Chapter 1:

Overview

Biography

Gore  Bush

Why I Seek the Presidency

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Biography - Gore

Al Gore
Carthage, Tennessee
August 9, 2000

Growing up in Tennessee

Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you. Thank you so much. You know, everything important in my life, it seems, has started right here in Carthage, and I wanted the first formal event after the announcement of Joe Lieberman as my running mate to be here in Carthage. And I'm so delighted to see so many close friends and -- you know, if I had the time, I could stay here all day long talking about old stories and catching up on mutual friends. And I just thank you so much for being here.

And I'm so glad that my mother and Joe Lieberman's mother are here, and I want to ask you to especially welcome them. They had a great visit up at my mother's house and met each other yesterday. And I want to say a special word of welcome to Hadassah Lieberman and ask her and my bride, Tipper, to both stand. (Applause.) And there are quite a few family members here, and forgive me for not introducing everybody, but we've got a lot of friends that have come from all over Smith County and from some other counties to come here and participate in this meeting.

This is -- Joe, this is really a little bit different from the open meetings that I've told you about that I had. I had thousands of them.

I had an average of five a week. And for 16 years, eight in the House and eight in the Senate, I traveled all over Smith County and the other 25 counties in my district, and then all over the 95 counties in this state,
meeting with people and asking them to give me their ideas and suggestions and comments, and respond to their questions. And if there was some kind of problem that was related to the federal government, I wanted to know about that.

These folks are my teachers. They taught me what I needed to know to make democracy work the way it's supposed to. And I threw my whole heart into it.

In the car on the way out here, I was telling Joe about a -- about a saying that somebody from Tennessee put on an embroidery and framed for me, because he heard me say it so many times in ending speeches. And it -- and the saying is from Scripture: "Whatsoever thy -- you findeth thy hand to do, do it with all thy might."

Well, when I got the job of representing you in the House of Representatives, that's kind of the approach that I tried to take -- just to do it with everything I had -- and the same thing with the Senate, and the same thing as vice president. And I want to ask you to support me for president so I can do exactly that as president of the United States.

Now let me introduce Carthage to you. I've said before that Carthage is the kind of place that knows about it when you're born and cares about it when you die. Every adult in the community, when we're at our best, takes responsibility for every child in the community. Family ties are known going back many, many generations.

Your daughter-in-law April, who we talked about the other day, knows that because she's like a lot of the folks here. You know where that name "Tennessee" came from? Joe's daughter-in-law went to investigate her family tree, because in Gleason, Tennessee, her high school teacher gave her that assignment. And so she went to her grandmother. And her grandmother said, "Now listen here. If you're going to do this, we're going to do it right."
And so they went to graveyards and rubbed the stones, and got the records from the courthouse, and they ended up spending six months reconstructing the entire family tree. She found Cherokees. She found out all of the information. And she found out that six generations back and seven generations back, there were two women in her family that moved away from Tennessee with their husbands, and they were so homesick that both of them named their firstborn daughters "Tennessee."

And so when she was spirited away from this beautiful state --the home of the Tennessee Lady Volunteers -- and taken way north to the home of the University of Connecticut ladies basketball team -- you can readily understand that when their first daughter was born, she too was going to name that daughter "Tennessee."

Well, thank you all for -- for coming. Joe and I are anxious to get on with the fight for working families, the struggle for -- on behalf of the people and not the powerful.

This is the new guard. Joe and Hadassah represent in many ways the American dream, when you know their stories. And Joe said on the podium in Nashville at War Memorial -- he said he'd like us to be known as "the American Dream Team." And that's pretty good.

We like to think of ourselves as the new guard and that other bunch as the old guard. We don't want to go back; we want to go forward.

I will not say a single unkind word about Governor Bush or Dick Cheney. I will not have a single negative personal attack on either one of them. We want to elevate this campaign. We want to elevate it.

We want to invite them to debate the issues. We want to invite them to come town hall meetings kind of like this one and just take questions from folks and go round the country that way. We want regular debates. But they'll have to decide on that.
In any case, we are going to run a campaign that honors the American people, and asks a lot of the American people, but asks the best of the American people. And one way to do that is to listen carefully and then respond effectively. And that's a little bit about what we're going to do here today.
When I was 16, I met Al at a party after his graduation prom. Remember formal dresses and corsages? We had come with different dates but wound up hitting it off better with each other. I remember right from the start, he was a good listener, and he had the most intense and beautiful blue eyes. He called me the next day, and soon we began to fall in love.

When Al went to Harvard as a freshman, I traveled there with my grandmother to see him a couple of times. He had a great group of friends who remain close today.

I also went to his home in Tennessee. I met his friends there, and for the first time, his sister, Nancy, a beautiful woman with a wit to match, and his mother, Pauline, one of the first women to graduate from Vanderbilt Law School and still one of the wisest women I know -- those strong, intelligent, independent women who I think gave Al an early and lasting respect for women and their views.

It was the late ‘60s, an exciting time, a time of change.
[Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., Civil Rights Activist]:
Great God Almighty, we are free at last.

[T. Gore]:
And controversy. We certainly were touched by it. But we also had a lot of fun, riding on his motorcycle, going to the teach, going to concerts, just falling in love and enjoying the way the world around you just fades away when you are only focused on each other.

But soon Al faced the most important decision of his young life, Vietnam. We opposed the war, but for Al, as for many people, it was complicated. Al knew that if he didn’t go, then someone else from Carthage could go in his place, so he did something I remain so proud of today. He decided to enlist in the Army. One night that spring, we went for a long walk on the banks of the Charles River, and Al asked me to marry him. On May 19, 1970, I married Private Albert Gore, Jr.

After our honeymoon, we moved into our first home in a trailer park near Fort Lucker, Alabama, with other service families. I soon learned about life on the base, and I learned the hard way. Like, when I hung the laundry out and a helicopter blew it all down, and I had to wash it all over again. Once.

At the same time as Al and I were starting our life together, his father was facing a tough reelection campaign. Senator Gore was a man of get principle who had opposed the war and supported civil rights. He was not only Al's father, he was his hero. In November, his father lost, and it was tough for our whole family.

Just seven weeks later, during Christmas break, he was due to leave for Vietnam. Al was an Army journalist in the field, and like all wartime wives, I worried, especially because the mail was so slow and unreliable.
Every night, I prayed for his safe return.
The summer he came home, we took a camping trip across America from Nashville to Yosemite National Park here in California. We had a great time, but I could tell Al was someplace else. His father's defeat and the war had made him question old assumptions. Politics was the last thing on his mind.

Back in Nashville, Al went to the graduate school of religion at Vanderbilt and started out as a reporter at "The Nashville Tennessean." He worked his way up to writing editorials.

Karenna was born in 1973. Al took some time off to stay with us. And by the way, he treated me like a queen.

It was a special time in our lives. We bought a small farm in Carthage right across the river from Al's parents. I went to work for "The Tennessean" as a photographer. Al and I even worked on a couple of stories together, my pictures, his words.

Then one Friday morning, the editor of "The Tennessean" called us at home to say that the local congressman was retiring. We spent the weekend thinking about it.

I think Al's work as a journalist gave him the sense that if people got involved, it could make things better. His idealism was tempered but still strong.

[A. Gore]:
I believe that with your help, I can make a difference.

[T. Gore]:
Al announced his candidacy on Monday, and we hit the campaign trail.

We tried to meet every person who could cast a vote, and I mean every person, no matter what it took. I sure wish we could do that this year.

It was a tough campaign, but late on primary night, as the last votes
were counted, Al won.

[A. Gore]:
I'm going to take Tennessee ideas to Washington and put them to work for this country.

[T. Gore] :
That campaign marked the beginning of Al's public life, 24 years as a congressman, senator, and vice president.

[A. Gore]:
We will make democracy work the way it's supposed to.

[T. Gore]:
I believe Al's leadership style was formed early on in the hundreds of open meetings he held in Tennessee.

[A. Gore]:
We can glimpse the future in the hearts and minds of Tennesseans.

[T. Gore]:
He listened to his constituents' concerns. He took them back to Washington, and he made the system respond to them. He took on powerful interests and held the first hearings on protecting families from toxic waste, the beginning of his commitment to the environment.

[A. Gore]:
We have to accept responsibility for choosing the destiny of America.

[T. Gore]:
Meanwhile, Al and I were raising our family through these years. After Al went to Congress, our daughters Kristin and Sarah were born, followed by our son, Albert.

Family vacations were a very special time, and he enjoyed them as much as the kids did.

Al always worked long hours, but as busy as he was, he put his family
first. One year I remember Al going to Speaker Tip O'Neill and saying, "Sir, you scheduled votes on Halloween night." The speaker just looked back at him, and Al said, "Well, there are a lot of us with kids who want to take them trick-or-treating." The speaker realized how important this was to Al and other young parents in Congress, and he changed the schedule.

With an even busier schedule today, he still manages to make time for Halloween.

Eleven years ago, our family life was shaken to its core when a car struck our son, Albert, after a baseball game. With support and prayers from people all across America, our entire family helped him get well. I will never forget the kindness of senators and their wives who visited and prayed for Albert's recovery.

It was the hardest time in my life. I talked with Al, with my friends, and with mental health professionals. And I realized that I was suffering from clinical depression. I got help, and it worked. And Al was there for me and our family, day after day, every step of the way.

We know the shame and the pain so many other American families have faced with this illness, and we want you to know you're not alone. People care. Professionals can help.

We'd always been a close family, but after the accident we saw more clearly how precious we are to each other. We made sure we made time for the little things, like baseball, soccer, and lacrosse games.

In recent years, Al spent months training to run the Marine Corps marathon with our daughters, and then climbed Mount Ranier with our son. And you should see Al with our first grandson, Wyatt -- who, by the way, was born on the Fourth of July.

A year and a half ago, Al lost his father. I wish his father could be here to see his son accept your nomination. I know how proud he'd be, not
just of his son's sense of duty and love of country, but for his
dedication as a husband, father, and grandfather.
You see, to me, what is most important is that with all the past
accomplishments and future promises, he's still the man I fell in love
with in high school 30 years ago.
[Announcer]:
1969.
America in turmoil.
Al Gore graduates college.
His father, a U.S. senator, opposes the Vietnam War.
Al Gore has his doubts but enlists in the Army.
When he comes home from Vietnam, the last thing he thinks he'll ever do is enter politics.
He starts a family with Tipper, becomes an investigative reporter.
Then Al Gore decided that to change what was wrong in America, he had to fight for what was right.
He ran for Congress, held some of the first hearings on cleaning up toxic waste, made the environment his cause, broke with his own party to support the Gulf War, fought to reform welfare with work requirements and time limits.
His fight now is to ensure that prosperity enriches all our families -- not just the few, strengthen Social Security, take on big drug companies to guarantee prescription drugs for seniors, hold schools accountable for results, tax cuts for working families and the middle
class.

Al Gore -- married 30 years, father of four, fighting for us.

(On screen: Al Gore for President, www.algore.com; Paid for by Gore/Lieberman Inc.)
I'm on my way to Philadelphia, and we are on our way to victory come November.

We've been working our way toward the convention, traveling through states the Democrats won in the last few elections. But not this time. Not this year. We've had rallies in Arkansas, Missouri, Kentucky, and Ohio. We've seen thousands of people. The crowds have been big, and the enthusiasm even bigger. Now I'm in Westerville, Ohio, and I cannot wait to stand before you on Thursday night and tell America how I want to use these good times for great purposes.

Tonight you heard from the best speaker in our family, my wife Laura. Watching her speak tonight, seeing her grace and strength, reminded me just how much I love her.

It also reminded me of a true story. When I asked Laura to marry me -- not on our first date, by the way, but pretty shortly thereafter -- she was a public school librarian, as you just learned. She knew I was getting ready to run for the United States Congress, and she said she would marry me so long as she never had to give a speech. I know you're as glad as I am that she didn't hold me to that promise. Laura has been a fabulous first lady of Texas. One of the very best reasons I can think of to vote for me for president is to have Laura Bush as first lady of the United States of America.
George W. Bush  
Republican National Convention 2000  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania  
August 3, 2000  

**Biography: "The Sky's the Limit." (Audio)**

[G.W. Bush]:

I think in order to be good president, first and foremost, you have to know where you want to lead. I want to lead America to a day that everybody in this country feels that the great American dream belongs to them as much as anybody else, if they're willing to work for it. There is kind of life I think that a lot of Americans feel is slipping away. Safe for kids everywhere, and baseball, barbecues, football games after church. Midland is out in middle of nowhere really. It's kind of on the edge. And I know this may sound trite, but in the '50s, people who went to Midland were pretty daring, and were kind of pioneers, entrepreneurial pioneers, in many ways. Their used to be slogan in Midland said, "The Sky is the Limit," which really is such an optimistic slogan. It's how I feel about America really.

[Barbara Bush, Former First Lady]:

The kids all were the same. They all went to public school and then on to
high school, and when Robin died, Jebbie was just about 3 or 4 months old and George was 7.

[G.W. Bush]:
It was a tough time. The thing I came away from that is that is marriages face stressful situations, and sometimes a stressful situation like that can wreck a marriage. In this case, it made my mother and dad's marriage that much stronger, brought them together and brought our family together.

[B. Bush]:
But he compensated by trying to make me feel better. And for about six months, George kept big George and me laughing, or playing with us or doing things with us, and we, on the other hand, were trying to do things with him so he wouldn't feel neglected. When suddenly one day I heard him out window say to Mike Procter, a friend his, "I'm sorry, Mike. I can't come out and play. I have to play with my mother." And I realized that that caring little boy had -- he'd really had been entertaining me. I hadn't been entertaining him at all. So I had to let him go.

[Laura Bush, Wife of G W. Bush]:
We met in Midland in 1977. George had moved back in 1975.

[B. Bush]:
He fell so madly in love with her so quickly.

[L. Bush]:
It was a whirlwind romance. I was school librarian then in Austin, Texas, and I came home for a couple of weeks in the summer to stay with my parents, and George and I met then.

[B. Bush]:
And George knocked on the door, and he said, "Mother, I want you to meet Laura Welch. She's the girl I have to marry." I said "What?" And
he meant I'm going to marry.

[L. Bush]:
Married right away, and then I moved back to Midland, and that was a very sweet time in our lives. That was when we had our children.

[G.W. Bush]:
There was a great moment when they were born, and I was in delivery room, and it was just an incredible feeling of life and the preciousness of life, and I realized I was responsible for helping them grow up in a safe and secure home, that I was responsible for loving them with all my heart and all my soul, that I was going to be responsible for helping them get a good education, and they -- these girls mean more to us than anything, and they've just graduated from high school, and it just seems like yesterday we were at the hospital having birth.

[G.W. Bush]:
I like to laugh. And I like to laugh with people, and you know, sometimes I find myself I need to laugh at some of the things I say. I'm just -- I'm a person who likes to smile.

[Mayor Carlos M. Ramirez (D), El Paso, Texas]:
The governor has family values that are very dear to Hispanics. We have seen that. He embraces those family values. We have those family values, so we identify with him.

[George W. Bush, Former President of the United States]:
You know, their the same values that everybody here teaches their own kids. To be honest, tell the truth, give somebody else credit.

[G.W. Bush]:
Country is so -- values are so strong and the concept of entrepreneurship, family, freedom, such a powerful, powerful part of the American experience, that somebody who's newly arrived to this
country can be just as an American as somebody who has been here for generations.

A wonderful man named John White asked me to come work with him, and in a project in the third ward of Houston called Project PULL. It was a mentoring program.

[Ernie Ladd, Co-founder, Pull]:
The meaning of PULL was Professional United Leadership League. We had professional people who were schoolteachers, football players, basketball players, lawyers and doctors involved, and help going to community to help minority kids.

[G.W. Bush]:
I realized then that society can change and must change one person at a time, and but it was place that was full of activity, and energy, and kids were coming from tough circumstances. I saw that firsthand one night when I took a little boy who I took a shining to named Jimmy Dean. I took him home, and it’s a situation I had never seen before. It was a living room with his mom, looked like she was on drugs, and bunch of hanger-oners, and smoke filled, and this was this boy’s home, and it was tragic and sad that he was growing up in such a tough environment, an environment that -- where the love that I had known as a child seemed like the drugs and alcohol abuse had replaced that love. And unfortunately, the story ends on a sad note. My little friend was shot when he became a teenager, and died.

[Ladd]:
We all were made in the image of God, regardless of the color of skin, and George Bush was a part of working this out for the city of Houston. The city of Houston could be very well thankful for George Bush and John White.

[G.W. Bush]:
One of the great challenges of our generation is to assume responsibility and lead. We started as the "if it feels good, do it" generation. But now we're moms, and dads, and business leaders and teachers. If we don't help others, if we don't step up and lead, who will? That's one of the reasons I ran for governor of Texas.

[Unidentified Female]:
I have seen a big difference since he has been governor of the state of Texas in the amount of supports that we have to help us as educators reach the standards. He said, if you need it, we'll get it for you. We have Web sites. We have grant programs. We have teacher training in the state of Texas, and we have George leading the way. George W. -- people ask me why have I followed him so intently in this education and reading. I followed him because he's been leader. He has been leading the way.

[G.W. Bush]:
Reading is new civil right, and inherent in that statement is this profound knowledge, and it says, if you can't read, you can't access the American dream.

"Dear Governor Bush, thank for you coming to our school and for your visit. Thank you for trying to be our president. We hope that a lot of people vote for you." So do I. "If you become president, we hope that you will make the world safer and that there will be no more bad guys." America's more than just another country. America is more than just a place. It's an ideal. Teddy Roosevelt said, "It's hard to fail, but it's worse never to have tried." Our great country was built by people who never gave up and never gave in.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

[Ronald Reagan, Former President of the United States]:
Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall.
(END VIDEO CLIP)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

[John F. Kennedy, Former President of the United States]:
Ask not what your country can do for you...

(END VIDEO CLIP)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

[Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., Civil Rights Activist]:
I have a dream today.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

[G.W. Bush]:
Dreamers, the doers who take risks and sometimes failed, but then rose above failure to achieve greater good things.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

[Richard Nixon, Former President of the United States]:
Because of what you have done, the heavens have become a part of man's world.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

[G.W. Bush]:
I'm confident I can do the job that people want me to do. I'm a proud member of my party. But I'm more than that -- I'm an American. I love my country. I love what America stands for. I'm going to remind people that we're lucky to be Americans.
Bill Bradley’s Endorsement

I’m very grateful to be here today with a leader who brought high purpose and high ideals to our contest for the nomination, Senator Bill Bradley.

There is no more passionate voice for justice and equality in all of America than Senator Bill Bradley.

And I look forward to working with Bill Bradley, working with him in the years ahead to break down all the barriers of intolerance and discrimination. Anybody who listened to Bill Bradley in the last 15 months, or throughout his career, knows that the passion in his heart to bring our people together across the lines of race and other barriers that have been used by some to justify hatefulness and discrimination, that that passion in his heart is deep and real and motivates him to make this a better country. And I am honored to have his support today.

No one has done more to put campaign finance reform at the top of our national agenda. And I look forward to working with Bill Bradley in the years ahead to break the special-interest stalemate in Washington once and for all. And both of us look forward to working with Wisconsin's Russ Feingold to pass the legislation that he's introduced, and Herb Kohl. It was here in Wisconsin that I first pledged, as I reaffirm today, that with your help, the very first bill I send to the Congress as president will be the McCain-Feingold campaign finance reform bill. And we're going to pass it into law.
Bill Bradley called our party and our nation to the cause of health care reform. And I look forward to working with Bill Bradley in the years ahead to move this nation toward universal health coverage, starting with every single child in America by the year 2004 and then moving step by step to cover all Americans. Nobody has spoken more eloquently about the need for our country to address the problem of child poverty. With your help, I pledge to translate his plans and his words on child poverty into the deeds of this great nation in confronting the problem of child poverty in our country.

I treasure Bill Bradley's support. He is a good Democrat, who speaks and stands for principles we all believe in. And Bill Bradley will be an important part of this campaign and an important part of America's future.

Now, Bill quoted Vince Lombardi once. I'm going to quote him a second time here. He said, “People who work together win.” It's the same thought as the one Bill expressed, “Winning is a team sport.” And I'll tell you this; on behalf of the hard-working families of America, on behalf of hard-working men and women all across this country, we're going to win this fight. We're going to win this election. We're going to win in November. We've going to win the presidency.

And with your help, we're going to win the future of this country and make it what it should be!

Two decades ago, two decades ago, in the days before his election, Ronald Reagan asked a famous question that—he asked a question that deserves to be repeated.

But our opponents wouldn't dare to adapt and ask this question today. The question is, “Are you better off than you were eight years ago?”

What about it, Green Bay: Is America better off than it was four
years ago? Better off than eight years ago?

Well together, we set our hands to a time of recession and doubt, and built it into a time of prosperity and progress, the longest period of economic growth in the 211-year history of the U.S. republic. That is progress that deserves to be continued.

Our opponents, instead of rejoicing, seem to be actually a little put out by this record. After all, every single one of them in the House and Senate voted against the policies that unleashed the prosperity and progress. They seek to minimize our nation's unprecedented success. And then, when they find it's impossible, they seek to somehow explain it all away.

They say, for example, that the credit goes to the hard work of the American people. Of course, it does. Yes, of course, it does. But let's remind our opponents that, when they were in power, people were working just as hard and they had a lot less to show for it because the policies in Washington, D.C., were wrong; they were holding them back.

Their work was undone by a government that didn't work, a government that wasn't on your side.

I am running for president because I want to serve the people, and not the powerful, the well-connected and the well-off. I want to fight for you and your families.

America has done well these past eight years. But I am here today to tell you, you ain't seen nothing yet! We are moving on to a higher place with even more good jobs so that nobody is left behind.

As Senator Bradley said, in a letter to his supporters this morning, and as he said in slightly different ways today, I believe we can wisely pursue both prosperity and justice, both freedom and equality. That is a powerful message; it is Bill Bradley's message.

It is my vision because it is the cause of the Democratic Party. It is
what we all share in common. And with your help, we're going to do it on behalf of the American people.

Let us reach for an America that closes out not just its material debts, but its moral debts as well; where no child goes without health care; where no senior goes without the prescription medicine that they need; and where, at long last, we heal the great division of our history and close the racial divide. As Bill Bradley has said, and I quote, “The quest for racial unity is the defining moral issue of our time.”

Let us also reach for an America where we invoke all the wonders of science and discovery to cure cancer, ease the pain of disease and let all our children breathe free from pollution and smog, and clean up the environment and take on global warming and have clean air and clean water, and protect the Great Lakes.

Let us open a whole new era of prosperity and progress for all Americans, but it's not going to come without hard effort, deep conviction and a continuing will to fight, for there are powerful, entrenched interests determined to block our progress at every turn. It was hard to win in '92 and '96. It was hard to make them reopen the government when they shut it down. It was hard to pass the new economic plan that's unleashed the progress. So you bet, it's going to be hard to continue making progress.

The HMOs and the insurance companies have lavished special interest money on our opponents. The big oil companies and the big polluters stand with them. That's why the gun lobby is against us lock, stock and barrel. Well, I wear their opposition as a badge of honor. And that is another issue, that last one, that Bill Bradley spoke up on so eloquently and alerted this nation to. And when he so often pointed to the stark truth, “There are”—and these are his words—“There are 13 people killed with a gun every day. It's about time we faced up to the
NRA.”

The other side talks about privatizing Social Security, but that would take the security out of Social Security and take the trust out of the trust fund, draining away a trillion dollars needed to pay Social Security for today's retirees.

I'll oppose any effort to privatize Social Security. I'll protect Social Security. We have to use our prosperity to strengthen Social Security and Medicare. Let's put both Social Security and Medicare in an off-budget, iron-clad lock box, where no politicians can touch them.

We have to make our public schools the best in the world. I will fight for the single-greatest national commitment to education since the GI Bill. It's time to treat teachers like the professionals that they are reduce the class size, and modernize the class rooms; raise the standards with new accountability and new resources.

And Bill Bradley and I agree, a strong America is a healthy America. And you deserve the best health care, not just the cheapest. I am tired of life-and-death decisions about your health care being made by doctors, and then being overruled by young accountants working for insurance companies and HMOs who don't have a license to practice medicine who don't have a right to play God. It's time to pass the Patients' Bill of Rights and give those decisions back to the doctors and the nurses!

And it's time for this special-interest Congress to stop blocking our progress and pass that legislation, just as it is time for this special-interest Congress to hear the pleas of the senior citizens from one part of America to another, who take out their medicine bottles and count the pills when they count the pennies, and unilaterally cut out some of their prescriptions because they can't afford food if they take all their medicine. It is time to give our seniors a prescription drug benefit under the Medicare program.
It's time to decide that never again should any parent have to lie awake at night worrying if they can afford to take their child to the doctor. Bill Bradley is right when he says, and I quote, “It’s not right that kings and dictators can come to this country to get the best medical care in the world, while children and families two blocks away may not be able to afford any care at all.” We’ve got to change that. We’ve got to carry this banner high and fix our health care system!

You know, the fundamental issue here goes to the heart of both our history and our hopes.

Let's do what's best for people, not for powerful interests.

Jim Doyle talked about President Franklin Roosevelt's speech 66 years ago on this spot. I want you to know that there is a person here today, Coravander Perron who was here that day 66 years ago. Where is Cora? Where are you? There she is. God bless you. Thank you for being here.

On this very spot 66 years ago Franklin Roosevelt said “Economic improvement comes from the improved conditions of the whole population, not a small fraction.” That's the formula today. And it works. We need to lift up all Americans, not just the wealthy few. We need to fight for all of the people, not just the well-connected and powerful. I've made my priorities clear, and they are the same priorities that brought us today's prosperity: balance the budget, pay down our debt, invest in the best enterprise of all, the American people themselves. Put people first. Put their welfare first.

Now, my opponent, Governor Bush, has a different priority: massive tax breaks for those who don't need them. But let's give Governor Bush credit: he practices what he preaches in that his top priority for Texas' budget surpluses was a big tax cut. Well, now the news today is that Texas is facing a budget shortfall of almost three-quarters of a billion
dollars with huge deficits in its health care and criminal justice systems. Texas' surplus is just as good as gone. And that is coming in the midst of the strongest national economy in the history of the United States. Now Governor Bush says he wants to do for America what he's done for Texas go to Washington and spend our surplus and then more for budget-busting tax cuts, and then hope that somehow it will all add up. Well, they don't add up. And let me tell you, the very last thing this country needs is an era of Bush economics that brings us back to deficits and high interest rates and high unemployment and recession and the bad times of the 1980s.

It's time to move forward toward more prosperity and progress.

And so if you believe as I do that America can do better than vague promises, special interests, stalemate and massive budget deficits, then join with me. If you believe as I do that we can use our prosperity for great purposes to lift every child and level every barrier, to give help to the helpless and a voice to the voiceless, then join with me. Let us believe without reservation that we, in our day and generation, can do what's right and be the better for it. I ask you to join forces with Bill Bradley and me and then, with unwavering determination, all of us together will bring America nearer to the mountaintop of our ideals—one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.
Two decades ago, in the days before his election, Ronald Reagan asked a justly-famous question that deserves to be asked again today: Are you better off than you were four years ago?

Let me go even further: are you better off than you were eight years ago?

For most Americans, I believe the answer is obvious.

Together as a nation, we turned the biggest deficits in our history into the biggest surpluses in our history.

We set our hands to a time of recession and doubt, and built it into a time of pride and plenty: the longest period of economic growth in the entire American record.

For example, together, we turned this great state around: instead of losing 130,000 jobs a year, New York's families have gained almost 120,000 jobs each and every year. You will find the same success story in almost every part of our country.

Instead of asking, as Americans did eight years ago, "how did we get into this mess?" -- people are asking now: what is the real cause of this economic boom?

The winning formula began with this: the hard work of the American people. But the American people have always been hard-working. Certainly they were hard-working in 1991.

The difference? We gave them the tools to build this economy better, so now it's able to blaze on the fuel of their ideas and skill.
Some want to challenge the record of the Clinton administration. In my view, that record is clear and undeniable.

None of this boom happened by accident. It happened because, together with the American people, we put in place a brand new economic strategy, one that unlocked the full potential of our people: balancing the budget, paying down the debt, and investing in the best enterprise of all - people. Americans themselves.

It was a winning formula with three elements: fiscal discipline gave us lower interest rates. Lower interest rates sparked more investment, more jobs, and more growth. And all that has in turn fueled even greater investment in our people and our future.

No serious person can question the achievements of the 1990’s. Now we must ask: Will we be better off still -- in terms of our affluence and in terms of our spirit -- four years from this day?

I intend to win this election on behalf of the American people to see to it that the answer is yes.

I intend to build even higher on the foundation of the Clinton years. Because this is a turning point for America.

The 1990’s were about more than getting rid of America’s debt. They were also about getting rid of America’s doubt.

Remember how helpless people felt eight years ago, faced with deficits that were growing so fast, we could barely count them? It seemed as if there were no good choices -- no way to free ourselves - no way to break the shackles of recession and debt.

But together, we have. We’re America. We’ve proven that we’re not afraid of big choices, big decisions, and big dreams.

To those who said our economic plan would fail, that it would destroy jobs and choke off recovery - I say: look around you. You underestimated what we, the American people, are capable of doing.
To those who say prosperity has achieved its full reach, I say: just watch us.

We will deepen prosperity, and extend it to the homes and hearts of every family - from struggling immigrants who seek a better life for their children; to farmers and factory workers who need more money to pay the bills and more time with their families; to the young Internet geniuses from every background, hungering to transform our world.

To those who say we can’t make our public schools the best in the world, I say: just watch us. We’ll give all our kids a chance to learn more and lift themselves higher.

To those who say we can’t cure cancer, ease the pain of disease, and give new health and hope to America’s children, I say: just watch us. We’ll harness all the wonders of science and discovery. We’ll build an America where health is never again decided by wealth.

And to those who say that as America becomes more diverse, discrimination will only get worse, I say: lift your eyes. See how wide the American horizon has become.

All of us as Americans have had different experiences in the past. But we all share a common future. Now is the time for decision about what that future will be.

And that is why I want to make this election about the big choices we have to make to secure prosperity and progress for a new American century.

Imagine an America that closes out not just its material debts, but its moral debts as well: where working parents have the help they need to care for their children, and the chance to stay home with their babies if they wish to.

Imagine how we will transform education when all schools become thriving schools; when we give our children the best, and demand the
best in return.

Imagine how we will improve human health when all our children can breathe clean air, drink pure water, and grow up with a stable climate in a healthy world.

To achieve this future, we have to make the right choices - in ethics no less than in economics. Right now, our economy is doing better than anyone expected. Believe it or not, I am here to give you still more good news: we’re all learning that the estimates of America’s budget surpluses, already the highest ever, are expected to rise yet again -- dramatically -- in the coming weeks. When the time is right and those numbers are firm, I’ll lay out a detailed budget plan. And for the next three weeks, I’ll be talking about the specifics of my plans and proposals.

...
Al Gore
International Association of Fire Fighters
Chicago, Illinois
August 4, 2000

Fighting for Working People

... Well, I’m running for president because I want to fight for you. I want to fight for your families, for your future, for the communities you protect.

I want to fight for the people, not for the powerful.

And I know that we’re starting out behind. I know it’s going to be a tough fight, with powerful forces lined up against us. But you deserve a president who will work just as hard as you do. You deserve a president who will take on the toughest odds and battle the big interests to give you the future that you deserve.

