



For Immediate Release
Office of the Press Secretary
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President's Remarks at Victory 2004 Rally in Johnstown, Pennsylvania

Cambria County War Memorial Arena
Johnstown, Pennsylvania

5:06 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you all. (Applause.) Thank you all very much. Thanks for coming. You know, it turns out I am the first sitting President to have visited Johnstown in more than 30 years. (Applause.) All those other Presidents sure missed out. (Applause.) Thanks for coming. I'm proud you came out. I'm honored you are here. I'm pleased to be with the good folks here in Johnstown. I know you like to hunt and fish. (Applause.) So do I. I know you care about your neighbors. I appreciate that. (Applause.) I know you take your baseball seriously. (Applause.) And from the looks of things, with your help, we'll carry Pennsylvania in November. (Applause.)

I'm here to ask for your vote. (Applause.) And I'm here to ask for your help. We have a duty to vote in this country, and I'm here to ask you to register your friends and neighbors, and encourage them to do their duty. (Applause.) And when you're out registering people, don't overlook discerning Democrats. (Applause.) You might remember my friend, Zell Miller. (Applause.) He represents a lot of folks who understand that when you put Dick Cheney and me back in office, this country will be safer, stronger and better for every American. (Applause.)

My regret is that Laura didn't come with me today.

AUDIENCE: Awww --

THE PRESIDENT: She was a public school librarian when I asked her to marry me. And she said, fine, I'll marry you, so long as I don't have to give a political speech. (Laughter.) I said, okay. Fortunately, she didn't hold me to that promise. You saw her the other night in New York City. You saw how gracious she is, how strong she is. (Applause.) I love her dearly. I'm going to give you some reasons why I think you ought to put me back in office, but perhaps the most important one of all is so that Laura is First Lady for four more years. (Applause.)

I'm proud of my running mate, Dick Cheney. (Applause.) I admit it, he doesn't have the waviest hair on the ticket. (Laughter.) I didn't pick him for his looks. I picked him because he's a man of sound judgment and great experience, and can get the job done for the American people. (Applause.)

I appreciate Congressman Bill Shuster joining us today. He's been telling me all along I need to come to Johnstown, Pennsylvania. (Applause.) When I showed up, he said, you finally made it. I said, I made it just in time to rally these folks to get ready to win this election come November. (Applause.)

I want to thank your Mayor, Don Zucco, for joining us today. Mr. Mayor, I'm proud you're here. Sometimes they say, well, do you ever have any advice for the local officials. Mr. Mayor, fill the potholes. (Laughter and applause.) I appreciate you coming, Mayor.

I want to thank all the state and local officials who are here. I want to thank my friend, Victor Raia. He heads Veterans for Bush. And I want to thank all the veterans who have joined us here today, as well. (Applause.)

I want to thank the Wil Gravatt Band. I appreciate them playing here. I appreciate the high school band that's here tonight. Thank you for coming. I'm going to try to keep my speech short so you can get home and do your homework. (Laughter.)

I want to thank all the grassroots activists who are here -- the people who put up the signs and make the phone

calls. I really appreciate your help. (Applause.) I know you're working hard, but keep working. And I'll be working right alongside of you. I'm looking forward to the campaign. I'm going to tell the people where I stand, where I -- what I believe and where I'm going to lead this nation. (Applause.) I'm going to tell them that I have a plan to keep this country of ours safer and a more hopeful America. I'm running on a compassionate conservative philosophy that says government ought to help people, not dictate to people. (Applause.)

I believe every child can learn. That's what I believe. I went to Washington to challenge the soft bigotry of low expectations. (Applause.) We've raised standards. We're measuring early to solve problems before it is too late. We're ending that old practice of just shuffling the kids through the system year after year without learning the basics. We trust the local people to make the right decisions for the schools. We're closing an achievement gap in America, and we're not turning back. (Applause.)

