

For Immediate Release
Office of the Press Secretary
November 4, 2002

Remarks by the President at Arkansas Welcome

Northwest Arkansas Regional Airport
Bentonville, Arkansas

3:37 P.M. CST

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you all very much for coming today. Thanks for coming.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: We love you, 43! (Laughter.)

THE PRESIDENT: Well, first of all, we're working our way back to Texas because tomorrow is voting day. And I intend to cast my ballot in Crawford, and Laura is going to cast hers in Crawford, and we're not undecided. (Applause.) And I'm not undecided about what's best for Arkansas. The best thing that can happen to Arkansas, and the best thing that can happen to America is to put Tim Hutchinson back in the U.S. Senate. (Applause.)

And I know something about being a government. And you've got a good one. (Applause.) You not only have a good one, you've got a great one. (Applause.) The best thing for Arkansas, the best thing for the taxpayers of Arkansas, the best thing for the schoolchildren of Arkansas is to reelect Mike Huckabee. (Applause.)

You know, the spirit of America is really strong. The American spirit, that's that spirit that says, no matter what the cost, we'll defend our country. It's that spirit that says we love freedom. But part of loving freedom means you have a responsibility. You've got a responsibility to vote. You've got a responsibility to go to the polls.

I'm here in Arkansas asking all the good citizens of this state, Republicans and Democrats, independents, people who don't give a hoot about politics, to do your duty as Americans. You have an obligation. But when you get in that voting booth I do have some suggestions. (Laughter.) Hutchinson and Huckabee. (Applause.)

No, I'm proud to call Mike Huckabee friend. I knew him -- known him for a long while. We were both governors together, and I've watched his passion when it comes to education. See, education is to a state what national defense is to the federal government. It's the most important responsibility of the state government, I think. And Mike shares that point of view.

I was here a while ago to talk about advance reading programs, states which have changed their curriculum to make sure that every child could learn to read. One of the first states that I came to was one of the first states that responded -- this state of Arkansas, led by your Governor, stepped up to the plate to make sure that every child can learn how to read. (Applause.)

No, he's got a heart. He cares deeply about everybody in this state. See, the thing I like about Mike, he's not one of the fellows that travels around the state saying, well, I'll try to help these folks only because they agree with me politically. Mike Huckabee cares for everybody in Arkansas. And that's why, coming Tuesday, this good state is going to send this good man, with overwhelming numbers, back to the statehouse. (Applause.)

Make sure you don't forget about Win Rockefeller either. (Applause.)



He's done a fine job. I want to thank all the candidates who are up here with us, people who have tossed their hat in the ring, or out seeking the vote, working hard to elevate the process. I hope you give them your help, as well.



I'm honored to be here with John Boozman, a fine United States Congressman from Arkansas. (Applause.) I'm proud to call John friend; I'm proud to call him ally. One of the things I like about a congressman like John is he's an independent thinker, but when it comes down to doing the right thing for America, I don't have to worry about his vote. (Applause.)

I appreciate the Gatlin Boys being here. I've known them for a long time. They're good buddies of mine, and we've got a couple extra seats on Air Force One and we're heading down home, if you want a ride. (Laughter.) My problem is you -- the one in the yellow tie, I'm not sure you can pass the security clearance. (Laughter.) It's great to see you.

I'm also, obviously, thrilled to be traveling with Laura today. Thanks for singing "Happy Birthday" to her. That's one of the prices you pay when you marry somebody in the political process and your birthday is on election day; you have to spend it on the road. You know, when I asked her to marry me, she was a public school librarian. The truth is she didn't like politics in those days, and didn't care for politicians. (Laughter.) Thankfully, she said yes when I asked her to marry me, and she has made a great First Lady for America. (Applause.)

No, we're enjoying ourselves traveling around our country. And what a magnificent country we have. It's a joy to travel America and to talk to our fellow Americans. One of the things that I'm urging you all to do is the same thing that your Governor just said -- round people up to vote. You see, not only do you have an obligation to vote yourself, but you can make a difference in this election. A lot of those political pundits, the big talkers have said the to world, Hutchinson can't win. Let's prove them wrong on Tuesday. (Applause.)

Sometimes that's where you want your opponent, half asleep. (Laughter.) You can make a difference. Find good people. In this part of the world, don't be afraid to haul some of those Democrats to the polls. They care about a good United States senator. They want somebody who's wise about their taxpayer's money. Independent voters care about Tim Hutchinson's point of view. Just tell them, Tim Hutchinson agrees with us. He thinks like the citizens of Arkansas think. And so does Mike Huckabee.

I'm here to thank you for what you've done in the past. I know how hard you worked for Laura and me and Dick Cheney. And I want to urge you, over the next -- how many hours, Governor -- 24, 8 hours, or whatever it is -- to get out the vote. Work hard, and you'll be surprised at what's going to happen come Tuesday. And I'm going to be proud of what you do on behalf of these good candidates. (Applause.)

