

President Bush Pushes for Homeland Security Bill

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Remarks by the President at Matt Salmon for Governor and Rick Renzi for Congress Dinner

Phoenix Civic Plaza

Phoenix, Arizona

4:38 P.M. MST

THE PRESIDENT: Thanks for that kind introduction, Governor. (Applause.) First I want to thank the host of the dinner for organizing an early dinner. (Laughter.) It's good for Canangelo's ballpark. (Laughter.) I guess tonight's the night for the D-backs. (Applause.) I know this for certain, that this will be the only candidate I ever campaigned for who rides a Harley, speaks fluent Mandarin Chinese, and fronts an Elvis cover band. (Laughter.) He's the candidate I'm campaigning for who's going to win. (Applause.)

Matt's a breath of fresh air. See, he told the voters of his congressional district he'd only serve three terms. And when the third term finished, he didn't run again. He's the kind of person who does in office what he says he is going to do, which is vital for the statehouse and Arizona. (Applause.)

The state faces real challenges, but with him you're going to get a straightforward fellow, somebody who will tell you the truth, somebody who will give it his all to make Arizona the best state for everybody who lives here. It's my honor to be here. I'm proud to support him, and I thank you all for coming, as well. (Applause.)

I had the privilege of meeting Nancy. Both of us married above ourselves. (Laughter.) Nancy and Matt are the proud parents of four kids. And they place their family above all else. And it gives me great comfort to know I'm working for somebody who has got his priorities straight. (Applause.)

And I appreciate you mentioning Laura, Matt. She sends her best. She sends her best to our friends who are here, she sends her best to you and Nancy. She's over there in Crawford, waiting for me. One of the good things about coming out West is, I get to spend the night in Crawford, and remember there are values other than Washington values that count in the nation. (Applause.) It's good to come out West where the spirit of individualism still remains strong; to come out West, where you can see a long way; to come out West where people understand helping neighbor is an important part of building a good state.

So thanks for having me. I'm sorry Laura's not here. She's doing great. And by the way, I'm really, really proud of the job she's doing as our First Lady. (Applause.)

We went up to Flagstaff where we were working on the drought relief program. It was raining. (Laughter.) But I was up there to help a fellow named Rick Renzi who is going to be the next congressman from Northern Arizona. (Applause.) I want to thank Rick for putting his hat in the ring, and I want to thank you all for helping him.

I'm also honored to be with two great United States senators -- a great patriot, a man who is speaking clearly about the need to defend America and defend our freedoms, and that's John McCain. (Applause.) And by the way, he married above himself, too. (Laughter.) And today I was traveling with John Kyl. One of the jobs of the President is to pick good judges, who can put people of sound judgment and great talent on our federal benches. And the United States Senate has been, in some cases, not treating my nominees fairly.

I named a great lady named Pricilla Owen to the bench. She'd run statewide in our state, had overwhelming votes, one of the top graduates of her law school. The lawyer group rated her one of the best, the highest ratings they could give. And yet the Senate distorted her record because she wouldn't be willing to legislate

from the bench. John Kyl has remained strong on the Judiciary Committee to make sure my nominees get a fair hearing. We need to change the United States Senate so we can change the United States course. (Applause.)

I want to thank Congressman Hayworth -- who's not here, but I'm going to thank him anyway -- and Shadegg and Flake and Kolbe for their support. Arizona has got a fine congressional delegation, and I'm proud to be able to work with these members. I want to thank your Governor for coming today, my friend, Jane Dee Hull. I want to thank the Mayor of Phoenix for being here, Mayor Rimsza. And I also want to appreciate those of you who helped organize this dinner. I want to thank Chairman Fannon.

But most of all, I want to thank the grassroot activists who are here, the people who put the signs in the yards, the people who do the phone-calling, the people who do the mailers. Those tireless souls who never get thanked. I want to thank you for what you have done, and as importantly, I thank you for what you're going to do, which is to turn out a big vote come November the 5th. (Applause.)

I appreciate your next governor's agenda. It starts with making sure that the state doesn't raise the taxes on the working people. I appreciate that promise. He's a man who keeps his word. It's one of these issues that will distinguish him from his opponent. If he says he's not going to raise your taxes, he means he's not going to raise your taxes. And that will be good for the economy of Arizona. (Applause.)