I believe we have a moral responsibility to honor our seniors with good health care. (Applause.) I went up to Washington to fix problems; we had a problem with Medicare. Let me give you one example. Medicare would pay tens of thousands of dollars for the heart surgery, and that's okay. But it wouldn't pay for the medicine to prevent the heart surgery from happening in the first place. It didn't make any sense for our seniors to have a Medicare system like that, and it certainly didn't make sense for the taxpayers. We have modernized Medicare. Our seniors will get prescription drug coverage, and we're not turning back. (Applause.)

I believe in the energy and innovative spirit of the American worker and farmer and small business owner. And that's why we unleashed that energy with the largest tax relief in a generation. (Applause.) When you're out rounding up the vote, remind your friends and neighbors that we've been through a lot. This economy of ours has been through a lot. See, five months before I got into office, the stock market had begun to decline. We had a recession. We had corporate scandals, which affected our economy. And of course, we had the attacks on our country. But we've overcome all these obstacles because we've got good workers, good small business owners. (Applause.) We've overcome them, too, because of well-timed tax cuts.

And this economy of ours is strong and it is getting stronger. Our economy has been growing at rates as fast as any in nearly 20 years. (Applause.) We're adding jobs here in America -- about 1.7 million new jobs over the last 12 months. (Applause.) We've added 107,000 manufacturing jobs since January. The unemployment rate is now 5.4 percent. (Applause.) That is lower than the average rate of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. (Applause.) The unemployment rate in your great state is 5.3 percent. The economic stimulus plan we passed is working. (Applause.)

I believe a President must confront problems, not pass them on to future Presidents and future generations. (Applause.) I believe the most solemn duty of the American President is to protect the American people. If America shows uncertainty or weakness in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This is not going to happen on my watch. (Applause.) I believe this nation wants steady, consistent, principled leadership, and that is why, with your help, we're going to win a great victory in November. (Applause.)

The world in which we live and work is changing. In the generations of our dads and granddads, a man generally had one job and one career, worked for one company, and the company provided health care and a pension plan. It's a different world today. I understand it's a different world today. Many women now work inside the home and outside the home. The workplace is changing. Many people change careers. Yet many of the most fundamental systems of our government -- the tax code, health coverage, pension plans and worker training -- were created for the world of yesterday, not tomorrow. In the next four years, we will transform these systems so that all citizens are equipped, prepared and, thus, truly free to make your own choices, so you can realize the great promise of America. (Applause.)

Listen, any hopeful society has a growing economy. And I've got a plan to keep this economy moving forward. To create more jobs in America, America must be the best place in the world to do business. (Applause.) That means we must reduce the regulatory burden on our small business owners in America. (Applause.) To create more jobs in America, we must stop the junk lawsuits that threaten our employers. (Applause.) To keep jobs here and to expand our economy, Congress needs to pass my energy plan -- (applause) -- a plan that encourage conservation, encourages renewable sources of energy like ethanol and biodiesel. It encourages clean coal technology. It is a plan that understands that we must become less dependent on foreign sources of energy. (Applause.)

Listen, to create jobs here, we've got to open up markets for U.S. products. We open up our markets for goods

from other countries, and that's good for the consumer. And it's good for you. If you've got more choices to choose from, you're likely to get the product you want at a better price and higher quality. So what I tell countries like China is, you treat us the way we treat you. America can compete with anybody, anytime, anywhere so long as the rules are fair. (Applause.)

To create jobs we got to be wise about how we spend your money and keep your taxes low. (Applause.) We have a difference of opinion about taxes in this campaign. I'm running against a fellow who has proposed more than \$2 trillion in new spending so far.

AUDIENCE: Boo!

THE PRESIDENT: Awfully tempting when you're coming down the pike to tell everybody what they want to hear. So they said, well, how are you going to pay for it? He said, oh, that's simple, we'll just tax the rich. There's two problems with that. One is that you can't raise enough money by taxing the rich to pay for \$2 trillion. There's a gap between what he promises and what he says he's going to do. Guess who usually has to fill that gap? Yeah. Here's the other problem. You've heard that rhetoric before, oh, don't worry, we'll just tax the rich. They hire lawyers and accountants and dodge, and you get stuck with the bill. We're not going to let him tax you. We're going to win in November. (Applause.)

