard decisions and keep his commitments. And with your help, that is how I will continue to lead our great Nation for 4 more years.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. I'm ready for the race. I'm looking forward to the contest. I like campaigning. I like to get out with the people. And this is going to be a tough race. That's why I'm here to ask for your help.

I'm running against an experienced United States Senator.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. He's been in Washington a long, long time—

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. —long enough to take both sides of just about every issue. He voted for the PATRIOT Act. He voted for NAFTA. He voted for No Child Left Behind Act, and he voted for the use of force in Iraq. Now, he opposes the PATRIOT Act, NAFTA, and the No Child Left Behind Act and the liberation of Iraq. If you disagree with my opponent on almost any issue, you may just have caught him on the wrong day.

He recently even tried to claim he was the candidate with conservative values.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. I know it—I know it. That's what he said, though. [Laughter] It's kind of hard to square with the previous statement when he said, "I'm liberal and proud of it." [Laughter]

Now he's got him a runningmate. Senator Kerry is rated the most liberal Member of the United States Senate. And he chose a fellow lawyer who is the fourth most liberal Member of the United States Senate.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Back in Massachusetts, that's what they call balancing the ticket. [Laughter]

Great events will turn on this election. The person who sits in the Oval Office will set the course of the war on terror and the direction of our economy. I'm here asking for your vote because I have a vision and a strategy to win the war on terror and to extend the peace and freedom throughout the world. I'm here asking for your vote because I have a plan to continue to create jobs and opportunity for every single American. I'm here asking for your vote because I have a plan and a strategy to continue to rally the compassionate spirit of this country, so every American has a chance to realize the great promise of America. We are going to win, and after 4 more years, America will be safer, stronger, and better.

A big issue for every family in America is the Federal tax burden. By providing the largest tax relief since Ronald Reagan was the President, we have left more money in the hands that earned it. By spending and investing and helping create new jobs, the American people have used their money far better than the Federal Government could have.

This economy of ours is strong, and it's growing stronger. Since last summer, our economy has been growing at its fastest rate in nearly 20 years. In less than a year's time, we've added 1.5 million new jobs. Here in the great State of West Virginia, the unemployment rate is 5.2 percent. That's down more than a full point since last summer. The manufacturing sector of our country is growing stronger. The homeownership rate is at an alltime high. Business investment is growing. Consumer confidence is at a 2-year high. Personal incomes are on the rise. The tax relief we passed is working.

My opponents look at all this progress and somehow conclude that the sky is falling. [Laughter] Whether their message is delivered with a frown or a smile, it's the same old pessimism. And to cheer us up, they propose higher taxes, more Federal spending, and economic isolationism.

The surest way to end economic growth and put Americans out of work is to adopt their plan. This Nation is on the path of progress and opportunity, and we are not going back.

To sustain this growth, we need to keep taxes low. Higher taxes right now would undermine growth and destroy jobs, just as the economy is getting stronger.

To help grow the American economy and create more jobs for West Virginia workers and American workers, I have a better idea: The Congress needs to make the tax relief permanent. The Congress does not need to raise taxes on the working people of America.

We've got money to spend in Washington. We just need to set priorities. We need spending discipline in the Nation's Capital, and that starts with understanding whose money we spend. We don't spend the Government's money; we spend the people's money.

I've got a plan to make sure this economy not only grows this year but in the years to come. We've got to stop these frivolous lawsuits that make it hard for small-business owners to expand. You cannot be pro-small-business and pro-trial-lawyer at the same time. You have to choose. My opponent has made his choice, and he put him on the ticket. [*Laughter*] I made my choice: I will continue to push Congress to end the junk and frivolous lawsuits that hurt the small-business owners of America.

In order to make sure we've got jobs not only this year but in the years to come, we've got to make sure Americans have better health care and more affordable health care. That means association health plans and giving Americans more control over their health care through tax-free health savings accounts. And for the sake of reasonable costs in health care and for the sake—for the availability of health care, we need to have medical liability reform in Washington, DC.

To make sure we grow our economy, we must reject economic isolationism. We must be a confident nation. See, here's what I believe: If there is a level playing field, American workers, American entrepreneurs, American farmers and ranchers can compete with anybody, anytime, anywhere.