Let me see if I can put it as plainly as I can. I need Tim Hutchinson in the United States Senate. (Applause.) Besides the fact he's a good fellow, and I like being around him, I need his help. See, we've got some problems in the country. We've got some hurdles we've got to cross. It's going to be good to have an ally from Arkansas up there with whom I can work in the Senate.

One of the problems we have is that enough people can't find work in America. We've got some people looking and they can't find work. And that is a problem. My attitude is any time anybody wants to put food on the table and can't find work to do so says we've got to worry about creating more jobs in America. We've got to expand the job base.

But here's what Tim and I believe how to do it -- see, there's a debate in Washington about how to do it. I believe if you let a person keep more of their own money 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 that good or a service. And when somebody produces a good or a service, somebody is more likely to find work. The tax relief plan that Senator Hutchinson strongly supported came at the right time. (Applause.)

And we need to have a senator from Arkansas who will join me, for the sake of job creation, for the sake of the entrepreneurial spirit, for the sake of small business owners, to make the tax cut permanent. (Applause.)

I've seen Tim at work, and you're going to see the products of his work in a good education bill. He worked hard on the education reform, the most meaningful piece of education reform in a long, long time out of the federal government. A lot of times people hear, well, reform out of the federal government may not be the kind of reform I like. But let me describe to you what I'm talking about.

First of all, this bill says every child can learn. The premise of the bill is, is that everybody has got the capacity to learn; therefore, we must set high standards and high expectations. The way I like to put it is we're going to challenge the soft bigotry of low expectations. That means when you lower the bar, you tend to get lousy results. And that's not good enough for America. Tim knows that; Governor Huckabee knows that; and I know that.

In the bill we also are passing power out of Washington because we strongly believe in local control of schools. (Applause.) This year we're sending a record amount of money out of Washington back to the Arkansas school system, \$440 million. And Tim Hutchinson, you need to tell your friends and neighbors, Tim Hutchinson had a lot to do with that money coming back to Arkansas. See, he's working hard on behalf of the citizens of Arkansas.

But in return for that money, we're now asking this question: Are you getting results? In return for the money, we're asking the question: Can the children read and write and add and subtract? If you believe every child can do that, it's a legitimate question then to ask the question. And when we find out if the children are, I can assure you, George W. and Governor Huckabee and Senator Hutchinson will praise the teachers and principals and parents who have worked hard to make it happen. But if we find children trapped in schools which will not teach, trapped in schools which will not change, for the sake of a better tomorrow, we are going to challenge the status quo, because no child should be left behind in the state of Arkansas. (Applause.)

I look forward to working with Senator Hutchinson to make the Medicare system work better. We made that promise to our seniors, and it's a promise that we're going to have to work together to keep. Senator Hutchinson in the U.S. Senate will be easier to work with to get the job done. See, Medicare is stuck in the past; medicine is changing. Medicine is becoming modern through technologies and new discoveries. Yet Medicare has been used as a politics football and is just stuck. We need to modernize Medicare, which means prescription drugs for every senior, and the best way to do that is to send Senator Hutchinson back to the United States Senate. (Applause.)

No, it's a lot of issues we're going to work on. But let me tell you a cutting edge issue, and that is the issue of judges.

AUDIENCE: Yeah!

THE PRESIDENT: We have a got a -- too many vacancies on our federal bench, in spite of the fact that I have sent a lot of names to the United States Senate. The bunch running the Senate up there has done a lousy job with my nominees.

AUDIENCE: Yeah!

THE PRESIDENT: And I want to tell you something, the kind of judges I'm nominating are the kind of judges that you would expect me to nominate and want me to nominate. (Applause.) These are good -- good and honorable people who have got good records; whose records sometimes are being distorted in the Senate; and sometimes can't even get a hearing because they're playing petty politics.

These are good, honorable people who will use the bench not to legislate from, but to interpret the Constitution of the United States of America. (Applause.)

And this should be clear to the citizens -- let me -- I hope to make it clear to the citizens of this state, that if you're interested in a solid judiciary, if you're interested in a judiciary that represents the majority opinion in Arkansas, put Tim Hutchinson back in the United States Senate. (Applause.)

There are a lot of issues we're going to work on, but there's no bigger issue than protecting you from attack. That's the biggest issue we've got. That's because there's still an enemy lurking around out there, an enemy which hates America because of what we love. And we love our freedoms. We love the freedom to worship any way you see fit. We love the freedom of our campaigns. We love the freedom of our press. We love every aspect about freedom and

we're not going to change. (Applause.)