I’m here today to serve notice. This is day one of the fight for working families. And with your help, we’re going to win this fight. We’re going to win this election, and we’re going to win the future for American families. Join with me, and we’ll win this fight! Let’s go the distance for working families!

On Tuesday -- on Tuesday, I’ll be -- (shout from the audience) -- I appreciate that. On Tuesday, I will be announcing my running mate in this election. But I can tell you something right now. This entire campaign, I’ll be running with firefighters, with the police, with working men and women all over this country. I’ll be running with the office workers and the construction workers, the factory workers. And I’ll be running to bring new hope and a new vision for the future, not to restore the faded days and the rusted ways of the old guard.
Early next week, I'll start making my way to Los Angeles, the city where President John F. Kennedy was nominated, to accept your nomination for president of the United States. And I'll be talking about eight great years of prosperity and progress for America. I'll be talking about the new heights America can reach if we stay on the right track and make the right choices today.

...
Al Gore
War Memorial Plaza
Nashville, Tenessee
August 8, 2000

*Announcement of Senator Joseph Lieberman as Running Mate*

With pride in his achievements, with gratitude for his acceptance of this challenge, and with faith in his fight for working families, I'm here to announce my running mate, the next vice president of the United States, Senator Joseph Lieberman of Connecticut!

Tipper and I and our family, including my mother, are thrilled to welcome Joe and Hadassah and their family, including Joe’s mother. And I say to all of you now, together we're going to take this ticket from Nashville, Tennessee today, to Los Angeles, California next week and then all the way across America to the White House in November!

When I set out to choose a running mate, I said from the start that I had three simple tests. First, and most importantly, I wanted someone who had the experience, the character and the judgment to become president on a moment’s notice, should that ever become necessary.

Second, I wanted someone who could work with me as a partner, someone who shares my values and believes in the promise of America as I do. And third, I wanted someone who would fight right alongside me for the people, not the powerful for you.

Joe Lieberman has the experience and the integrity, he has the courage and the commitment, and for all his public life, Joe Lieberman has stood for working families. He's the right person. No one is better prepared to be vice president of the United States of America.

As Attorney General of Connecticut, he took on the big polluters to clean up toxic waste. He believes, as I do, that every family has a right to
clean air and clean water. He believes, as I do, that the earth is the
Lord’s and the fullness thereof. Joe Lieberman has stood up to the big oil
companies and cracked down on price gouging at the gas pump. He
believes, as I do, in an America that frees itself forever from the
dominance of big oil and foreign oil.

I’ve known Joe Lieberman for 15 years now. We have stood together
again and again for policies and principles to bring a new time of
prosperity and progress. Together we fought for welfare reform; to set
time limits and make welfare a second chance and not a way of life. And
the welfare rolls have been cut in half with people moving into good jobs.

Together we fought for fiscal discipline, for balanced budgets based
on hard numbers and tough choices. And in the Gore-Lieberman
administration, we will put this nation on the road to completely
eliminating our national debt, to keep the prosperity and progress going.

Together we fought to make our communities safe again. We’re
putting 100,000 new community police on our streets, and we’ve seen
crime rates fall seven years in a row. In our administration, we’re going
to pass a Crime Victims’ Bill of Rights, including a constitutional
amendment to make sure that victims and not just criminals have
guaranteed rights in our justice system.

Together we fought to provide health care for children in need, and
to make sure that families don’t lose health insurance when a parent
loses a job or changes jobs. And in the Gore-Lieberman administration,
we’re going to pass a prescription drug benefit in the Medicare program
for all of our seniors.

And we’re going to pass a real Patients Bill of Rights, to take the
medical decisions away from the accountants and give them back to the
doctors and the nurses and the health care professionals.

And we’re going to move step by step toward health care for all our
families, starting with every child by the year 2004.

Joe Lieberman and I have fought together for campaign finance reform, and that will be the very first bill of the Gore-Lieberman administration.

And together, Joe Lieberman and I have always stood for a strong national defense.

He and I broke with our own party to cast two lonely Democratic votes in support of the Persian Gulf War. And next January, we're going to lead the fight to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty.

There's a big difference in this election, and it comes down to this: Joe and I are fighting to see to it that our prosperity benefits working families and not just the few; to make sensible investments in health care, education, secure retirement. We're fighting for middle-class tax cuts, not a massive tax giveaway that, in Joe's words, gives a buck a day, at most, to the average person and more than $50,000 a year to the wealthy, who don't need it.

Joe is devoted to his family. Tipper and I have often seen firsthand the joy that he and Hadassah find in each other and in their children. And here is something I regard as being of special importance: Joe is a grandfather.

Now, as many of you know, my grandson, Wyatt, was born a little over a year ago on the 4th of July, and I've been bragging about him. I want you to know that Joe has two grandchildren, a girl Wyatt's age named Willie Dee and a beautiful three-year-old granddaughter whose name is -- listen to this -- Tennessee. And, to put the icing on the cake, Tennessee's mother, April, was born in the same Tennessee county, Weakley County, where my mother was born and where Tipper's grandmother was born. I think something is in the air, here.

Joe and I come from different regions and different religious faiths,
but we believe in a common set of ideals, and we both believe with our whole resolve that, as Americans, we must make real the great ideal that we are one country with a common destiny.

Next week, when our party meets in Los Angeles, we will recall the last time we met there, at the convention where we nominated John F. Kennedy. That year, we voted with our hearts to make history by tearing down an old wall of division, and when we nominate Joe Lieberman for vice president, we will make history again. We will tear down an old wall of division once again.

When he sought the presidency more than 30 years ago, Robert Kennedy summoned us to make new the life of the world. That year, Robert Kennedy’s Connecticut campaign chair was a young man of purpose and character; a young man who had dedicated himself to social justice and working families. Earlier, when he was in college, that young man traveled here to the South, a year before Freedom Summer, when great fights for civil rights were being fought and won, to help register African Americans to vote. Before he went, that young man wrote these words: "I am going because there is much work to be done. I am an American, and this is one nation or it is nothing."

That young man’s name was Joe Lieberman.

And as I stand next to him today, I believe in my heart that we are one step closer to truly being "One nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all"!
Al Gore
The United Auto Workers
Detroit, Michigan
August 11, 2000
Fighting for Working Families

A lot of you know how long and how hard I have worked to gain your confidence and your support and your endorsement. I am grateful to you more than I can say in words. My heart is full. This means the world to me. I know what it means in Michigan and Ohio and Illinois and Pennsylvania, and I know what it means in the United States of America. And I know what it means in the history of our country because the UAW, as many have noted, is not only an active force for a better way of life for working men and women when it comes to bargaining sessions, when it comes to organizing, when it comes to wages, it has also historically been at the forefront of the progressive movement to have better health care and environmental protection and education and rights for women and minorities and social justice and a better country!

I'm going to be back here in Michigan on Tuesday, in Monroe County. But when Steve told me that the vote had taken place as it had, I wanted to come here; indeed, I had to come here to carry this special message to you.

First, I'm running for president because I want to fight for you and your family and your communities and your future! I want to stand by you! I want to fight for the people and not the powerful! I want to fight for working men and women and a better way of life.

The second thing I came here to say is that I now know, Joe Lieberman and I now know that with the UAW on our side, we're going to win this election in November. And we're going to win for working men
and women this November. And we're going to elect Debbie Stabenow to
the United States Senate this November!

Nothing can stop us now, and by building the best cars and trucks
in the world, you're driving our economy.

As nurses and educators and public servants, you are strengthening
our communities. By standing up for workers' rights and the right to
organize, you're making sure that we have an economy of fairness and
fundamental decency. I respect you. I appreciate what you have done
and I thank you for your help.

The choice in this election is very simple. It comes down to this:
We're for working families, not the powerful and well-connected. We're
for the people, not the special interests. We are for the working families,
not those at the very top. And when the people we work for are well-
taken care of and have people who are willing to fight for them, then our
country is better off.

...
The Issues in this Election

Tipper and Joe and Hadassah and I are so proud to have our families on stage here on behind us. And we can't thank you enough for being a part of this effort to bring about positive change to America, continue the prosperity and progress and build the kind of future that our children and grandchildren deserve. Are you with us?

There’s some big choices we have to make. And I’m looking forward to addressing the nation at the convention podium tomorrow night with some specific, hard choices that I believe we have to make in order to ensure that we have a bright future. I believe that you deserve to know exactly what the candidates are proposing to do so you can make an informed judgment. I’m going to tell you.

I believe we need to start treating teachers like the professionals that they are, with smaller classes higher standards, new accountability, with new resources.

I believe it’s time to increase the minimum wage for those who most need some help in balancing their own budgets.

I believe it’s time to give the medical decisions back to the doctors instead of leaving them with the HMOs. I believe it’s time for our seniors to have a prescription drug benefit under the Medicare program.

I believe it’s time to pass a hate crimes law and bring our people together, and support affirmative action. I believe it’s time to get guns out of the hands of children and criminals with mandatory child safety trigger locks.
I believe it's time to clean up our air and water and our environment for all of our families.

More than any of that, I believe it's time for all of us to come together and lift up the ideal of the best America that we can move toward. In every generation, we have to make the hard choices between one direction or another, between going back to the past or forward to the future. Let others argue the case for the old guard. We're the new guard and we're going to bring positive change to the United States of America.

Well, as we arrived here, Tipper and I looked out the airplane window and saw this overwhelming crowd and felt your enthusiasm. And to walk out here and have the chance to greet many of you and shake hands with you and to tell you thanks personally, I just want you to know it couldn't possibly be any better as a way to start the convention activities that Tipper and I are going to be able to enjoy.

And along with the Liebermans, we are looking forward to being here in Los Angeles.

The future starts in California. The victory starts in California. With your help we'll win. I need your help to fight for you.
Al Gore
Democratic National Convention 2000
Los Angeles, California
August 17, 2000
Nomination Acceptance Speech (Audio)

... For almost eight years now, I've been the partner of a leader who moved us out of the valley of recession and into the longest period of prosperity in American history. I say to you tonight, millions of Americans will live better lives for a long time to come because of the job that’s been done by President Bill Clinton.

Instead of the biggest deficits in history, we now have the biggest surpluses, the highest home ownership ever, the lowest inflation in a generation, and instead of losing jobs, we now have 22 million good new jobs, higher family incomes.

Instead of the biggest deficits in history, we now have the biggest surpluses, the highest home ownership ever, the lowest inflation in a generation and, instead of losing jobs, we now have 22 million good new jobs, higher family incomes.

Above all, our success comes from you, the people who have worked hard for your families. But let’s not forget that a few years ago you were
also working hard, but your hard work then was undone by a government that didn’t work, didn’t put people first, and wasn’t on your side. Together, we changed things to help unleash your potential and unleash innovation and investment in the private sector -- the engine that drives our economic growth -- and our progress on the economy is a good chapter in our history.

But now we turn the page and write a new chapter, and that’s what I want to speak about tonight. This election is not an award for past performance. I’m not asking you to vote for me on the basis of the economy we have. Tonight I ask for your support on the basis of the better, fairer, more prosperous America we can build together.

Together, let’s make sure that our prosperity enriches not just a few, but all working families. Let’s invest in health care, education, a secure retirement and middle class tax cuts. I’m happy that the stock market has boomed and so many businesses and new enterprises have done well. This country is richer and stronger, but my focus is on working families, people trying to make house payments and car payments working overtime to save for college and do right by their kids!

Whether you’re in a suburb or an inner city, whether you raise crops or drive hogs and cattle on a farm, drive a big rig on the Interstate or drive e-commerce on the Internet, whether you’re starting out to raise your own family or getting ready to retire after a lifetime of hard work, so often powerful forces and powerful interests stand in your way and the odds seem stacked against you, even as you do what’s right for you and your family.

How and what we do for all of you, the people who pay the taxes, bear the burdens and live the American Dream, that is the standard by which we should be judged. And for all of our good times, I am not satisfied.
To all the families in America. To all the families in America who have to struggle to afford the right education and the skyrocketing costs of prescription drugs, I want you to know this: I've taken on the powerful forces, and as president, I'll stand up to them and I'll stand up for you!

To all the families -- to all the families who are struggling with things that money can’t measure, like trying to find a little more time to spend with your children, or protecting your children from entertainment that you think glorifies violence and indecency, I want you to know I believe we must challenge a culture with too much meanness and not enough meaning. And as president, I will stand with you for a goal we all share, to give more power back to parents to choose what your own children are exposed to so you can pass on your family’s basic lessons of responsibility and decency.

The power should be in your hands. The future should belong to everyone in this land. Everyone. All families. We could squander this moment, but our country would be the poorer for it. Instead, let’s lift our eyes and see how wide the American horizon has become.

We're entering a new time. We're electing a new president. And I stand here tonight as my own man. And I want you to know me for who I truly am.

I grew up in a wonderful family. I have a lot to be thankful for. And the greatest gift my parents gave me was love. When I was a child, it never once occurred to me that the foundation upon which my security depended would ever shake. And of all the lessons my parents taught me, the most powerful one was unspoken: the way they loved one another. My father respected my mother as an equal, if not more. She was his best friend and, in many ways, his conscience. And I learned from them the value of a true, loving partnership that lasts for life. They simply couldn’t imagine being without each other. And for 61 years, they
were by each other's side.

My parents taught me that the real values in life aren't material, but spiritual.

They include faith and family duty and honor, and trying to make the world a better place.

I finished college at a time when all that seemed to be in doubt and our nation’s spirit was being depleted. We saw the assassination of our best leaders, appeals to racial backlash and the first warning signs of Watergate. I remember the conversations I had with Tipper back then and the doubts we had about the Vietnam War. But I enlisted in the Army because I knew if I didn’t go, someone else in the small town of Carthage, Tennessee, would have to go in my place.

I was an Army reporter in Vietnam. When I was there, I didn’t do the most or run the gravest danger. But I was proud to wear my country’s uniform.

Let me tell you, when I came home running for office was the very last thing I ever thought I would do. I studied religion at Vanderbilt and worked nights as a police reporter at the Nashville Tennessean. And I saw more of what could go wrong in America, not only on the police beat but as an investigative reporter covering local government.

I also saw so much of what could go right -- citizens lifting up local communities, family by family, block by block, neighborhood by neighborhood; in churches and charities, on school boards and city councils. And then, Tipper and I started our own family, and when our first daughter, Karenna, was born, I began to see the future through a fresh set of eyes. I know a lot of you have had that feeling, too. And I decided I couldn’t turn away from service at home any more than I could have turned away from service in Vietnam.

That’s why I ran for Congress. In my first term, a family n Hardeman
County, Tennessee, wrote a letter and told how worried they were that toxic waste, a lot of it, had been dumped near their home. I held some of the first hearings on the issue and, ever since, I've been there in the fight against the big polluters. Our children should not have to draw the breath of life in cities awash in pollution. When they come in from playing on a hot summer afternoon, every child in America, anywhere in America, ought to be able to turn on the faucet and get a glass of safe, clean drinking water. On the issue of the environment, I've never given up, I've never backed down, and I never will.

And I say it again tonight, we must reverse the silent rising tide of global warming, and we can.

In the Senate, and as vice president, I fought for welfare reform. Over and over again, I talked to folks who told me how they were trapped in the old welfare system. I saw what it did to families. So I fought to end welfare as we then knew it, to help those in trouble, but to insist on work and responsibility. Others talked about welfare reform. We actually reformed welfare and set time limits. Instead of handouts, we gave people training to go from welfare to work, and we have cut the welfare rolls in half and moved millions into good jobs. And it's helped lift them up.

For almost 25 years now, I've been fighting for people, and for all that time I've been listening to people, holding open meetings in the places where they live and work. And you know what? I've learned a lot. And if I'm your president, I'm going to keep on having open meetings all over this country.

I'm going to go out to you, the people, because I want to stay in touch with your hopes, with the quiet, everyday heroism of working families. And because I've learned that the issues before us, the problems and the policies all have names. And I don't mean the big, fancy names that we put on programs and legislation. I'm talking about family names,
like Nistle, Johnson, Gutierrez and Malone, people and families I've met in the last year all across this country, and here's what they've told me:

I met Mildred Nistle in Waterloo, Iowa. Because of our welfare reform, she has left welfare and found a good job training electricians. And she's become a proud member of IBEW Local 288. Now -- now, she dreams of sending her daughter, Irene, to college. Mildred Nistle is here with us, and I say to her, I will fight for a targeted affordable tax cut to help working families save and pay for college. They need help, and we'll give it to them. It's the key to our future.

I met Jacquelyn Johnson in St. Louis, Missouri. She worked for 45 years as a medical assistant caring for others. Now she's 72-years-old and needs prescription medicines to care for herself. She spends over half of her Social Security check, her only source of income, on her pills. So she either skips meals or shops for bargains at a wholesale food store and buys macaroni-and-cheese dinners in bulk and then has them at every meal. I invited her here tonight. And Mrs. Johnson, I promise you once again, I will fight for a prescription drug benefit for all seniors under Medicare.

It's just wrong for seniors to have to choose between food and medicine while the big drug companies run up record profits. That is wrong!

I met George and Juanita Guitterez in San Antonio, Texas. Their daughter, Katarina has just started the fourth grade at Davy Crockett Elementary School. The school building is crumbling and overcrowded with cracked walls and peeling plaster. Trailers cover the playground where the kids used to spend recess. The Guitterez family is here tonight, and I tell them again, I will fight to rebuild and modernize crumbling schools and reduce class size. We need to put safety, discipline and character first in every classroom! Are you with me?
You know, education -- education may be a local responsibility, but I believe it also has to be our number one national priority. We can't stop until every school in America is a good place to get a good education.

And I will never forget a little boy named Ian Malone, who suffered from a medical mistake during childbirth and needs full-time nursing care for several years. I met him and his parents in Seattle, never Everett, Washington, their home. And their HMO had told the Malones that it would no longer pay for the nurse they needed, and then actually told them they should consider giving Ian up for adoption.

That's when his mom and dad got really mad. They told their story in public, and the HMO was embarrassed. Because they fought for their baby, today Ian has the care he needs to stay alive.

But no family in America should have to go on national television to save their child's life! You know what we need to do! You know!

Dylan and Christine Malone are here with us tonight. Ian's here, too. And I say to them and to all the families of America, I will fight for a real, enforceable Patients Bill of Rights. It's just wrong to have life-and-death medical decisions made by bean-counters at HMOs who don't have a license to practice medicine and don't have a right to play God. It's time to take the medical decisions away from the HMOs and insurance companies and give them back to the doctors and the nurses and the health care professionals. Let's make that a bipartisan issue.

So, this is not just an election between my opponent and me. It's about our people, our families and our future, and whether forces standing in your way will keep you from living a better life. To me, this election is about Mildred Nystel, Jacqueline Johnson, Katerina Gutierrez, Ian Malone. It's about millions of Americans whose names we may never know, but whose needs and dreams must always be our calling.

And so, here tonight, in the name of all the working families who are
the strength and soul of America, I accept your nomination for president of the United States of America.

I’m here to talk seriously about the issues. I believe people deserve to know specifically what a candidate proposes to do. I intend to tell you tonight. You ought to be able to know and then judge for yourself.

If you entrust me with the presidency, I will put our democracy back in your hands and get all the special interest money, all of it, out of our democracy by enacting campaign finance reform. I feel so strongly about this, I promise you that campaign finance reform will be the very first bill that Joe Lieberman and I send to the United States Congress.

Let others try to restore the old guard. We come to this convention as the change we wish to see in America. And what are those changes? At a time when most Americans will live to know even their great-grandchildren, we will save and strengthen Social Security and Medicare, not only for this generation but for generations to come.

At a time of almost unimaginable medical breakthroughs, we will fight for affordable health care for all, so patients and ordinary people are not left powerless and broke. We will move toward universal health coverage, step by step, starting with all children. Let’s get all children covered by 2004.

And let’s move to the day when we at long last end the stigma of mental illness and treat it like every other illness everywhere in this nation.

And I thank you, Tipper, for leading the way.

Within the next few years, scientists will identify the genes that cause every type of cancer. We need a national commitment equal to the promise of this unequaled moment. So we will double the federal investment in medical research. We will find new medicines and new cures, not just for cancer but for everything from diabetes to HIV/AIDS.
At a time when there is more computer power in a Palm Pilot than in the spaceship that took Neil Armstrong to the Moon, we will offer all our people lifelong learning and new skills for the higher-paying jobs of the future. At a time when the amount of human knowledge is doubling every five years, and science and technology are advancing so rapidly, we will do bold things to make our schools the best in the world.

I will fight for the greatest single commitment to education since the GI bill for revolutionary improvements in our schools, for higher standards and more accountability; to put fully qualified teachers in every classroom, test all new teachers, and give teachers the training and professional development they deserve. It's time to treat and reward teachers like the professionals that they are!

It's not just about more money, it's about higher standards, accountability, new ideas. But we can't do it without new resources, and that's why I will invest far more in our schools. In the long run, a second-class education always costs more than a first-class education. And I will not go along with any plan that would drain taxpayer money away from our public schools and give it to private schools in the form of vouchers!

This nation was a pioneer of universal education. Now let's set a specific new goal for the first decade of the 21st century: high quality, universal preschool available to every child in every family all across this nation! And let's give middle-class families help in paying for college with tax-free college savings, and by making most college tuition tax deductible. Open the doors of learning to all!

All of this -- all of this is the change we wish to see in America.

Not so long ago, a balanced budget seemed impossible. Now, our budget surpluses make it possible to give a full range of targeted tax cuts to working families, not just to help you save for college, but to pay for health insurance and child care, to reform the estate tax so people can
pass on a small business or a family farm, and to end the marriage penalty the right way, the fair way, because we should not force couples to pay more in income taxes just because they're married.

But let me say it plainly: I will not go along with a huge tax cut for the wealthy at the expense of everyone else and wreck our good economy in the process.

Let me tell you, under the tax plan the other side has proposed, for every $10 that goes to the wealthiest 1 percent, middle class families would get one dime and lower-income families would get one penny.

In fact, if you add it up, the average family would get about enough money to buy one extra diet Coke a week about -- That's not nothing! About 62 cents in change. But let me tell you, that's not the kind of change I'm working for. I'll fight for tax cuts that go to the right people, to the working families who have the toughest time paying taxes and saving for the future.

I'll fight for a new, tax-free way to help you save and build a bigger nest egg for your retirement. I'm talking about something extra that you can save and invest for yourself -- something that will supplement Social Security, not be subtracted from it. But I will not go along with any proposal to strip one out of every six dollars from the Social Security Trust Fund and privatize the Social Security that you're counting on. That's Social Security "minus." Our plan is Social Security Plus!

We will balance the budget every year and dedicate the budget surplus first to saving Social Security. In the next four years, we will pay off all the national debt this nation accumulated in our first 200 years. This will put us on the path to completely eliminating the debt by 2012, keeping America prosperous far into the future.

But there's something else at stake in this election that's even more important than economic progress.
Simply put, it’s our values. It’s our responsibility to our loved ones, to our families. And to me, family values means honoring our fathers and mothers. Teaching our children well. Caring for the sick. Respecting one another. Giving people the power to achieve what they want for their families. Putting both Social Security and Medicare in an ironclad lock box where the politicians can’t touch them. To me, that kind of common sense is a family value. Hands off Medicare and Social Security trust fund money! I’ll veto anything that spends it for anything other than Social Security and Medicare.

Getting cigarettes out of the hands of kids before they get hooked is a family value. I will crack down on the marketing of tobacco to our children, no matter how hard the tobacco companies lobby and no matter how much they spend.

A new prescription drug benefit under Medicare for all our seniors -- that’s a family value. And let me tell you, I’ll fight for it, and the other side will not. They give in to the big drug companies. Their plan tells seniors to beg the HMOs and insurance companies for prescription drug coverage. And that’s the difference in this election: They’re for the powerful, we’re for the people!

Judge for yourself. Look at the agendas. Look at the facts. Big tobacco, big oil, the big polluters, the pharmaceutical companies, the HMOs.

Sometimes you have to be willing to stand up and say no so families can have a better life.

I know one thing about the job of the president: It is the only job in the Constitution that is charged with the responsibility of fighting for all the people, not just the people of one state or one district, not just the wealthy or powerful -- all the people, especially those who need a voice, those who need a champion, those who need to be lifted up so they are
never left behind.

So I say to you tonight, if you entrust me with the presidency, I will fight for you. I mean that with all my heart.

There’s one other word that we’ve heard a lot of in this campaign, and that word is honor. To me, honor is not just a word, but an obligation. And you have my word, we will honor hard work by raising the minimum wage so that work always pays more than welfare.

We will honor families by expanding child care and after-school care and family and medical leave so working families have the help they need to care for their children. Because one of the most important jobs of all is raising our children. And we’ll support the right of parents to decide that one of them will stay home longer with their babies if that’s what they believe is best for their families.

We will honor the ideal of equality by standing up for civil rights and defending affirmative action.

We will honor -- we will honor equal rights and we will fight for an equal day’s pay for an equal day’s work.

And let there be no doubt: I will protect and defend a woman’s right to choose. The last thing this country needs is a Supreme Court that overturns Roe v. Wade.

We will remove all the old barriers so that those who are called disabled can develop all their abilities.

And we will also widen the circle of opportunity for all Americans, and we will vigorously enforce all our civil rights laws, with the budgets and personnel that are necessary. And hear me well: We will pass the Employment Nondiscrimination Act.

And we will honor the memory of Matthew Shepard and Joseph Ileto and James Byrd, whose families all joined us this week, by passing a law against hate crimes. They are different. We need to embody our values in
that new law. It's time.

We will honor the hard work of raising a family by doing all we can to help parents protect their children. Parents deserve the simple security of knowing that their children are safe, whether they're walking down the street, surfing the World Wide Web, or sitting behind a desk in school. To make families safer, we passed the toughest crime bill in history, and we're putting 100,000 new community police on our streets. Crime has fallen in every major category for seven years in a row.

But there's still too much danger and there's still too much fear. So tonight I want to set another new specific goal to cut the crime rate every year, year after year, all the way till the end of this decade -- every single year. That's why I'll fight to add another 50,000 new police. Community police. Prevention. Community police who help prevent crime by establishing real relationships between law enforcement and neighborhood residents. Which, incidentally, is the opposite of racial profiling, which must be brought to an end throughout the criminal justice system! And community policing -- policing and prevention is one of the keys.

I will fight for a crime victims' bill of rights, including a constitutional amendment to make sure that victims and not just criminals are guaranteed rights in our justice system.

I'll fight to toughen penalties on those who misuse the Internet to prey on our children and violate our privacy.

And I'll fight to make every school in this nation drug-free and gun-free.

I believe in the right of sportsmen and hunters and law-abiding citizens to own firearms. But I want mandatory background checks to keep guns away from criminals and mandatory child safety locks to protect our children.
Tipper and I went out to Columbine High School after the tragedy there, and we embraced the families of the children who were lost. And I will never forget the words of the father who whispered into my ear, "Promise me that these children will not have died in vain." All of us must join together to make that promise come true. Laws and programs by themselves will never be enough. All of us, especially all parents, need to take more responsibility. We need to change our hearts and make a commitment to our children and to one another. We need to lift up the meaning in their lives.

You know, I am excited about America's prospects, and full of hope for America's future. Our country has come a long way. And I've come a long way since that long ago time when I went to Vietnam. I've never forgotten what I saw there and the bravery of so many young Americans.

The price of freedom is sometimes high. But I've never believed that America should turn inward.

As a senator, I broke with many in our party and voted to support the Gulf War when Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait, because I believed America's vital interests were at stake. Early in my public service, I took up the issue of nuclear arms control and nuclear weapons, because nothing is more fundamental than protecting our national security.

Now, I want to lead America because I love America. I will keep America's defenses strong. I will make sure our armed forces continue to be the best-equipped, best-trained, and best-led in the entire world. They are now, and they will be.

In the last century, this nation, more than any other, freed the world from fascism and communism, but a newly free world still has dangers and challenges, both old and new. We must always have the will to defend our enduring interests, from Europe to the Middle East, to Japan and Korea. We must strengthen our partnerships with Africa, Latin
America, and the rest of the developing world.

We must confront the new challenges of terrorism, new kinds of weapons of mass destruction, global environmental problems and new diseases that know no national boundaries and can threaten national security. We must welcome and promote truly free trade. But I say to you, it must be fair trade. We must get standards -- we must set standards to end child labor, to prevent the exploitation of workers, and the poisoning of the environment. Free trade can and must be and, if I'm president, will be a way to lift everyone up, not bring anyone down to the lowest common denominator.

So those are the issues. And that's where I stand.

But -- but I also want to tell you just a little more about two of my greatest heroes, my father and my mother. They did give me a good life, but like so many in America, they started out with almost nothing. My father grew up in a small community named Possum Hollow in middle Tennessee. When he was just 18, he went to work as a teacher in a one-room school. Then the Great Depression came along and taught him a lesson that couldn't be found in any classroom. He told me and my sister often how he watched grown men with wives and children they could neither feed nor clothe, on farms they could no longer pay for.

My father didn't know whether he could help those families, but he believed he had to try. And never in the years to come, in Congress and in the United States Senate, did he lose sight of the reason he entered public service: to fight for the people, not the powerful.

My mother grew up in a poor farming community in northwest Tennessee. Her family ran a small country store in Cold Corner, a store that went bust during the Great Depression. She worked her way through college. Then she got a room in Nashville at the YWCA and waited tables at an all-night coffee shop for 25-cent tips. She then went
on to become one of the first women in history to graduate from 
Vanderbilt Law School.

As Tipper told you, we lost my dad a year and a half ago, but we're 
so lucky that my mother, Pauline, continues to be part of our lives every 
single day. She is here tonight.

She is here tonight.

Sometimes -- sometimes in this campaign, when I visit a school and 
see a hard-working teacher trying to change the world one child at a 
time, I see the face of my father. And I know that teaching our children 
well is not just the teacher's job, it's everyone's job. And it has to be our 
national mission.

I've shaken hands in diners and coffee shops all across this country. 
And sometimes, when I see a waitress working hard and thanking 
someone for a tip, I see the face of my mother. And I know for that 
waitress carrying trays or a construction worker in the winter cold, I will 
ever agree to raise the retirement age to 70 or threaten the promise of 
Social Security. It's just not fair to them, and I won't do it.

I say to you tonight, we've got to win this election, because every 
hard-working American family deserves to open the door to their dreams.

In our democracy, the future is not something that just happens to 
us. It's something that we make for ourselves together. So to the young 
people watching tonight, I say this is your time to make new the life of 
our world. We need your help to rekindle the spirit of America. Believe in 
our country. We believe in you.

And I ask all of you, my fellow citizen from this city that marked both 
the end of America's journey westward and the beginning of the New 
Frontier, let us set out on a new journey to the best America, a new 
journey on which we advance not by the turning of wheels, but by the 
turning of our minds, the reach of our vision, the daring grace of the
human spirit.

Yes, we have our problems, but the United States of America is the best country ever created and still, as ever, the hope of humankind! Yes, we're all imperfect, but as Americans, we share in the privilege and challenge of building a more perfect union.

I know my own imperfections. For example, I know that sometimes people say I'm too serious, that I talk too much substance and policy. Maybe I've done that tonight, but the presidency is more than a popularity contest it's a day-by-day fight for people. Sometimes you have to choose to do what's difficult or unpopular! Sometimes you have to be willing to spend your popularity in order to pick the hard right over the easy wrong!

There are big choices ahead, and our whole future is at stake, and I do have strong beliefs about it. If you entrust me with the presidency, I know I won't always be the most exciting politician.