And in order to make sure this economy is strong today and strong tomorrow so the people of West Virginia can continue to find jobs, we need a sound energy policy. I submitted an energy plan to the United States Congress. It's stuck. Here in West Virginia—

you know this—a vital part of an energy strategy is coal. When I campaigned in this State in 2000, I said that we would have coal as an integral part of our national energy strategy and that I would push clean coal technology. I have met that promise. And I will continue to support clean coal technology so powerplants can burn West Virginia coal and America can be less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

There is a difference of opinion in this campaign. My opponent calls coal a dirty energy source.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Last year, he supported a bill that the Department of Energy estimates would cost up to 50,000 jobs in the coal industry over the next two decades. He voted against Senator Byrd's legislation to save the mining industry in this State. On the campaign trail here in Beckley, Senator Kerry said he plans to declare energy independence for our country, but you cannot be independent without West Virginia coal.

America's future also depends on our willingness to lead in the world. The momentum of freedom in our time is strong, but we still face serious dangers. Al Qaida is wounded but not broken. Terrorists continue to attack in Afghanistan and in Iraq. Regimes in North Korea and Iran are challenging the peace. If America shows weakness or uncertainty in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This will not happen on my watch.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. After the attacks of September the 11th, 2001, this Nation resolved, and I resolved, to fight the terrorists where they dwell. We resolved to hold regimes that hide and sponsor terrorists to account. Afghanistan was a terrorist state. It was a training camp for Al Qaida killers. Because we acted, Afghanistan is a rising democracy. Because we acted, Afghanistan is an ally in the war on terror. Because we acted, many young girls now go to the school for the first time in Afghanistan.

Iraq, only last year, was controlled by a dictator who threatened the civilized world and had used weapons of mass destruction

against his own people. For decades, he tortured and tortured the people of Iraq. Because we acted, Iraq is a free and sovereign nation. Because we acted, its dictator now sits in a prison cell and will receive the justice he denied so many for so long.

September the 11th, 2001, taught a lesson I will never forget, and it is the lesson America must never forget. America must confront threats before they fully materialize. Remembering the past behavior of Saddam Hussein, remembering the fact that he hated America, my administration looked at the intelligence, and we saw a threat. Members of the United States Congress from both political parties looked at the intelligence, and they saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence, and it saw a threat. I want you to remember that the previous administration and Congress looked at the intelligence and made regime change in Iraq the policy of our country.

In 2002, I went to the United Nations. The U.N. Security Council demanded a full accounting of Saddam Hussein's weapons programs. As he had for over a decade, Saddam Hussein refused to comply. He deceived the inspectors. He would not allow for the inspectors to find out what he had. So I had a choice to make: Either ignore the warnings of September—lessons of September the 11th and take the word of a madman, or take action to defend the United States. Given that choice, I will defend America.

Although we have not found the stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction, I believe we were right to go into Iraq, and America is safer today because we did. We removed a declared enemy of America who had the capability of producing weapons of mass destruction and could have passed that capability to terrorists bent on acquiring them. In the world after September the 11th, that was a risk we could not afford to take.

We still have an important and difficult work to do. Our immediate tasks in Iraq and Afghanistan and elsewhere is to capture or kill the terrorists and foreign fighters. You see, you cannot talk sense to the terrorists. You can't negotiate with terrorists. You cannot sit back and hope for the best. We will engage the enemies in Afghanistan and Iraq

and around the world so we do not have to face them here at home.

In a country as big as ours, there is no such thing as perfect security. And the threats to our homeland are real. We know the terrorists want to strike us. They want to spread fear and disrupt our way of life. We reorganized our Government to better protect our homeland. You just need to know, there's a lot of really good people at the Federal level, at the State level, at the local level working hard on your behalf. We're doing everything we possibly can to run down intelligence leads and to disrupt a potential threat to the United States of America. And I know you join me in thanking the police and firefighters and emergency teams of Beckley, West Virginia, for their hard work.

For the next 4 years, we will defend our homeland; we will defeat the terrorists abroad. Yet in the long run, our safety requires something more. We must work to change the conditions that give rise to terror in the Middle East, the poverty and the hopelessness and the resentment that terrorists can exploit. Life in that region will be far more hopeful and peaceful when men and women can choose their own leaders, when the people decide their own future.

By serving the ideal of liberty, we're bringing hope to others, and that makes America more secure. By serving the ideal of liberty, we serve the deepest ideals of our country. You see, freedom is not America's gift to the world; freedom is the Almighty God's gift to every man and woman in this world.

