

at Washington to say, “I think I want to serve my country. I think I want to maybe go to the United States Senate or the United States House.” We have that responsibility to our citizens. And I pledge to you that these first 14 days in office, or near 14 days in office—the tone set in the first 14 days will be a consistent tone for however long I happen to be fortunate enough to be your President. This is a message I want to say to all elected officials.

I love meeting with the Members. For those of you who have been to our office, thanks for coming. For those of you that have not been to our office yet, you’re coming. Just don’t take any silverware. [Laughter] When you come, I look forward to hearing from you. I look forward to having a frank discussion. I look forward to hearing what’s on your mind. I don’t want you to—I’m sure you won’t be, but don’t be looking around at the furnishings and say, “Gosh, oh, the meeting ended, and I didn’t say anything.” We expect to hear from you, and that’s the best way to get things done, is to have a good, honest discussion.

I also want to remind members of both parties that I am able to stand before you as the President because of an agenda that I ran on. I believe the fact that I took specific stands on important issues is the reason I was able to win. The fact that I took on the Social Security issue in as clear language as I could be, with innovative thinking, I believe, was part of the reasons why people came our way.

I’m going to take that same positions I took on Social Security and other issues, and try to get them on the floor of the House and the Senate and get something done. It’s a positive agenda. It’s one that I believe, when we apply our principles to it, will make a huge difference for America. The agenda is going to require a lot of patience and a lot of time and a lot of work. But I want you to know, this is not a lot of items. I believe I’ve got a limited amount of capital, and I’m going

to spend it wisely and spend it in a focused way.

One item is Social Security; another is Medicare reform. We have a fantastic opportunity to seize the initiative to make sure that, working with people like Chairman Thomas, to make sure that the Medicare system works. Prescription drugs need to be an integral part of a Medicare delivery system. It will be a proud moment for all of us, Republicans and Democrats, to say we came together to modernize Medicare so that the seniors can retire in dignity.

I see the respective chairmen of the committees dealing with our military. I commit to you that our mission is going to be to make sure our military is strong and capable. But it first requires the administration to act. One, is to clarify the mission, to make it clear to those who wear our uniform that the mission is to be prepared and ready to fight and win war and, therefore, prevent war from happening in the first place.

But we have an obligation to the Members of Congress to present a strategic vision about what the military ought to look like. We’ve got an unbelievable opportunity, as we go into the 21st century, to refashion how war is fought and won and, therefore, how the peace is kept. It’s a remarkable moment. But it’s incumbent upon those of us in the executive branch, Secretary Rumsfeld and our policy team, to present to you a blueprint about what the military ought to look like and where the priorities ought to be. You may like it; you may not like it. But before we—good appropriations will really only occur if there is a strategic vision. And we’re the appropriate people to present the strategic vision. So Secretary Rumsfeld is working on that.

We’ve had a lot of talk—early talk about education. I want to thank you all for your respective chairmen coming over and talking about education. This is not a Republican issue or a Democrat issue. This is