But I pledge to you tonight, I will work for you every day and I will never let you down!

If we allow ourselves to believe without reservation that we can do what’s right and be the better for it, then the best America will be our America. In this City of Angels, we can summon the better angels of our nature. Do not rest where we are or retreat -- do all we can to make America all it can become.
Al Gore
Florida State University.
Tallahassee, Florida
August 28, 2000

_**Striving for the Better, Fairer, Stronger Economy**_

... 

Now, the last eight years have been good for the country. I won’t go through all the statistics, but we’ve turned the biggest deficits into the biggest surpluses, and instead of a triple dip recession, we have seen a tripling of the stock market. Instead of high unemployment, we have got 22 million new jobs and the strongest economy in the 224-year history of the United States of America. That’s progress. And we need to keep that going.

But this election is not an award for past performance, and I am not asking you to support me on the basis of the economy we have, but I’m asking your support on the basis of the better, fairer, stronger economy that together we can create over the next four years. And with your help, we’re going to do just that.

Now the prosperity. The prosperity that we’re enjoying today is not good enough. I feel like I want to start by saying you ain’t seen nothing yet. We need to do better and we can do better. And we need to given a lot of thought over the next 10 weeks or so to what we want to use the surplus for; what we want to use the prosperity for. One of the things I think is so important is to continue fiscal responsibility, balance the budget, and pay down the debt so that our children and grandchildren are not burdened with the debts from the past or ours.

But even as we do that, we’re going to have a surplus left over, if we handle this economy correctly. So what should we be thinking about? I think we should invest in people: education, health care, clean up the
environment, continue reducing crime.

...
Al Gore
Tampa, Florida
September 4, 2000

*Big Issues to be Considered in the Election*

We want to honor you, we want to listen carefully, and we want to tell you what we believe is the right thing to do to get our country moving in the right direction.

We’ve got a big choice to make this November, and the choice is one that will have big, fateful consequences for the direction our country goes in the future. The Supreme Court’s going to be picked, we’re going to have decisions on the minimum wage, on the budget, on health care, the environment, education, all across the board.

Now, to start with the economy, the other side has been saying that the way they look at it we are worse off today than we were eight years ago, but I don’t think so. I don’t think so because, back then, after they tried their approach, we had the biggest deficits ever in history and the debt had been multiplied by four times and we had high unemployment and it was a time of great stress.

And you gave us a chance to bring some change. And since that change came in, we turn the biggest surpluses. And instead of a triple-dip recession, we’ve had a tripling of the stock market. And instead of high unemployment, we’ve got the lowest Latino unemployment in history, the lowest African-American unemployment in history, 22 million new jobs and the strongest economy in the 224-year history of the United States of America.

We need to keep that prosperity going and we need to make sure that our prosperity enriches not just the few, but all of our families. We need to invest in education and health care and middle-class tax cuts...
and retirement security.

And that's why we are proposing a plan that will safeguard the surplus and not -- and let me repeat -- not -- I will not ever support the other side's plan to give away the surplus in a giant tax cut to the -- primarily to the wealthy at the expense of the middle class in a way that stops our prosperity and progress. I want middle-class tax cuts for you.

I want to make most college tuition tax deductible. I want tax cuts for health care and education and raising children and child care. And that's really the difference.

And then, instead of going back into deficits again, we believe that it's time to pay down the debt so we don't pass it on to our children and grandchildren. And if we do that the right way, we'll keep the interest rates down and that way we'll keep the economy strong.
Al Gore
September 27, 2000

TV Ad: "Veteran"


Tax cuts for middle-class families...

(On screen: $500 billion in targeted tax cuts)

... including a $10,000-a-year tax deduction for college tuition. Continue welfare reform with time limits, work requirements. Force deadbeat parents to take responsibility for their children. A crime victims' bill of rights to protect victims, not just criminals. Fight violence and pornography on the Internet, helping parents block out what children shouldn't see.

Al Gore. He'll put his values to work for us.

(On screen: www.algore.com; Paid for by Gore/Lieberman, Inc.)
Al Gore  
Democratic National Convention 2000  
Los Angeles, California  

Party Platform: Introduction  

Today, America finds itself in the midst of prosperity, progress, and peace. We have arrived at this moment because of the hard work of the American people. This election will be about the big choices we have to make to secure prosperity that is broadly shared and progress that reaches all families in this new American century. In the year 2000, the Democratic Party stands ready to meet that challenge and to build on our achievements.

When Thomas Jefferson was elected as our Party's first president in 1800, America was a young country trying to find its place in the world. Two hundred years later, Democrats gather at a moment of vast possibility to nominate Al Gore as America's next president. A new economy founded on the force of new technologies and traditional values of work is giving rise to new industries and transforming old ones. Biological breakthroughs give us the chance to unlock the mysteries of humanity's deadliest plagues. While the globe is still beset with tragedies and difficulties, more people live under governments of freedom, liberty, and democracy than ever before in history. America enjoys unparalleled affluence at home and influence abroad.

Yet this moment is clearly one of possibility, not absolute guarantees. We must remember that our achievements were accomplished only with creativity, courage, and conscience; with a willingness to innovate and imagine; and with a recommitment to our basic American values of hard work, community, embracing diversity, faith, family, and personal responsibility. And all of it can be imperiled
again.

Let us not forget that America's future did not always seem so bright. Under the Bush-Quayle administration, America was suffering through economic stagnation. Businesses were failing. Jobs were disappearing. The welfare rolls swelled. Crime exploded in the streets. Hope and optimism were scarce. Most Americans felt that the American Dream was endangered - if not extinct.

But in 1992, Americans elected Bill Clinton and Al Gore with a mandate to turn America around. And that's just what they did. They took on the old thinking that had come to dominate politics and offered new ideas - new ideas that met the challenges of the day, new ideas that kept faith with America's oldest values, new ideas that worked.

Eight years later the record is clear: the longest economic expansion in American history. The most jobs ever created under a single administration. The first real wage growth in 20 years. The highest home ownership rate ever. The lowest African-American and Hispanic-American unemployment rates in American history. The lowest crime rate in 25 years. The lowest number of people on welfare since the 1960's. The largest drop in poverty in nearly 30 years. The lowest level of child poverty in 20 years. And after 15 painful years when the rich were getting richer and the poor were getting poorer, America is finally growing together instead of growing apart.

These are accomplishments, not accidents. They came about because Democrats - from the White House, to the Congress, to State Houses all across America - brought new thinking and new action to our most pressing challenges. We used government as a catalyst to engage the best ideas and energies of the American people. We asked citizens to get involved and they did. They tutored in their children's schools, patrolled on neighborhood crime watches, volunteered in local hospitals,
and voiced their opinion on every issue. They shaped effective solutions to real problems. It will take more of this brand of new thinking if we are to build on this record of achievement.

During our nation's darkest hours, Americans have strived mightily and succeeded in meeting the challenges of their times. The question before us is whether we will do the same during this bright moment; whether we will seize this moment to bring more prosperity and progress to more Americans than ever before; whether, having finally conquered our financial deficits, we will have the courage to conquer the other deficits - in health care, in education, in the environment - that challenge us today.

In this Platform, today's Democratic Party lays out its plans to do just that. This platform was not written in a dark backroom, but in the light of day; in an open, democratic process that was interactive and inclusive. It was developed both with the guidance of the brightest Democratic leaders and with the voices of thousands of ordinary Americans around the country who contributed their thoughts, ideas, beliefs, and dreams to this platform in person, on paper, and over the Internet. This is a 21st century platform for the 21st century's party. A people's platform for the people's party.

If one theme runs through this 2000 Democratic platform, it is this: if America is to secure prosperity, progress, peace and security for all, we cannot afford to go back. We must move forward together and we must not leave anyone behind.
Al Gore
Democratic National Convention 2000
Los Angeles, California

Party Platform: Economic Prosperity

Prosperity

Eight years ago, America was facing a big challenge. Under the Bush-Quayle Administration, the American economy was floundering. Slow growth had turned into no growth and into a jobless recovery. Americans in all walks of life were facing a future of less prosperity and more resignation. In 1992, Bill Clinton and Al Gore were elected to turn the American economy around and point upward toward the future.

They took office with a new set of ideas about how to get the economy moving again. They knew that the private sector is the engine of economic growth, but they also knew that, in Franklin Roosevelt's phrase, "the national community" - acting through government - can make a big difference.

Today, the success of these new ideas is clear. After a generation of stagnation for many and decline for some, real wages for all working families have started to rise again. America has the lowest unemployment and fastest economic growth in more than 30 years. The American people have created 22 million new jobs. We have the lowest inflation rate in decades. More Americans own their home than ever before. Looking back on 1992, this much is clear: Americans are better off than we were eight years ago.

But ours is a record to build on, not to rest on. That's because eight years later, we face a new challenge: how to keep prosperity alive - and how to deepen it - in a fast-moving, fast-changing economy. We can never take our economic prosperity for granted nor can we afford to go
back to either tax-and-spend or cut-and-run - the failed policies of the past. It took innovative, new Democratic policies to create the environment where prosperity could bloom. It will take more such policies to allow prosperity to blossom - to forge a prosperity that does not leave anyone out and does not leave anyone behind.

During the past decade, the birth of the global, information-based new economy has changed most every aspect of Americans' lives. As we move inexorably from the Industrial Age to the Information Age, the transition will be difficult for some. In the decade to come, Democrats must lead the way in equipping all Americans with new tools for economic success and security. This is the only sure means of ensuring that America's prosperity is one that is broadly shared.

Time after time, Republicans opposed the ideas that brought prosperity to America. Time after time, they have been proven wrong. But their sorry record does not give them pause, it does not even slow them down. Despite a Democratic record of success, the Republicans now propose to rewind to the policies that brought America the days of deficits, doubt, debt, and decline; a retreat to the thinking of the era of recessions, repossessions, and retrenchment.

Democrats believe that to further our prosperity and make sure all Americans are ready to reap the rewards of the new economy we need thinking as innovative as the moment in which we live. First, we must continue the fiscal discipline that has been the hallmark of the past eight years - that means paying down the debt and offering the right kind of tax cuts. Second, we must use our unprecedented prosperity to secure Social Security and Medicare for future generations. Third, we must invest in the most precious resource we have - the American people and their skills and ability to innovate. Fourth, we must continue to reinvent government so that it works better and costs less and is in line with the
on-line world. Fifth, we must open new markets to American products at home and around the world. Finally, we must reinforce the basic American bargain of requiring and rewarding hard work and we must provide Americans with the opportunity to participate in key decisions at work and in their communities.

Progress

Eight years ago, many citizens had come to accept the idea that America’s best days were behind her: that crime, welfare, teen births, divisiveness and irresponsibility would continue to rise; that our air and water would keep getting dirtier; and that our essential social safety net programs were fated to go broke.

Instead, with the leadership of today’s Democratic Party, the past decade has seen not just a rebirth of American prosperity, but a new season of progress in meeting our challenges and living up to our obligations. Crime is down to its lowest levels in a generation - the longest decline on record, teen births are down seven years in a row, adoptions are up by 30 percent, millions of Americans have moved off the welfare rolls and onto the payrolls. America is not just better off, it is better.

But Democrats know that it must be better still. So we want to use this moment to bring even more progress to America. To make America safer, healthier, more secure. To clean up our environment and our politics. To make the job of parents easier and to bring us together as one America.
Why I Seek The Presidency - Bush

George W. Bush
2000 Florida Majority Dinner
Orlando, Florida
June 17, 2000

Policy Outline

... I'm looking forward to working my heart out for the next four months. Four months till we rid this nation of Clinton/Gore, four months. Four months till an administration comes to Washington, D.C. that sets the—raises the sights of America. Unites this country, doesn't divide it. Four months until we have an administration and a president who will appeal to the better angels of America, not our darker impulses. Four months until we have an agenda that is so optimistic and so positive an—an agenda that will appeal to Americans from all walks of life. An agenda that starts with this goal: The American dream will touch every willing heart. The great American dream of owning your own business or raising a family in a safe neighborhood. The American dream of making sure your children are well educated will touch every single willing heart. And I mean those newly arrived to American and those who have been here a long time.

Our party is a party that welcomes anybody who is willing to work. Our party is the party of the entrepreneur in America. Al Gore's traveling the country talking about the fact that he and Mr. Clinton invented prosperity. He no more invented prosperity than he invented the Internet. What we Republicans know, the government's role isn't to create wealth, but an environment in which small businesses can grow to be big
businesses. And where entrepreneurship flourishes. That's why it's so important to have a president who's committed to free trade and tort reform and less regulation. A president who understands the projected surpluses are not the government's money; it's the people's money.

I look forward to taking my case to the American people that we need to reform our tax code. We need to make it more simple. And we need to pass some of that surplus back to the people who pay the bills. I want to get rid of the death tax. I want to—I want to drop the top rate. The Federal Government should take no more than a third of anybody's check in America. But I also—I want you to hear me loud and clear about what this tax relief package means, though. It means it's going to extend its reach throughout all the folks who are paying taxes in America. We're not for targeted tax cuts. We're for saying anybody who pays taxes in America ought to get tax relief. If you're a family of four in the State of Florida making $50,000 a year under my plan, you get a 50 percent cut in the taxes you pay.

I'm running and make it clear that this administration of mine is going to keep the peace. Morale for the past seven years, seven years of neglect, has been dangerously low in the folks who wear the United States military. In order to keep the peace, we will rebuild the military power of the United States of America. I will not let our nation retreat. Our greatest export to the world is freedom. The great America freedom, the ideals of our country are important to spread around the world. But I understand we can't be all things to all people around the world. I'm going to work to strengthen alliances. But say to our friends and allies, “You get to be the peacekeeper. The great land called America will be the peacemaker.” Our military must have a clear mission. A Commander-in-Chief who sets a clear tone. And the mission of the United States military will be to fight and win war, and therefore prevent war from happening in
the first place.

I'm going to continue taking my message to the seniors of America, to say nothing will change under Governor Bush when I become the President. Nothing will change for your social security.

We're going to keep the promises to the seniors. But I'm also going to tell America we need to have a new attitude in the White House when it comes to social security. We need to have somebody willing to work with Republicans and Democrats to say loud and clear to America, “We understand there's a problem with social security.” That by the year 2037, if nothing is done, if the same old, tired attitude in Washington prevails, an attitude represented by my opponent, will either have to be raising taxes or reducing benefits. No, what I want to say to America is “We're going to trust younger workers to manage some of their money. Their own money in the private markets to make sure there's a social security system around tomorrow.” Now, I've got a plan that I'm going to take in front of the Congress. But the most important thing we need to do domestically is to redouble our efforts to make sure every child is educated. And no child—I mean no child—is left behind.

I've assured my big, little brother that I don't want—I'm not running to become the federal superintendent of schools. I believe in local control of schools. I believe we ought to trust the people of Florida. But I will work to change the attitude that says to children, “How old are you?” That attitude that asks the question, “How old are you,” the same old, tired process of public schools. See, if you ask that question, you're ten, you're supposed to be here, and you're twelve, we'll put you here, and if you're fourteen, we'll put you there. And guess what happens?

Children whose parents don't speak English as a first language just get shuffled through the system. Inner-city kids are quit upon. Under President Bush, I'm going to ask the question, “What do you know.” And
if you don't know what you're supposed to know, we'll make sure you do early before it's too late.

I'm going to say—I'm going to work with states and local jurisdictions to challenge what I call the soft bigotry of low expectations. See, I think every child can learn. And I want to assure you in this campaign there are no second-rate children, as far as we're concerned, and there are no second-rate dreams. The great strength of America lies in the hearts and souls of our citizens, not in the halls of government. And that's why this campaign is so optimistic and so hopeful about the future.

If we're concerned about the American dream touching every willing heart, the next president must raise the spirits of the country. To call upon the good hearts of Americans; to rally who I call the “soldiers in the armies of compassion.” To say to children who may wonder whether or not America is meant for them, somebody loves you. To mentor children; to have values-based education curriculum in our schools and after-school programs. To welcome faith-based programs into the everyday lives of citizens to say to people “By changing hearts, we can change a life.” I can't wait to restore the spirit of America, to lift our sights, and it begins the day I get sworn in. And the day I swear in, I will swear to uphold the laws of the land. But I will also swear to uphold the honor and the integrity of the office to which I have been elected so help me God.

...
George W. Bush
July 17, 2000

TV Ad: "Hard Things"

(On screen: Paid for by Bush-Cheney 2000, Inc.)

[Bush]:
This is a moment in history when we have a chance to focus on tough problems.
It's not always popular to say 'Our children can't read,' or 'Social Security needs improving,' or 'We have a budget surplus and a deficit in values.'
But those are the right things to say.
And the right way to make American better for everyone is to be bold and decisive to unite instead of divide.


Now is the time to do the hard things.

(On screen: Bush-2000-Cheney logo)
I believe you are looking at the next Vice President of the United States. Throughout this vice presidential selection process, my foremost goal has been to select an outstanding individual who is capable of serving as President of the United States

I wanted the selection process to be thorough and dignified. I reached out to a distinguished and experienced statesman to lead the search. For months, we worked closely together to review the qualifications of many impressive candidates.

As we worked to evaluate the strengths of others, I saw firsthand Dick Cheney’s outstanding judgment. As we considered many different credentials, I benefited from his keen insight.

I was impressed by the thoughtful and thorough way he approached his mission. And gradually, I realized that the person who was best qualified to be my vice presidential nominee was working by my side.

Before I asked Dick Cheney to chair the selection process, I had asked whether he would consider being a candidate himself. At the time, he said no. He had a challenging and demanding job leading a worldwide company; he was enjoying life in the private sector. But I kept the thought of him joining me in the back of my mind.

When Secretary Cheney visited me in Crawford over the July 4th weekend, we reviewed many different candidates, all of whom are impressive. But I continued to believe the best candidate might be sitting next to me. I asked him again whether he would be willing to join me to accomplish some great goals for our country: to save and strengthen
social security, to improve medicare and provide prescription drug benefits to seniors, to reform our public schools and to rebuild our military. This time he said he was willing to talk with his family and consider it.

Early this morning, I called and asked him to join me in renewing America’s purpose, together. So I am proud to announce that Dick Cheney, a man of great integrity and judgment and experience, is my choice to be the next Vice President of the United States. I can’t wait for the delegates at our convention next week to hear from Dick Cheney and I will ask them to confirm this good man as our party’s choice for Vice-President.

The fact that this outstanding man is willing to serve speaks to the power of our compassionate conservative message and its promise for our country.

I have to admit: I didn’t pick Dick Cheney because of Wyoming’s three electoral votes although we want and will work hard to earn them. I picked him because he is without a doubt fully capable of being President of the United States and he will be a valuable partner in a Bush administration.

Dick Cheney has served our country as chief of staff to a President, served in the United States Congress and as Secretary of Defense. He is a man of integrity who is respected by Republicans and Democrats alike. Even my opponent, Vice President Gore, once said Dick Cheney is a good man who is well liked and respected by his colleagues. I am proud to call him my friend, and honored to call him my running mate.

I also want to welcome Lynne Cheney. She is woman of many accomplishments. She served as chair of the National Endowment for the Humanities and she is a leader in developing high standards and sound curriculum for public schools. She is an important member of our team.
Laura and I are delighted to have Dick and Lynne by our side. And we look forward to winning and working for a better America.
George W. Bush  
Springdale, Arkansas  
July 28, 2000  
_Compassion & Conservatism_

...  

I tell why we are all here because we are king of working our way toward the convention.  

At least that's why we are together. So it may come as a surprise to you that in the midst of all this politicking, our campaign decided to stop at the Jones Center, and we did so for a couple of reasons: one, we wanted to see firsthand a -- the actions and the compassion and the energy of people who hear that universal call to love a neighbor just like you'd like to be loved yourself.  

There is something so powerful in that message. It's much bigger than government. It comes from a higher calling. It's a message that affects our hearts. But when properly channeled, it's a message that can affect people's lives in such a constructive and positive way. So we're here to see and feel and hear firsthand the acts of this particular platoon in the army of compassion. You see, the great strength of America, I'm going to tell you what the great strength of our country is. The great strength lies in the hearts and souls of decent and caring and loving citizens. That's where the great strength of America is.
George W. Bush
Owensboro, Kentucky
July 29, 2000

Stronger Military and Solvent Social Security

... This is a campaign of ideas. We’re running for a reason. I just don’t want to hold the job. I want to lead America in new directions. I want to talk about some of the issues that I think Americans wants to talk about.

First, we’re talking about Social Security. This man right here, Chris was standing up saying, I support the idea of the government trusting workers to manage their own money, their own money in the private sector. That’s what he’s saying. He says, give us trust, government. I want you to know.

And we must give young workers that option. Otherwise, there will be no Social Security system when the baby boomers retire. We must have a president who’s willing to work with Republicans and Democrats, a president who will seize this moment and get something done.

I want the elderly here in this audience to hear me loud and clear. Don’t be fooled by the politics of the past. Don’t be fooled by that kind of politics where they’re going get on your TV screen and try to scare you. President George W. Bush will keep the promise to the elderly in America.

Oh, you’ll hear a lot of talk. You’ll hear a lot of talk during the course of the campaign. But for seven years, this administration has not seized the moment, and its time to get some new thinking in Washington, D.C.

And I’m going to remind the people of this country that over the last seven years morale in the United States military is dangerously low. And I’m going to remind the people of this country, and I hope you join me in
reminding them, that in order to keep the peace, in order to make sure this world is a peaceful world and I want to tell you, I'm committed to keeping the peace; we must rebuild the military power of the United States of America.

...
George W. Bush  
Dayton, Ohio  
July 31, 2000  

Love for Family & America  

I picked my running mate. I picked a good man to become the next vice president of the United States! You know, oftentimes, talking about what’s the selection process going to be like, and I said, "I’m going to pick somebody who can be the president, if he needs to." I found that man in Dick Cheney.

I told the American people I was going to pick somebody who, should we become fortunate enough to become the president and vice president, somebody who would bring added value to the administration, somebody who would be my partner and work by my side for a better America. I found that man in Dick Cheney.

I picked a good man, a solid man, a decent man, a man of integrity, a man I call friend, and a man you’ll call a great vice president of the United States in Dick Cheney!

Plus, you might have noticed -- you might have noticed somebody else walked up on the stage with me this morning. She’s on her way to the convention. This is her last stop before she goes to Philadelphia to give the kick-off speech! And I can’t wait for America to see this good woman, this great lady, the next first lady of the United States!

I told Laura when I -- so there I was on bended knee -- I think I was on bended knee -- in Midland, Texas, years ago. See, we were both raised in Midland, Texas. It's a town out in the desert in west Texas. I said, "Would you marry me?" She said, "Yes, so long as I don't ever have to give any speeches." Well, I'm glad she didn't hold me to that promise. She's going to talk about our priorities tonight. Our priorities are our
faith. Our priorities are our family, and our priorities are this great land we call America!

We've had a great experience traveling to the convention in Philadelphia. We started in our home state of Texas and we went to Arkansas, then we went to Kentucky, now we're in the great state of -- and then to Missouri -- and then the great state of Ohio. And guess what we saw? We've seen huge crowds. These are states that Republicans have not done well lately in, but that's going to change come November. We're going to carry the state of Ohio.
George W. Bush
The Republican Party Luncheon
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
August 2, 2000
Striving for a Change

I’m sure by now you’ve heard I made a presidential decision last week; I picked great man to become the next vice president of the United States. I am so honored to have Dick Cheney by my side. This man is a man of enormous integrity, great depth, solid judgment. He is really fun to be around. I care for him a lot. America’s going to care for him. I’m proud to call him "friend," and this great land is going to be proud to call him "Mr. Vice President."

We also had a big moment in our family last Monday night. My wife raised the bar. She elevated the standards for public speaking. I can’t tell you how proud I was to see Laura Bush, she gave an unbelievable speech, a speech that spoke from her heart and a speech that spoke to Americans from all walks of life. Now if all goes well next November, America just got to see a great first lady of the United States.

I’m so proud to be here with my family members. I see the great governor from the state of Florida, Jeb Bush. And I’m so proud my brother Neil’s here, and his wife Sharon. Thank you all for coming. And of course, with Neil is his son Pierce, and with Jeb is Jeb, Jr., and the hot member of the family, George P. Bush, I’m not so sure we should be campaigning with him anymore, Jeb. He’s -- people are kind of looking beyond us these days.

I’m proud of Mother and Dad. I can’t wait to address the convention tomorrow night. First thing I’m going to do is share with America how proud I am and how much I love my parents. And I’m proud of Chairman
Jim Nicholson and all the folks who've worked hard to put on this convention. This is a fantastic convention. At least it seems that way from TV. I'm looking forward to showing up there tomorrow.

And I also want to thank my friend Andy Card. Andy's done a fantastic job.

Today we had a rally coming in with our Latino friends. Gracias. Gracias por tu apoyo.

At any rate, John McCain was there. And I had a chance to say publicly at that event what I felt last night. I was so moved by his address, so honored to have his support, so pleased that America got to see this good man on prime-time TV. I told him then, and I meant it, I can't wait to campaign with John McCain all across our country, together. Together we can win this election.

I'd like to give you a report from the field. I don't know if you've been paying attention or not, but the Cheneys and Laura and I have been traveling toward the convention. We were in Arkansas, we were in Kentucky, we were in Missouri, Ohio, and we finished yesterday in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, where a mere six or seven thousand people showed up. Let me tell you what I'm seeing and what I'm feeling.

I'm feeling America's ready for change. They're interested in something different. They don't want four more years of Clinton-Gore. They want somebody to appeal to our better angels, not our darker impulses. America is hungry for new leadership, and that's exactly what Dick Cheney and I are going to give 'em.

I want to thank you all for supporting the grassroots efforts of the Republican Party. Dick and my job is to deliver the message, and it will be a message that makes you proud; a message that's cause to lift the spirit of this country. Your job and others is to get out and turn out the vote; is to make sure that we do what we used to do well, identify the
voters and turn them out to the polls. It’s to convince not only Republicans but Democrats and independents that the future will be better under a Bush-Cheney administration. So I want to thank you all for coming.

A crowd this big kind of makes me want to go through the full speech. But I decided I'd better wait till tomorrow night. And so instead, I want to thank you again. I want to say what an honor it is to be the nominee of the Republican Party. I want to tell you how hopeful I am about this country and about what we stand for, and I want to say one more time, I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart. If all goes well, if all goes well, you're looking at the next president of the United States.
This is a remarkable moment in the life of our nation. Never has the promise of prosperity been so vivid. But times of plenty, like times of crisis, are tests of American character.

Prosperity can be a tool in our hands -- used to build and better our country. Or it can be a drug in our system -- dulling our sense of urgency, of empathy, of duty.

Our opportunities are too great, our lives too short, to waste this moment. So tonight we vow to our nation ... We will seize this moment of American promise. We will use these good times for great goals. We will confront the hard issues -- threats to our national security, threats to our health and retirement security -- before the challenges of our time become crises for our children.

And we will extend the promise of prosperity to every forgotten corner of this country. To every man and woman, a chance to succeed. To every child, a chance to learn. To every family, a chance to live with
dignity and hope.

For eight years, the Clinton/Gore administration has coasted through prosperity. And the path of least resistance is always downhill. But America's way is the rising road. This nation is daring and decent and ready for change.

Our current president embodied the potential of a generation. So many talents. So much charm. Such great skill. But, in the end, to what end? So much promise, to no great purpose.

Little more than a decade ago, the Cold War thawed and, with the leadership of Presidents Reagan and Bush, that wall came down.

But instead of seizing this moment, the Clinton/Gore administration has squandered it. We have seen a steady erosion of American power and an unsteady exercise of American influence.

Our military is low on parts, pay and morale. If called on by the commander-in-chief today, two entire divisions of the Army would have to report ... "Not ready for duty, sir." This administration had its moment. They had their chance. They have not led. We will.

This generation was given the gift of the best education in American history. Yet we do not share that gift with everyone. Seven of ten fourth-graders in our highest poverty schools cannot read a simple children's book.

And still this administration continues on the same old path with the same old programs -- while millions are trapped in schools where violence is common and learning is rare. This administration had its chance. They have not led. We will.

America has a strong economy and a surplus. We have the public resources and the public will -- even the bipartisan opportunities -- to strengthen Social Security and repair Medicare.

But this administration -- during eight years of increasing need --
did nothing. They had their moment. They have not led. We will.

Our generation has a chance to reclaim some essential values -- to show we have grown up before we grow old.

But when the moment for leadership came, this administration did not teach our children, it disillusioned them. They had their chance. They have not led. We will. And now they come asking for another chance, another shot. Our answer? Not this time. Not this year.

This is not a time for third chances, it is a time for new beginnings. The rising generations of this country have our own appointment with greatness.

It does not rise or fall with the stock market. It cannot be bought with our wealth. Greatness is found when American character and American courage overcome American challenges.

When Lewis Morris of New York was about to sign the Declaration of Independence, his brother advised against it, warning he would lose all his property.

Morris, a plain-spoken Founder, responded ... "Damn the consequences, give me the pen." That is the eloquence of American action.

We heard it during World War II, when General Eisenhower told paratroopers on D-Day morning not to worry -- and one replied, "We're not worried, General ... It's Hitler's turn to worry now."

We heard it in the civil rights movement, when brave men and women did not say ... "We shall cope," or "We shall see." They said ... "We shall overcome."

An American president must call upon that character. Tonight, in this hall, we resolve to be, not the party of repose, but the party of reform. We will write, not footnotes, but chapters in the American story.

We will add the work of our hands to the inheritance of our fathers.
and mothers -- and leave this nation greater than we found it. We know the tests of leadership. The issues are joined.

We will strengthen Social Security and Medicare for the greatest generation, and for generations to come.

Medicare does more than meet the needs of our elderly, it reflects the values of our society.

We will set it on firm financial ground, and make prescription drugs available and affordable for every senior who needs them.

Social Security has been called the "third rail of American politics" -- the one you're not supposed to touch because it shocks you. But, if you don't touch it, you can't fix it. And I intend to fix it.

To seniors in this country ... You earned your benefits, you made your plans, and President George W. Bush will keep the promise of Social Security ... no changes, no reductions, no way.

Our opponents will say otherwise. This is their last, parting ploy, and don't believe a word of it.

Now is the time for Republicans and Democrats to end the politics of fear and save Social Security, together.

For younger workers, we will give you the option -- your choice -- to put a part of your payroll taxes into sound, responsible investments.

This will mean a higher return on your money, and, over 30 or 40 years, a nest egg to help your retirement, or pass along to your children.

When this money is in your name, in your account, it's not just a program, it's your property. Now is the time to give American workers security and independence that no politician can ever take away.

On education ... Too many American children are segregated into schools without standards, shuffled from grade-to-grade because of their age, regardless of their knowledge.

This is discrimination, pure and simple -- the soft bigotry of low
expectations. And our nation should treat it like other forms of
discrimination ... We should end it.

One size does not fit all when it comes to educating our children, so
local people should control local schools.

And those who spend your tax dollars must be held accountable.
When a school district receives federal funds to teach poor children, we
expect them to learn. And if they don't, parents should get the money to
make a different choice.

Now is the time to make Head Start an early learning program, teach
all our children to read, and renew the promise of America’s public
schools. Another test of leadership is tax relief.

The last time taxes were this high as a percentage of our economy,
there was a good reason ... We were fighting World War II.

Today, our high taxes fund a surplus. Some say that growing federal
surplus means Washington has more money to spend. But they've got it
backwards.