America is leading the world. We're leading the world, and the world is changing for the better. Three years ago, Afghanistan was home to Al Qaida. Now, the terror camps are closed, democracy is rising, and the American people are safer. Three years ago, Pakistan was a safe transit point for terrorists on missions of murder. Now, the Pakistan Government is committed to bringing Al Qaida to justice, and the American people are safer. Three years ago, Saudi Arabia—in Saudi Arabia, terrorists were moving with little opposition. Now, the Saudi Government is taking the fight to Al Qaida, and the American people are safer for it. Three years ago, there was a proliferation network run

by A.Q. Khan. The CIA discovered the plot. We have disrupted it and dismantled the organization, and the American people are safer for it. Three years ago—just 3 years ago—Libya was spending millions to acquire weapons of mass destruction. Now, thousands of Libya's chemical munitions have been destroyed. Libya has given up nuclear processing equipment, and the American people are safer for it.

The world is changing because of American leadership. The dictator in Iraq had the capability of producing weapons. He could have passed them on to terrorists. Now he's sitting in a prison cell, and the American people are safer for it.

We will finish the work in Afghanistan and Iraq. Free societies in that troubled part of the world are in the interest of the United States of America. Free societies are peaceful societies. Free societies will serve as an example for other people and other troubled countries. Afghanistan and Iraq now have strong leadership, people who have stepped up and are willing to battle the terrorists for the good of the people in those countries. These people are counting on us. They're counting on the United States of America to support them in their ambitions for liberty. And when America gives its word, America keeps its word.

We've got a lot of fine troops here from the West Virginia National Guard who have served our country with distinction, and I want to thank them for their service. At bases across our country and the world, I have had the privilege of meeting those who wear our uniform. I've seen their great decency, their unselfish courage. I have met with the loved ones of those who have sacrificed, paid the ultimate sacrifice. I have assured them, to honor the memory of their loved one, we will complete the mission.

And I assure you, ladies and gentlemen, the cause of freedom is in really good hands. I'll make sure our troops have the best. They deserve the best. And that's why last September, I proposed supplemental funding to support our military in its mission. This legislation provided funding for body armor and other vital equipment, for hazard pay, health benefits, ammunition, fuel, spare parts. In the Senate, only a small, out-of-the-main-

stream minority voted against the legislation. And 2 of those 12 Senators—2 of the 12—are my opponent and his runningmate.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. When asked to explain his vote, Senator Kerry said this: "I actually did vote for the \$87 billion, before I voted against it." [Laughter] End quote. Now he's offering a different explanation. Earlier this week, Senator Kerry said he is proud that he and his runningmate voted against the funding for the troops.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. And yesterday, he said that his vote against funding for our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan was complicated. No, there's nothing complicated about supporting our troops. As the Commander in Chief of a great United States military, I will make sure they have what is necessary so they can do their jobs.

America is leading the world with confidence and moral clarity. And we've got others to help us. We've got a vast coalition of nations working together, and that's good. There are over 60 nations involved in the Proliferation Security Initiative. Nearly 40 nations are involved in Afghanistan. More than 30 nations are involved in Iraq. I'll continue to work to build alliances and to work with our friends for the cause of security and peace, but I will never turn over America's national security decisions to leaders of other countries.

This Nation is prosperous and strong. Yet we need to remember that our greatest strength is in the character of our citizens. The night before he came to Beckley, my opponent said that a bunch of Hollywood entertainers conveyed the heart and soul of America.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. The heart and soul of America is found right here in Beckley, West Virginia.

Our Nation is strong—our Nation is strong because of the values we try to live by: courage and compassion, reverence and integrity. We're strong because of the institutions that help give us direction and purpose: our families and our schools and our religious congregations. These values and institutions are

fundamental to our lives, and they deserve the respect of our Government.

Listen, we stand for high standards in our public schools. We stand for local control of our public schools. We stand for accountability in our public schools so no child is left behind in America. We stand for the fair treatment of faith-based groups so they can receive Federal help for their works of compassion and healing. We stand for welfare reforms that require work and strengthen marriage, which have helped millions of Americans find independence and dignity. We stand for a culture of life in which every person matters and every person counts. We reject the brutal practice of partial-birth abortion. We stand for institutions like marriage and family which are the foundations of our society. We stand for judges who strictly and faithfully interpret the law, instead of legislating from the bench. We stand strongly for the Second Amendment, which gives every American the individual right to bear arms.

My position and my record stands in stark contrast to my opponent's record of voting against the rights of law-abiding gun owners.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Listen, as a sportsman, I understand that gun ownership carries serious responsibilities. When someone uses a gun to commit a crime, they should be prosecuted and sent to jail. Over the past 3 years, Federal prosecutions of crime committed with firearms have increased by 68 percent. The way to make our communities safer is to lock up more gun-toting criminals, not to restrict the constitutional liberties of law-abiding citizens.