And so long as we hold strong to what we believe in and so long as that enemy is moving around out there, we've got a job to do, and that's to protect you. There's a lot of good folks working hard and long hours to protect the American people, there just are. See, we've been warned. We're now aware that they're out there. We're aware of how mean they are.

See, we've discovered that they don't value life like we do in America. We say every life matters, everybody is precious, everybody counts. This bunch of killers are willing to take innocent life in the name of a hijacked religion. And so we've got to do everything we can. And we are. Any time we get any kind of hint that somebody is thinking about doing something to America, we're moving on them, we're disrupting, we're denying. We're fulfilling the obligation that you expect us to do, which is to protect you.

And that's why I went to Congress to figure out if we couldn't do it even better. So I'd proposed a Department of Homeland Security. It says that we're going to take the agencies involved with protecting America and better coordinate them, make sure that the good folks up there get the message that this is our top priority and, if need be, change cultures, so that people are all working in concert to face the new threats of the 21st century.

And the House of Representatives passed the bill, and I want to thank John for his vote. But it's stuck in the Senate -- not because of Tim Hutchinson, I might add -- but it's stuck there, because some senators want to take away the power that every President since John Kennedy has had. And that power is the ability to suspend collective bargaining rules, in any department of the federal government, when the national security is at stake.

In other words, if there are certain work rules that prevent me from putting the right people at the right place at the right time to protect you, I have had -- up to now, and if the Senate, some senators get their way, I won't have -- the ability to suspend those rules. That's what you want. You want me to be able to move quickly and to defend America. (Applause.)

I'm not going to accept a lousy bill from the Senate. There is no question in my mind, and there should be no question in the voters of Arkansas mind, that the man who understands this issue the best, the guy who's got the best vision for homeland security in this race is Senator Tim Hutchinson. (Applause.)

The best way to secure this homeland, short-term and long-term, is to find those killers one at a time and bring them to justice. (Applause.) See, this is a different kind of war. It's a kind of war instead of trying to knock down airplanes and sink ships, we're looking in caves. We're putting the spotlight on some of the dark corners of the world.

Their leaders kind of hide and then they send youngsters to their suicidal deaths, that's the way they do it. The only way to treat them is what they are -- international killers. And the only way to find them is to be patient and steadfast and hunt them down. And the United States of America is doing just that. (Applause.)

I sent a defense bill up to the Congress and Senator Hutchinson and Congressman Boozman were strong supporters of this defense bill. It's the largest increase in defense spending since Ronald Reagan was the President. The message is two-fold. Any time we put our troops into harm's way, they deserve the best pay, the best training and the best possible equipment. (Applause.)

Senator Hutchinson knows that. He also knows what I'm about to tell you. The size of this defense bill sends a clear message to friend and foe alike: we're in this deal for the long haul. (Applause.) It doesn't matter how long it takes to defend the freedom of the United States, we received the call, we know what our obligations are. There's no calendar on my desk in the Oval Office that says by such-and-such a date we're hauling them home. That's not how we think in America. That's not how Americans want their government to act.

Freedom is essential. Security of America is essential. And it does not matter how long it takes. And that defense bill sent that message loud and clear. (Applause.)

So we're after them. Sometimes you'll see it on your TV screens and sometimes you won't. But just know we're after them. And we're after them with one of the finest United States militaries ever assembled. (Applause.)

No, it's important for us in Washington to be clear-eyed about the threats we face in America. See, after September the 11th, the world changed when it came to the threats to our country. In the old days -- the old days not all that long ago, I might add -- oceans protected us. It's not all that long ago that we could kind of settle back and say, well, there's a gathering threat over here, but we don't have to worry about it at home because of our geography -- oceans can protect us. There may be a potential conflict, and we could pick and choose whether we wanted to be involved in it. But we didn't have to be involved in it, necessarily, because our own people at home weren't threatened.

That changed. The battlefield is here. And that's why it's important for us to evaluate every single threat that we find and deal with them appropriately. And that's why I started the dialogue on Saddam Hussein. He's a threat to America. He's a true threat to our country. (Applause.)

This is a man who told the world he wouldn't have weapons of mass destruction, promised he wouldn't have them. He's got them. When they had the inspectors go in there a while ago, he was -- some estimated -- very close to having a nuclear weapon. Imagine this guy having a nuclear weapon. Imagine what it would mean to America and our friends.

He said he wouldn't have chemical weapons, he's got them. And not only does he have them, this is a man who used them. And he used them not only on people in his neighborhood, he used them on his own citizens. This is the kind of guy we're dealing with. This is a man who hates America, he hates our friends, he can't stand what we believe in. He's had contacts with al Qaeda. Imagine a scenario where an al Qaeda-type organization uses Iraq as an arsenal, a place to get weapons, a place to be trained to use the weapons. Saddam Hussein could use surrogates to come and attack people he hates.