Thinking about taxes -- thinking about taxes, the federal tax code needs to be changed. It's a complicated mess. It is -- (Applause.) It is full of special interest loopholes. Americans spend hours after hours filling out their tax form. They estimate about six billion hours worth of paperwork and headache on an annual basis is spent by American workers and small business owners and big businesses. You see, the American people need a simpler, fairer, pro-growth tax code. In a new term, I will lead a bipartisan effort to simplify and make more fair the federal tax code. (Applause.)

The job base is changing, and we've got to help workers gain the skills necessary to fill the jobs of the 21st century. That's why I'm such a strong proponent of helping workers gain new skills at the community colleges across this country. (Applause.) Most new jobs are now filled by people with at least two years of college. Yet one in four of our students gets there. So in our high schools, we'll fund early intervention programs to help students at risk. We'll place an emphasis on math and science. Over time we'll require a rigorous exam before graduation. By raising performance at our high schools, and by expanding Pell grants for low- and middle-income families, we will help more Americans start their career with a college diploma. (Applause.)

In this time of change, we will do more to make sure health care is available and affordable. More than half of the uninsured are employees of small businesses. Small businesses are having trouble with health care costs. In order to help those families, and help small businesses, government should allow small businesses to join together to purchase insurance at the discounts available for big companies. (Applause.)

We will expand health savings accounts. We will make sure poor companies have got community health centers. And we've got to do something about these junk lawsuits. I'm telling you, the cost of medicine is on the rise, because junk lawsuits are driving good docs out of practice and running up the cost of medicine here in America. (Applause.) You cannot be pro-doctor, pro-hospital, pro-patient and pro-trial lawyer at the same time. (Applause.) You have to choose. And my opponent has made his choice, and he put him on the ticket.

AUDIENCE: Boo!

THE PRESIDENT: I have made my choice. I am for medical liability reform now. (Applause.) In all we do to improve health care in America, we will make sure that health decisions are made by doctors and patients, not by bureaucrats in Washington, D.C. (Applause.)

In a changing society, ownership can help bring stability to people's lives. That's why we want more people owning their own home in America. The home ownership rate in America is at an all-time high right now. Isn't that fantastic? Think about that. More people are opening their front door, saying, welcome to my home, welcome to my piece of property. (Applause.) We've got a plan to continue to expand home ownership to every community in this country.

And we also want to make sure that our pension plans are modern and work. If you're an older citizen, you're in

good shape when it comes to Social Security. If you're a baby boomer, like me, you're in okay shape when it comes to Social Security. But we need to worry about our children and our grandchildren. (Applause.) I believe younger workers ought to be able to take some of their own money and set it aside in a personal account to make sure Social Security is available. (Applause.)

We have a difference of philosophy in this campaign. If you listen carefully to the rhetoric, my opponent's programs expand government. My programs expand opportunity. (Applause.) And I feel comfortable doing that because I think the role of government is to trust the people, trust the people with their own decisions, trust the people with their own money, trust the people to make the right judgment. (Applause.)

In a world of change, there's some things that just do not change -- the values we try to live by, courage and compassion, reverence and integrity. In a time of change, we must support the institutions that give us stability, our families, our schools and our religious congregations. (Applause.)

We stand for a culture of live in which every person counts and every being matters. (Applause.) We stand for marriage and family, which are the foundations of our society. (Applause.) And I stand for the appointment of federal judges who know the difference between personal opinion and the strict interpretation of the law. (Applause.)

This election will also determine how America responds to the continuing danger of terrorism. Since the terrible morning of September the 11th, 2001, we have fought the terrorists across the Earth -- not for pride, not for power, but because the lives of our citizens are at stake. (Applause.) Our strategy is clear: We're defending the homeland, we're transforming our military, and we're reforming and strengthening the intelligence services. We're staying on the offensive. We're striking the terrorists abroad so we do not have to face them here at home. (Applause.)

AUDIENCE: Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

THE PRESIDENT: We will work to advance liberty in the broader Middle East and around the world, and we will prevail. (Applause.) Our strategy is succeeding. Four years ago, Afghanistan was the home base of al Qaeda, Pakistan was a transit point for terrorist groups, Saudi Arabia was fertile ground for terrorist fundraising, Libya was secretly pursuing nuclear weapons, Iraq was a gathering threat, and al Qaeda was largely unchallenged as it planned attacks.

