

It's a million acts of kindness and compassion on a daily basis that define the true spirit and the true strength of America. We live in a blessed land. The values are great; the system is wonderful; but most of all, the people are the best in the world.

Thank you for coming. God bless. Thank you all.

I'll be glad to answer some questions. Now that I'm in California, I've got to walk around like a talk show host. [Laughter]

California Water Resources

Q. Mr. President, my name is Al Lopez. I'm a member of the Western Municipal Water District. Our agency works in cooperation with all the water agencies throughout the Inland Empire to provide adequate drinking water for our Inland Empire. California has to reduce its dependency on the Colorado River. Congressman Calvert is working very closely with legislation to reauthorize Cal-Fed, and we would hope that one of those projects would meet your support, especially for the Riverside-Corona theater that will provide much water to our Inland Empire for its economic base.

The President. Thank you, sir. Tell Calvert to come on by and drop it off. [Laughter] Thank you very much. I appreciate your work. Listen, I understand water. I grew up in Midland, Texas. There you go. [Laughter] You remember how much water we didn't have there. [Laughter]

Yes, sir, back in the back.

Energy Policy

Q. First, sir, a message from the crew that just recently returned from the U.S.S. *Enterprise*. My son-in-law was aboard that. From the last man and woman on that crew, they are honored to call you their Commander in Chief.

The President. Okay.

Q. And my question, sir, after you make Tommy Daschle go to his room for being bad, tell us something about your plans to end our dependency on foreign oil.

The President. There you go. He brings up a very important point, because in order to make sure our economy remains strong and vital in the long run, we have got to have an energy plan. Over 50 percent of our energy comes from overseas. Fortunately, a lot of it comes from Canada. But a lot of it comes from the Middle East.

And it seems like to me, we've got to do a couple of things: One, find more oil in an environmentally friendly way. I think we can do this without drilling off the coast of California. I know that we have got the technologies necessary to explore in places like Alaska without damaging the environment; the technologies have changed so dramatically.

I know you all had a fright here in California. It's an indication of what could happen again. When you start running out of energy and demand is high, there's either going to be price spikes or shortages.

I've worked with your Governor to try to help get through this situation. One of the things that California has done is, they have expedited permitting for plants driven by natural gas. But we better figure out where we're going to get the natural gas from in order to make sure that you've got ample electricity in the future, and therefore, we need to explore. And I repeat, we can do so without damaging our environment. I am absolutely confident of that.

The other thing that's important to note is that in our own hemisphere, Mexico, which is obviously a vital neighbor, imports natural gas from the United States. So we've got to find more. We've got to find more not only for ourselves but to make sure our neighbor to the south is able to grow. There's nothing more important for America than for Mexico to be strong and vibrant and to have good growth.

We also can do a better job of conservation. Governor Davis, the last time I met with him, reminded me that California has done a very good job of conservation, that you have been able to reduce dependency