He's focused on jobs. He briefed me on his WorkFair 2010 program. See, he and I understand the role of government is not to create wealth, but to create an environment in which the entrepreneur can flourish, in which small businesses can grow to be big businesses. I appreciate his vision for job creation.

I also appreciate his brand of compassionate conservatism, which says, we're going to help people help themselves; that when it comes to welfare, that job training is essential to help people find work. We understand that in work you find dignity; in work you find the chance to put food on the table; in work, you have a chance to realize your own self-worth. And so when it comes to helping people, your next governor will make sure that work is an essential part of your welfare system here in the state of Arizona.

I also appreciate his common sense views on our forests. You've got a lot of vital land here. We're mismanaging our forests. We're doing a lousy job of protecting an important treasure for the country. We ought to be thinning our forests. We ought to be taking the burnt timber and making use of it. We ought to be clearing the timber out from underneath our trees. We ought to be saving our forests with common sense forest policy. And I want to work with a governor who understands that. (Applause.)

No, I appreciate Matt. I appreciate him working hard to make this state a safer and stronger and better place. And that's what we've got to do for our country, as well. A strong America is a country that works to make sure people can find work. I'm worried about the fact that some of our fellow Americans who want to work can't find a job. And we've got to do everything we can to increase our job base, to do everything we can to make sure our economy continues to grow.

That's why it's absolutely essential, in my judgment, that we make the tax cuts we passed permanent, that we don't let them be temporary; that we get rid of that Senate rule that says, we're going to give -- on the one hand we giveth, on the other hand we taketh away. See, we give you tax cuts, but because of a -- kind of a weird rule in the Senate, those go away after 10 years. For the sake of planning, for the sake of job creation, for the sake of growth, for the sake of small businesses, the tax cuts need to be permanent. (Applause.) And that includes getting rid of the death tax forever. (Applause.)

We need an energy bill out of Washington, D.C. For the sake of job security and for the sake of national security, we need an energy bill. They've been talking too long up there. We need a bill which encourages conservation, promotes new technologies, promotes renewables, but a bill which will encourage increase of supply here in America. Listen, we're too dependent on foreign sources of crude oil. And, unfortunately, some of those people don't like us. For the sake of job security and national security, I need an energy bill and I need it soon. (Applause.)

There are some big projects that have been put on hold because construction folks can't get terrorism insurance. They estimate over 300,000 of our fellow citizens aren't working, 300,000 hard-hats aren't working because people can't get insured because of the terrorist attacks. Congress needs to act. They need to get a terrorism insurance bill to my desk. For the sake of job creation, for the sake of helping people find work, for the sake of the 300,000 hard-hats who would be working, I need a terrorism insurance bill; a bill that does not

reward the trial lawyers, but a bill that encourages construction workers to get back to work. (Applause.)

There's a lot of things Congress can do to help, and I look forward to working with them to create the jobs. And I know the two senators here and the members of Congress are anxious to help to expand our economy. But one thing Congress must not do is overspend. See, one thing Congress has got to do is hold the line on spending if we want our economy to grow. Interest rates are low, inflation is low, productivity is some of the best in the world. The foundation for growth is there.

But to make sure people can find work, it's important for Congress not to overspend. And there's a danger. See, every program in Washington sounds good. Everybody's idea is a brilliant idea. The problem is, is those brilliant ideas cost in the billions. Plus, the Senate doesn't have a budget. Senator McCain wants it to have a budget. Senator Kyl wants it to have a budget. It doesn't have a budget. The other side hasn't been able to get a budget. And when you don't have a budget, guess what the danger is -- that there's no fiscal responsibility with your money. There's no fiscal restraint. For the sake of job creation, the Congress must fund our priorities and hold the line on additional spending. (Applause.)