And we're building a culture of responsibility in America. The culture of our country is changing from one that has said, "If it feels good, do it," and, "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each of us understands we are responsible for the decisions we make in life.

If you are fortunate enough to be a mother or a father, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart and all your soul. If you're worried about the quality of education in the community in which you live, you're responsible for doing something about it. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you are responsible for telling the truth to

your shareholders and your employees. And in a responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourselves.

For all Americans, these years in our history will always stand apart. There are quiet times in the life of a nation when little is expected of its leaders. This isn't one of those times. You and I are living in a period when the stakes are high, when the challenges are difficult—a time when firm resolve is needed.

None of us will ever forget that week when one era ended and another began. On September the 14th, 2001, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers. It's a day I'll never forget. There were workers in hardhats yelling, "Whatever it takes." A guy grabbed me by the arm—I can't remember if he was a firefighter or a policeman—and he said, "Do not let me down."

As we all did that day, these men and women searching through the rubble took it personally. I took it personally. I have a responsibility that goes on. I will never relent in bringing justice to our enemies. I will defend our country, whatever it takes. [*Applause*] Thank you all.

In these times, I have also been witness to the character of this Nation. I've seen the unselfish courage of our troops. I've seen the heroism of Americans in the face of danger. I've seen the spirit of service and compassion renewed in this country. And we've all seen our Nation unite in common purpose when it mattered most. We will need all these qualities for the work ahead. We have a war to win, and the world is counting on us to lead the cause of freedom and peace.

We have a duty to work to spread opportunity to every corner of our country. This is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it. And we know that for our blessed Nation, the best days lie ahead.

Thanks for coming. Proud you're here. God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:08 p.m. at the Raleigh County Armory Civic Center. In his remarks, he referred to former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; and A.Q. Khan, former head of Pakistan's nuclear weapons program. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Review of Title III of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (LIBERTAD) Act of 1996

July 16, 2004

Dear _____:

Consistent with section 306(c)(2) of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (LIBERTAD) Act of 1996 (Public Law 104–114), (the “Act”), I hereby determine and report to the Congress that suspension for 6 months beginning August 1, 2004, of the right to bring an action under title III of the Act is necessary to the national interests of the United States and will expedite a transition to democracy in Cuba.

Sincerely,

George W. Bush

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Richard G. Lugar, chairman, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., ranking member, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations; Ted Stevens, chairman, and Robert C. Byrd, ranking member, Senate Committee on Appropriations; Henry J. Hyde, chairman, and Tom Lantos, ranking member, House Committee on International Relations; and C.W. Bill Young, chairman, and David R. Obey, ranking member, House Committee on Appropriations. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Proclamation 7802—Captive Nations Week, 2004

July 16, 2004

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Each year during Captive Nations Week, the United States reaffirms our commitment to building a world where human rights, democracy, and freedom are respected and protected by the rule of law. As Americans, we believe the nonnegotiable demands of human dignity must be upheld without regard to race, gender, creed, or nationality. We stand in solidarity with those living under repressive regimes who seek democracy and peaceful changes in their homelands.

Throughout our Nation’s history, our brave men and women in uniform have fought for the freedom of those suffering under authoritarian governments. From Nazi Germany to Bosnia, and Afghanistan to Iraq, American service members have fought to remove brutal leaders. The American people and their generous contributions have helped to rebuild traumatized nations and given the oppressed hope for the future. More than a year ago, American service members and our coalition partners freed the Iraqi people from a dictatorship that routinely tortured and executed innocent civilians. Since then, Americans have helped the Iraqi people establish institutions for the protection of human rights, based on democratic principles, to ensure that freedom will endure in the new Iraq.

Earlier this summer, as our Nation paid respect to President Ronald Reagan, we recognized his contributions to ending the Cold War and advancing freedom around the world. In his first Inaugural Address, President Reagan said: “Above all, we must realize that no arsenal or no weapon in the arsenals of the world is so formidable as the will and moral courage of free men and women. It is a weapon our adversaries in today’s world do not have. It is a weapon that we as Americans do have.” These words carry forward today as we continue to push for democratic freedoms and human rights around the world.

The Congress, by Joint Resolution approved July 17, 1959 (73 Stat. 212), has authorized and requested the President to issue a proclamation designating the third week in July of each year as “Captive Nations Week.”

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim July 18 through July 24, 2004, as Captive Nations Week. I call upon the people of the United States to observe this week with appropriate ceremonies and activities and to reaffirm their commitment to all those seeking liberty, justice, and self-determination.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this sixteenth day of July, in the year of our Lord two thousand four, and of