The surplus is not the government's money. The surplus is the
people's money. I will use this moment of opportunity to bring common
sense and fairness to the tax code. And I will act on principle.

On principle ... every family, every farmer and small businessperson,
should be free to pass on their life's work to those they love. So we will
abolish the death tax.

On principle ... no one in America should have to pay more than a
third of their income to the federal government. So we will reduce tax
rates for everyone, in every bracket. On principle ... those in the greatest
need should receive the greatest help. So we will lower the bottom rate
from 15 percent to 10 percent and double the child tax credit.

Now is the time to reform the tax code and share some of the surplus
with the people who pay the bills.
The world needs America's strength and leadership, and America's armed forces need better equipment, better training, and better pay.

We will give our military the means to keep the peace, and we will give it one thing more ... a commander-in-chief who respects our men and women in uniform, and a commander-in-chief who earns their respect.

A generation shaped by Vietnam must remember the lessons of Vietnam. When America uses force in the world, the cause must be just, the goal must be clear, and the victory must be overwhelming.

I will work to reduce nuclear weapons and nuclear tension in the world -- to turn these years of influence into decades of peace.

And, at the earliest possible date, my administration will deploy missile defenses to guard against attack and blackmail.

Now is the time, not to defend outdated treaties, but to defend the American people. A time of prosperity is a test of vision. And our nation today needs vision. That is a fact ... or as my opponent might call it, a "risky truth scheme." Every one of the proposals I've talked about tonight, he has called a "risky scheme," over and over again.

It is the sum of his message -- the politics of the roadblock, the philosophy of the stop sign. If my opponent had been there at the moon launch, it would have been a "risky rocket scheme." If he'd been there when Edison was testing the light bulb, it would have been a "risky anti-candle scheme." And if he'd been there when the Internet was invented well ... I understand he actually was there for that.

He now leads the party of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. But the only thing he has to offer is fear itself. That outlook is typical of many in Washington -- always seeing the tunnel at the end of the light.

But I come from a different place, and it has made me a different leader. In Midland, Texas, where I grew up, the town motto was "the sky
is the limit" ... and we believed it.

There was a restless energy, a basic conviction that, with hard work, anybody could succeed, and everybody deserved a chance. Our sense of community was just as strong as that sense of promise. Neighbors helped each other. There were dry wells and sandstorms to keep you humble, and lifelong friends to take your side, and churches to remind us that every soul is equal in value and equal in need.

This background leaves more than an accent, it leaves an outlook. Optimistic. Impatient with pretense. Confident that people can chart their own course. That background may lack the polish of Washington. Then again, I don’t have a lot of things that come with Washington. I don’t have enemies to fight. And I have no stake in the bitter arguments of the last few years. I want to change the tone of Washington to one of civility and respect.

The largest lesson I learned in Midland still guides me as governor ... Everyone, from immigrant to entrepreneur, has an equal claim on this country's promise.

So we improved our schools, dramatically, for children of every accent, of every background. We moved people from welfare to work. We strengthened our juvenile justice laws. Our budgets have been balanced, with surpluses, and we cut taxes not only once, but twice.

We accomplished a lot. I don't deserve all the credit, and don't attempt to take it. I worked with Republicans and Democrats to get things done.

A bittersweet part of tonight is that someone is missing, the late Lt. Governor of Texas Bob Bullock. Bob was a Democrat, a crusty veteran of Texas politics, and my great friend. He worked by my side, endorsed my re-election, and I know he is with me in spirit in saying to those who would malign our state for political gain... Don’t mess with Texas.
As governor, I’ve made difficult decisions, and stood by them under pressure. I’ve been where the buck stops -- in business and in government. I’ve been a chief executive who sets an agenda, sets big goals, and rallies people to believe and achieve them.

I am proud of this record, and I’m prepared for the work ahead. If you give me your trust, I will honor it ... Grant me a mandate, and I will use it... Give me the opportunity to lead this nation, and I will lead ...

And we need a leader to seize the opportunities of this new century - - the new cures of medicine, the amazing technologies that will drive our economy and keep the peace.

But our new economy must never forget the old, unfinished struggle for human dignity.

And here we face a challenge to the very heart and founding premise of our nation.

A couple of years ago, I visited a juvenile jail in Marlin, Texas, and talked with a group of young inmates. They were angry, wary kids. All had committed grownup crimes. Yet when I looked in their eyes, I realized some of them were still little boys. Toward the end of conversation, one young man, about 15, raised his hand and asked a haunting question... "What do you think of me?" He seemed to be asking, like many Americans who struggle ... "Is there hope for me? Do I have a chance?" And, frankly ... "Do you, a white man in a suit, really care what happens to me?"

A small voice, but it speaks for so many. Single moms struggling to feed the kids and pay the rent. Immigrants starting a hard life in a new world. Children without fathers in neighborhoods where gangs seem like friendship, where drugs promise peace, and where sex, sadly, seems like the closest thing to belonging. We are their country, too.

And each of us must share in its promise, or that promise is
diminished for all. If that boy in Marlin believes he is trapped and worthless and hopeless -- if he believes his life has no value, then other lives have no value to him -- and we are ALL diminished.

When these problems aren't confronted, it builds a wall within our nation. On one side are wealth and technology, education and ambition.

On the other side of the wall are poverty and prison, addiction and despair. And, my fellow Americans, we must tear down that wall.

Big government is not the answer. But the alternative to bureaucracy is not indifference.

It is to put conservative values and conservative ideas into the thick of the fight for justice and opportunity.

This is what I mean by compassionate conservatism. And on this ground we will govern our nation.

We will give low-income Americans tax credits to buy the private health insurance they need and deserve.

We will transform today's housing rental program to help hundreds of thousands of low-income families find stability and dignity in a home of their own.

And, in the next bold step of welfare reform, we will support the heroic work of homeless shelters and hospices, food pantries and crisis pregnancy centers -- people reclaiming their communities block-by-block and heart-by-heart.

I think of Mary Jo Copeland, whose ministry called "Sharing and Caring Hands" serves 1,000 meals a week in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Each day, Mary Jo washes the feet of the homeless, then sends them off with new socks and shoes.

"Look after your feet," she tells them ...... "They must carry you a long way in this world, and then all the way to God."

Government cannot do this work. It can feed the body, but it cannot
reach the soul. Yet government can take the side of these groups, helping the helper, encouraging the inspired.

My administration will give taxpayers new incentives to donate to charity, encourage after-school programs that build character, and support mentoring groups that shape and save young lives.

We must give our children a spirit of moral courage, because their character is our destiny.

We must tell them, with clarity and confidence, that drugs and alcohol can destroy you, and bigotry disfigures the heart.

Our schools must support the ideals of parents, elevating character and abstinence from afterthoughts to urgent goals.

We must help protect our children, in our schools and streets, by finally and strictly enforcing our nation’s gun laws.

Most of all, we must teach our children the values that defeat violence. I will lead our nation toward a culture that values life -- the life of the elderly and the sick, the life of the young, and the life of the unborn. I know good people disagree on this issue, but surely we can agree on ways to value life by promoting adoption and parental notification, and when Congress sends me a bill against partial-birth abortion, I will sign it into law.

Behind every goal I have talked about tonight is a great hope for our country. A hundred years from now, this must not be remembered as an age rich in possessions and poor in ideals.

Instead, we must usher in an era of responsibility. My generation tested limits -- and our country, in some ways, is better for it. Women are now treated more equally. Racial progress has been steady, if still too slow. We are learning to protect the natural world around us. We will continue this progress, and we will not turn back.

At times, we lost our way. But we are coming home. So many of us
held our first child, and saw a better self reflected in her eyes. And in that family love, many have found the sign and symbol of an even greater love, and have been touched by faith.

We have discovered that who we are is more important than what we have. And we know we must renew our values to restore our country. This is the vision of America’s founders. They never saw our nation’s greatness in rising wealth or advancing armies, but in small, unnumbered acts of caring and courage and self-denial.

Their highest hope, as Robert Frost described it, was "to occupy the land with character." And that, 13 generations later, is still our goal ... to occupy the land with character.

In a responsibility era, each of us has important tasks -- work that only we can do. Each of us is responsible ... to love and guide our children, and help a neighbor in need.

Synagogues, churches and mosques are responsible ... not only to worship but to serve. Corporations are responsible ... to treat their workers fairly, and leave the air and waters clean. Our nation’s leaders are responsible ... to confront problems, not pass them on to others. And to lead this nation to a responsibility era, a president himself must be responsible.

And so, when I put my hand on the Bible, I will swear to not only uphold the laws of our land, I will swear to uphold the honor and dignity of the office to which I have been elected, so help me God.

I believe the presidency -- the final point of decision in the American government -- was made for great purposes. It is the office of Lincoln’s conscience and Teddy Roosevelt’s energy and Harry Truman’s integrity and Ronald Reagan’s optimism. For me, gaining this office is not the ambition of a lifetime, but it IS the opportunity of a lifetime. And I will make the most of it. I believe great decisions are made with care, made
with conviction, not made with polls. I do not need to take your pulse before I know my own mind. I do not reinvent myself at every turn. I am not running in borrowed clothes. When I act, you will know my reasons ... When I speak, you will know my heart.

I believe in tolerance, not in spite of my faith, but because of it. I believe in a God who calls us, not to judge our neighbors, but to love them. I believe in grace, because I have seen it ... In peace, because I have felt it ... In forgiveness, because I have needed it. I believe true leadership is a process of addition, not an act of division. I will not attack a part of this country, because I want to lead the whole of it. And I believe this will be a tough race, down to the wire. Their war room is up and running ... but we are ready. Their attacks will be relentless ... but they will be answered. We are facing something familiar, but they are facing something new.

We are now the party of ideas and innovation ... The party of idealism and inclusion. The party of a simple and powerful hope ...

My fellow citizens, we can begin again. After all of the shouting, and all of the scandal. After all of the bitterness and broken faith. We can begin again.

The wait has been long, but it won't be long now.

A prosperous nation is ready to renew its purpose and unite behind great goals ... and it won't be long now. Our nation must renew the hopes of that boy I talked with in jail, and so many like him ... and it won't be long now. Our country is ready for high standards and new leaders ... and it won't be long now. An era of tarnished ideals is giving way to a responsibility era ... and it won't be long now. I know how serious the task is before me. I know the presidency is an office that turns pride into prayer. But I am eager to start on the work ahead. And I believe America is ready for a new beginning. My friend, the artist Tom Lea of El Paso,
captured the way I feel about our great land.

He and his wife, he said, "live on the east side of the mountain ... It is the sunrise side, not the sunset side. It is the side to see the day that is coming ... not the side to see the day that is gone."

Americans live on the sunrise side of a mountain. The night is passing. And we are ready for the day to come. Thank you. And God bless you.
I say a prayer breakfast is a good ending to what has been a fantastic experience for a couple of reasons. Sitting up here at the dais just reminds me that we’re all God’s children in America, that the gateway to heaven takes different paths, that in my case, I was a person who sought redemption and found it, and my life is better for it.

It’s fitting that we be at a prayer breakfast afterwards because it reminds us that while government can feed the body, it cannot nourish the soul.

A government should be about laws and justice and freedom. But as I told a lot of folks in Texas over the years, I wish I knew the law to make people love one another. I would sign it.

I wish I knew the budget that would be required, because we’d pass it.

The truth of the matter is, love comes from a higher calling, a higher being, and our jobs as leaders, Republicans, Democrats, non-affiliates, is to rally that compassion of America, is to call upon the love that exists, not because of government, it exists because of a gracious and loving God.

And our jobs as leaders, Republicans, Democrats, non-affiliates, is to rally that compassion of America, is to call upon the love that exists, not because of government, it exists because of a gracious and loving God.

Our mission, regardless of political party, is to work together to
make sure no child is left behind as we go into the 21st century, is to focus our efforts on rejecting bigotry and hatred and promoting that which we find in prayer in our respective books of God.

And so, as we depart the City of Brotherly Love, we depart with a good feeling in our heart. We depart with the understanding that this nation is in fact one nation, under God, indivisible.

God bless.
The convention started off pretty well I thought Monday night with one of the great speeches of all time by my wife.

I was really proud of her, I was really proud of her. America got to see, if, in fact, you can judge the nature of a man by the company he keeps, I keep pretty darn good company.

I was so pleased to see Dick Cheney have a chance to speak from his heart, talk about his leadership, talk about his -- and I think people got to see what I know. This is a strong man, it's a steady man, it's a man who has brought nobility to the public service, it's a man who is my friend and who is going to be great vice president of the United States.

So we leave this City of Brotherly Love energized and united and focused on victory. This is a message of ours that we started laying out for the American people to see, that should Dick and I be fortunate to earn the will of the people, we'll be the president and vice president of every citizen, not just a few.

And our job is to bring -- is to restore confidence to America, to lift this nation's spirit, to call upon the best of our citizenry.

We believe we can do it. We're optimistic people. We believe the great strength of America lies in the hearts and souls of our decent, compassionate, loving citizenry.

One of the best things about campaigning is not only going out and asking for the vote, but it's to see the true strength of our country, it's to be able to look our fellow citizens in the eyes and realize that our job will be to unite, realize our job is to call upon the best, realize our job will be
to appeal to the better angels of Americans, not our darker impulses.

So as we leave this convention, excited about our chances, united for the cause, I want to say once again: I appreciate the honor to be carrying the banner for the Republican Party.

I want to say once again: America give us a chance, give us a chance to restore honor to the White House.

So as we head out, thank you all from the bottom of our hearts. You did a fantastic job. Work hard, we'll be working with you. Pennsylvania will be Bush-Cheney country.
George W. Bush
Naperville, Illinois
September 4, 2000

*The Issues in this Election*

And that's the same message for America: Help is on the way. It's time to elect some folks that've got good common sense.

It's time to elect people who say what they mean and mean what they say when they tell the American people something.

It's time to get rid of all those words like "no controlling legal authority."

We need plain-spoken Americans in the White House. Just yesterday we had interesting example of, kind of, the Washington double speech. My opponent said he would debate me any place, any time, anywhere. I said, "Fine. Why don't we just show up at NBC, with Mr. Russert as a moderator, or why don't we just show up at "LARRY KING" and discuss our differences? Why don't we stand up and show the clear difference of opinion?"

But no, all of a sudden the words about any time, anywhere, don't mean anything. It's time to get some plain-spoken folks in Washington, D.C.

When we tell you...

When we tell you something, we mean it. When we say we're going to do something, we're going to do what we say. That's what America hungers for. America wants leadership that lifts its spirit. America wants leadership so that when you turn to your children they say, "These good men are going to do what they say they're going to do." You know, that's the kind of leadership we're going to provide this great country called America.
And we're running for a reason. We're running for a reason. There's some compelling issues.

As you know, we've got a big debate over the surplus. You know why I think the surplus exists? It doesn't exist because of the ingenuity and the hard work of the federal government. The surplus exists because of the ingenuity and the hard work of the American working people.

The surplus exists because the federal government overcharges the people that work every single day.

It's time to have new leadership when it comes to the surplus. You see, we understand the surplus is not the government's money; the surplus is the people's money.

Here's the way I'd like to describe the surplus. The surplus exists after our budget's increase and yet there's still over $4 trillion of the people's money in Washington. After our budget's grow, there's still $4 trillion left over. Now, I want to take $2 trillion of that and set it aside for Social Security. It's time to have new leadership in Washington, D.C.

It's time so have new leadership that says to the seniors, "The promise of Social Security will be met." But it's also time to have new thinking in Washington that says we must trust younger workers, demanding some of your own money -- your own hard-earned money in the private sector.

... in stark contrast to the last few decades, which has clearly said, "If it feels good do it, and you've got a problem blame somebody else," our vision says each of us must understand we're responsible for the decisions we make in life.

If you're a dad or you're a mom, that you're responsible for loving your children with all your heart and all your soul and all your might. If you live in this good community, you're responsible for making sure the quality of education is the best it can possibly be.
Part of the responsibility era says we understand that there are some in our society who wonder whether the American dream is meant for them; some who wonder whether or not there’s any hope in their lives.

This campaign says there’s hope for every American in their lives. We understand, though, we must rally the armies of compassion: those good souls who’re responsible when they hear the universal call to love a neighbor just like you’d like to be loved yourself.

No, America’s better days are ahead of us, but it requires new leadership, it requires a willingness to change the attitude in Washington, D.C., to call upon the best. And it begins with having a president and vice president who, should we be fortunate enough to earn your confidence, when we swear in, we will swear in not only to uphold the laws of the land, we will swear to uphold the honor and the integrity of the offices to which we have been elected, so help me God.
George W. Bush
California Republican Party Convention via Satellite
Austin, Texas
September 16, 2000

Fighting on Issues

... 

It is good to be with you by satellite. I just came back from California after three good days of campaigning. That makes about 30 days campaigning in your wonderful state. We are planning some more good days there – and a great day on the seventh of November.

We have a solid chance to sweep the West Coast. But this election will be close, and the outcome will be determined precinct by precinct. In a race like this, everything we do matters. Every day matters. And everyone in this room can make a difference.

We need to get out every Republican vote.

We need to appeal to independents.

We need to reelect a Republican Congress – because I will need help in the work we have to do next year.

I view California as a battleground state. My opponent has made the mistake of already counting the votes of California – but I am going to earn them.

From the beginning, the hopes of families have been the goals of this campaign.

The hope of parents for better and safer schools.

The hope of the middle class to build savings and independence.

The hope of new Americans to join that middle class.

The hope of young people, facing the financial challenges of college and marriage and mortgage and children.
The hope of seniors for dignity and security in retirement.

We are not just opposing the current administration. We are proposing something better. For over a year, we have been applying creative, conservative ideas to the job of helping real people.

That is the meaning of compassionate conservatism. That is the message of my campaign. That is a cause worth waging, and a cause we will win together.

Now my opponent, after months of bitter attack politics, says he wants to talk about policy. He says he wants to talk about issues. And I am glad he wants to play on our turf.

...
George W. Bush  
Republican National Convention 2000  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania  

Party Platform: Preamble

We meet at a remarkable time in the life of our country. Our powerful economy gives America a unique chance to confront persistent challenges. Our country, after an era of drift, must now set itself to important tasks and higher goals. The Republican Party has the vision and leadership to address these issues.

Our platform is uplifting and visionary. It reflects the views of countless Americans all across this country who believe in prosperity with a purpose — who believe in Renewing America’s Purpose. Together.

This platform makes clear that we are the party of ideas. We are the party that follows its bold words with bold deeds.

Since the election of 1860, the Republican Party has had a special calling — to advance the founding principles of freedom and limited government and the dignity and worth of every individual.

These principles form the foundation of both an agenda for America in the year 2000 and this platform for our party. They point us toward reforms in government, a restoration of timeless values, and a renewal of our national purpose.

The twenty-fifth man to receive our party’s nomination is equal to the challenges facing our country. After a period of bitter division in national politics, our nominee is a leader who brings people together. In a time of fierce partisanship, he calls all citizens to common goals. To longstanding problems, he brings a fresh outlook and innovative ideas and a record of results.

Under his leadership, the Republican Party commits itself to bold
reforms in education — to make every school a place of learning and achievement for every child. We will preserve local control of public schools, while demanding high standards and accountability for results.

We commit ourselves to saving and strengthening Social Security. After years of neglect and delay, we will keep this fundamental commitment to the senior citizens of today and tomorrow.

We commit ourselves to rebuilding the American military and returning to a foreign policy of strength and purpose and a renewed commitment to our allies. We will deploy defenses against ballistic missiles and develop the weapons and strategies needed to win battles in this new technological era.

We commit ourselves to tax reforms that will sustain our nation’s prosperity and reflect its decency. We will reduce the burden on all Americans, especially those who struggle most.

We commit ourselves to aiding and encouraging the work of charitable and faith-based organizations, which today are making great strides in overcoming poverty and other social problems, bringing new hope into millions of lives. For every American there must be a ladder of opportunity, and for those most in need, a safety net of care.

We recommit ourselves to the values that strengthen our culture and sustain our nation: family, faith, personal responsibility, and a belief in the dignity of every human life.

We offer not only a new agenda, but also a new approach — a vision of a welcoming society in which all have a place. To all Americans, particularly immigrants and minorities, we send a clear message: this is the party of freedom and progress, and it is your home.

The diversity of our nation is reflected in this platform. We ask for the support and participation of all who substantially share our agenda. In one way or another, every Republican is a dissenter. At the same time,
we are not morally indifferent. In this, as in many things, Lincoln is our model. He spoke words of healing and words of conviction. We do likewise, for we are bound together in a great enterprise for our children’s future.

We seek to be faithful to the best traditions of our party. We are the party that ended slavery, granted homesteads, built land grant colleges, and moved control of government out of Washington, back into the hands of the people. We believe in service to the common good — and that good is not common until it is shared.

We believe that from freedom comes opportunity; from opportunity comes growth; and from growth comes progress and prosperity.

Our vision is one of clear direction, new ideas, civility in public life, and leadership with honor and distinction.

This is an election with clear alternatives. The Republican Party offers America a chance to begin anew: To give purpose to our plenty. To apply enduring principles to new challenges. To extend to all citizens the full promise of American life.

With confidence in our fellow Americans and great hopes for the future of our country, we respectfully submit this platform to the people of the United States.
George W. Bush
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
October 26, 2000

An Era of Responsibility

From the first day of this campaign I have talked about the goal of a responsibility era for America. And even before that, it was one of my priorities as governor. For too long our culture has sent this message: if it feels good, do it. And if you’ve got a problem, just go ahead and blame somebody else. Each of us must understand that's not right. Each of us must understand that we're responsible for the decisions and choices we make in life.

Around campaign time the responsibility era is not merely a set of political promises. It's a set of challenges for the American people and for their government. It is not something a president can do alone. It is something that this nation must do together. Each citizen -- each citizen -- is responsibility for loving the children that he or she brings into this world. To love them, and to teach them right from wrong.

It is so important for this nation to remember that the character of our children is the destiny of our nation. Churches and synagogues -- churches, synagogues and mosques are responsible, not only to worship, but also to serve. Charities and community groups are not our last resort, they're this nation's best hope. Communities are responsible to educate children of every background, and to help those in need.

This is kind of country we want to be: a country of strong communities and self-governing citizens. And this is the kind of country our government should encourage. In helping families and communities, we should give them options, not orders. We should trust people with responsibility.
We should help people live their lives, not try to run their lives.

On the major issues before America, this is the choice. I believe younger workers, for example, should be trusted to invest some of their own payroll tax for their own retirement. It is necessary, and it's going to be a part of a stronger Social Security system that will build personal wealth and independence. My opponent? He's opposed to trusting workers to manage some of their own money.

I believe education is a national priority, but it's also a local responsibility. I want to give schools -- I want to give schools the resources and authority to chart their own path to excellence. My opponent thinks Washington knows best. I believe that when children, low-income children are trapped in failing schools, their parents should be trusted to make other choices. My opponent would deny them those options.

I believe that seniors should have a better Medicare system, with prescription drugs -- access to the latest medical technology, and more control over their health care. My opponent thinks differently. He has a one-size-fits-all answer, dictated by Washington, from Washington.

I believe that every American deserves tax relief and a tax cut. My opponent offers tax cuts for only the few and the favored, for those he calls "the right people." And even his right people only get tax cuts when they do what the government says they ought to do. I don't believe a president, by the way, should choose right Americans. All Americans are the right people, in our vision.

I believe in supporting the good work of churches and synagogues and charities in communities all across America.

My opponent calls their work, and he did so during this campaign, the crumbs of compassion, and looks to government instead. I trust people and communities with responsibility. And my proposals time after
time help them meet those responsibilities in very practical ways.

There's a big difference in this campaign. I'm running against a man who would expand government more than we have seen in 35 years; and that's a threat to prosperity. But the problem runs even deeper. Even if we could afford to pay for the vice president's ideas, they would still be the wrong ideas. They would be the failed policies of the past.

For decades we've tried to solve problems with rules and mandates from distant bureaucracies, and theories from far-away federal experts, but that doesn't solve communities' problems. It doesn't answer the need. My opponent is promoting a big buildup of big government. Make no mistake about it: more spending, more programs, more of Washington talking down to us and thinking on our behalf.

I believe government works best when it relies on the good judgment and common sense of the people themselves. Americans are not asking for a bigger, more intrusive government. We deserve a government that gives us the tools to dream and build and prosper on our own. In a responsibility era -- in a responsibility era, government must trust the people. And in return, in a responsibility era, people should also be able to trust their government.

Public officials should call on Americans to be responsible, but lectures do not replace leadership. Leaders must lead by example. Leaders must be responsible, and in our great democracy, the top responsibility rests with the president of the United States. I'm prepared to assume this awesome responsibility, and I will be guided by principle and convictions that will not change.

When I ran for governor of Texas, I told my fellow Texans that I'd be guided by four fundamental principles. They shaped decisions I have made as governor, and they'll shape decisions I make as president of the United States.
I believe our government should be limited and efficient. I believe in local control, because local people know better than anyone else the needs for their schools and their communities. I believe all laws and public policy should support strong families. And I believe in individual responsibility, that all individuals are responsible for their actions and for their decisions.

Responsible leadership is the most important task of an American president. And it should be -- and it should be the most important question Americans ask before they vote. What kind of leader will a potential president be?

A responsible leader sets a clear agenda and brings people together to achieve it. A leader accepts responsibility and is willing to share credit. A leader stands on principle. A good leader is predictable. He doesn't try to be all things to all people, or he doesn't change personalities, say, for a different debate. Leaders get things done, and they realize they cannot do it alone, so they surround themselves with good people and build a strong team.

Responsible leaders do not -- responsible leaders confront problems. They don't pass them along to others.

Leaders are never content with the status quo. They look down the road, anticipate, and prepare for new challenges and new opportunities. And good leaders create a climate of honesty and integrity.

And my friends, our nation needs leadership, because even in these good times, we face big challenges. On Social Security, the crisis is coming. It will be in the red within a couple of decades, bankrupt by 2037. On education, the crisis is here -- stagnating scores and American students who perform near the bottom among industrialized nations.

On both of these issues the current administration has left faint footprints, making time, not making progress. On both of these issues
my opponent would add four years of drift to eight years of failed leadership.

His idea is to issue government IOUs to fill the Social Security trust fund, a massive transfer from one government pocket to another. These IOUs amount to $40 trillion. But IOUs don't pay benefits, and eventually they will come due. Our children and grandchildren will be forced to pay them with massive new taxes or major cuts in benefits. It is not responsible leadership to deny future generations a chance to have a secure retirement. All for the political purpose of frightening the greatest generation into believing that reform is their enemy, pitting grandparents against grandchildren is the worst kind of old style politics.

And as importantly, it is a failure of leadership. There was a time when leaders spoke of passing the torch to a new generation of Americans. On Social Security, my opponent would pass the buck and the bill to the next generation of Americans, leaving trillions in debts to voters he will never face.

Education is a similar story. He talks about reform. And he talks -- and talks -- and talks. But for eight years there's been little progress, few results. And his current proposals really don't require any. Now he's attacking our successes in Texas in boosting student achievement, aligning himself with the voices of the status quo, those who oppose testing, and thereby revealing his true stripes. During our debate he claimed to support accountability. But unless you measure, unless you test every child every year from third to eighth grade, reform is an illusion.

The vice president and the forces of the status quo find lots of excuses to avoid accountability. But without accountability, standards are just scraps of paper, and parents will never know if their children are learning.
Vice President Gore's plan has no new accountability, and in too many schools this will mean another generation of children lost to the soft bigotry of low expectations. This is not my idea of leadership. When you govern by focus groups and act for interest groups, you cannot confront real problems in America.

When you wait for the latest polls to point the way, you cannot lead. When you hold your finger to the wind, you cannot put your finger on a problem. And when you hold on to power for power's sake, you cannot govern.

I believe when it's all said and done, America will realize my opponent's campaign is a fitting close to the Clinton-Gore years. They're going out as they came in -- their guide; the nightly polls, their goal; the morning headlines, their legacy; the fruitless search for a legacy.

Should I earn the confidence of the American people and become your president, I am going to confront the hard issues. I am not going to leave Social Security as a problem for others to solve. My plan strengthens Social Security by increasing the rate of return that younger workers get on payroll taxes they pay into the system. Ours is a vision that will create real assets and a more secure retirement for the next generation.

Now I know the Social Security issue is supposed to be what they call the third rail of American politics; you know, the one that shocks you when you touch it. And more than one person advised me, before I got running, to stay away from this issue.

But I'm running for a reason. I just don't want to hold a job. I understand if you don't touch it, you cannot fix it. And I intend to fix Social Security when I become the president.

And I'll also lead on education. I want the best public schools in the world. And we will no longer fund failure, in my administration. In return
for federal money, we will insist local jurisdictions test every year. We'll raise the bar and require strong results for our children. I believe our public schools will rise to the occasion, just as they have in my state of Texas. But if schools -- but if schools do not teach and will not change, instead of accepting the status quo, we will give parents better options -- different choices. We'll leave no child behind in America. And that's what accountability means. And that's what leadership demands.

Responsible leadership does more than just sets an agenda; it sets a tone of civility and bipartisanship to get things done on behalf of the American people. In recent years, there's been too much argument in Washington and not enough discussion; too many standoffs and showdowns and shutdowns; too much deadlock and gridlock. And Americans do not like what they see.

My opponent in the course of this campaign has set a tone about what he's going to be should he win. He talked about ripping the lungs out of political adversaries. Part of his campaign headquarters is called, incredibly enough, the slaughterhouse. And his staff proudly calls itself a band -- and I quote -- of killers. That's political killers, of course. This is a sample of what we could expect, a bitter and negative tone that has nearly destroyed bipartisanship in our nation's capital, the same attack politics that have disillusioned so many Americans, especially young Americans who want to believe in a cause larger than ourselves.

But folks, as you go to gather the vote, I want you to remind people, it doesn't have to be this way in Washington, D.C.

The last eight years are an example of what the next eight years will be. I'll change the tone of Washington; I'll change the tone of this nation's capital to call upon a better day tomorrow.

And I will bring good people to our nation's capital and surround myself with a strong team of capable leaders. I set such a clear signal of
my intentions when I named a great citizen to be my running mate, Mr. Dick Cheney. It would be presumptuous for me to name other names before the people of this land have spoken, but I do have great respect for the man who introduced me today. No, it would be presumptuous to name names, and I do have great respect, but I hope his greatest days for service to this country might still lie ahead.

We're coming down the stretch, and I feel great about our chances -- I feel great about our chances because the American people know the difference in philosophy, because the American people understand there's a better day ahead for this great country. And should I earn the confidence of the American people, I'll work with Republicans and Democrats to get things done on behalf of the American people. We won't always agree in Washington, D.C. -- I understand that. But I will work to keep our disagreements respectful, and I'll work to find common ground. I will do everything I can to restore civility to our national politics -- -- a respect for honest differences and a decent regard for one another. I know you can't take the politics out of politics. I'm from Texas, I'm a realist!

But I'm convinced our government can show more courage in confronting hard problems, more goodwill toward the other side, and more integrity in the exercise of power.

This isn't always easy. But it's always important. It's what the people expect of their leaders. And it's what leaders must require of themselves. My administration will provide responsible leadership. And finally, a leader must uphold the honor and the dignity of the office to which he had be elected.