We'll work together, and we'll work hard together to make sure this country is a stronger country, to make sure people can find work. We've also got to make sure it's a safer country. I think our biggest job is to protect the homeland, and the reason we need to do so, there is still an enemy out there which hates America. They hate us because of what we love. We love freedom. We love the fact that people can worship an almighty God any way they see fit here in America. We love the fact that people can have honest discourse and political debate. We love a free press. We love everything about freedom, and we refuse to relinquish that love. And so long as we love freedom, there are people that want to hurt us. See, that's the problem we face.

And the other difference is, we value life in America. Every life matters, everybody counts. Everybody is precious. Not to the enemy. They have hijacked a great religion, and murdered -- murdered innocent people, and could care less. And that's who we're fighting, and they're out there. So we've got to do everything we can to protect the homeland.

You've got to know, there's a lot of good people working hard to protect you. Conversations taking place that never took place before in Washington. A lot of information-sharing, a lot of folks running down every hint, every lead, every idea that somebody might be thinking about doing something to America. We're moving on it, within the confines of the United States Constitution, I might add. We're pursuing leads. We're disrupting. We're making sure, as best as we possibly can, that the enemy doesn't hit us again.

And that's why I went to the United States Congress and asked the Congress to join me in the creation of a homeland security department. I did so because there's over 100 agencies in Washington, D.C. that have something to do with securing the homeland. They're everywhere, and it seems like to me that if the number one priority of the government is to defend the homeland, they ought to be under one agency, so we can change the culture of these agencies, so we can insist on priority.

And the House moved and the Senate is stuck. And the Senate is stuck because they want to micromanage the process. Not all senators, but some senators. They want to have a thick book of rules that will tell the executive branch and this administration and future administrations how to deal with the -- securing our homeland. I appreciate these two senators here, standing strong for doing what's right, for leaving a legacy behind so future Presidents can more likely deal with an enemy who could care less about rules and regulations, an enemy which is willing to move fast.

Now, let me just tell you what I'm talking about, so you'll understand. After September the 11th, the Customs Service wanted to require its inspectors at our nation's 301 ports of entry to wear radiation detection devices so they could -- these guys would have them on their belts, and if there was -- somebody was trying to smuggle a weapon of mass destruction into our country, we'd know about it. Somebody was trying to bring something in illegally, across the border, we would know about it, through the radiation detection device. The union that represents the Customs workers objected to this common sense action. They didn't like it. They sought to invoke collective bargaining, which would have taken a year to resolve.

See, it's those kind of rules which bind the capacity of the executive branch to do the job you want us to do. In order to locate employees in cases of emergency, the Customs Service sought to have employees provide their home addresses and their telephone numbers to the Customs Service. That makes sense. If you've got somebody you think may be getting ready to hit us and you need to move one of your Custom employees into a spot of action, you need his phone number. The union objected to listing the phone numbers, and said such a request would violate the privacy rights of workers. The union actually filed a grievance and sought to

negotiate something as sensible as this request.

We do not need rules and bureaucracy to entangle us in the job you want us to do. Protection of the homeland is more important than special interests in Washington, D.C. (Applause.)

In this state, you don't need to write your senators. In this state they've been strong in leaving a legacy behind, an important legacy. Because this enemy isn't going away. And the best way, however, to secure the homeland, short-term and long-term, is to hunt the killers down, one person at a time, one at a time, and bring them to justice, which is what the United States of America is going to do. (Applause.)

And we're making progress. We're making progress against the killers. That's all they are, by the way. Nothing but a bunch of cold-blooded killers. And that's the way we're treating them. Sometimes it's hard to tell the progress; this is a different kind of war, as you all know. I mean, in the old days you count the number of tanks you destroy, or the number of airplanes you destroy, and say we're making progress. These folks don't have tanks. They don't have airplanes. They hide in caves. They send youngsters to their suicidal death. That's the kind of people fighting. They're resourceful and they're determined, but they're not as resourceful and determined as the United States of America.

I put out a doctrine that said either you're with us or you're with the enemy. That doctrine still stands today. And a lot of nations have joined us in rounding up these killers. We captured over a couple thousand of them. We got one the other day in Karachi. He popped his head up, and he's no longer a threat to the United States or our friends. (Applause.)