No, he's a threat. And that's why I went to the United Nations. I went to the United Nations because I want that august body to work to keep the peace. I want that august body to show whether it's got the backbone necessary to hold Mr. Saddam Hussein to account. See, after all, for 11 years, they've passed resolution after resolution after resolution. Sixteen times they've passed resolutions holding this man to account, and 16 times he ignored them.

My message to that body is, for the sake of peace, we hope you're effective, we hope you've become an effective United Nations, not the League of Nations. Their choice to make, their choice to make.

And Saddam Hussein has got a choice to make. It's his choice to make. He told the world that he would disarm. We're going to hold him to his word. We expect him to disarm. But for the sake of freedom, and for the sake of peace, if Saddam Hussein won't disarm and if the United Nations is incapable of doing its duty, the United States will lead a coalition and disarm Saddam Hussein. (Applause.)

And I want to thank Senator Hutchinson and Congressman Boozman for their strong support on that resolution that came out of the halls of the United States Congress that allows America to speak with one voice on this very important subject of peace.

I say, speaking with one voice, because I believe that if we remain strong and tough when we have to be tough, we can achieve peace. That's what I believe. That's what I want you to tell your children or your grandchildren, that amongst the talk that they're hearing, that the drive and the aim and the vision is for peace, for the world to be a peaceful world.

No, we can achieve peace. We can achieve peace if we stay the course and we can achieve peace if we remember our values. And remember that freedom is not an American gift to the world, freedom is God's gift to the world. (Applause.)

I can't imagine what was going through the mind of the enemy. I just can't imagine. They must have thought our religion was materialism, and that we were so self-absorbed and selfish that after 9/11/2001, we would take a step back and maybe file a lawsuit or two. (Laughter.) That must have what they thought.

But they're learning different about America. They understand when we love something, we love it to the core, and we love freedom. (Applause.) And they could have never imagined what I'm about to tell you, that out of the evil done to America is going to come some good. (Applause.) Out of the evil done to this country, because of our nature

and the fact that the American spirit is strong, is going to come a peaceful world. You mark my words, we're going to have peace at home.

But we'll be able to achieve peace in parts of the world where people have quit on peace. We have a chance, and this country is going to seize that opportunity to keep the peace. And here at home, we can be a better tomorrow -- better America, too. And that's important to realize. We have an opportunity to bring some good out of the evil. We have a chance to work together to eradicate pockets of despair and loneliness and hopelessness that exist right here in this country. Amongst our plenty, there are people who hurt. And so long as some of us hurt, we all hurt.

But we've got a chance to change that, by starting with understanding the limitations of government. No, Senator Hutchinson and Governor Huckabee and Congressman Boozman will all work to pass laws that will help. But we've got to remember that government, while it can pass out money, it can never put hope into people's hearts, or a sense of purpose in people's lives.

The solid truth of the matter is, when you find -- if you want to help heal the hurt -- if you want to hurt [sic] people and help people in pain, the best way to do so is to call upon the great strength of the country, which is the compassion of our fellow Americans.

The best way to help fight evil is to do some good, by putting your arm around somebody who hurts, and say, I love you, what can I do to help you, how can I help make your life a better, hopeful place? (Applause.)

No, a lot of good folks in this country took a step back after September the 11th, and took an inventory of that which is important. That's why I can tell you the American spirit is strong and alive, because people are beginning to understand that part of being a patriot is somebody willing to serve something greater than yourself in life.

And you can do so all kinds of ways. You can do so by mentoring a child, you can do so by feeding the hungry, providing shelter to the homeless. You can do so by running a Boy Scouts troop or a Girl Scout troop.

Today I met Cynthia Caughlin. She helped initiate the Boys and Girls Club of Benton County. She's worked for Rebuilding Together, with Christmas in April. That's a program to rehabilitate homes for people who hurt. There's all kinds of ways we can help. There's all kinds of ways to change America one conscience, one soul, one person at a time. And that's happening in this country; it just is. No, the American spirit is alive and well.

I want the youngsters to remember that story of Flight 93. It helps define what I'm talking about, about a spirit of sacrifice. Remember, those are the people flying across the plane that day -- flying across the country that day on the plane. They learned that the plane was going to be a weapon. They told their loved ones, goodbye. They said a prayer. One guy said, let's roll. They took the plane into the ground to serve something greater than themselves in life. They saved lives because of their courage and their heroism. (Applause.)

No, our country is strong and our country is great -- which allows me to boldly predict that the evil done to America is going to yield a more peaceful world and a more hopeful country, because this is greatest nation, full of the finest, most caring, most compassionate people on the face of the earth.

Thank you for coming. May God bless you all, and may God bless America. (Applause.)

END

4:05 P.M. CST

Return to this article at:

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/11/20021104-7.html>

 CLICK HERE TO PRINT