In my administration we will ask not only what is legal, but what is right. Not just what the lawyers allow, but what the public deserves. In my administration we'll make it clear there is the controlling legal
authority of conscience. We will make people proud again, so that Americans who love their country can once again respect their government.
[LEHRER]: Good evening from the Clark Athletic Center at the University of Massachusetts in Boston. I'm Jim Lehrer of "The NewsHour" on PBS. And I welcome you to the first of three 90- minute debates between the Democratic candidate for president, Vice President Al Gore, and the Republican candidate, Governor George W. Bush of Texas.

The debates are sponsored by the Commission on Presidential Debates, and they will be conducted within formats and rules agreed to by the commission and the two campaigns.

Tonight's will have the candidates at podiums. No answer to a question can exceed two minutes. Rebuttals are limited to one minute. But as moderator, I have the option to follow up and to extend any particular give and take another three and a half minutes. But even then, no single answer can exceed two minutes.

The candidates, under their rules, may not question each other directly.
There will be no opening statements, but each candidate may have up to two minutes for a closing statement. The questions and the subjects were chosen by me alone. I have told no one from the two campaigns or the commission or anyone else involved what they are. There's a small audience in the hall tonight.

[LEHRER]: They are not here to participate, only to listen.

I have asked and they have agreed to remain silent for the next 90 minutes, except for right now, when they will applaud as we welcome the two candidates, Governor Bush and Vice President Gore.

And now, the first question. As determined by the flip of a coin, it goes to Vice President Gore.

Vice President Gore, you have questioned whether Governor Bush has the experience to be President of the United States. What exactly do you mean?

[GORE]: Well, Jim, first of all I would like to thank the sponsors of this debate and the people of Boston for hosting the debate. I'd like to thank Governor Bush for participating. And I'd like to say I'm happy to be here with Tipper and our family.

I have actually not questioned Governor Bush's experience; I have questioned his proposals. And here's why: I think this is a very important moment for our country. We have achieved extraordinary prosperity. And in this election, America has to make an important choice: Will we use our prosperity to enrich not just the few but all of our families?

I believe we have to make the right and responsible choices. If I'm entrusted with the presidency, here are the choices that I will make: I'll balance the budget every year, I will pay down the national debt, I will put Medicare and Social Security in a lockbox and protect it, and I will cut taxes for middle class families.
I believe it’s important to resist the temptation to squander our surplus. If we make the right choices, we can have a prosperity that endures and enriches all of our people.

If I’m entrusted with the presidency, I will help parents and strengthen families, because, you know, if we have prosperity that grows and grows, we still won’t be successful unless we strengthen families by, for example, ensuring that children can always go to schools that are safe, by giving parents the tools to protect their children against cultural pollution.

I will make sure that we invest in our country and our families. And I mean investing in education, health care, the environment and middle class tax cuts and retirement security. That’s my agenda, and that’s why I think that it’s not just question of experience.

[LEHRER]: Governor Bush, one minute rebuttal.

[BUSH]: Well, we do come from different places. And I come from West Texas. I’ve been a governor. Governor is the chief executive officer and learns how to set agendas, and I think you’re going to find the difference reflect in our budgets.

[BUSH]: I want to take one-half of the surplus and dedicate it to Social Security, one-quarter of the surplus for important projects, and I want to send one-quarter of the surplus back to the people who pay the bills. I want everybody who pays taxes to have their tax rates cut. Now that stands in contrast to my worthy opponent’s plan, which will increase the size of government dramatically. His plan is three times larger than President Clinton’s proposed plan eight years ago. It’s a plan that will have 200 new programs, as well -- or expanded programs. It'll create 20,000 new bureaucrats. In other words, it empowers Washington.

And tonight you’re going to hear that my passion and my vision is to
empower Americans to be able to make decisions for themselves in their own lives.

[LEHRER]: So, I take it by your answer then, Mr. Vice President, that in your -- an interview recently with the New York Times, when you said that you questioned whether vice president -- or Governor Bush was experienced enough to be President, you were talking about strictly policy differences?

[GORE]: Yes, Jim. I said that his tax cut plan, for example, raises the question of whether it's the right choice for the country.

[GORE]: And let me give you an example of what I mean: Under Governor Bush's tax cut proposal, he would spend more money on tax cuts for the wealthiest 1 percent than all of the new spending that he proposes for education, health care, prescription drugs and national defense, all combined. Now, I think those are the wrong priorities. Now, under my proposal, for every dollar that I propose in spending for things like education and health care, I will put another dollar into middle class tax cuts.

And for every dollar that I spend in those two categories, I'll put two dollars toward paying down the national debt. I think it's very important to keep the debt going down and completely eliminate it. And I also think it's very important to go to the next stage of welfare reform. Our country has cut the welfare rolls in half. I fought hard, from my days in the Senate and as Vice President, to cut the welfare rolls, and we've moved millions of people in America into good jobs. But it's now time for the next stage of welfare reform and include fathers and not only mothers.

[LEHRER]: We're going to get to a lot of those.

Yes, go ahead, Governor.

[BUSH]: Well, let me just said that obviously tonight we're going to hear
some phony numbers about what I think and what we ought to do. People need to know that, over the next 10 years, there's going to be $25 trillion of revenue that comes into our Treasury, and we anticipate spending $21 trillion.

[BUSH]: And my plan says, "Why don't we pass $1.3 trillion of that back to the people who pay the bills?" Surely we can afford 5 percent of the $25 trillion that are coming into the Treasury to the hard-working people who pay the bills.

There's a difference of opinion. My opponent thinks the government -- the surplus is the government's money. That's not what I think. I think it's the hard-working people of America's money, and I want to share some of that money with you, so you've got more money to build and save and dream for your families.

It's a difference of opinion. It's the difference between government making decisions for you and you getting more of your money to make decisions for yourself.

[LEHRER]: Let me just follow up, one quick question. When you hear Vice President Gore question your experience, do you read it the same way, that he's talking about policy differences only?

[BUSH]: Yes. I take him for his word.

I mean, look, I fully recognize I'm not of Washington. I'm from Texas. And he's got a lot of experience, but so do I. And I've been the chief executive officer of the second-biggest state in the Union. And I've had a proud record of working with both Republicans and Democrats, which is what our nation needs. We need somebody who can come up to Washington and say, "Look, let's forget all the politics and all the finger-pointing and get some positive things done on Medicare and prescription drugs and Social Security." And so, I take him for his word.
[GORE]: Jim, if I could just respond.

[LEHRER]: Just quick and then we need to move on.

[GORE]: I know that.

The governor used the phrase "phony numbers," but if you -- if you look at the plan and add the numbers up, these numbers are correct. He spends more money for tax cuts for the wealthiest one percent in all of his new spending proposals for health care, prescription drugs, education and national defense, all combined.

I agree that the surplus is the American people's money; it's your money. That's why I don't think we should give nearly half of it to the wealthiest 1 percent, because the other 99 percent have had an awful lot to do with building this surplus and our prosperity.

[LEHRER]: All right, three and a half minutes is up. New question.

[BUSH]: I hope it's about wealthy people.

[LEHRER]: Governor Bush, you have questioned -- this is a companion question to the question I asked Vice President Gore.

[BUSH]: OK.

[LEHRER]: You have questioned whether Vice President Gore has demonstrated the leadership qualities necessary to be president of the United States. What do you mean by that?

[BUSH]: Well, here's what I've said: I've said, Jim, I've said that eight years ago they campaigned on prescription drugs for seniors, and four years ago they campaigned on getting prescription drugs for seniors, and now they're campaigning on getting prescription drugs for seniors. It seems like they can't get it done.

[BUSH]: Now they may blame other folks, but it's time to get somebody in Washington who's going to work with both Republicans and Democrats to get some positive things done when it comes to our seniors.
And so what I've said is, is there's been some missed opportunities.

They've had a chance. They've had a chance to form consensus. I've got a plan on Medicare, for example, that's a two-stage plan that says we're going to have immediate help for seniors in what I call "Immediate Helping Hand," a $48 billion program.

But I also want to say to seniors, "If you're happy with Medicare the way it is, fine, you can stay in the program. But we're going to give you additional choices just like they give federal employees in the federal employee health plan." Federal employees have got a variety of choices from which to choose, so should seniors.

And my point has been, as opposed to politicizing an issue like Medicare -- in other words, holding it up as an issue, hoping somebody bites and then try to clobber them over the head with it for political purposes -- this year, in the year 2000, it's time to say, "Let's get it done once and for all." And that's what I have been critical about the administration for.

Same with Social Security. I think there was a good opportunity to bring Republicans and Democrats together to reform the Social Security system so the seniors will never go without. Those on Social Security today will have their promise made.

But also to give younger workers the option, at their choice, of being able to manage some of their own money in the private sectors to make sure there's a Social Security system around tomorrow. There's a lot of young workers at our rallies we go to, that when they hear that I'm going to trust them, at their option, to be able to manage, under certain guidelines, some of their own money to get a better rate of return so that they'll have a retirement plan in the future, they begin to nod their heads. And they want a different attitude in Washington.

[LEHRER]: One minute rebuttal, Vice President Gore.
[GORE]: Well, Jim, under my plan, all seniors will get prescription drugs under Medicare. The governor has described Medicare as a government HMO; it’s not. And let me explain the difference. Under the Medicare prescription drug proposal I’m making, here’s how it works: You go to your own doctor and your doctor chooses your prescription, and no HMO or insurance company can take those choices away from you. Then you go to your own pharmacy, you fill the prescription and Medicare pays half the cost. If you’re in a very poor family or you have very high costs, Medicare will pay all the costs -- a $25 premium and much better benefits than you can possibly find in the private sector.

Now here’s the contrast. Ninety-five percent of all seniors would get no help whatsoever, under my opponent’s plan, for the first four or five years.

Now, one thing I don’t understand, Jim, is, why is it that the wealthiest 1 percent get their tax cuts the first year, but 95 percent of seniors have to wait four to five years before they get a single penny.

[LEHRER]: Governor?

[BUSH]: I guess my answer to that is, the man’s running on Mediscare, trying to frighten people in the voting booth. That’s just not the way I think, and I that’s just not my intentions. That’s not my plan.

[BUSH]: I want all seniors to have prescription drugs and Medicare. We need to reform Medicare. There have been opportunities to do so, but this administration has failed to do it. And so seniors are going to have not only a Medicare plan where the poor seniors will have their prescriptions paid for, but there will be a variety of options.

The current system today has meant a lot for a lot of seniors, and I really appreciate the intentions of the current system. And as I mentioned,
if you're happy with the system, you can stay in it.

But there's a lot of procedures that have not kept up in Medicare with the current times. There's no prescription drug benefits, there's no drug therapies, there's no preventing medicines, there's no vision care.

I mean, we need to have a modern system to help seniors. And the idea of supporting a federally controlled, 132,000-page document bureaucracy as being a compassionate way for seniors is -- and the only compassionate source of care for seniors, is just not my vision. I believe we ought to give seniors more options. I believe we ought to make the system work better. But I know this: I know it's going to require a different kind of leader to go to Washington to say to both Republicans and Democrats, "Let's come together."

You've had your chance, Vice President. You've been there for eight years and nothing has been done.

And my point is that my plan not only trusts seniors with options, my plan sets aside $3.4 trillion for Medicare over the next 10 years. My plan also says it's going to require a new approach in Washington, D.C.

\[BUSH\]: It's going to require somebody who can work across the partisan divide.

\[GORE\]: If I could respond to that, Jim, under my plan, I will put Medicare in an iron-clad lockbox and prevent the money from being used for anything other than Medicare. The governor has declined to endorse that idea, even though the Republican as well as Democratic leaders of Congress have endorsed it.

I'd be interested to see if he would this evening say that he would put Medicare in a lockbox. I don't think he will, because under his plan, if you work out the numbers, $100 billion comes out of Medicare just
for the wealthiest 1 percent in the tax cut.

Now here is the difference: Some people who say the word "reform" actually mean cuts. Under the governor’s plan, if you kept the same fee-for-service that you have now under Medicare, your premiums would go up by between 18 and 47 percent. And that's the study of the congressional plan that he's modeled his proposal on by the Medicare actuaries.

Let me just give you one quick example: There's a man here tonight named George McKinney from Milwaukee. He's 70 years old, he has high blood pressure, his wife has heart trouble. They have income of $25,000 a year. They cannot pay for their prescription drugs. And so they're some of the ones that go to Canada regularly in order to get their prescription drugs.

Under my plan, half of their costs would be paid right away. Under Governor Bush's plan, they would get not one penny for four to five years, and then they would be forced to go into an HMO or to an insurance company and ask them for coverage, but there would be no limit on the premiums or the deductibles or any other terms and conditions.

[BUSH]: I cannot let this go by, the old-style Washington politics, of "We're going to scare you in the voting booth."

Under my plan, the man gets immediate help with prescription drugs. It's called "Immediate Helping Hand." Instead of squabbling and finger-pointing, he gets immediate help.

Let me say something. Now, I understand -- excuse me...

[LEHRER]: All right, excuse me, gentlemen...

[GORE]: Jim, can I...

(CROSSTALK)

[LEHRER]: ... minutes is up, but we'll finish that.
[GORE]: Can I make one other point? They get $25,000 a year income.
That makes them ineligible.

[BUSH]: Look, this is the man who's got great numbers. He talks about
numbers. I'm beginning to think, not only did he invent the Internet,
but he invented the calculator.

It's fuzzy math. It's to scare them, trying to scare people in the voting
booth.

Under my tax plan, that he continues to criticize, I set a third. You know,
the federal government should take more of that -- no more than a
third of anybody's check. But I also dropped the bottom rate from 15
percent to 10 percent, because, by far, the vast majority of the help
goes to the people at the bottom end of the economic ladder.
If you're a family of four in Massachusetts making $50,000, you get a 50
percent cut in the federal income taxes you pay. It's from $4,000 to
about $2,000.

Now, the difference in our plans is, I want that $2,000 to go to you.

[LEHNER]: All right. Let me -- hold on.

[BUSH]: And the vice president would like to be spending the $2,000 on
your behalf.

[LEHNER]: One quick thing, gentlemen. These are your rules. I'm doing
my best. We're way over the three and a half. I have no problems
with it, but we wanted -- do you want to have a quick response, and
we'll move on. We're already almost five minutes on this, all right?

[GORE]: Yes. It's just clearer -- you can go to the web site and look. If you
make more than $25,000 a year, you don't get a penny of help under
the Bush prescription drug proposal for at least four to five years.
And then you're pushed into a Medicare -- into an HMO or an
insurance company plan, and there's no limit on the premiums or
the deductibles or any of the conditions. And the insurance
companies say that it won't work and they won't offer these plans.

[LEHRER]: Let me ask you both this, and we'll move on, on this subject.
As a practical matter, both of you want to bring prescription drugs to
seniors, correct?

[BUSH]: Correct.

[GORE]: Correct, but the difference is -- the difference is I want to bring it
to 100 percent, and he brings it only to 5 percent.

[LEHRER]: All right. All right. All right.

[BUSH]: That's just -- that's just -- that's just totally false.

[LEHRER]: All right. What difference does it make how...

[BUSH]: Wait a minute. It's just totally false for him to stand up here and
say that.

Let me make sure the seniors hear me loud and clear. They've had their
chance to get something done. I'm going to work with both
Republicans and Democrats to reform the system. All seniors will be
covered. All poor seniors will have their prescription drugs paid for.
In the meantime -- in the meantime, we're going to have a plan to
help poor seniors. And "in the meantime" could be one year or two
years.

[GORE]: Let me -- let me call your attention to the key word there. He
said all "poor" seniors.

[BUSH]: No. Wait a minute, all seniors are covered under prescription
drugs in my plan.

[GORE]: In the first year? In the first year?

[BUSH]: If we can get it done in the first year, you bet. Yours is phased in
eight years.

[GORE]: No. No. No. No. It's a two-phase plan, Jim. And for the first four
years -- it takes a year to pass it. And for the first four years, only
the poor are covered. Middle class seniors, like George McKinney and
his wife, are not covered for four to five years.

[LEHRER]: I've got an idea.

GORE: OK.

[LEHRER]: You have any more to say about this, you can say it in your closing statement, so we'll move on, OK?

New question, Vice President Gore, how would you contrast your approach to preventing future -- future oil price and supply problems like we have now to the approach of Governor Bush?

[GORE]: Excellent question, and here's the -- here's the simple difference: My plan has not only a short-term component, but also a long-term component, and it focuses not only on increasing the supply, which I think we have to do, but also on working on the consumption side.

Now, in the short term, we have to free ourselves from the domination of the big oil companies that have the ability to manipulate the price, from OPEC when they want to raise the price. And in the long term, we have to give new incentives for the development of domestic resources, like deep gas in the western Gulf, like stripper wells for oil, but also renewable sources of energy and domestic sources that are cleaner and better.

And I'm proposing a plan that will give tax credits and tax incentives for the rapid development of new kinds of cars and trucks and buses and factories and boilers and furnaces that don't have as much pollution, that don't burn as much energy and that help us get out on the cutting edge of the new technologies that will create millions of new jobs, because when we sell these new products here, we'll then be able to sell them overseas. And there's a ravenous demand for them overseas.

[GORE]: Now another big difference is, Governor Bush is proposing to open up our -- some of our most precious environmental treasures,
like the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, to the big oil companies to go in and start producing oil there. I think that is the wrong choice. It would only give us a few months worth of oil, and the oil wouldn't start flowing for many years into the future. And I don't think it's a fair price to pay to -- to destroy precious parts of America's environment.

We have to bet on the future and move beyond the current technologies to have a whole new generation of more efficient, cleaner energy technologies.

[LEHRER]: Governor Bush, one minute.

[BUSH]: Well, it's an issue I know a lot about. I was a small oil person for a while in West Texas. This is an administration that's had no plan, and all of a sudden, the results of having no plan have caught up with America.

First and foremost, we got to make sure we fully fund LIHEAP, which is a way to help low-income folks, particularly here in the East, to pay for their high fuel bills.

Secondly, we need an active exploration program in America. The only way to become less dependent on foreign sources of crude oil is to explore at home.

And you bet I want to open up a small part of -- a part of Alaska because when that field is on-line, it will produce a million barrels a day. Today we import a million barrels from Saddam Hussein.

[BUSH]: I would rather that a million come from our own hemisphere, our own country, as opposed from Saddam Hussein.

I want to build more pipelines to move natural gas throughout this hemisphere. I want to develop the coal resources in America and have clean-coal technologies.

We've got abundant supplies of energy here in America, and we better get...
out there and better start exploring it, otherwise we're going to be in deep trouble in the future because of our dependency upon foreign sources of crude.

[LEHRER]: So, if somebody is watching tonight, listening to what the two of you just said, is it fair to say, OK, the differences between Vice President Gore and George W. Bush, Governor Bush, are the following: You are for doing something on the consumption end, you're for doing something on the production end...

[GORE]: Let me clarify. I'm for doing something both on the supply side and production side and on the consumption side. And let me say that I found one thing in Governor Bush's answer that we certainly agree on and that's the low-income heating assistance program, and I commend you for supporting that. I worked to get $400 million just a couple of weeks ago and to establish a permanent home heating oil reserve here in the Northeast.

Now, as for the proposals that I've worked for, for renewables and conservation and efficiency and the new technologies, the fact is, for the last few years in the Congress, we've faced a lot of opposition to them, and they've only -- they've only approved about 10 percent of the agenda that I've helped to send up there.

And I think that we need to get serious about this energy crisis, both in the Congress and in the White House. And if you entrust me with the presidency, I will tackle this problem and focus on new technologies that will make us less dependent on Big Oil or foreign oil.

[LEHRER]: How would you draw the difference, Governor?

[BUSH]: Well, I would first say that he should have been tackling it for the last seven years. And secondly, the difference is that we need to explore at home. And the vice president doesn't believe in exploration, for example, in Alaska. There's a lot of shut-in gas that
we need to be moving out of Alaska by pipeline. There's an interesting issue up in the Northwest, as well. And that is whether or not we remove dams that propose hydroelectric energy. I'm against removing dams in the Northwest. I don't know where the vice president stands. But that's a renewable source of energy we need to keep in-line.

I was in coal country yesterday, in West Virginia. There's an abundant supply of coal in America. I know we can do a better job of clean-coal technologies. I'm going to ask the Congress for $2 billion to make sure that we have the cleanest coal technologies in the world.

My answer to you is, is that in the short term, we need to get after it here in America. We need to explore our resources, and we need to develop our reservoirs of domestic production. We also need to have a hemispheric energy policy where Canada and Mexico and the United States come together.

I brought this up recently with Vicente Fox, who's the newly elected president. He's a man I know from Mexico. And I talked about how best to be able to expedite the exploration of natural gas in Mexico and transport it up to the United States, so we become less dependent on foreign sources of crude oil.

This is a major problem facing America. The administration did not deal with it. It's time for a new administration to deal with the energy problem.

[GORE]: If I could just -- just briefly, Jim, I know.

I found a couple of other things that we agree on, and we may not find that many this evening, so I wanted to emphasize them. I strongly supply the new investments in clean-coal technology.

[GORE]: I made a proposal three months ago on this. And also domestic exploration, yes, but not in the environmental treasures of our
country. We don't have to do that; that's the wrong choice. I know the oil companies have been itching to do that, but it is not the right thing for the future.

[BUSH]: No, it's the right thing for the consumers. Less dependency upon foreign sources of crude is good for consumers, and we can do so in an environmentally friendly way.

[GORE]: Well, can I have the last word on this?

[LEHRER]: New question.

[BUSH]: Of course.

[GORE]: OK. Go ahead.

[LEHRER]: New question. New subject.

[GORE]: All right.

[LEHRER]: Governor Bush, if elected president, would you try to overturn the FDA's approval last week of the abortion pill RU-486?

[BUSH]: I don't think a president can do that. I was disappointed in the ruling because I think abortions ought to be more rare in America. And I'm worried that that pill will create more abortion, will cause more people to have abortions.

This is a very important topic, and it's a very sensitive topic because a lot of good people disagree on the issue. I think what the next president ought to do is to -- is to promote a culture of life in America, is the life of the elderly and the life of those living all across the country, life of the unborn.

As a matter of fact, I think a noble goal for this country is that every child, born and unborn, ought to be protected in law and welcomed into life. But I know we got to change a lot of minds before we -- before we get there in America.

What I do believe is, we can find good common ground on issues like parental notification or parental consent. And I know we need to ban
partial-birth abortions. This is a place where my opponent and I have strong disagreements. I believe banning partial-birth abortion would be a positive step toward reducing the number of abortions in America.

[BUSH]: This is an issue that’s going to require a new attitude. We’ve been battling over abortion for a long period of time. Surely this nation can come together to promote the value of life. Surely we can fight off these laws that will encourage doctors -- to allow doctors to take the lives of our seniors. Surely we can work together to create a cultural life so some of these youngsters that feel like they can take a neighbor’s life with a gun will understand that that’s not the way America’s meant to be.

And surely we can find common ground to reduce the number of abortions in America. As to the drug itself, I mentioned I was disappointed. I hope -- and I'm -- I hope the FDA took its time to make sure that American women will be safe who use this -- who use this drug.

[LEHRER]: Vice President Gore?

[GORE]: Well, Jim, the FDA took 12 years. And I do support that decision. They determined it was medically safe for the women who use that drug.

Now, this is, indeed, a very important issue. First of all, on the issue of partial-birth or so-called late-term abortion, I would sign a law banning that procedure, provided that doctors have the ability to save a women’s life or to act if her health is severely at risk. And that’s not the main issue.

The main issue is whether or not the Roe v. Wade decision is going to be overturned. I support a woman’s right to choose; my opponent does not.
It is important because the next president is going to appoint three,
maybe even four, justices of the Supreme Court.

[GORE]: And Governor Bush has declared to the anti-choice groups that
he will appoint justices in the mold of Scalia and Clarence Thomas,
who are known for being the most vigorous opponents of a woman's
right to choose.

Here's the difference: He trusts the government to order a woman to do
what he thinks she ought to do. I trust women to make the decisions
that affect their lives, their destinies and their bodies. And I think a
woman's right to choose ought to be protected and defended.

[LEHRER]: Governor, we'll go to the Supreme Court question in a
moment. But, to make sure I understand your position on RU-486, if
you're elected president will you not throw appointments to the FDA,
you won't support legislation to overturn this?

[BUSH]: I don't think a president can unilaterally overturn it. I think the
FDA's made its decision.

[LEHRER]: That means that you wouldn't throw appointments to the FDA
and ask them to reappraise it?

[BUSH]: I think once the decision's made, it's been made, unless it's
proven to be unsafe to women.

[GORE]: Well, Jim, you know, the question you asked, if I heard you
correctly, was would he support legislation to overturn it. And if I
heard the statement the day before yesterday, you said you would
order -- he said he would order his FDA appointee to review the
decision. Now, that sounds to me a little bit different. And I just
think that we ought to support the decision.

[BUSH]: I said I would make sure that -- that women would be safe to
use the drug.

[LEHRER]: All right, on the Supreme Court question, should a voter
assume -- you’re pro-life. You just stated your position.

[BUSH]: I am pro-life.

[LEHRER]: Should a voter assume that all judicial appointments you make to the Supreme Court or any other federal court will also be pro-life?

[BUSH]: Voters should assume that I have no litmus test on that issue or any other issue. The voters will know I’ll put competent judges on the bench, people who will strictly interpret the Constitution and will not use the bench to write social policy.

And that’s going to be a big difference between my opponent and me. I believe that -- I believe that the judges ought not to take the place of the legislative branch of government, that they’re appointed for life and that they ought to look at the Constitution as sacred. They shouldn’t misuse their bench. I don’t believe in liberal, activist judges. I believe in -- I believe in strict constructionists. And those are the kind of judges I will appoint.

I’ve named four Supreme Court judges in the state of Texas, and I would ask the people to check out their qualifications, their deliberations. They’re good, solid men and women who have made good sound judgments on behalf of the people of Texas.

[LEHRER]: What kind of appointments should they expect from you, Vice President Gore?

[GORE]: Both of us use similar language to reach an exactly opposite outcome. I don’t favor litmus tests, but I know that there are ways to assess how a potential justice interprets the Constitution. And, in my view, the Constitution ought to be interpreted as a document that grows with our country and our history.

And I believe, for example, that there is a right of privacy in the Fourth Amendment.
[GORE]: And when the phrase "strict constructionist" is used, and when the names of Scalia and Thomas are used as benchmarks for who would be appointed, those are code words, and nobody should mistake this, for saying that the governor would appoint people who would overturn Roe v. Wade. I mean, just -- it's very clear to me. And I would appoint people who have a philosophy that I think would make it quite likely that they would uphold Roe v. Wade.

[LEHRER]: Is the vice president right? Is that a code word for overturning Roe v. Wade?

[BUSH]: Sounds like the vice president is not very right many times tonight. I just told you the criteria in which I'll appoint judges. I've had a record of appointing judges in the state of Texas. That's what a governor gets to do. A governor gets to name Supreme Court judges, and I've given...

(CROSSTALK)

[BUSH]: He also reads all kinds of things into my tax plan and into my Medicare plan. And I just want the viewers out there to listen to what I have to say about it.

[GORE]: That's a yes; it is a code.

[LEHRER]: Reverse the question. What code phrases should we read by what you said about what kind of people you will appoint to the U.S. Supreme Court?

[GORE]: It'd be very likely that they'd uphold Roe v. Wade. But I do believe it's wrong to use a litmus test. But if you look at the history of a lower court judge's rulings, you can get a pretty good idea of how they're going to interpret questions. Now, a lot of questions are first impression. And these questions that have been seen many times comes up in a new context. And so, but -- you know, this is a very important issue, because a lot of
young women in this country take this right for granted, and it could be lost.

[GORE]: It is on the ballot in this election, make no mistake about it.

[BUSH]: I'll tell you what kind of judges he'll put on there. He'll put liberal, activist judges who will use their bench to subvert the legislature. That's what he'll do.

[GORE]: That's not right.

[LEHRER]: New subject, new question.

Vice President Gore, if President Milosevic of Yugoslavia refuses to accept the election results and leave office, what action, if any, should the United States take to get him out of there?

[GORE]: Well, Milosevic has lost the election. His opponent, Kostunica, has won the election. It's overwhelming. Milosevic's government refuses to release the vote count. There's now a general strike going on. They're demonstrating.

I think we should support the people of Serbia and the -- Yugoslavia, as they call Serbia plus Montenegro, and put pressure in every way possible to recognize the lawful outcome of the election.

The people of Serbia have acted very bravely in kicking this guy out of office. Now he is trying to not release the votes, and then go straight to a so-called run-off election without even announcing the results of the first vote.

Now, we've made it clear, along with our allies, that when Milosevic leaves, then Serbia will be able to have a more normal relationship with the rest of the world. That is a very strong incentive that we have given them to do the right thing.

[GORE]: Bear in mind, also, Milosevic has been indicted as a war criminal, and he should be held accountable for his actions.

Now, we have to take measured steps, because the sentiment within
Serbia is, for understandable reasons, still against the United States, because their nationalism has led -- even if they don’t like Milosevic, they still have some feelings lingering from the NATO action there. So we have to be intelligent in the way we go about it. But make no mistake about it: We should do everything we can to see that the will of the Serbian people, expressed in this extraordinary election, is done. And I hope that he’ll be out of office very shortly.

[LEHRER]: Governor Bush, one minute.

[BUSH]: Well, I'm pleased with the results of the elections, as the vice president is. It's time for the man to go. And it means that the United States must have a strong diplomatic hand with our friends in NATO. That's why it's important to make sure our alliances are as strong as they possibly can be, to keep the pressure on Mr. Milosevic. But this'll be an interesting moment for the Russians to step up and lead as well, be a wonderful time for the -- for the Russia to step into the Balkans and convince Mr. Milosevic it's in his best interest and his country's best interest to leave office. The Russians have got a lot of sway in that part of the world, and we'd like to see them use that sway to encourage democracy to take hold. And so it's an encouraging election. It's time for the man to leave.

[LEHRER]: But what if he doesn't leave, Mr. Vice -- what if all the things, all the diplomatic efforts, all the pressure from all over the world and he still doesn't go? Is this the kind of thing, to be specific, that you as president would consider the use of U.S. military force to get him gone?

[GORE]: In this particular situation, no. Bear in mind that we have a lot of sanctions in force against Serbia right now. And the people of Serbia know that they can escape all those sanctions if this guy is
turned out of power.

Now, I understand what the governor has said about asking the Russians to be involved. And under some circumstances, that might be a good idea. But being as they have not yet been willing to recognize Kostunica as the lawful winner of the election, I’m not sure that it’s right for us to invite the president of Russia to mediate this dispute there, because we might not like the result that comes out of that.

They currently favor going forward with a runoff election. I think that’s the wrong thing. I think the governor’s instinct is not necessarily bad, because we have worked with the Russians in a constructive way, in Kosovo, for example, to end the conflict there. But I think we need to be very careful in the present situation before we invite the Russians to play the lead role in mediating.

[BUSH]: Well, obviously we wouldn’t use the Russians if they didn’t agree with our answer, Mr. Vice President.

[GORE]: Well, they don’t.

[BUSH]: But let me say this to you: I wouldn’t use force. I wouldn’t use force.

[LEHRER]: You wouldn’t use force?

[BUSH]: No.

[LEHRER]: Why not?

[BUSH]: Because it’s not in our national interest to use force in this case. I would keep pressure. I would use diplomacy. There’s a difference between what the president did, who I supported, in Kosovo and this. And it’s up for the people in this region to figure out how to take control of their country.

[LEHRER]: New question.

How would you go about, as president, deciding when it was in the
national interest to use U.S. force? Generally.