That's the kind of war we fight. It's not a glamorous war according to the TV shows and stuff. It's just one person at a time. And we're relentless. And we're absolutely determined because we love freedom, and we owe it to our children to be relentless and determined. And that's why I asked the Congress to pass a defense bill that's the largest increase in defense spending since Ronald Reagan was the President. It sends two signals as far as I'm concerned. One, any time our youngsters are sent into harm's way, they deserve the best pay, the best training, and the best possible equipment. (Applause.) We owe that to them, and we owe it to their loved ones. For those of you in the audience who have got a loved one in the military, I'm proud of them, I've got great confidence in them, and I want to thank you for your sacrifice, as well.

Secondly, the reason I requested the defense bill that I did is because I wanted to send a message to friend and foe alike that we're not quitting. There is no calendar on my desk that says by such and such a date we're leaving, that we're going to quit when -- by an artificial time. That's not the way we think in America. No matter how long it takes, we will defend our freedom. That's the message we sent.

Now, the House passed the bill, and the Senate passed the bill, and it hasn't gotten to my desk yet. We're at war, and the defense bill hasn't made it. I'm calling upon the leaders of the Senate and the leaders of the House to reconcile any differences they have quickly, and get the defense bill to my desk before you go home. Quit playing politics with the defense bill. (Applause.)

In order to defend our freedoms, there's going to be some steep hills to climb, and we're going to have to climb them, and climb them together. We've still got work to do against al Qaeda in Afghanistan. I want you to tell your children, if they ask you about all this war rhetoric, that your great country went into Afghanistan not to conquer anybody, but to free people. We went in and freed people from the clutches -- (applause.) It's really important for you to tell them that we value each life, no matter where that life lives.

And we cried when we heard the stories about the Taliban not letting young girls go to school. It broke our heart, but it also made us joyous when we realized upholding the doctrine that said, if you harbor a terrorists, you're just as guilty as the terrorists, not only allowed the United States to keep its word, but we freed people. We freed people from the clutches of the barbaric Taliban regime. (Applause.)

We've got work to do in Afghanistan, and we will continue to do the work in Afghanistan. No, they're kind of sliding around the border regions, and we've got people looking for them. Sometimes they try to get into Pakistan, and we're teamed up with the Pakistan government to find them. Sometimes we get them on the run, and then they think they can light in other countries. And so we're pressuring them in other countries. It doesn't matter where they think they can light, we're after them.

We've also got a big chore to make sure the world's worst leaders never threaten, blackmail or harm America with the world's worst weapons. I went to the United Nations the other day. I did so because I wanted to make the case against a mad man, a case against a man who has lied to the world, the case in front of this august

body that for 11 long years he has stood in defiance of resolution after resolution, and at the same time built up his cache of chemical and biological weapons.

This is a man who continues to murder his own people; a man who has gassed -- used gas on his own citizens; a man who has used chemical weapons on his neighbors; a man who has invaded two countries; a man which hates -- who hates America; a man who loves to link up with al Qaeda; a man who is a true threat to America, to Israel, to anybody in the neighborhood.

And so I went to the United Nations, and I said to the United Nations, you need to deal with him. You, the collective body of freedom-loving countries, need to deal with him. For 11 years he's made fun of you. You can either be the United Nations and be effective, or you can be the League of Nations -- your choice. I hope they're the United Nations. I hope they're a robust United Nations. I hope they're capable of helping to keep the peace. That's their choice.

Saddam Hussein has got a choice, and that is, he can disarm. There's no negotiations, by the way. There's nothing to negotiate with him. He told the world he would disarm 11 years ago, and he's lied to the world. (Applause.) It's their choice to make. He must disarm, just like he said he would do. And the United Nations, in order to be effective, must disarm him. But for the sake of our freedom, for the sake of our future, if nothing happens, the United States will lead a coalition to hold him to account and to disarm Saddam Hussein. We owe it to the world to do so. (Applause.)

I want to thank members of both political parties in the Congress for working on a strong statement of resolve that the world will see. Members of both political parties have worked together with the -- with members of my staff, to develop a statement that shows our determination and our desire to keep the peace, to make the world a more peaceful place. I think you're going to see that our government will be, shortly, speaking with one voice, and the world will take notice.

