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Tightened remarks.

Remarks to the UNITY: Journalists of Color Convention
Friday, August 6, 2004
Draft #4

- Thank you very much. It's an honor to welcome so many fine American journalists to the nation's capital. This is a diverse and distinguished gathering. We have representatives from the worlds of radio, television, print, and online journalism. And I'm proud to be with members of the Associations of Asian American, African American, Hispanic American, and Native American Journalists.
- I know all of you share an important goal: You believe there ought to be diversity in the newsroom, and on the editorial page, and behind the managing editor's desk, because America benefits from diverse perspectives. I have a goal as well: I believe there ought to be diversity in both political parties, because my party is better and stronger when different backgrounds are represented at the table. So in this campaign, I am asking minority Americans to look at my agenda and not let anyone take them for granted.

Acknowledgments

- [TK]
- I am the candidate of one party, but I am the President of all the people. The day I took the oath, I pledged to build a single nation of justice and opportunity. And I have taken that promise seriously. Unlike some Republicans, I believe government must take an active role in improving the lives of citizens. Unlike some Democrats, I don't put my faith in bureaucracies that are distant and cold and unresponsive. I believe government should help individuals gain the tools and skills to improve their own lives, and to make the best of their abilities. And I believe the final measure of compassion is not intentions – it is results. And we have achieved solid results for all Americans, including those from minority backgrounds.

Elementary Education

- America is a better nation when every child of every background learns the basics of reading and math that will give them a fair shot at success.
- We have acted:
 - No Child Left Behind Act – higher standards and accountability

- Funding to meet these standards
- 2005 budget – K-12 funding up 49% over 2001 levels
Title One funding up 41% over 2001 levels
- New choices for low-income parents. I was proud to sign into law the bill creating taxpayer-sponsored scholarships for students in Washington, D.C. If school choice is good for the wealthy and the middle class, it's good for the disadvantaged children of America.
- We are seeing the results:
 - The achievement gap in both reading and math is closing for African-American and Latino school children across America.
 - In Maryland, the percentage of African American third graders reading proficiently increased 16 percentage points last year alone – and Hispanic third graders improved their performance by 10 percentage points in a year.
 - This spring I signed an Executive Order to help spread the gains under No Child Left Behind to American Indian and Alaska Native children.

Higher Education

- We have increased the number of men and women who will be receiving Pell Grants by nearly a million.
- Under my budget, funding for historically black colleges is at an all-time high.

Tax Relief

- America is a better nation when our economy is growing fast enough to create opportunity for everyone.
- We have acted:
 - Tax relief for families – marriage penalty, child tax credit.
 - Tax relief for entrepreneurs.
- We are seeing the results:
 - About 111 million Americans pay lower taxes, and nearly five million now have no tax bill at all.
 - After-tax income is growing.
 - With tax relief, we've created [TK] million jobs in the past eleven months, and brought the unemployment rate down to 5.6 percent – below the average rate of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s.

Progress for Minority Entrepreneurs

- We increased the number of SBA loans to minorities by 40 percent last year alone.
- We awarded six billion dollars in New Markets Tax Credits to promote economic and community development in low income areas by attracting capital from the private sector.
- We requested the largest funding increase for the Minority Business Development Agency in more than a decade.
- We've set a national strategy to create 100,000 new jobs in Indian Country by 2008.
- Earlier this year, I established a presidential commission to expand business opportunities for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.
- The entrepreneurial spirit in America is strong, and we can proudly say that more minorities are business owners than ever before.

Homeownership

- America is a better nation when more of our citizens achieve the great goal of home ownership.
- We have acted:
 - Down payment assistance ... good counseling to protect home buyers against predatory lenders ... and proposing tax credits to encourage the building of more affordable housing.
- We are seeing the results:
 - We learned this week that more minorities are now homeowners than ever before.
 - Fifty-one percent of minority households – nearly 15 million in all – now own their house.
 - More than half of all African Americans own their home.
 - Two summers ago I set a bold goal to have 5.5 million new homeowners by the end of the decade. We've added more than 1.5 million new homeowners since I launched that initiative – and we're on pace to exceed our goal.

Medicare

- America is a better nation when we keep our promise to care for citizens in their old age.
- We have acted:
 - I signed into law the first prescription drug benefit in the history of Medicare.
- We are seeing the results:

- Every senior citizen on Medicare is now eligible to get a drug discount card, which will immediately save them 15 to 30 percent off the retail price of most drugs.
- Four million seniors have already signed up for a card.
- Low- income seniors can get a 600 dollar credit right away.
- And beginning in 2006, all seniors on Medicare will be able to choose a prescription drug coverage plan that suit their needs, and gives them the peace of mind they deserve.

Justice in our communities

- America is a better country when we uphold civil rights and equality before the law.
- During my Administration, the Department of Justice has vigorously enforced the civil rights laws.
- The Civil Rights Division has opened a federal investigation into the murder of Emmett Till.
- I am the first President of the United States to ban racial profiling in federal law enforcement.
- And to serve the cause of justice on the federal bench, I have nominated outstanding men and women to the courts – including ten superbly qualified African Americans and Hispanic Americans for the courts of appeals, and 30 African Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Asian Americans for the district courts.

Compassion for those in need

- America is a stronger country when we encourage the good works of faith-based groups that are saving and changing lives.
- We have acted:
 - I signed an Executive Order to end discrimination against faith-based groups.
- We are seeing the results:
 - We have awarded more than a billion dollars in federal funds to faith-based groups.
 - Organization receiving grants from my Administration: Associated Black Charities of Baltimore, the United Methodist Mexican American Ministries, the San Jose Cambodian Buddhist Society, the Navajo Nation, the Cherokee Nation, and the Kenaitze Indian Tribe.

- People of faith are transforming America one heart, one soul at a time. They deserve to know that the law will never discriminate against them again.

Vision for the Future

- This is the consistent record of three and a half years – not a series of promises for an election year.
- There is more to do.
- We've brought standards and accountability to our Nation's schools, and we should do more for high schools – because we can't give up on the teenagers heading toward graduation.
- We're creating jobs, and now we need to train more people to fill them.
- We're implementing welfare reform, and now we need to encourage strong marriages and responsible fatherhood.
- We're protecting the rights of our minority citizens, and now we need to do more to bring America's illegal alien workers out of the shadows. America has always been a welcoming country, yet many of workers are condemned to live in a massive, undocumented economy. So I have proposed reforms that will grant legal status to temporary workers already in the country. This proposal reflects the interests and the best values of our country, and Congress should pass it into law.

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- I believe that every minority community – African Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Native Americans – will have a stronger voice in our country if they have a voice in both parties. And I believe that the policies of my Administration – policies that empower individuals and communities through better education and fairer immigration, lift up enterprise through tax relief and homeownership, and

respect the family by respecting faith and our promise to our seniors – are good for our whole Nation.

- Thank you very much for the invitation. Now I am happy to answer your questions.

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