[BUSH]: Well, if it's in our vital national interests. And that means whether or not our territory -- our territory is threatened, our people could be harmed, whether or not our alliances -- our defense alliances are threatened, whether or not our friends in the Middle East are threatened. That would be a time to seriously consider the use of force.

Secondly, whether or not the mission was clear, whether or not it was a clear understanding as to what the mission would be.

Thirdly, whether or not we were prepared and trained to win, whether or not our forces were of high morale and high standing and well-equipped.

And finally, whether or not there was an exit strategy.

I would take the use of force very seriously. I would be guarded in my approach. I don't think we can be all things to all people in the world. I think we've got to be very careful when we commit our troops.

The vice president and I have a disagreement about the use of troops. He believes in nation-building. I would be very careful about using our troops as nation builders.

[BUSH]: I believe the role of the military is to fight and win war and, therefore, prevent war from happening in the first place.

And so I take my responsibility seriously. And it starts with making sure we rebuild our military power.

Morale in today's military is too low. We're having trouble meeting recruiting goals. We met the goals this year, but in the previous years, we have not met recruiting goals. Some of our troops are not well-equipped. I believe we're overextended in too many places.

And, therefore, I want to rebuild the military power. It starts with a
billion dollar pay raise for the men and women who wear the uniform, a billion dollars more than the president recently signed into law, to make sure our troops are well-housed and well-equipped; bonus plans to keep some of our high-skilled folks in the services; and a commander in chief who clearly sets the mission, and the mission is to fight and win war, and, therefore, prevent war from happening in the first place.

[LEHRER]: Vice President Gore, one minute.

[GORE]: Let me tell you what I'll do. First of all, I want to make it clear: Our military is the strongest, best-trained, best-equipped, best-lead fighting force in the world and in the history of the world. Nobody should have any doubt about that, least of all our adversaries or potential adversaries.

I -- if you entrust me with the presidency, I will do whatever is necessary in order to make sure our forces stay the strongest in the world. In fact, in my 10-year budget proposal, I have set aside more than twice as much for this purpose as Governor Bush has in his proposal.

[GORE]: Now, I think we should be reluctant to get involved in someplace, in a foreign country. But, if our national security is at stake, if we have allies, if we've tried every other course, if we're sure military action will succeed, and if the costs are proportionate to the benefits, we should get involved.

Now, just because we don't want to get involved everywhere doesn't mean we should back off anywhere it comes up.

And I disagree with the -- with the proposal that maybe only when oil supplies are at stake that our national security is at risk. I think that there are situations, like in Bosnia or Kosovo where there's a genocide, where our national security is at stake there.

[LEHRER]: Governor?
[BUSH]: I agree that our military is the strongest in the world today. That's not the question. The question is will it be strongest in years to come? And the warning signs are real. Everywhere I go around the campaign trail, I see people who -- moms and dads whose son or daughter may wear the uniform, and they tell me about how discouraged their son and daughter may be. A recent poll was taken amongst 1,000 enlisted personnel, as well as officers, over half of whom are going to leave the service when their time of enlistment is up. The captains are leaving the service. There is a problem, and it's going to require a new commander in chief to rebuild the military power. The other day, I was honored to be flanked by Colin Powell and General Norman Schwarzkopf, who stood by my side and agreed with me.

[BUSH]: They said we could, even though we're the strongest military, that if we don't do something quickly, we don't have a clearer vision of the military, if we don't stop extending our troops all around the world in nation-building missions, then we're going to have a serious problem coming down the road. And I'm going to prevent that. I'm going to rebuild our military power. It's one of the major priorities of my administration.

[LEHRER]: Vice President Gore, how should the voters go about deciding which one of you is better suited to make the kind of decisions we've been -- whether it's Milosevic or whether it's whatever, in the military and foreign policy area?

[GORE]: Well, they should look at our proposals and look at us as people and make up their own minds.

When I was a young man, I volunteered for the Army. I served my country in Vietnam. My father was a senator who strongly opposed the Vietnam War. I went to college in this great city and most of my
peers felt against the war, as I did.
But I went anyway, because I knew if I didn’t, somebody else in the small
town of Carthage, Tennessee, would have to go in my place.
I served for eight years in the House of Representatives, and I served on
the Intelligence Committee, specialized in looking at arms control. I
served for eight years in the United States Senate and served on the
Armed Services Committee. For the last eight years, I've served on
the National Security Council.
And when the conflict came up in Bosnia, I saw a genocide in the heart
of Europe, with the most violent war on the continent of Europe
since World War II. Look, that's where World War I started, in the
Balkans.

[GORE]: My uncle was a victim of poison gas there. Millions of Americans
saw the results of that conflict.
We have to be willing to make good, sound judgments.
And, incidentally, I know the value of making sure our troops have the
latest technology. The governor's proposed skipping the next
generation of weapons. I think that's a big mistake, because I think
we have to stay at the cutting edge.

[LEHRER]: Governor, how would you advise the voters to make the
decision on this issue?

[BUSH]: Well, I think you've got to look at how one has handled
responsibility in office, whether or not -- it's the same in domestic
policy as well, Jim, whether or not you've got the capacity to
convince people to follow, whether or not one makes decisions based
on sound principles, or whether or not you rely upon polls and focus
groups on how to decide what the course of action is.
We've got too much polling and focus groups going on in Washington
today. We need decisions made on sound principles.
And I've been the governor of a big state. I think one of the hallmarks of my relationship in Austin, Texas, is, is that I've had the capacity to work with both Republicans and Democrats. I think that's an important part of leadership. I think of what it means to build consensus. I've shown I know how to do so.

As a matter of fact, tonight in the audience there's one elected state senator who's a Democrat, a former state rep who's a Democrat, couple of -- one statewide officer's a Democrat. I mean, there's a lot of Democrats who are here in the debate too...

[LEHRER]: Go ahead.

[GORE]: Go ahead.

[BUSH]: ... because they want to show their support, that shows I know how to lead.

And so the fundamental answer to your question: Who can lead, and who has shown the ability to get things done?

[GORE]: If I could say one other thing...

(CROSSTALK)

[LEHRER]: All right. We're way over the three and a half minutes. Go ahead.

[GORE]: I think one of the key points in foreign policy and national security policy is the need to reestablish the old-fashioned principle that politics ought to stop at the water's edge.

When I was in the United States Congress, I worked with former President Reagan to modernize our strategic weaponry and to pursue arms control in a responsible way. When I was in the United States Senate, I worked with former President Bush, your father, and was one of only a few Democrats in the Senate to support the Persian Gulf War.

I think bipartisanship is a national asset, and we have to find ways to
reestablish it in foreign policy and national security policy.

[LEHRER]: In a word, do you have a problem with that?
[BUSH]: Yes, why haven't they done it in seven years?

[LEHRER]: New subject, new question.

Should the voters of this election, Vice President Gore, see this on domestic area -- in the domestic area, as a major choice between competing political philosophies?

[GORE]: Oh, absolutely. This is a very important moment in the history of our country.

Look, we've got the biggest surpluses in all of American history. The key question that has to be answered in this election is, will we use that prosperity wisely in a way that benefits all of our people and doesn't go just to the few? Almost half of all the tax cut benefits, as I said, under Governor Bush's plan, go to the wealthiest 1 percent.

I think we have to make the right and responsible choices.

[GORE]: I think we have to invest in education, protecting the environment, health care, a prescription drug benefit that goes to all seniors, not just to the poor; under Medicare, not relying on HMOs and insurance companies.

I think that we have to help parents and strengthen families by dealing with the kind of inappropriate entertainment material that families are just heartsick that their children are exposed to.

I think we have got to have welfare reform taken to the next stage.

I think that we have got to balance the budget every single year, pay down the national debt. And, in fact, under my proposal, the national debt will be completely eliminated by the year 2012.

I think we need to put Medicare and Social Security in a lockbox. The governor will not put Medicare in a lockbox. I don't think it should be used as a piggy bank for other programs. I think it needs to be
moved out of the budget and protected. I'll veto anything that takes money out of Social Security or Medicare for anything other than Social Security or Medicare.

Now, the priorities are just very different. I'll give you a couple of examples: For every new dollar that I propose for spending on health care, Governor Bush spends three dollars for a tax cut of the wealthiest 1 percent. Now, for every dollar that I propose to spend on education, he spends five dollars on a tax cut for the wealthiest 1 percent. Those are very clear differences.

[LEHRER]: Governor, one minute.

[BUSH]: Man's practicing fuzzy math again. There's differences.

Under Vice President Gore's plan, he's going to grow the federal government in the largest increase since Lyndon Baines Johnson in 1965. We're talking about a massive government, folks. We're talking about adding to or increasing 200 new programs, 200 programs, 20,000 new bureaucrats. Imagine how many IRS agents it's going to take to be able to figure out his targeted tax cut for the middle class that excludes 50 million Americans.

There is a huge difference in this campaign. He says he's going to give you tax cuts; 50 million of you won't receive it. He said, in his speech, he wants to make sure the right people get tax relief. That's not the role of a president to decide right and wrong. Everybody who pays taxes ought to get tax relief.

After my plan is in place, the wealthiest Americans will pay a higher percentage of taxes than they do today, and the poorest of Americans, 6 million families, 7 million people, won't pay any tax at all.

It is a huge difference. It's the difference between big, exploding federal government that wants to think on your behalf and a plan that
meets priorities and liberates working people to be able to make decisions on your own.

[GORE]: Let me just say, Jim, you haven't heard the governor deny these numbers. He's called them phony, he's called them fuzzy. But the fact remains, almost 30 percent of his proposed tax cut goes only to Americans that make more than $1 million per year.

[LEHRER]: Let's...

[GORE]: More money goes to the...

(CROSSTALK)

[GORE]: Can I have a rebuttal here?

[LEHRER]: Sure, but I just want to see if he buys that.

[BUSH]: No, here, let me just tell you what the facts are. The facts are, after my plan, the wealthiest of Americans pay more taxes of the percentage of the whole than they do today. Secondly, if you're a family of four making $50,000 in Massachusetts, you get a 50 percent tax cut.

[BUSH]: Let me give you one example, the Strunk family in Allentown, Pennsylvania, I campaigned with them the other day. They make $51,000 combined income. They pay about $3,800 in taxes -- or $3,500 in taxes. Under my plan, they get $1,800 of tax relief. Under Vice President Gore's plan, they get $145 of tax relief.

Now you tell me who stands on the side of the rich? You ask the Strunks.

[GORE]: Well, he's...

[BUSH]: You ask the Strunks...

[GORE]: If I could get my...

[BUSH]: ... whose plan -- it makes more sense. And there's a difference of opinion. He would rather spend the Strunks' $1,800, and I would rather the Strunks spend their own money.

[LEHRER]: Do you see it that way, Vice President Gore?
[GORE]: No, I don’t. And I’m not going to go to calling names on his facts, I’m just going to tell you what the real facts are. The analysis that he’s talking about leaves out more than half of the tax cuts that I have proposed. And if you just add the numbers up -- he still hasn’t denied it -- he spends more money on a tax cut for the wealthiest 1 percent than all of his new proposals for prescription drugs, health care, education and national defense combined. Now those are the wrong priorities -- $665 billion over 10 years for the wealthiest 1 percent.

Now -- and as I said, almost 30 percent of it goes to Americans that make more than $1 million per year.

[GORE]: Every middle class family is eligible for a tax cut under my proposal.

Let me give you some specific examples: I believe that college tuition up to $10,000 a year ought to be tax deductible so middle class families can choose to send their children to college. I believe that all seniors should be able to choose their own doctors and get prescription drugs from their own pharmacist with Medicare paying half the bill. I believe that parents ought to have more choices with charter schools and public school choice to send their kids always to a safe school. I think we need to make education the number one priority in our country and treat teachers like the professionals that they are, and that’s why I have made it the number one priority in my budget, not a tax cut for the wealthiest.

[BUSH]: Let me talk about tax cuts one more time. This is a man whose plan excludes 50 million Americans.

[GORE]: Not so.

[BUSH]: He doesn’t believe that -- well, take for example the marriage penalty. If you itemize your tax return, you get no marriage penalty
relief. He picks and chooses. He decides whether -- who the right people are. It’s a fundamental difference of opinion.

I want my fellow Americans to hear one more time. We’re going to spend $25 trillion -- we’re going to collect $25 trillion of revenue over the next 10 years, and we're going to -- projected to spend $21 trillion. Now, surely, we can send 5 percent of that back to you all who pay the bills. There is a problem.

I want to say something, Jim, wait a minute.

[LEHRER]: OK.

[BUSH]: This man’s been disparaging my plan with all this Washington-fuzzy math.

I want you to hear a problem we've got in America. If you're a single mother making $22,000 a year and you've got two children, under this tax code, for every additional dollar you make, you pay a higher marginal rate on that dollar than someone making $200,000 a year. And that is not right.

[BUSH]: And so my plan drops the rate from 15 percent to 10 percent and increases the child credit from $500 to $1,000 to make the code more fair for everybody, not just a few...

[LEHRER]: All right.

[BUSH]: ... not just, you know, a handful. Everybody who pays taxes ought to get some relief.

[LEHRER]: All right, having cleared that up... we're going to a new question: education.

Governor Bush, both of you have promised dramatically -- to change dramatically public education in this country. But of the public money spent on education, only 6 percent of it is federal money.

[BUSH]: Right.

[LEHRER]: You want to change 100 percent of public education with 6
percent of the money. Is that possible?

[BUSH]: Well, I tell you, we can make a huge difference by saying, "If you receive federal money, we expect you to show results."

Let me give you a story about public ed, if I might, Jim. It's about KIPP Academy in Houston, Texas. It's a -- it's a charter school run by some people from Teach for America, young folks that said, "Well, I'm going to do something good for my country. I want to teach." A guy named Michael runs the school.

It's a school full of so-called at-risk children. It's how we, unfortunately, label certain children. It means basically they can't learn. It's a school of strong discipline and high standards. It's one of the best schools in Houston.

And here are the key ingredients: high expectations, strong accountability. What Michael says is, "Don't put all these rules on us. Just let us teach and hold us accountable for every grade."

[BUSH]: And that's what we do. And as a result, these young, mainly Hispanic, youngsters are some of the best learners in Houston, Texas. That's my vision for public education all around America.

Many of you viewers don't know, but Laura and I sent our girls to public school. They went to Austin High School. And many of the public schools are meeting the call.

But, unfortunately, a lot of schools are trapping children in schools that just won't teach, and we'll change that.

Here's the role of the federal government: One is to change Head Start into a reading program.

Two is to say that if you want to access reading money, you can do so because the goal is for every single child to learn to read. There must be K-2 diagnostic tools, teacher training money available.

Three, we got to consolidate federal programs to free districts, to free the
schools to encourage innovators like Michael to let schools reach out beyond the confines of the current structure to recruit -- teach-for-the-children-type teachers.

Four, we're going to say, if you receive federal money, measure third grade, fourth grade, fifth grade, sixth grade, seventh grade, eighth grade, and show us whether or not children are learning to read and write and add and subtract. And, if so, there will be a bonus plan and, and -- but if not, instead of continuing to subsidize failure, the money will go to the parent so the parent can choose a different public school. Federal money attributed to the child will go to the parent for a public school or a charter school or a tutorial or a Catholic school.

What I care about is children, and so does Michael Feinberg. And you know what? It can happen in America with the right kind of leadership.

[LEHRER]: Vice President Gore?

[GORE]: Look, we agree on a couple of things on education.

[GORE]: I strongly support new accountability; so does Governor Bush. I strongly support local control; so does Governor Bush.

I'm in favor of testing as a way of measuring performance, every school, every school district, have every state test the children. I've also proposed voluntary national tests in the fourth grade and eighth grade, and a form of testing that the governor has not endorsed. I think that all new teachers ought to be tested, including in the subjects that they teach.

We've got to recruit 100,000 new teachers, and I have budgeted for that. We've got to reduce the class size so that the student who walks in has more one-on-one time with the teacher. We ought to have universal preschool. And we ought to make college tuition tax
deductible up to $10,000 a year.

I'd like to tell you a quick story. I got a letter today, as I left Sarasota, Florida. I'm here with a group of 13 people from around the country who helped me prepare and we had a great time. But two days ago we ate lunch at a restaurant and the guy who served us lunch sent - - got me a letter today. His name is Randy Ellis, he has a 15-year-old daughter named Kailey, who's in Sarasota High School. Her science class was supposed to be for 24 students. She is the 36th student in that classroom, sent me a picture of her in the classroom. They can't squeeze another desk in for her, so she has to stand during class.

I want the federal government, consistent with local control and new accountability, to make improvement of our schools the number one priority so Kailey will have a desk and can sit down in a classroom where she can learn.

[LEHRER]: All right. So, having heard the two of you, voters have just heard the two of you, what's the difference? What's the choice between the two of you on education, Governor?

[BUSH]: Well, the first is -- the difference is, there is no new accountability measures in Vice President Gore's plan. He says he's for voluntary testing. You can't have voluntary testing. You must have mandatory testing. You must say that if you receive money, you must show us whether or not children are learning to read and write and add and subtract. That's the difference.

You may claim you've got mandatory testing, but you don't, Mr. Vice President. And that is a huge difference.

Testing is the cornerstone of reform. You know how I know? Because it's the cornerstone of reform in the state of Texas. Republicans and Democrats came together and asked the question, "What can we do to make our public education the best in the country?" And we've
And the cornerstone is to have strong accountability and return for money. And in return for flexibility, we're going to ask you to show us whether or not -- and we ask to post the results on the Internet. We encourage parents to take a look at the comparative results of schools. We've got a strong charter school movement that I signed the legislation to get started in the state of Texas.

I believe if we find poor children trapped in schools that won't teach, we need to free the parents. I think we need to expand education savings accounts. That's something the vice president's vice presidential running mate supports.

Now, there's big differences of opinion. He won't support freeing local districts from the strings of federal money.

[LEHRER]: All right. How do you see the differences?

[GORE]: Well, first of all, I do have mandatory testing. I think the governor may not have heard what I said clearly. The voluntary national test is in addition to the mandatory testing that we require of states, all schools, all school districts, of students themselves, and required teacher testing, which goes a step farther than Governor Bush has been willing to go.

[GORE]: Here are a couple of differences, though, Jim: Governor Bush is in favor of vouchers, which take taxpayer money away from public schools and give them to private schools that are not accountable for how the money is used and don't have to take all applicants. Now, private schools play a great role in our society.

All of our children have gone to both public schools and private schools. But I don't think private schools should have a right to take taxpayer money away from public schools at a time when Kailey Ellis is standing in that classroom.
Let me give you another example. I went to a school in Dade County Florida where the facilities are so overcrowded, the children have to eat lunch in shifts with the first shift for lunch starting at 9:30 in the morning.

Look, this is a funding crisis all around the country. There are fewer parents of school-age children in the -- as a percentage of the voting population and there's the largest generation of students ever.

We're in an information age when learning is more important than ever. Ninety percent of our kids go to public schools. We have to make it the number one priority: modernize our schools, reduce the class size, recruit new teachers, give every child a chance to learn with one-on-one time in a quality -- high-quality, safe school. If it's a failing school, shut it down and reopen it under a new principal, with a turnaround team of specialists, the way Governor Jim Hunt does in North Carolina.

[GORE]: Here's another difference: The governor, if it's a failing school, would leave the children in that failing school for three years and then give a little bit of money to the parents, a down payment on a down payment for private school tuition, and pretend that that would be enough for them to go out and go to a private school.

[BUSH]: Wait a minute. Wait a minute.

[LEHRER]: Thirty seconds, Governor. OK.

[BUSH]: OK. First of all, most good governance is at the state level. See, here's the mentality: I'm going to make the state do this; I'm going to make the state do that.

All I'm saying is, if you spend money, show us results, and test every year, which you do not do, Mr. Vice President. You do not test every year. You can say you do into cameras, but you don't, unless you've changed your plan here on the stage.
[GORE]: I didn’t say that. I didn’t say that.

[BUSH]: Secondly -- and you need to test every year, because that's where you determine whether or not children are progressing to excellence. Secondly, one of the things that we've got to be careful about in politics is throwing money at a system that has not yet been reformed. More money is needed, and I'd spend more money. But step one is to make sure we reform the system, to have the system in place that leaves no child behind, to stop this business about asking, "Gosh, how old are you?" If you're ten, we're going to put you here, if you're 12, we'll put you here, and start asking the question, "What do you know?" And if you don't know what you're supposed to know, we'll make sure you do early and before it is too late.

[LEHRER]: New question. We've been talking about a lot of specific issues. It's often said that, in the final analysis, about 90 percent of being the president of the United States is dealing with the unexpected, not with issues that came up in the campaign.

[LEHRER]: Vice President Gore, can you point to a decision, an action you have taken, that illustrates your ability to handle the unexpected, the crisis under fire, et cetera?

[GORE]: When the action in Kosovo was dragging on, and we were searching for a solution to the problem, our country had defeated the adversary on the battlefield without a single American life being lost in combat, but the dictator Milosevic was hanging on, I invited the former prime minister of Russia to my house and took a risk in asking him to get personally involved, along with the head of Finland, to go to Belgrade and to take a set of proposals from the United States that would constitute, basically, a surrender by Serbia. But it was a calculated risk that paid off.

Now, I could probably give you some other examples of decisions over the
last 24 years. I have been in public service for 24 years, Jim. And throughout all that time the people I have fought for have been the middle class families, and I have been willing to stand up to powerful interests like the big insurance companies, the drug companies, the HMOs, the oil companies. They have good people and they play constructive roles sometimes, but sometimes they get too much power.

\textit{[GORE]}: I cast my lot with the people even when it means that you have to stand up to some powerful interests who are trying to turn the policies and the laws to their advantage.

That's -- you can see it in this campaign. The big drug companies support Governor Bush's prescription drug proposal. They oppose mine because they don't want to get Medicare involved because they're afraid that Medicare will negotiate lower prices for seniors who currently pay the highest prices of all.

\textit{[LEHRER]}: Governor Bush?

\textit{[BUSH]}: Well, I've been standing up to big Hollywood, big trial lawyers -- what was the question? It was about emergencies, wasn't it?

\textit{[LEHRER]}: Well, it was about -- well, well, OK.

\textit{[BUSH]}: I -- you know, as governor, one of the things you have to deal with is catastrophe. I can remember the fires that swept Parker County, Texas. I remember the floods that swept our state. I remember going down to Del Rio, Texas.

And I've got to pay the administration a compliment. James Lee Witt of FEMA has done a really good job of working with governors during times of crisis.

But that's the time when you're tested not only -- it's a time to test your meddle. It's the time to test your heart, when you see people whose lives have been turned upside down. It broke my heart to go to the
flood scene in Del Rio where a fellow and his family got completely uprooted.

[BUSH]: The only thing I knew to do was to get aid as quickly as possible, which we did with state and federal help, and to put my arms around the man and his family and cry with them. But that’s what governors do. Governors are oftentimes found on the front-line of catastrophic situations.

[LEHRER]: New question.
There can be all kinds of crises. Governor, question for you. There could be a crisis, for instance, in the financial area.

[BUSH]: Yes.

[LEHRER]: The stock market could take a tumble. There could be a failure of a major financial institution. What is your general attitude toward government intervention in such events?

[BUSH]: Well, it depends, obviously. But what I would do, first and foremost, is I would get in touch with the Federal Reserve chairman, Alan Greenspan, to find out all the facts and all the circumstances. I would have my secretary of treasury be in touch with the financial centers, not only here, but at home. I would make sure that key members of Congress were called in to discuss the gravity of the situation. And I would come up with a game plan to deal with it. That’s what governors end up doing. We end up being problem-solvers. We come up with practical, common-sense solutions for problems that we’re confronted with.

And, in this case, in case of a financial crisis, I would gather all the facts before I made the decision as to what the government ought or ought not to do.

[LEHRER]: Vice President Gore?

[GORE]: Yes, first, I want to compliment the governor on his response to
those fires and floods in Texas. I accompanied James Lee Witt down to Texas when those fires broke out.

[GORE]: And FEMA has been a major flagship project of our reinventing government efforts. And I agree, it works extremely well now.

On the international financial crisis that come up. My friend, Bob Rubin, former secretary of treasury is here. He’s a very close adviser to me and a great friend in all respects.

I have had a chance to work with him and Alan Greenspan and others on the crisis following the collapse of the Mexican peso, when the Asian financial crisis raised the risk of worldwide recession that could affect our economy, and starting -- and now, of course, the euro’s value has been dropping, but seems to be under control.

But it started for me -- in the last eight years -- when I had the honor of casting the tie-breaking vote to end the old economic plan here at home and put into place a new economic plan that has helped us to make some progress -- 22 million new jobs and the greatest prosperity ever. But it's not good enough. And my attitude is, you ain't seen nothing yet. We need to do more and better.

[LEHRER]: So, Governor, would you agree there is no basic difference here on intervening -- federal government intervening in what might be seen by others to be a private financial crisis, if it's that –

[BUSH]: No, there's no difference on that. There is a difference, though, as to what the economy has meant. I think the economy has meant more for the Gore and Clinton folks than the Gore and Clinton folks has meant for the economy.

[BUSH]: I think most of the economic growth that has taken place is a result of ingenuity and hard work and entrepreneurship. And that's the role of government, is to encourage that.

But in terms of the response to the question, no.
[LEHRER]: OK.

[GORE]: Can I comment on that?

[LEHRER]: You may.

[GORE]: See, you know, I think that the American people deserve credit for the great economy that we have. And it's their ingenuity. I agree with that.

But, you know, they were working pretty hard eight years ago, and they had ingenuity eight years ago. The difference is, we've got a new policy, and instead of concentrating on tax cuts mostly for the wealthy, we want -- I want tax cuts for the middle class families, and I want to continue the prosperity and make sure that it enriches not just the few, but all of our families.

Look, we have gone from the biggest deficits to the biggest surpluses; we've gone from a triple dip recession during the previous 12 years to a tripling of the stock market. Instead of high unemployment, we've got the lowest African-American and lowest Latino unemployment rates ever in history, and 22 million new jobs.

But it's not good enough. Too many people have been left behind. We have got to do much more. And the key is job training, education, investments in health care and education, the environment, retirement security.

And, incidentally, we have got to preserve Social Security. And I am totally opposed to diverting $1 out of every $6 away from the Social Security trust fund, as the governor has proposed, into the stock market.

I want new incentives for savings and investment for the young couples who are working hard, so they can save and invest on their own on top of Social Security, not at the expense of Social Security as the governor proposes.
[LEHRER]: Governor?

[BUSH]: Two points: One, a lot of folks are still waiting for that 1992 middle class tax cut. I remember the vice president saying, "Just give us a chance to get up there, we're going to make sure you get tax cuts." It didn't happen. And now he's having to say it again. It's -- they've had their chance to deliver a tax cut to you.

Secondly, the surest way to bust this economy is to increase the role and the size of the federal government. The Senate Budget Committee did a study of the vice president's expenditures. They projected it could conceivably bust the budget by $900 billion. That means he's either going to have to raise your taxes by $900 billion or go into the Social Security surplus for $900 billion.

This is a plan that is going to increase the bureaucracy by 20,000 people. His targeted tax cut is so detailed, so much fine print, that it's going to require numerous IRS agents.

No, we need somebody to simplify the code, to be fair, to continue prosperity by sharing some of the surplus with the people who pay the bills, particularly those at the bottom end of the economic ladder.

[GORE]: If I could respond, Jim, what he's quoting is not the Senate Budget Committee, it is a partisan press release by the Republicans on the Senate Budget Committee that's not worth the government -- the taxpayer-paid paper that it's printed on.

[GORE]: Now, as for 20,000 new bureaucrats, as you call them, you know the size of the federal government will go down in a Gore administration. In the Reinventing Government Program, you just look at the numbers. It is 300,000 people smaller today than it was eight years ago.

Now, the fact is you're going to have a hard time convincing folks that we
were a whole lot better off eight years ago than we are today. But that's not the question. The question is, will we be better off four years from now than we are today?

And as for the surest way to threaten our prosperity, having a $1.9 trillion tax cut, almost half of which goes to the wealthy, and a $1 trillion Social Security privatization proposal, is the surest way to put our budget into deficit, raise interest rates and put our prosperity at risk.

[BUSH]: I can't let the man -- I can't let the man continue with fuzzy math. It's $1.3 trillion, Mr. Vice President. It's going to go to everybody who pays taxes. I'm not going to be one of these kinds of presidents that says, "You get tax relief and you don't." I'm not going to be a pick-and-chooser.

[LEHRER]: I...

[BUSH]: What is fair is everybody who pays taxes ought to get relief.

[LEHRER]: I thought we cleared this up a while ago.

New question on Social Security: Both of you have Social Security reform plans, and we could spend the rest of the evening and two or three other evenings talking about them in detail.

[GORE]: Suits me.

[LEHRER]: We're not going to do that. But...

Many experts, including Federal Reserve Chairman Greenspan, Vice President Gore, say that it will be impossible for either of you, essentially, to keep the system viable on its own during the coming baby boomer retirement onslaught without either reducing benefits or increasing taxes.

[LEHRER]: Do you disagree?

[GORE]: I do disagree, because if we can keep our prosperity going, if we can continue balancing the budget and paying down the debt, then
the strong economy keeps generating surpluses. And here's what I would do. Here is my plan.

I will keep Social Security in a lockbox, and that pays down the national debt. And the interest savings, I would put right back into Social Security. That extends the life of Social Security for 55 years.

Now, I think that it's very important to understand that cutting benefits under Social Security means that people like Winifred Skinner, from Des Moines, Iowa who's here, would really have a much harder time, because there are millions of seniors who are living almost hand to mouth. And you talk about cutting benefits. I don't go along with it. I am opposed to it.

I am also opposed to a plan that diverts one out of every six dollars away from the Social Security trust fund. You know, Social Security is a trust fund that pays the checks this year with the money that's paid into Social Security this year.

[GORE]: The governor wants to divert one out of every six dollars off into the stock market, which means that he would drain $1 trillion out of the Social Security trust fund over the -- in this generation -- over the next 10 years. And Social Security, under that approach, would go bankrupt within this generation. His leading adviser on this plan actually said that would be OK, because then the Social Security trust fund could start borrowing. It would borrow up to $3 trillion.

Now, Social Security has never done that. And I don't think it should do that. I think it should stay in a lockbox. And I'll tell you this: I will veto anything that takes money out of Social Security for privatization or anything else other than Social Security.

[LEHRER]: Governor?

[BUSH]: Well, I thought it was interesting on the two minutes he spent about minute and a half on my plan, which means he doesn't want
you to know that what he’s doing is loading up IOUs for future generations. He puts no real assets in the Social Security system. The revenues exceed the expenses in Social Security to the year 2015, which means all retirees are going to get the promises made. So for those of you who he wants to scare into the voting booth to vote for him, hear me loud and clear: A promise made will be a promise kept. And you bet we want to allow younger workers to take some of their own money. See that's a difference of opinion. The vice president thinks it's the government's money. The payroll taxes are your money. You ought to put it in prudent, safe investments, so that $1 trillion, over the next 10 years, grows to be $3 trillion. The money stays within the Social Security system. It's a part of the -- it's a part of the Social Security system.

[BUSH]: He keeps claiming it's going to be out of Social Security. It's your money, it's a part of your retirement benefits, it's a fundamental difference between what we believe.