History has called us into action, my fellow Americans; it just has. We have a chance to blink, or we have a chance to lead. I intend to lead. (Applause.)

As we make sure that we're a safer and stronger place, we've also got to work to make America a better place for all of us. I mean all of us. It starts with making sure the education systems work. I appreciate the idea of having a governor who is willing to work to challenge the soft bigotry of low expectations; somebody who is willing to raise the standards; somebody who believes, like I believe, every child can learn; and somebody who is willing to measure to determine if every child is learning.

You see, it's really important to measure. If you believe children can learn, then you want to know. And if you find children trapped in schools which won't teach and won't change, you'd better have you a governor who won't stand for the status quo. There's no second-rate children in Arizona. There's no second-rate children in America. (Applause.)

But a better America also understands that the true strength of our country is not our government, but the true strength of the country is the people, the hearts and souls of the American people. See, that's what I think the strength of the country is. And we can change this country. You've got to understand that amongst the plenty, there are pockets of despair and hopelessness in this country. There just are. There are people who are addicted. There are people who are lonely. There are people who are lost. When you say American Dream to some of our fellow Americans, they go blank. And that's not right. And we need to deal with that. We need to address that part of our -- because when one of us hurts, all of us should hurt.

And we can change that part of the American scene. And we've got to understand, as we do, the limitations of government. Listen, government can hand out money, and we do a pretty good job of it sometimes. But what government can never do is put love in somebody's life; can't put hope in a person's heart. That's going to happen because our fellow Americans decide to fight evil by doing some good. That will happen when our fellow Americans understand being a patriot is more than just putting your hand over your heart. Being a patriot is serving something greater than yourself. Being a patriot is somebody who mentors a child. Being a patriot is somebody who feeds the hungry. Being a patriot is somebody who starts a Boy or -- Boys or Girls Club. Being a patriot -- who does everything he or she can do to make the quality of life in your neighborhood as good it can be.

I don't know what's going through the mind of the enemy when they hit us. Oh, they probably thought after September the 11th, we might file a lawsuit or two. (Laughter.) But they learned differently. They learned that this great country is plenty tough, and we'll defend our freedoms. They also learned that we're plenty

compassionate, and that we'll respond to their evil with decency. One person can't do everything in America, but one person can do something. And as you do that something, I want you to remember that you can change this country, one heart, one soul, one conscience at a time.

I believe that we're in the midst of a cultural change in America; I believe it. I believe we're shifting our culture from one which had said, if it feels good, just go ahead and do it, and, if you've got a problem, blame somebody else. I believe that since the terrible attack on America took place, that we're ushering in a period of personal responsibility, where each of us must understand if you're lucky enough to be a mom or a dad, your most important job is to love your child with all your heart and all your soul.

The culture of responsibility says, if you live in Phoenix, Arizona, you must do everything you can to support the quality of life in that community, don't hope for some distant government to do it. The culture of responsibility says, if you run a corporation in America, you're responsible to be honest with the books and treat your employees and shareholders with respect. (Applause.)

I believe it's happening. And perhaps the most vivid example about what I'm talking about, about serving something greater than yourself took place on Flight 93. America must remember that tragic story, because it speaks volumes about the great spirit of the country. People flying across the plane, 40 passengers and I think four crew members, I believe it was. They learned from their loved ones that something was taking place on the ground that no one could possibly imagine in America. They realized the plane they were on was going to be used as a weapon. They talked to their loved ones. They said the word "love" a lot. They said a prayer, they prayed for strength. One guy said, "Let's roll." They took the plane into the ground. They served something greater than themselves. That's a powerful story, because to me it speaks to the soul of our country, our worth.

There is no question in my mind that if we remain strong and focused and tough, we can achieve peace. We can achieve peace for our country. We can achieve peace in the Middle East, peace in South Asia. There's no doubt we can do that, if we're tough and strong and determined to speak clearly and always defend freedom. And at home, we can eliminate those pockets of despair. We can help people with love.

And the reason I'm optimistic, is because I know America. America is full of the finest people on the face of the Earth. America is the greatest nation on the face of the Earth. Thank you for coming. May God bless, and God bless America. (Applause.)

END 5:15 P.M. MST

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