

make America a safer place, a stronger place, and a better place.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:08 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. S. 23, approved January 8, to provide for a 5-month extension of the Temporary Extended

Unemployment Compensation Act of 2002 and for a transition period for individuals receiving compensation when the program under such Act ends, was assigned Public Law No. 108–1. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

## Remarks at the National Capital Flag Company in Alexandria, Virginia January 9, 2003

Thanks for having me, Al. First, we just had a really good discussion about how to make sure America is as promising as possible, how do we grow our economy, what's the role of Government, who do we trust when it comes to the people's money. And I want to thank Al for assembling the group and providing this opportunity for me to come and speak to you all and to the country about America.

First, the great thing about America, it's represented by guys like Al. He owns his own business. It's his. He's realizing his dream. The true strength of America is the entrepreneurial spirit of America, is the fact that Al, who had gone from firefighter to CEO—it can happen—and not only CEO but CEO of a thriving business. And I know Al's wife and daughter are really proud of him for taking a risk.

But by taking risk, he is not only realizing a dream, he's also helping other people find work. The backbone of the U.S. economy is the small business. And to be able to talk about economic vitality and growth in a small business is a joy for me.

So thanks for having me. Thanks for what you do. Thanks for making all those flags that fly on the limousines. [Laughter] I'm proud to be traveling behind your flag. [Laughter]

I want to thank Hector Barreto, who is the Administrator of the Small Business Administration, for being with us.

I'm proud that our Senator from the State of Virginia is with us, George Allen. I'm honored George is here. He's a good fellow. If you've got any complaints about things, just take them to George. [Laughter] But I'm proud to call him friend.

I want to thank the vice mayor of Alexandria who's here. Where are you? Thank you, sir. Mr. Mayor, thanks for coming. I'm honored you're here. My little brother is a resident of Alexandria, so go light on his property taxes. [Laughter] I'm going to try to go light on his income taxes. [Laughter]

I appreciate so very much the folks that joined us to talk about their own individual circumstances and the policies that I've articulated. I am oftentimes asked, "How is the economy doing?" And it's doing pretty darn well, given the fact that we've been through a recession, which is three quarters of negative growth. We've been through an attack on America, which many folks in this neighborhood, obviously, witnessed the consequences of firsthand. That caused our economy to slow down. It caused people not to get on airplanes and go to hotels. It was a shock to our economy. And then we had some of our citizens not tell the truth, that they thought that they could fudge the numbers to get ahead. And that created a lack of confidence. And we've dealt with all three of these things, and our economy is growing.