I want you to have your own asset that you can call your own. I want you to have an asset that you can pass on from one generation to the next. I want to get a better rate of return for your own money than the paltry 2 percent that the current Social Security trust gets today. So Mr. Greenspan missed the -- I thought, missed an opportunity to say there's a third way, and that is to get a better rate of return on the Social Security monies coming into the trust.

There's $2.3 trillion of surplus that we can use to make sure younger workers have a Social Security plan in the future -- if we're smart, if we trust workers and if we understand the power of the compounding rate of interest.

[GORE]: Here's the difference: I give a new incentive for younger workers to save their own money and invest their own money, but not at the
expense of Social Security -- on top of Social Security.

My plan is Social Security-plus. The governor's plan is Social Security-minus. Your future benefits would be cut by the amount that's diverted into the stock market. And if you make bad investments, that's too bad.

But even before then the problem hits, because the money contributed to Social Security this year is an entitlement. That's how it works. And the money is used to pay the benefits for seniors this year.

If you cut the amount going in, $1 one out of every $6, then you have to cut the value of each check by $1 out of every $6, unless you come up with the money from somewhere else.

[GORE]: I would like to know from the governor -- I know we're not supposed to ask each other questions, but I'd be interested in knowing, does that trillion dollars come from the trust fund or does it come from the rest of the budget?

[BUSH]: No. There's enough money to pay seniors today in the current affairs of Social Security. The trillion comes from the surplus. Surplus is more money than needed.

Let me tell you what your plan is: It's not Social Security-plus, it's Social Security plus huge debt, is what it is. You leave future generations with tremendous IOUs.

It's time to have a leader that doesn't put off, you know, tomorrow what we should do today. It's time to have somebody to step up and say, "Look, let's let younger workers take some of their own money and, under certain guidelines, invest it in the private markets." The safest of federal investments yields 4 percent. That's twice the amount and rate of return than the current Social Security trust does.

There's a fundamental difference of opinion here, folks. Younger worker after younger worker hears my call that says I trust you. And you
know what, the issue is changing, because seniors now understand that the promise made will be a promise kept, but younger workers now understand we'd better have a government that trusts them. And that's exactly what I'm going to do.

[GORE]: Could I do a quick response to that, Jim?

[LEHRER]: We're almost -- let's...

[GORE]: This is a big issue. This is a big issue. Could we do another round on it?

[LEHRER]: We're almost out of time.

[GORE]: Just briefly. When FDR established Social Security, they didn’t call them IOUs, they called it the full faith and credit of the United States. If you don’t have trust in that, I do.

And if you take it out of the surplus in the trust fund, that means the trust fund goes bankrupt in this generation, within 20 years.

[LEHRER]: Go ahead.

[BUSH]: This is a government that thinks a 2 percent rate of return on your money is satisfactory. It's not. This is a government that says younger workers can’t possibly have their own asset.

We need to think differently about the issue. We need to make sure our seniors get the promise made.

But I'm going to tell you, if we don’t trust younger workers to manage some of their own money with the Social Security surplus to grow from $1 trillion to $3 trillion, it’s going to be impossible to bridge the gap without -- what Mr. Gore’s plan will do, causing huge payroll taxes or major benefit reductions.

[LEHRER]: New question.

[BUSH]: Yes, sir.

[LEHRER]: Governor Bush, are there issues of character that distinguish you from Vice President Gore?
[BUSH]: Well, the man loves his wife, and I appreciate that a lot, and I love mine. And the man loves his family a lot, and I appreciate that because I love my family.

I think the thing that discouraged me about the vice president was uttering those famous words, "no controlling legal authority." I felt like that there needed to be a better sense of responsibility of what was going on in the White House.

I believe that -- I believe they've moved that sign, "The buck stops here," from the Oval Office desk to "The buck stops here" on the Lincoln Bedroom. And that's not good for the country. It's not right.

We need to have a new look about how we conduct ourselves in office. There's a huge trust. I see it all the time when people come up to me and say, "I don't want you to let me down again."

[BUSH]: And we can do better than the past administration has done. It's time for a fresh start. It's time for a new look. It's time for a fresh start after a season of cynicism.

And so, I don't know the man well, but I've been disappointed about how and his administration has conducted the fund-raising affairs. You know, going to a Buddhist temple and then claiming it wasn't a fund-raiser is just not my view of responsibility.

[LEHRER]: Vice President Gore?

[GORE]: Well, I think we ought to attack our country's problems, not attack each other. I want to spend my time making this country even better than it is, not trying to make you ought to be a bad person. You may want to focus on scandals; I want to focus on results.

As I said a couple of months ago, I stand here as my own man, and I want you to see me for who I really am. Tipper and I have been married for 30 years. We became grandparents a year and a half ago; we've got four children. I have devoted 24 years of my life to public
service.

And I've said this before and I'll say it again: If you entrust me with the presidency, I may not be the most exciting politician, but I will work hard for you every day, I will fight for middle class families and working men and women, and I will never let you down.

[LEHRER]: So, Governor, what are you saying when you mention the fund-raising scandals or the fund-raising charges that involved Vice President Gore? What are saying that the voters should take from that that's relevant to this election?

[BUSH]: I just think they ought to factor it in when they make their decision in the voting booth. And do a better job...

[LEHRER]: In what way?

[BUSH]: Pardon me?

[LEHRER]: In what way?

[BUSH]: Well, I just, you know, I think that people need to be held responsible for the actions they take in life. I think that...

[LEHRER]: Go ahead, excuse me.

[BUSH]: Well, I think that that's part of the need for a cultural change. We need to say that each of us need to be responsible for what we do. And people in the highest office of the land must be responsible for decisions they make in life.

And that's the way I've conducted myself as governor of Texas. And that's the way I'll conduct myself as president of the United States, should I be fortunate enough to earn your vote.

[LEHRER]: Are you saying all of this is irrelevant, Vice President Gore, to this office?

[GORE]: No, I think -- I think the American people should take into account who we are as individuals, what our experience is, what our positions on the issues are, what our proposals are.
I am asking you, again, to see me for who I really am. I’m offering you my own vision, my own experience, my own proposals. And incidentally, one of them is this: This current campaign financing system has not reflected credit on anybody in either party. And that’s one of the reasons that I’ve said before, and I’ll pledge here tonight, if I'm president, the very first bill that Joe Lieberman and I will send to the United States Congress is the McCain-Feingold campaign finance reform bill.

And the reasons it’s that important is that all of the other issues, whether prescription drugs for all seniors that are opposed by the drug companies, or the Patients' Bill of Rights to take the decisions away from the HMOs and give them to the doctors and nurses opposed by the HMOs and insurance companies, all of these other proposals are going to be a lot easier to get passed for the American people if we limit the influence of special interest money and give democracy back to the American people.

[GOlRE]: And I wish Governor Bush would join me this evening in endorsing the McCain-Feingold campaign finance reform bill.

[LEHRER]: Governor Bush?

[BUSH]: You know, this man has no credibility on the issue. As a matter of fact, I read in the New York Times where he said he cosponsored the McCain-Feingold campaign fundraising bill, but he wasn't in the Senate with Senator Feingold.

And so I -- look, I'm going to -- what you need to know about me is I'm going to uphold the law. I'm going to have an attorney general that enforces the law; that if the time for -- the time for campaign funding reform is after the election, this man has outspent me, the special interests are outspending me, and I am not going to lay down my arms in the middle of a campaign for somebody who has got no
credibility on the issue.

[GORE]: Well, well...

[LEHRER]: Senator McCain said in -- excuse me, one sec, Vice President Gore.

[GORE]: Please.

[LEHRER]: Senator McCain said in August that it doesn't matter which one of you is president of the United States in January, there's going to be blood on the floor of the United States Senate and he's going to tie up the United States Senate until campaign finance reform is passed that includes a ban on soft money.

First of all, would you support that effort by him, or would you sign a bill that is finally passed that included soft...

[BUSH]: I would support an effort to ban corporate soft money and labor union soft money so long as there was dues check off. I've campaigned on this ever since the primaries. I believe there needs to be instant disclosure on the Internet as to who's given to whom. I think we need to fully enforce the law. I mean I think we need to have an attorney general that says if the laws are broken, we'll enforce the law. Be strict about it. Be firm about it.

[GORE]: Look, Governor Bush, you have attacked my character and credibility and I am not going to respond in kind.

[GORE]: I think we ought to focus on the problems and not attack each other.

And one of the serious problems, hear me well, is that our system of government is being undermined by too much influence coming from special interest money. We have to get a handle on it.

And like John McCain, I have learned from experience. And it's not a new position for me; 24 years ago, I supported full public financing of all federal elections. And anybody who thinks I'm just saying it'll be the
first bill I’ll send to the Congress, I want you to know...

[BUSH]: Let me just say one thing.

[GORE]: ... I care passionately about this, and I will fight until it becomes law.

[BUSH]: I want people to hear what he just said. He is for full public financing of congressional elections. I’m absolutely, adamantly opposed to that. I don't want the government financing congressional elections.

[LEHRER]: Time up.

[BUSH]: Sorry.

[LEHRER]: I would just say on that wonderful note of disagreement, we have to stop here.

And we want to go now to your closing statements. Governor Bush is first. You have two minutes.

[BUSH]: Thank you, Jim. Thank the University of Massachusetts. Mr. Vice President, thank you. It’s been a good, lively exchange. Obviously, we have huge differences of opinion.

Mine is that I want to empower people in their own lives. I also want to go to Washington to get some positive things done. It's going to require a new spirit, a spirit of cooperation. It's going to require the ability of a Republican president to reach out across the partisan divide and to say to Democrats, "Let's come together to do what's right for America." It's been my record as governor of Texas. It'll be how I conduct myself if I'm fortunate enough to earn your vote as president of the United States.

I want to finally get something done on Medicare.

[BUSH]: I want to make sure prescription drugs are available for all seniors. And I want seniors to have additional choices when it comes to choosing their health care plans.
I want to finally get something done on Social Security. I want to make sure the seniors have the promise made will be a promise kept. But I want younger workers to be able to manage some of their own money, some of their own payroll taxes in the private sector under certain guidelines to get a better rate of return on your own money.

I want to rebuild our military to keep the peace. I want to have a strong hand when it comes to -- when it comes to the United States and world affairs. I don't want to try to put our troops in all places at all times. I don't want to be the world's policeman. I want to be the world's peacemaker by having a military of high morale and a military that's well-equipped. I want to have antiballistic missile systems to protect ourselves and our allies from a rogue nation that may try to hold us hostage or blackmail a friend.

I also want to make sure education system fulfills its hope and promise. I've had a strong record of working with Democrats and Republicans in Texas to make sure no child is left behind. I understand the limited role of the federal government, but it can be a constructive role when it comes to reform, by insisting that there be strong accountability systems.

And my intentions are to earn your vote and earn your confidence. I'm asking for your vote. I want you to be on my team.

And for those of you working, thanks. Thanks from the bottom of my heart.

And for those of you making up your mind, I'd be honored to have your support.

[LEHRER]: Vice President Gore, two minutes.

[GORE]: I want to thank everybody who watched and listened tonight because this is, indeed, a crucial time in American history. We're at a fork in the road. We have this incredible prosperity, but a lot of
people have been left behind.
And we have a very important decision to make: Will we use the
prosperity to enrich all of our families and not just the few?

[GORE]: One important way of looking at this is to ask, "Who are you
going to fight for?" Throughout my career in public service, I have
fought for the working men and women of this country, middle class
families. Why? Because you are the ones who have the hardest time
paying taxes, the hardest time making ends meet. You are the ones
who are making car payments and mortgage payments and doing
right by your kids.

And a lot of times, there are powerful forces arrayed against you. And
make no mistake about it, they do have undue influence in
Washington, D.C., and it makes a difference if you have a president
who will fight for you.

I know one thing about the position of president: It's the only position in
our Constitution that's filled by an individual who is given the
responsibility to fight not just for one state or one district or the well-
connected or wealthy, but to fight for all of the people, including
especially those who most need somebody who will stand up and
take on whatever powerful forces might stand in the way.

There's a woman named Winifred Skinner here tonight from Iowa. I
mentioned her earlier. She's 79 years old, she has Social Security.
I'm not going to cut her benefits or support any proposal that would.
She gets a small pension. But in order to pay for her prescription
drug benefits, she has to go out seven days a week, several hours a
day, picking up cans. She came all the way from Iowa in a
Winnebago with her poodle in order to attend here tonight.

[GORE]: And I want to tell her, I am going to fight for a prescription drug
benefit for all seniors. And I'm going to fight for the people of this
country for a prosperity that benefits all.

[LEHRER]: And we will continue this dialogue next week, on October the 11th, at Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. The format then will be more informal, more conversational with the two candidates seated at a table with me. The third will be October 17th, at Washington University in St. Louis. And that will follow a town hall-type format.

Also, ahead, the day after tomorrow, on October 5, there's the 90-minute debate between the Democratic candidate for vice president, Senator Joe Lieberman, and the Republican candidate, former Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney. It will be held at Centre College in Danville, Kentucky. The moderator will be Bernard Shaw of CNN.

Thank you, Governor Bush, Vice President Gore. See you next week. And for now, from Boston, thank you and good night.
[LEHRER]:
Let's welcome the candidates, Governor Bush and Vice President Gore. Good evening, from Wake Chapel at Wake Forest University at Winston-Salem, North Carolina. I'm Jim Lehrer of the News Hour on PBS. Welcome to this second election 2000 debate between the Republican candidate for president, George W. Bush of Texas, and the Democratic candidate, Vice President Al Gore. These debates are sponsored by the Commission on Presidential Debates. The format and the rules are those negotiated by representatives of the two campaigns. Only the subjects tonight and the questions are mine. The format tonight is that of a conversation. The only prevailing rule is that no single response can ever, ever exceed two minutes. The prevailing rule for the audience here in the hall is as always, absolute quiet, please. Good evening, Governor Bush, Vice President Gore. The end of our 90 minutes last week in Boston, the total time
each of you took was virtually the same. Let's see if we can do the same tonight, or come close. Governor Bush, the first question goes to you. One of you is about to be elected the leader of the single-most powerful nation in the world, economically, financially, militarily, diplomatically, you name it. Have you formed any guiding principles for exercising this enormous power?

[BUSH]:

I have, I have. First question is what's in the best interests of the United States? What's in the best interests of our people? When it comes to foreign policy that will be my guiding question. Is it in our nation's interests? Peace in the Middle East is in our nation's interests. Having a hemisphere that is free for trade and peaceful is in our nation's interests. Strong relations in Europe is in our nation's interest. I've thought a lot about what it means to be the president. I also understand that an administration is not one person, but an administration is dedicated citizens who are called by the president to serve the country, to serve a cause greater than self, and so I've thought about an administration of people who represent all America, but people who understand my compassionate and conservative philosophy. I haven't started naming names except for one person, and that's Mr. Richard Cheney who I thought did a great job the other night. He's a vice presidential nominee who represents -- I think people got to see why I picked him. He's man of solid judgment and he's going to be a person to stand by my side. One of the things I've done in Texas is I've been able to put together a good team of people. I've been able to set clear goals. The goals ought to be an education system that leaves no child behind, Medicare for our seniors, a Social Security system that's safe and secure, foreign policy that's in our nation's interest, and a strong military, and then
bring people together to achieve those goals. That's what a Chief Executive Officer does. So I've thought long and hard about the honor of being the President of the United States.

[LEHRER]:
Vice President Gore?

[GORE]:
Yes, Jim. I've thought a lot about that particular question, and I see our greatest national strength coming from what we stand for in the world. I see it as a question of values. It is a great tribute to our founders that 224 years later this nation is now looked to by the peoples on every other continent and the peoples from every part of this earth as a kind of model for what their future could be. And I don't think that's just the kind of exaggeration that we take pride in as Americans. It's really true, even the ones that sometimes shake their fists at us. As soon as they have a change that allows the people to speak freely, they're wanting to develop some kind of blueprint that will help them be like us more, freedom, free markets, political freedom. So I think first and foremost our power ought to be wielded to in ways that form a more perfect union. The power of example is America's greatest power in the world. And that means, for example, standing up for human rights. It means addressing the problems of injustice and inequity, along the lines of race and ethnicity here at home, because in all these other places around the world where they're having these terrible problems, when they feel hope, it is often because they see in us a reflection of their potential. So we've got to enforce our civil rights laws. We've got to deal with things like racial profiling. And we have to keep our military strong. We have the strongest military, and I'll do whatever is necessary, if I'm president, to make sure that it stays that way. But our real
power comes, I think, from our values.

[LEHRER]:
Should the people of the world look at the United States, Governor, and say, should they fear us, should they welcome our involvement, should they see us as a friend, everybody in the world? How would you project us around the world, as president?

[BUSH]:
Well, I think they ought to look at us as a country that understands freedom where it doesn't matter who you are or how you're raised or where you're from, that you can succeed. I don't think they'll look at us with envy. It really depends upon how our nation conducts itself in foreign policy. If we're an arrogant nation, they'll resent us. If we're a humble nation, but strong, they'll welcome us. And it's -- our nation stands alone right now in the world in terms of power, and that's why we have to be humble. And yet project strength in a way that promotes freedom. So I don't think they ought to look at us in any way other than what we are. We're a freedom-loving nation and if we're an arrogant nation they'll view us that way, but if we're a humble nation they'll respect us.

[LEHRER]:
A humble nation.

[GORE]:
I agree with that. I agree with that. I think that one of the problems that we have faced in the world is that we are so much more powerful than any single nation has been in relationship to the rest of the world than at any time in history, that I know about, anyway. That there is some resentment of U.S. power. So I think that the idea of humility is an important one. But I think that we also have to have a sense of mission in the world. We have to protect our capacity to
push forward what America's all about. That means not only military strength and our values, it also means keeping our economy strong. You know, in the last, or two decades ago it was routine for leaders of foreign countries to come over here and say you guys have got to do something about these horrendous deficits because it's causing tremendous problems for the rest of the world, and we were lectured to all the time. The fact that we have the strongest economy in history today is not good enough. We need to do more. But the fact that it is so strong enables us to project the power for good that America can represent.

[LEHRER]:
Does that give us -- does our wealth, our good economy, our power, bring with it special obligations to the rest of the world?

[BUSH]:
Yes, it does. Take, for example, Third World debt. I think we ought to be forgiving Third World debt under certain conditions. I think, for example, if we're convinced that a Third World country that's got a lot of debt would reform itself, that the money wouldn't go into the hands of a few but would go to help people, I think it makes sense for us to use our wealth in that way, or to trade debt for valuable rain forest lands, makes that much sense, yes. We do have an obligation, but we can't be all things to all people. We can help build coalitions but we can't put our troops all around the world. We can lend money but we have to do it wisely. We shouldn't be lending money to corrupt officials. So we have to be guarded in our generosity.

[LEHRER]:
Let's go through some of the specifics now. New question. Vice President Gore, the governor mentioned the Middle East. Here we're talking at
this stage in the game about diplomatic power that we have. What do you think the United States should do right now to resolve that conflict over there?

[GORE]:
The first priority has to be on ending the violence, dampening down the tensions that have arisen there. We need to call upon Syria to release the three Israeli soldiers who have been captured. We need to insist that Arafat send out instructions to halt some of the provocative acts of violence that have been going on. I think that we also have to keep a weather eye toward Saddam Hussein because he is taking advantage of this situation to once again make threats, and he needs to understand that he's not only dealing with Israel, he is dealing -- he's dealing with us if he is making the kind of threats that he's talking about there. The use of diplomacy in this situation has already, well, it goes hour-by-hour and day-by-day now. It's a very tense situation there. But in the last 24 hours there has been some subsiding of the violence there. It's too much to hope that this is going to continue, but I do hope that it will continue. Our country has been very active with regular conversations with the leaders there. And we just have to take it day-to-day right now. But one thing I would say where diplomacy is concerned, Israel should feel absolutely secure about one thing. Our bonds with Israel are larger than agreements or disagreements on some details of diplomatic initiatives. They are historic, they are strong, and they are enduring. And our ability to serve as an honest broker is something that we need to shepherd.

[LEHRER]:
Governor?
[BUSH]:

IN THEIR OWN WORDS
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Well, I think during the campaign, particularly now during this difficult period, we ought to be speaking with one voice, and I appreciate the way the administration has worked hard to calm the tensions. Like the vice president, I call on Chairman Arafat to have his people pull back to make the peace. I think credibility is going to be very important in the future in the Middle East. I want everybody to know should I be the president Israel's going to be our friend. I'm going to stand by Israel. Secondly, that I think it's important to reach out to moderate Arab nations, like Jordan and Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. It's important to be friends with people when you don't need each other so that when you do there's a strong bond of friendship. And that's going to be particularly important in dealing not only with situations such as now occurring in Israel, but with Saddam Hussein. The coalition against Saddam has fallen apart or it's unraveling, let's put it that way. The sanctions are being violated. We don't know whether he's developing weapons of mass destruction. He better not be or there's going to be a consequence should I be the president. But it's important to have credibility and credibility is formed by being strong with your friends and resoluting your determination. One of the reasons why I think it's important for this nation to develop an anti-ballistic missile system that we can share with our allies in the Middle East if need be to keep the peace is to be able to say to the Saddam Husseins of the world or the Iranians, don't dare threaten our friends. It's also important to keep strong ties in the Middle East, credible ties, because of the energy crisis we're now in. After all, a lot of the energy is produced from the Middle East, and so I appreciate what the administration is doing. I hope to get a sense of should I be fortunate to be the president how my administration will react to the Middle East.
[LEHRER]:
So you don't believe, Vice President Gore, that we should take sides and resolve this right now? A lot of people pushing hey, the United States should declare itself and not be so neutral in this particular situation.

[GORE]:
Well, we stand with Israel, but we have maintained the ability to serve as an honest broker. And one of the reasons that's important is that Israel cannot have direct dialogue with some of the people on the other side of conflicts, especially during times of tension, unless that dialogue comes through us. And if we throw away that ability to serve as an honest broker, then we have thrown -- we will have thrown away a strategic asset that's important not only to us but also to Israel.

[LEHRER]:
You agree with that, Governor?

[BUSH]:
I do. I do think this, though. When it comes to timetables it can't be the United States timetable as to how discussions take place. It's got to be a timetable that all parties can agree to, like the Palestinians and Israelis. Secondly, any lasting peace is going to have to be a peace that's good for both sides. And therefore, the term honest broker makes sense. This current administration's worked hard to keep the parties at the table. I will try to do the same thing. But it won't be on my timetable, it will be on the timetable that people are comfortable with in the Middle East.

[LEHRER]:
People watching here tonight are very interested in Middle East policy, and they are so interested they want to base their vote on differences
between the two of you as president how you would handle Middle East policy. Is there any difference?

[GORE]:
I haven't heard a big difference in the last few exchanges.

[BUSH]:
That's hard to tell. I think that, you know, I would hope to be able to convince people I could handle the Iraqi situation better.

[LEHRER]:
Saddam Hussein, you mean, get him out of there?

[BUSH]:
I would like to, of course, and I presume this administration would as well. We don't know -- there are no inspectors now in Iraq, the coalition that was in place isn't as strong as it used to be. He is a danger. We don't want him fishing in troubled waters in the Middle East. And it's going to be hard, it's going to be important to rebuild that coalition to keep the pressure on him.

[LEHRER]:
You feel that is a failure of the Clinton administration?

[BUSH]:
I do.

[GORE]:
Well, when I got to be a part of the current administration, it was right after -- I was one of the few members of my political party to support former President Bush in the Persian Gulf War resolution, and at the end of that war, for whatever reason, it was not finished in a way that removed Saddam Hussein from power. I know there are all kinds of circumstances and explanations. But the fact is that that's the situation that was left when I got there. And we have maintained the sanctions. Now I want to go further. I want to give robust
support to the groups that are trying to overthrow Saddam Hussein, and I know there are allegations that they're too weak to do it, but that's what they said about the forces that were opposing Milosevic in Serbia, and you know, the policy of enforcing sanctions against Serbia has just resulted in a spectacular victory for democracy just in the past week, and it seems to me that having taken so long to see the sanctions work there, building upon the policy of containment that was successful over a much longer period of time against the former Soviet Union in the communist block, seems a little early to declare that we should give up on the sanctions. I know the governor's not necessarily saying that but, you know, all of these flights that have come in, all of them have been in accordance with the sanctions regime, I'm told, except for three where they notified, and they're trying to break out of the box, there's no question about it. I don't think they should be allowed to.

[LEHRER]:
Did he state your position correctly, you're not calling for eliminating the sanctions, are you?

[BUSH]:
No, of course not, absolutely not, I want them to be tougher.

[LEHRER]:
Let's go on to Milosevic and Yugoslavia, and it falls under the area of our military power. Governor, new question. Should the fall of Milosevic be seen as a triumph for U.S. military intervention?

[BUSH]:
I think it's a triumph. I thought the president made the right decision in joining NATO and bombing Serbia. I supported them when they did so. I called upon the Congress not to hamstring the administration, and in terms of forcing troop withdrawals on a timetable that wasn't
necessarily in our best interest or fit our nation's strategy, and so I think it's good public policy, I think it worked, and I'm pleased I took -- made the decision I made. I'm pleased the president made the decision he made. Because freedom to go in that part of the world, and where there's a lot of work left to be done, however.

[LEHRER]:
But you think it would not have happened -- do you think that Milosevic would not have fallen if the United States and NATO had not intervened militarily? Is this a legitimate use of our military power?

[BUSH]:
Yes, I think it is. Absolutely. I don't think he would have fallen had we not used the force. And I know there are some in our party that disagree with that sentiment. I supported the president. I thought he made the right decision to do so. I didn't think he necessarily made the right decision to take land troops off the table right before we committed ourselves offensively, but nevertheless, it worked. The administration deserves credit for having made it work. It is important for NATO to have it work. It's important for NATO to be strong and confident and to help keep the peace in Europe. And one of the reasons I felt so strongly that the United States needed to participate was because of our relations with NATO, and NATO is going to be an important part of keeping the peace in the future. Now, there's more work to do. Remains to be seen, however, whether or not there's going to be a political settlement in Kosovo, and I certainly hope there is one. Also on record as saying at some point in time I hope our European friends become the peacekeepers in Bosnia and in the Balkans. I hope that they put the troops on the ground so that we can withdraw our troops and focus our military on fighting and winning war.
[GORE]:
Well, I've been kind of a hard-liner on this issue for more than eight years. When I was in the senate before I became vice president I was pushing for stronger action against Milosevic. He caused the death of so many people. He was the last communist party boss there and then he became a dictator that by some other label he was still essentially a communist dictator. And unfortunately now he is trying to reassert himself in Serbian politics. Already just today the members of his political party said that they were going to ignore the orders of the new president of Serbia, and that they question his legitimacy, and he's still going to try to be actively involved. He is an indicted war criminal. He should be held accountable. Now, I did want to pick up on one of the statements earlier, and maybe I have heard, maybe I have heard the previous statements wrong, Governor. In some of the discussions we've had about when it's appropriate for the U.S. to use force around the world, at times the standards that you've laid down have given me the impression that if it's something like a genocide taking place or what they called ethnic cleansing in Bosnia, that that alone would not be, that that wouldn't be the kind of situation that would cause you to think that the U.S. ought to get involved with troops. Now, have to be other factors involved for me to want to be involved. But by itself, that to me can bring into play a fundamental American strategic interest because I think it's based on our values. Now, have I got that wrong?

[LEHRER]:
Trying to figure out who the questioner was.

[BUSH]:
If I think it's in our nation's strategic interest I'll commit troops. I thought it was in our strategic interests to keep Milosevic in check.
because of our relations in NATO, and that's why I took the position I took. I think it's important for NATO to be strong and confident. I felt like unchecked Milosevic would harm NATO, and so it depends on the situation, Mr. Vice President.

[LEHRER]:
Well, let's stay on the subject for a moment. New question related to this. I figured this out; in the last 20 years there have been eight major actions that involved the introduction of U.S. ground, air or naval forces. Let me name them. Lebanon, Grenada, Panama, the Persian Gulf, Somalia, Bosnia, Haiti, Kosovo. If you had been president for any of those interventions, would any of those interventions not have happened?

[GORE]:
Can you run through the list again?

[LEHRER]:
Sure. Lebanon.

[GORE]:
I thought that was a mistake.

[LEHRER]:
Grenada.

[GORE]:
I supported that.

[LEHRER]:
Panama.

[GORE]:
I supported that.

[LEHRER]:
Persian Gulf.

[GORE]:
Yes, I voted for it, supported it.

[LEHRER]:
Somalia.

[GORE]:
Of course, and that again -- no, I think that that was ill-considered. I did support it at the time. It was in the previous administration, in the Bush-Quayle administration, and I think in retrospect the lessons there are ones that we should take very, very seriously.

[LEHRER]:
Bosnia.

[GORE]:
Oh, yes.

[LEHRER]:
Haiti.

[GORE]:
Yes.

[LEHRER]:
And then Kosovo.

[GORE]:
Yes.

[LEHRER]:
We talked about that. Want me to do it with you? Lebanon.

[BUSH]:
Make a couple comments.

[LEHRER]:
Sure, absolutely, sure. Somalia.

[BUSH]:
Started off as a humanitarian mission and it changed into a nation-building mission, and that's where the mission went wrong. The
mission was changed. And as a result, our nation paid a price. And so I don't think our troops ought to be used for what's called nation-building. I think our troops ought to be used to fight and win war. I think our troops ought to be used to help overthrow the dictator when it's in our best interests. But in this case it was a nation-building exercise, and same with Haiti. I wouldn't have supported either.

[LEHRER]:
What about Lebanon?
[BUSH]:
Yes.
[LEHRER]:
Grenada.
[BUSH]:
Yes.
[LEHRER]:
Panama?
[BUSH]:
Yes. Some of them I've got a conflict of interest on, if you know what I mean.

[LEHRER]:
I do, I do. The Persian Gulf, obviously. And Bosnia. And you have already talked about Kosovo. But the reverse side of the question, Governor, that Vice President Gore mentioned, 600,000 people died in Rwanda in 1994. There was no U.S. intervention, no intervention from the outside world. Was that a mistake not to intervene?

[BUSH]:
I think the administration did the right thing in that case. I do. It was a horrible situation, no one liked to see it on our TV screens, but it's a
case where we need to make sure we have an early warning system in place in places where there could be ethnic cleansing and genocide the way we saw it there in Rwanda. And that's a case where we need to use our influence to have countries in Africa come together and help deal with the situation. The administration, seem like we're having a great love for us tonight, but the administration made the right decision on training Nigerian troops for situations just such as this in Rwanda, and so I thought they made the right decision not to send U.S. troops into Rwanda.

[LEHRER]:
Do you have any second thoughts on that, based on what you said a moment ago about genocide?

[GORE]:
I'd like to come back to the question of nation building, but let me address the question directly, first. Fine. We did, actually, send troops into Rwanda to help with the humanitarian relief measures. My wife Tipper, who is here, actually went on a military plane with General Sholicatchvieli on one of those flights. But I think in retrospect we were too late getting in there. We could have saved more lives if we had acted earlier. But I do not think that it was an example of a conflict where we should have put our troops in to try to separate the parties for this reason, Jim. One of the criteria that I think is important in deciding when and if we should ever get involved around the world is whether or not our national security interest is involved, if we can really make the difference with military forces. We tried everything else. If we have allies in the Balkans we have allies, NATO, ready, willing and able to go and carry a big part of the burden. In Africa we did not. Now, we have tried -- our countries tried to create an Africa crisis response team there, and
we've met some resistance. We have had some luck with Nigeria, but in Sierra Leon, and now that Nigeria has become a democracy, and we hope it stays that way, then maybe we can build on that. But because we had no allies and because it was very unclear that we could actually accomplish what we would want to accomplish about putting military forces there, I think it was the right thing not to jump in, as heartbreaking as it was, but I think we should have come in much quicker with the humanitarian mission.