Because we led, because we acted, the government of a free Afghanistan is fighting terror, Pakistan is capturing terrorists, Saudi Arabia is making raids and arrests, Libya is dismantling its weapons programs. (Applause.) The army of a free Iraq is fighting for freedom, and more than three-quarters of al Qaeda's key members and associates have been brought to justice. (Applause.) We have led, many have joined, and America and the world are safer. (Applause.)

This progress involved careful diplomacy, and clear moral purpose, and some tough decisions -- and the toughest came on Iraq. We knew Saddam Hussein's record of aggression and support for terror. We knew his long history of pursuing and using weapons of mass destruction. And we know that after September the 11th, this nation must think differently. We must take threats seriously before they fully materialize. (Applause.)

In Saddam Hussein, we saw a threat. I went to the United States Congress. I said, take a look at this threat, and they took a look at the same intelligence I looked at. They remembered the same history I remembered. They concluded that Saddam Hussein was a threat, and authorized the use of force. (Applause.) My opponent looked at the very same intelligence I looked at, came to the same conclusion we came to, and he authorized the use of force.

Before the Commander-in-Chief commits troops into combat, we must try all means to deal with any threat. See, I was hopeful diplomacy would work. And so I went to the United Nations, and I gave a speech at the U.N.

AUDIENCE: Boo!

THE PRESIDENT: They looked at the same intelligence I looked at. They remembered the same history we remembered. And with a 15-to-nothing vote, the United Nations Security Council voted that Saddam Hussein

must disclose, disarm or face serious consequences. But as he had for over a decade, Saddam Hussein wasn't interested in what the free world has to say. As a matter of fact, he systematically deceived the inspectors that were sent into his country. So I had a choice to make, a choice that only comes to the Oval Office; a choice nobody wants to make, but must be prepared to make: Do I trust the word of a madman and forget the lessons of September the 11th, or do I take action to defend America. Given that choice, I will defend our country every time. (Applause.)

Because we acted, because we acted to defend our country, 50 million people now live in freedom. (Applause.) Fifty million people are free. In Afghanistan, the world has changed since those dark days when young girls weren't allowed to go to school and their mothers were whipped in the public square. The Taliban were barbaric people. They were backward. They had a dim vision of the world. Today, Afghanistan is an ally. They're helping us in the war on terror. And over 10 million Afghan citizens have registered to vote in the upcoming presidential elections.

Despite ongoing violence, Iraq now has a strong Prime Minister, a national council and national elections are scheduled for January. (Applause.) We are standing with the people of Afghanistan and Iraq, because when America gives its word, America must keep its word. (Applause.) We're also standing with them because we're serving a vital and historic cause that will make our country safer. Free societies in the Middle East will be hopeful societies, which no longer feed resentments and breed violence for export. Free governments in the Middle East will fight terrorists, instead of harboring them. And that makes America more secure, and it makes the world more peaceful. (Applause.)

Our mission in Afghanistan and Iraq is clear: We'll help new leaders to train their armies and their police forces so citizens in those countries can do the hard work of defending the hopes of many against the terror of a few. We'll help them get on their way to elections. We'll help them become more stable, and then our troops will return home with the honor they've earned. (Applause.)

I'm proud of our military. I'm proud of our military, and I know you are, as well. We've got a fantastic United States military. (Applause.) I've had the privilege of meeting with the servicemen and women who wear our uniform. I've seen their unselfish courage. I know their great decency. The cause of freedom is in really good hands.

I made a pledge -- I made a pledge to those who wear the uniform and their families that they will have all the support they need to complete their missions. That's why, a year ago, I went to the United States Congress and proposed supplemental funding of \$87 billion to help our troops in not only Iraq, but Afghanistan. It was important funding, really important funding. (Applause.) It was a really important funding request because it funded body armor and spare parts, ammunition, fuel, supplies needed for people to do their jobs. And we received great bipartisan support, so strong that only 12 United States senators voted against the funding request.

