

I want to thank Al Cardenas, and I want to thank you all for coming.

These are serious times that face our Nation. And these serious times require serious leaders, and you're here to support a really good, serious man.

I was reminded about how serious the times are today when we lost a KC-135 refueler in Afghanistan. Our hearts and prayers go out to the families of the soldiers. But I want to remind them that the cause that we are now engaged in is just and noble. The cause is freedom, and this Nation will not rest until we've achieved our objective.

I have explained to the American people that we must be patient—and I'm proud to report the Americans are patient—that we're entering into a dangerous phase in our war against terror, that we've achieved a lot of objectives, thanks to a fabulous military, that we have routed out the government that was the host to the parasitical Al Qaida. And in so doing, this great Nation liberated women and children from one of the most repressive, evil regimes history has ever known.

My favorite scenes of this conflict have been the joy on the faces of Afghan women as our soldiers and our allies have swept into these villages where women were so incredibly repressed. It's hard for our country to imagine the brutality and the backwardness of the Taliban. They are no longer in power, thanks to the great United States of America.

Those who struck America think they can run and hide. It's interesting—I find it amazing that the Al Qaida leaders are more than willing to convince some of their brethren to commit suicide; yet they, themselves, hide in caves. [Laughter] And that's why this phase of the war is dangerous, because we're going to hunt them down. They think they can hide, but this patient Nation will do whatever it takes to bring them to justice. And when we do, the world will be better for it.

We have got a job to do here at home, and I appreciate working with Governor Bush on protecting our homeland. We've got a job to make sure that we take every threat seriously. And make no mistake about it, the enemy still wants to harm America. But what they don't realize is that this Nation is alert, and we're ready. And anytime we find any hint of anybody who will try to harm the innocents of our country, we will give them the chance to share information with us. [Laughter] We will bring them to justice as well.

But the best homeland defense, of course, is to be successful overseas. We're in the first theater. But wherever terror exists, this great Nation will hunt it down. It's the calling of our time.

I appreciate so very much the spirit of unity here in Washington, DC, on this war. [Laughter] But we showed what's possible in Washington, what can happen in Washington, the last couple of days. I had the honor of traveling our country with George Miller of California, John Boehner of Ohio, Judd Gregg of New Hampshire, and Senator Ted Kennedy of Massachusetts. I signed an education bill that is a really good piece of legislation. It's a good piece of legislation because it enables and empowers Governors like Jeb Bush of Florida to continue to strive for excellence for every child. And it's a good piece of legislation because it shows what's possible in Washington, DC. Political parties are important, but they're not nearly as important as doing the Nation's business. And making sure every child is educated is a heck of a lot more important than the political parties that make up our political system.

I've worked hard to change the tone in Washington, to focus on big matters, and to bring people together to achieve those matters. I hope that one of the legacies of my administration will be that results matter more than rhetoric and that, as we achieve results, it's important to share credit with people.