

Remarks at the Republican Congressional Retreat in Williamsburg, Virginia  
February 2, 2001

Thank you all very much. I like to give short speeches, and I'm always on time. [Laughter] But evidently, I didn't get the dress code. [Laughter]

I really appreciate you, Speaker. Thanks for your friendship; thanks for your leadership. These are two really good men. And I want to thank you, J.C., and Rick as well, for your—pretty darn eloquent guy for being from Oklahoma. [Laughter] He can tell it. I appreciate you. Thank you very much. I'm looking forward to welcoming the University of Oklahoma football team to the White House.

I appreciate the chairman of the Republican Party being here. I chose a fellow Governor—or I asked a fellow Governor to serve, and he's a good one. He's a strong leader. He's done a fabulous job for the Commonwealth of Virginia, and I appreciate you being here, Jim. Thank you very much.

I'm glad you get to see the Secretary of the Treasury, who's smart and capable. He's surrounded by Senator Grassley and Congressman Thomas; good work. [Laughter] It didn't take you long to transition from the private sector. And Condi is here, Condi Rice; a capable Chief of Staff, Andy Card; Nick Calio, who's going to really head up our congressional affairs. The reason I bring these people up is that they're here to serve America. They're here to work with you to make our jobs easier. And I've assembled one of the finest staffs any President has ever done in the White House.

I'm making my rounds to the various caucuses. Senator Daschle invited me over this morning to the Library of Congress, and I was so honored he would, and it gave me a chance to come. Many Members of the Senate there had never seen me in person and had never had a chance to visit. And we had a very good discussion,

and I was grateful for his introduction. I'm going on to Pennsylvania Sunday afternoon, as well, thanks to the kind invitation of Congressman Gephardt.

And I want to go around and say a couple of things as clearly as I can. First, here, I want to thank all the Members who are here who I got to campaign with. We had a lot of fun. It was tiring at times, but I really, really appreciated the Senators and House Members for joining me and Laura on the campaign trail. It really made it a lot easier to understand your districts, as well as to put up with all the long hours on the campaign trail. So thanks from the bottom of my heart for your sacrifices.

It also gives me a chance to say how deadly earnest I am about using my position as your President to change the tone in the Nation's Capital, to say to America that we'll have our disagreements, we'll fight over principle, and we'll argue over detail, but we'll do so in a way that respects one another. I think it's so important for us as leaders, as people who have been given positions of responsibility, to understand that the way the process is conducted can set a good or bad tone for America. I'm committed to setting a positive tone for the country, and I know you'll join me.

You're not going to agree with everything I say. I probably won't agree with everything you say. But I'll listen, and I'll respect your opinion. I'll try to understand why the position you've taken. I'll try and understand why you don't do everything I tell you to do. [Laughter] But I'll do so in a way that tries to figure out where the other person comes from. I think that's an important part of the Washington experience.

I'm absolutely convinced that we can change Washington for the better. I believe we can have the dialog so necessary that will inspire some youngster who's looking