AUDIENCE: Boo!

THE PRESIDENT: Two of those senators were my opponent and his running mate.

AUDIENCE: Boo!

THE PRESIDENT: In fact, only four United States senators voted to authorize the use of force and then voted against funding our troops. Two of those senators -- two of those four were my opponent and his running mate. When asked to explain his vote, he said, well, I actually did vote for the \$87 billion before I voted against it.

AUDIENCE: Boo!

THE PRESIDENT: Now, I suspect -- I suspect that not many people in Johnstown, Pennsylvania talks that way. (Applause.) They kept asking him. He said, well, he was proud of the vote. And finally, my opponent said, the whole thing is a complicated matter. There is nothing complicated about supporting our troops in combat. (Applause.)

After voting for the war, but against funding it, after saying he would have voted for the war even knowing everything we know today, my opponent woke up this week -- (laughter) -- with new campaign advisers and yet another new position. Suddenly, he's against it again.

AUDIENCE: Boo!

THE PRESIDENT: No matter how many times -- no matter how many times he flip-flops, we were right to remove Saddam Hussein from power. (Applause.)

I appreciate the contributions our friends and allies are making. I spoke with Tony Blair this morning. (Applause.) He's got a clear vision. He's a good, strong leader. Every time I talk to him, I thank him for his contributions. You know, we put together a broad coalition -- some 40 nations in Afghanistan, some 30 in Iraq. And I will continue, over the next four years, to build our alliances, to strengthen our relationships. But I will never turn over America's national security decisions to leaders of other countries. (Applause.)

AUDIENCE: USA! USA! USA!

THE PRESIDENT: I believe in the transformational power of liberty. The wisest use of American strength is to advance freedom. I like to tell the people that I've spent time with the Prime Minister of Japan during my three-and-a-half years as President. I like him a lot. He's a good fellow. The amazing thing about my discussions with him is that here I am, sitting down with somebody that our country was at war with some 60 years ago -- my dad, I'm sure your dads or granddads fought against the Japanese. They were our sworn enemy. Yet right after World War II, President Harry Truman and many Americans believed that by helping the Japanese self-govern and become a democracy, that liberty would transform an enemy into a friend. And sure enough, it worked, because -- guess what -- Prime Minister Koizumi and I sit around the table talking about how to make the world more peaceful -- (applause) -- talking about how to use our respective positions in the world to make our countries more secure and the world a better place. Some day, an American President and a duly-elected leader from Iraq will be sitting down at the table talking about how to keep the peace. (Applause.)

I believe that millions in the Middle East plead for silence -- plead in silence for their liberty. I believe that if given the chance, they will embrace the most honorable form of government ever devised by man. I believe these things because freedom is not America's gift to the world, it is the Almighty God's gift to each man and woman in this world. (Applause.)

This young century will be liberty's century. By promoting freedom at home and freedom abroad, we will build a safer world and more hopeful America. By reforming our systems of government, we'll help more Americans realize their dreams. We'll spread ownership and opportunity to every corner of the land. We will pass the enduring values of our country on to a new generation, and we will continue to work for freedom and peace. (Applause.)

For all Americans -- 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. This is a time when we need firm resolve, clear vision, and a deep faith in the values that makes this a great nation. (Applause.)

None of us will ever forget that week when one era ended 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 hard hats yelling at me, "Whatever it takes." I remember trying to console the first responders, the brave firefighters and policemen who had gone into rubble and come out empty-handed. A lot of them had come out empty-handed. They'd lost their buddies. A guy looked me right in the eye and he said, "Do not let me down." (Applause.) I wake up every morning thinking about how to better protect our country. I will never relent in defending America, whatever it takes. (Applause.)

Four years ago, as I traveled this great state asking for the vote, I made a pledge that if you gave me a chance to serve, I would uphold the honor and the dignity of the office to which I had been elected. With your help and with your hard work, I will do so for the next four years.

God bless. (Applause.) Thank you all, thanks for coming. (Applause.)

END 5:46 P.M. EDT

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