[LEHRER]:
So what would you say, Governor, that somebody would say hey wait a minute, why not Africa, I mean why the Middle East, why the Balkans, but not Africa, when 600,000 people's lives are at risk?

[BUSH]:
Well, I understand, and Africa is important. And we've got to do a lot of work in Africa to promote democracy and trade, and there are some - - Vice President mentioned Nigeria is a fledgling democracy. We have to work with Nigeria. That's an important continent. But there's got to be priorities, and Middle East is a priority for a lot of reasons, as is Europe and the Far East, our own hemisphere. And those are my four top priorities should I be the president, not to say we won't be engaged nor work hard to get other nations to come together to prevent atrocity. I thought the best example of a way to handle the situation was East Timor when we provided logistical support to the Australians, support that only we can provide. I thought that was a good model. But we can't be all things to all people in the world, Jim. And I think that's where maybe the vice president and I begin to have some differences. I'm worried about overcommitting our military around the world. I want to be judicious in its use. You mentioned Haiti. I wouldn't have sent troops to Haiti. I didn't think it
was a mission worthwhile. It was a nation building mission, and it was not very successful. It cost us billions, a couple billions of dollars, and I'm not so sure democracy is any better off in Haiti than it was before.

[LEHRER]:
Vice President Gore, do you agree with the governor's views on nation building, the use of military, our military, for nation building as he described and defined it?

[GORE]:
I don't think we agree on that. I would certainly also be judicious in evaluating any potential use of American troops overseas. I think we have to be very reticent about that. But look, Jim, the world is changing so rapidly. The way I see it, the world is getting much closer together. Like it or not, we are now -- the United States is now the natural leader of the world. All these other countries are looking to us. Now, just because we cannot be involved everywhere, and shouldn't be, doesn't mean that we should shy away from going in anywhere. Now, both of us are kind of, I guess, stating the other's position in a maximalist extreme way, but I think there is a difference here. This idea of nation building is kind of a pejorative phrase, but think about the great conflict of the past century, World War II. During the years between World War I and World War II, a great lesson was learned by our military leaders and the people of the United States. The lesson was that in the aftermath of World War I, we kind of turned our backs and left them to their own devices and they brewed up a lot of trouble that quickly became World War II. And acting upon that lesson in the aftermath of our great victory in World War II, we laid down the Marshall Plan, President Truman did. We got intimately involved in building NATO and other structures
there. We still have lots of troops in Europe. And what did we do in the late '40's and '50's and '60's? We were nation building. And it was economic. But it was also military. And the confidence that those countries recovering from the wounds of war had by having troops there. We had civil administrators come in to set up their ways of building their towns back.

[LEHRER]:
You said in the Boston debate, Governor, on this issue of nation building, that the United States military is overextended now. Where is it overextended? Where are there U.S. military that you would bring home if you become president?

[BUSH]:
First let me just say one comment about what the vice president said. I think one of the lessons in between World War I and World War II is we let our military atrophy. And we can't do that. We've got to rebuild our military. But one of the problems we have in the military is we're in a lot of places around the world. And I mentioned one, and that's the Balkans. I would very much like to get our troops out of there. I recognize we can't do it now, nor do I advocate an immediate withdrawal. That would be an abrogation of our agreement with NATO. No one is suggesting that. But I think it ought to be one of our priorities to work with our European friends to convince them to put troops on the ground. And there is an example. Haiti is another example. Now there are some places where I think -- you know, I've supported the administration in Columbia. I think it's important for us to be training Colombians in that part of the world. The hemisphere is in our interest to have a peaceful Columbia. But -

[LEHRER]:
The use of the military, there -- some people are now suggesting that if you don't want to use the military to maintain the peace, to do the civil thing, is it time to consider a civil force of some kind that comes in after the military that builds nations or all of that? Is that on your radar screen?

[BUSH]:
I don't think so. I think what we need to do is convince people who live in the lands they live in to build the nations. Maybe I'm missing something here. I mean, we're going to have kind of a nation building core from America? Absolutely not. Our military is meant to fight and win war. That's what it's meant to do. And when it gets overextended, morale drops. I strongly believe we need to have a military presence in the peninsula, not only to keep the peace in the peninsula, but to keep regional stability. And I strongly believe we need to keep a presence in NATO, but I'm going to be judicious as to how to use the military. It needs to be in our vital interest, the mission needs to be clear, and the extra strategy obvious.

[GORE]:
I don't disagree with that. I certainly don't disagree that we ought to get our troops home from places like the Balkans as soon as we can, as soon as the mission is complete. That's what we did in Haiti. There are no more than a handful of American military personnel in Haiti now. And Haitians have their problems, but we gave them a chance to restore democracy. That's really about all we can do. But if you have a situation like that right in our backyard with chaos about to break out and flotillas forming to come across the water, and all kinds of violence there, right in one of our neighboring countries there, then I think that we did the right thing there. And as for this idea of nation building, the phrase sounds grandiose. And, you
know, we can’t be -- we can’t allow ourselves to get overextended. I certainly agree with that. And that’s why I’ve supported building up our capacity. I’ve devoted in the budget I’ve proposed, as I said last week, more than twice as much as the governor has proposed. I think that it’s in better shape now than he generally does. We’ve had some disagreements about that. He said that two divisions would have to report not ready for duty, and that’s not what the joint chiefs say. But there’s no doubt that we have to continue building up readiness and military strength. And we have to also be very cautious in the way we use our military.

[LEHRER]:
In the non-military area of influencing events around the world, the financial and economic are, the World Bank President Wilfinson said recently, Governor, that U.S. contributions to overseas development assistance is lower now almost than it has ever been. Is that a problem for you? Do you think -- what is your -- what is your idea about what the United States’ obligations are? I'm talking about financial assistance and that sort of thing to other countries, the poor countries.

[BUSH]:
Well, I mentioned Third World debt.

[LEHRER]:
Sure.

[BUSH]:
That’s a place where we can use our generosity to influence in a positive way, influence nations. I believe we ought to have foreign aid, but I don’t think we ought to just have foreign aid for the sake of foreign aid. I think foreign aid needs to be used to encourage markets and reform. I think a lot of times we just spend aid and say we feel better
about it and it ends up being spent the wrong way, and there's some pretty egregious examples recently. One being Russia, where we had IMF loans that ended up in the pockets of a lot of powerful people and didn't help the nation. I think the IMF has got a role in the world, but I don't want to see the IMF out there as a way to say to world bankers, if you make a bad loan, we'll bail you out. It needs to be available for emergency situations. I thought the President did the right thing with Mexico and was very strongly supportive of the administration in Mexico. But I don't think the IMF ought to be a stop loss for people who ought to be able to evaluate risks themselves. So I'll look at every place where we're investing money. I just want to make sure the return is good.

[LEHRER]:
Do you think we're meeting our obligations properly?

[GORE]:
No, I would make some changes. I think there need to be reforms in the IMF. I've generally supported it, but I've seen them make some calls that I thought were highly questionable. And I think that there's a general agreement in many parts of the world now that there ought to be changes in the IMF. The World Bank I think is generally doing a better job, but I think one of the big issues here that doesn't get nearly enough attention is the issue of corruption. The governor mentioned it earlier. I've worked on this issue. It's an enormous problem and corruption in official agencies, like militaries and police departments around the world, customs officials, that's one of the worst forms of it. And we have got to again lead by example and help these other countries that are trying to straighten out their situations find the tools in order to do it. I just think, Jim, that this is an absolutely unique period in world history. The world has come
together, as I said, they're looking to us. And we have a fundamental choice to make. Are we going to step up to the plate as a nation the way we did after World War II, the way that generation of heroes said okay, the United States is going to be the leader. And the world benefitted tremendously from the courage that they showed in those post-war years. I think that in the aftermath of the Cold War, it's time for us to do something very similar, to step up to the plate, to provide the leadership on the environment, leadership to make sure the world economy keeps moving in the right direction. Again, that means not running big deficits here and not squandering our surplus. It means having intelligent decisions that keep our prosperity going and shepherds that economic strength so that we can provide that leadership role.

[BUSH]:

Let me comment on that. I'm not so sure the role of the United States is to go around the world and say this is the way it's got to be. We can help. And maybe it's just our difference in government, the way we view government. I want to empower the people. I want to help people help themselves, not have government tell people what to do. I just don't think it's the role of the United States to walk into a country and say, we do it this way, so should you. I think we can help. I know we've got to encourage democracy in the marketplaces. But take Russia, for example. We went into Russia, we said here is some IMF money, and it ended up in Viktor Chemomyrdin's pocket, and others, and yet we played like there was reform. The only people that are going to reform Russia are Russia. They're going to have to make the decision themselves. Mr. Putin is going to have to make the decision as to whether or not he wants to adhere to rule of law and normal accounting practices so that if countries and/or entities
invest capital, there's a reasonable rate of return, a way to get the money out of the economy. But Russia has to make the decision. We can work with them on security matters, for example, but it's their call to make. So I'm not exactly sure where the vice president is coming from, but I think one way for us to end up being viewed as the ugly American is for us to go around the world saying, we do it this way, so should you. Now, we trust freedom. We know freedom is a powerful, powerful, powerful force, much bigger than the United States of America, as we saw recently in the Balkans. But maybe I misunderstand where you're coming from, Mr. Vice President, but I think the United States must be humble and must be proud and confident of our values, but humble in how we treat nations that are figuring out how to chart their own course.

[LEHRER]:
Lets move on. No, let's move on.

[GORE]:
Far be it from me to suggest otherwise. (LAUGHTER)

[LEHRER]:
First, a couple of follow-ups from the vice presidential debate last week. Vice President Gore, would you support or sign, as president, a federal law banning racial profiling by police and other authorities at all levels of government?

[GORE]:
Yes, I would. The only thing an executive order can accomplish is to ban it in federal law enforcement agencies, but I would also support a law in the Congress that would have the effect of doing the same thing. I just -- I think that racial profiling is a serious problem. I remember when the stories first came out about the stops in New Jersey by the highway patrol there. And I know it's been going on a
long time. In some ways this is just a new label for something that has been going on for years. But I have to confess that it was the first time that I really focused on it in a new way. And I was surprised at the extent of it. And I think we've now got so many examples around the country that we really have to find ways to end this. Imagine what it -- what it is like for someone to be singled out unfairly, unjustly, and feel the unfair force of law simply because of race or ethnicity. Now, that runs counter to what the United States of America is all about at our core. And it's not an easy problem to solve. But if I am entrusted with the presidency, it will be the first Civil Rights Act of the 21st century.

[BUSH]:
Yeah, I can't imagine what it would be like to be singled out because of race and stopped and harassed. That's just flat wrong, and that's not what America is all about. And so we ought to do everything we can to end racial profiling. One of my concerns, though, is I don't want to federalize the local police forces. I want to -- obviously in the egregious cases we need to enforce civil rights law, but we need to make sure that internal affairs decisions at the local level do their job and be given a chance to do their job. I believe in local control of governments, and obviously if they don't there needs to be a consequence at the federal level. But it's very important that we not overstep our bounds and I think most people -- most police officers are good, dedicated, honorable citizens who are doing their job, putting their lives at risk who aren't bigoted or aren't prejudiced. I don't think they ought to be held guilty. But I do think we need to find out where racial profiling occurs and do something about it and say to the local folks, get it done. And if you can't, there will be a federal consequence.
[LEHRER]:
And that could be a federal law?
[BUSH]:
Yeah.
[LEHRER]:
And you would agree?
[GORE]:
I would agree. And I also agree that most police officers, of course, are doing a good job and hate this practice also. I talked to an African-American police officer in Springfield, Massachusetts not long ago who raised this question and said that in his opinion one of the biggest solutions is in the training. And not only the training in police procedures, but human relations. And I think that racial profiling is part of a larger issue of how we deal with race in America. And as for singling people out because of race, you know, James Byrd was singled out because of his race in Texas. And other Americans have been singled out because of their race or ethnicity. And that's why I think we can embody our values by passing a hate crimes law. I think these crimes are different. I think they're different because they're based on prejudice and hatred, which gives rise to crimes that have not just a single victim, but they're intended to stigmatize and dehumanize a whole group of people.

[LEHRER]:
You have a different view of that.
[BUSH]:
No, I don't, really.
[LEHRER]:
On hate crimes laws?
[BUSH]:
No. We've got one in Texas. And guess what? The three men who murdered James Byrd, guess what's going to happen to them? They're going to be put to death. A jury found them guilty. It's going to be hard to punish them any worse after they get put to death. And it's the right cause. It's the right decision. Secondly, there is other forms of racial profiling that goes on in America. Arab-Americans are racially profiled in what is called secret evidence. People are stopped, and we have to do something about that. My friend, Senator Spencer Abraham of Michigan, is pushing a law to make sure that Arab-Americans are treated with respect. So racial profiling isn't just an issue at local police forces. It's an issue throughout our society. And as we become a diverse society, we're going to have to deal with it more and more. I believe, though -- I believe, as sure as I'm sitting here, that most Americans really care. They're tolerant people. They're good, tolerant people. It's the very few that create most of the crises, and we just have to find them and deal with them.

[LEHRER]:

What -- if you become president, Governor, are there other areas, racial problem areas, that you would deal with as president involving discrimination? Like you said, Arab-Americans, but also Hispanics, Asians, as well as Blacks in this country.

[BUSH]:

Let me tell you where the biggest discrimination comes. In public education when we just move children through the schools. My friend, Phyllis Hunter, is here. She had one of the greatest lines of all lines. She said, reading is the new civil right. She's right. And to make sure our society is as hopeful as it possibly can be, every single child in America must be educated. I mean every child. It starts with making sure every child learns to read. K-2 diagnostic
testing so we know whether or not there's a deficiency. Curriculum that works and phonics needs to be an integral part of our reading curriculum. Intensive reading laboratories, teacher retraining. I mean, there needs to be a wholesale effort against racial profiling, which is illiterate children. We can do better in our public schools. We can close an achievement gap, and it starts with making sure we have strong accountability, Jim. One of the cornerstones of reform, and good reform, is to measure. Because when you measure you can ask the question, do they know? Is anybody being profiled? Is anybody being discriminated against? It becomes a tool, a corrective tool. And I believe the federal government must say that if you receive any money, any money from the federal government for disadvantaged children, for example, you must show us whether or not the children are learning. And if they are, fine. And if they're not, there has to be a consequence. And so to make sure we end up getting rid of basic structural prejudice is education. There is nothing more prejudiced than not educating a child.

[LEHRER]:
Vice President Gore, what would be on your racial discrimination elimination list as president?

[GORE]:
Well, I think we need tough enforcement of the civil rights laws. I think we still need affirmative action. I would pass a hate crimes law, as I said, and I guess I had misunderstood the governor’s previous position. The Byrd family may have a misunderstanding of it in Texas also. But I would like to shift, if I could, to the big issue of education.

[LEHRER]:
Hold on one second. What is the misunderstanding? Let’s clear this up.
[GORE]:
Well, I had thought that there was a controversy at the end of the legislative session where the hate crimes law in Texas was -- failed, and that the Byrd family, among others, asked you to support it, Governor, and it died in committee for lack of support. Am I wrong about that?

[BUSH]:
Well, you don't realize we have a hate crimes statute? We do.

[GORE]:
I'm talking about the one that was proposed to deal --

[BUSH]:
No -- well, what the Vice President must not understand is we've got a hate crimes bill in Texas. And secondly, the people that murdered Mr. Byrd got the ultimate punishment. The death penalty.

[LEHRER]:
They were prosecuted under the murder laws, were they not, in Texas?

[BUSH]:
In this case when you murder somebody it's hate, Jim. The crime is hate. And they got the ultimate punishment. I'm not exactly sure how you enhance the penalty any more than the death penalty. We happen to have a statute on the books that's a hate crimes statute in Texas.

[GORE]:
May I respond?

[LEHRER]:
Sure.

[GORE]:
I don't want to jump in. I may have been misled by all the news reports about this matter, because the law that was proposed in Texas that had the support of the Byrd family and a whole lot of people in Texas
did, in fact, die in committee. There may be some other statute that was already on the books, but certainly the advocates of the hate crimes law felt that a tough new law was needed. And it’s important, Jim, not only -- not just because of Texas, but because this mirrors the national controversy. There is pending now in the Congress a national hate crimes law because of James Byrd, because of Matthew Shepard, who was crucified on a split rail fence by bigots, and because of others. And that law has died in committee also because of the same kind of opposition.

[LEHRER]:
And you would support that bill.
[GORE]:
Absolutely.
[LEHRER]:
Would you support a national hate crimes law?
[BUSH]:
I would support the Orrin Hatch version of it, not the Senator Kennedy version. But let me say to you, Mr. Vice President, we’re happy with our laws on our books. That bill did -- there was another bill that did die in committee. But I want to repeat, if you have a state that fully supports the law like we do in Texas, we’re going to go after all crime. And we’re going to make sure people get punished for the crime. And in this case we can’t enhance the penalty any more than putting those three thugs to deaths. And that’s what’s gonna happen in the State of Texas.

[LEHRER]:
New subject, new question. Another vice presidential debate follow-up. Governor, both Senator Lieberman and Secretary Cheney said they were sympathetically rethinking their views on same sex
relationships. What's your position on that?

[BUSH]:
I'm not for gay marriage. I think marriage is a sacred institution between a man and a woman. And I appreciated the way the administration signed the Defense of Marriage Act. I presume the Vice President supported it when the President signed that bill and supports it now. But I think marriage is a sacred institution. I'm going to be respectful for people who may disagree with me. I've had a record of doing so in the State of Texas. I've been a person that had been called a uniter, not a divider, because I accept other people's points of view. But I feel strongly that marriage should be between a man and a woman.

[LEHRER]:
Vice President Gore?

[GORE]:
I agree with that, and I did support that law. But I think that we should find a way to allow some kind of civic unions, and I basically agree with Dick Cheney and Joe Lieberman. And I think the three of us have one view and the Governor has another view.

[LEHRER]:
Is that right?

[BUSH]:
I'm not sure what kind of view he's describing to me. I can just tell you, I'm a person who respects other people. I respect their -- I respect -- on the one hand he says he agrees with me and then he says he doesn't. I'm not sure where he's coming from. But I will be a tolerant person. I've been a tolerant person all my life. I just happen to believe strongly that marriage is between a man and a woman.

[LEHRER]:
Do you believe in general terms that gays and lesbians should have the same rights as other Americans?

[BUSH]:
Yes. I don't think they ought to have special rights, but I think they ought to have the same rights.

[GORE]:
Well, there's a law pending called the Employment Non-Discrimination Act. I strongly support it. What it says is that gays and lesbians can't be fired from their job because they're gay or lesbian. And it would be a federal law preventing that. Now, I wonder if the -- it's been blocked by the opponents in the majority in the Congress. I wonder if the Governor who lend his support to that law.

[LEHRER]:
Governor?

[BUSH]:
The question --

[LEHRER]:
Well, but it's a logical response.

[BUSH]:
Well, I have no idea. I mean, he can throw out all kinds -- I don't know the particulars of this law. I will tell you I'm the kind of person, I don't hire or fire somebody based upon their sexual orientation. As a matter of fact, I would like to take the issue a little further. I don't really think it's any of my -- you know, any of my concerns what -- how you conduct your sex life. And I think that's a private matter. And I think that's the way it ought to be. But I'm going to be respectful for people, I'll tolerate people, and I support equal rights but not special rights for people.

[LEHRER]:
Special rights, how does that affect gays and lesbians?

[BUSH]:
Well, it would be if they're given special protective status. That doesn't mean we shouldn't fully enforce laws and fully protect people and fully honor people, which I will do as the President of the United States.

[LEHRER]:
New subject, new question, Vice President Gore. How do you see the connection between controlling gun sales in this country and the incidence of death by accidental or intentional use of guns?

[GORE]:
Jim, I hope that we can come back to the subject of education because the governor made an extensive statement on it and I have a very different view than the one he expressed. But that having been said, I believe that -- well, first of all, let me say that the governor and I agree on some things where this subject is concerned. I will not do anything to affect the rights of hunters or sportsmen. I think that homeowners have to be respected and their right to have a gun if they wish to. The problem I see is that there are too many guns getting into the hands of children, and criminals, and people who, for whatever reason, some kind of history of stalking or domestic abuse really should not be able to get guns. I think these assault weapons are a problem. So I favor closing the gun show loophole. In fact, I cast the tie-breaking vote to close it, but then the majority in the House of Representatives went the other way. That's still pending. If we could get agreement on that, maybe they could pass that in the final days of this Congress. I think we ought to restore the three-day waiting period under the Brady Law. I think we should toughen the enforcement of gun laws so that the ones that are
already on the books can be enforced much more effectively. Some of the restrictions that have been placed by the Congress in the last couple of years. I think -- in the last few years I think have been unfortunate. I think that we ought to make all schools gun free. Have a gun-free zone around every school in this country. I think that measures like these are important. Child safety trigger locks on a mandatory basis, and others.

[LEHRER]:
Governor?
[BUSH]:
Well, it starts with enforcing law. When you say loud and clear to somebody if you’re going to carry a gun illegally, we’re going to arrest you. If you’re going to sell a gun illegally, you need to be arrested. If you commit a crime with a gun, there needs to be absolute certainty in the law. And that means that the local law enforcement officials need help at the federal level. Programs like Project Exile where the federal government intensifies arresting people who illegally use guns. And we haven’t done a very good job of that at the federal level recently. And I’m going to make it a priority. Secondly, I don’t think we ought to be selling guns to people who shouldn’t have them. That’s why I support instant background checks at gun shows. One of the reasons we have an instant background check is so that we instantly know whether or not somebody should have a gun or not. In Texas I tried to do something innovative. There’s a lot of talk about trigger locks being on guns sold in the future. I support that. But I said if you want a trigger lock to make your gun safe, come and get one for free. So we’re distributing in our State of Texas for free. I think we ought to raise the age at which a juvenile can carry a handgun from 18 to 21. I disagree with the vice president on this
issue. He is for registration of guns. I think the only people that are going to show up to register or get a license -- I guess licensing like a driver's license for a gun, the only people that are going to show up are law-abiding citizens. The criminal is not going to show up and say hey, give me my I.D. card. It's the law-abiding citizens who will do that. An I don't think that is going to be an effective tool to make the -- keep our society safe.

[LEHRER]:
All right. So on guns, somebody wants to cast a vote based on your differences, where are the differences?

[GORE]:
Well, I'm not for registration. I am for licensing by states of new handgun purchases.

[LEHRER]:
What's that mean?

[GORE]:
A photo license I.D. like a driver's license for new handguns and, you know, the Los Angeles --

[LEHRER]:
Excuse me, you would have to get the license -- a photo I.D. to go in and before you could buy the gun?

[GORE]:
Correct.

[LEHRER]:
All right. Who would issue the --

[GORE]:
The state. The state. I think states should do that for new handguns, because too many criminals are getting guns. There was a recent investigation of the number in Texas who got -- who were given
concealed weapons permits in spite of the fact that they had records. And the "Los Angeles Times" spent a lot of ink going into that. But I am not for doing anything that would affect hunters or sportsmen, rifles, shotguns, existing handguns. I do think that sensible gun safety measures are warranted now. Look, this is the year -- this is in the aftermath of Columbine, and Paducah, and all the places in our country where the nation has been shocked by these weapons in the hands of the wrong people. The woman who bought the guns for the two boys who did that killing at Columbine said that if she had had to give her name and fill out a form there, she would not have bought those guns. That conceivably could have prevented that tragedy.

[LEHRER]:

Back to the question about the differences on gun control. What are they, Governor, from your point of view, between you and the Vice President?

[BUSH]:

Well, I'm not for photo licensing. Let me say something about Columbine. Listen, we've got gun laws. He says we ought to have gun-free schools. Everybody believes that. I'm sure every state in the union has got them. You can't carry a gun into a school. And there ought to be a consequence when you do carry a gun into a school. But Columbine spoke to a larger issue. It's really a matter of culture. It's a culture that somewhere along the line we've begun to disrespect life. Where a child can walk in and have their heart turned dark as a result of being on the Internet and walk in and decide to take somebody else's life? So gun laws are important, no question about it, but so is loving children, and character education classes, and faith-based programs being a part of after-school programs. Some
desperate child needs to have somebody put their arm around them and say, we love you. So there's a -- this is a society that -- of ours that's got to do a better job of teaching children right from wrong. And we can enforce law. But there seems to be a lot of preoccupation on -- not certainly only in this debate, but just in general on law. But there's a larger law. Love your neighbor like you would like to be loved yourself. And that's where our society must head if we're going to be a peaceful and prosperous society.

[GORE]:
I also believe in the Golden Rule. And I agree with a lot of the other things that the governor has said. We do have a serious problem in our culture. Tipper and I have worked on the problem of violence in entertainment aimed at children. She's worked on it longer than I have. But I feel very strongly about that. And if I'm elected president, I will do something about that. But I think that we -- I think we have to start with better parenting. But I don't think that we can ignore the role played by guns. I mean, the fact is that there -- even though no state wants them, there are guns in some schools. And the reason it's so difficult for schools to control that is because in recent years there has been a flood of cheap handguns that are so widely available that kids are finding ways to get ahold of them. And I think that if you look at the situation as it exists here in the United States compared to any other country in the world, it seems to me pretty obvious that while we respect the rights of hunters and sportsmen, we do need some common sense gun safety steps to stem this flood of guns that are getting into the wrong hands.

[BUSH]:
Yeah, no question about that, but there also needs to be strong enforcement of the law. Some kid who feels like -- doesn't matter
where the gun comes from, it could be a cheap gun, expensive gun. What matters is something in this person’s head says there is not going to be a consequence. So in my state we toughen up the juvenile justice laws. We added beds. We’re tough. We believe in tough love. We say, if you get caught carrying a gun, you're automatically detained. And that's what needs to happen. We've got laws. If laws need to be strengthened, like instant background checks, that’s important.

[LEHRER]:
New question. As I was saying. Both of you -- Governor, both of you have talked much about Medicare and health care for seniors. What about the more than 40 million younger Americans who do not have health insurance right now? What would you do about that?

[BUSH]:
Well, I've got a plan to do something about that. It's to make health care affordable and available this way. First, there's some who should be buying health care who choose not to. There's some --

[LEHRER]:
Some of the 40 million.

[BUSH]:
Some of the healthy folks, healthy young kids say I'll never get sick, therefore I don't need health care right now. For those what I think we need to do is to develop an investment-type vehicle that would be an incentive for them to invest, like medical savings accounts with rollover capacity. In other words, you say to a youngster, it will be in your financial interest to start saving for future illness, but for the working folks that do want to have health care that can't afford it, a couple of things we need to do. One, we need more community
health centers. I've developed -- put out money in my budget to expand community health centers all around the country. These are places where people can get primary care. Secondly -- and they're good. They're very important parts of the safety net of health care. Secondly, that you get a $2,000 rebate from the government if you're a family of $30,000 or less -- it scales down as you get higher -- that you can use to purchase health care in the private markets. It will be a huge down payment for a pretty darn good system. If you allow -- also allow -- convince states to -- allow states to allow the mother to match some of the children's health insurance money with it, the pool purchasing power. And to make health care more affordable, allow business associations like the National Federal of Independent Business or the Chamber of Commerce or the National Restaurant Association to write association plans across jurisdictional lines so that small businesses have got the capacity to have national pooling to drive the cost of insurance down. I think that's the very best way to go. It empowers people, it trusts people, it makes -- and it's a practical way to encourage people to purchase health care insurance.

[LEHRER]:
Vice President Gore?

[GORE]:
It's one of my top priorities, Jim, to give every single child in the United States affordable health care within the next four years. I would like to see eventually in this country some form of universal health care, but I'm not for a government-run system. In fact, I'm for shrinking the size of government. I want a smaller and smarter government. I have been in charge of this reinventing government streamlining project that's reduced the size of government by more than 300,000
people in the last several years. And the budget plan that I’ve put out, according to the "Los Angeles Times" again, the way these things are typically measured as a percentage of the GDP, will bring government spending down to the lowest level in 50 years. So I want to proceed carefully to cover more people. But I think we should start by greatly expanding the so-called child health insurance or CHIP program to give health insurance to every single child in this country. I think it's intolerable that we have so many millions of children without any health insurance. So it's one of my top priorities. Now, I know that we have some disagreements on this. And I'm sorry to tell you that, you know, there is a record here. And Texas ranks 49th out of the 50 states in health care -- in children with health care. 49th for women with health care, and 50th for families with health care. So it is a priority for me. I guarantee you. I'm not aware of any program -- well, I'll just leave it at that. I think it ought to be a top priority.

[LEHRER]:
Governor, did the -- are the vice president’s figures correct about Texas?
[BUSH]:
First of all, let me say he's not for a government-run health care system? I thought that's exactly what he and Mrs. Clinton and them fought for in 1993 was a government-run health care system. It was fortunately stopped in its tracks. Secondly, we spend $4.7 billion a year on the uninsured in the State of Texas. Our rate of uninsured, the percentage of uninsured in Texas has gone down, while the percentage of uninsured in America has gone up. Our CHIPS program got a late start because our government meets only four months out of every two years, Mr. Vice President. It may come as a shock for somebody who has been in Washington for so long. But
actually limited government can work in the second largest state in
the union. And therefore Congress passes the bill after our session
in 1997 ended, we passed an enabling legislation in 1999. We’ve
signed up over 110,000 children to the CHIPS program. For
comparable states our size, we’re signing them up as fast as any
other state. You can quote all the numbers you want, but I’m telling
you we care about our people in Texas. We spent a lot of money to
make sure people get health care in the State of Texas, and we’re
doing a better job than they are at the national level for reducing
uninsured.

[LEHRER]:
Is he right?

[GORE]:
Well, I don’t know about all these percentages that he throws out, but I
do know that -- I speculate that the reason why he didn’t answer
your question directly as to whether my numbers were right, the
facts were right about Texas ranking dead last in families with
health insurance and 49th out of 50 for both children and women, is
because those facts are correct. And as for why it happened, I’m no
expert on the Texas procedures, but what my friends there tell me is
that the governor opposed a measure put forward by Democrats in
the legislature to expand the number of children that would be
covered. And instead directed the money toward a tax cut, a
significant part of which went to wealthy interests. He declared the
need for a new tax cut for the oil companies in Texas an emergency
need, and so the money was taken away from the CHIP program.
There’s -- you don’t have to take my word for this. There is now a
federal judge’s opinion about the current management of this
program ordering the State of Texas to do -- you should read that
judge's language about this. I believe there are 1.4 million children in Texas who do not have health insurance. 600,000 of whom, and maybe some of those have since gotten it, but as of a year ago 600,000 of them were actually eligible for it but they couldn't sign up for it because of the barriers that they had set up.

[LEHRER]:
Let's let the governor respond to that. Are those numbers correct? Are his charges correct?
[BUSH]:
If he's trying to allege that I'm a hard-hearted person and I don't care about children, he's absolutely wrong. We've spent $4.7 billion a year in the State of Texas for uninsured people. And they get health care. Now, it's not the most efficient way to get people health care. But I want to remind you, the number of uninsured in America during their watch has increased. He can make any excuse he wants, but the facts are that we're reducing the number of uninsured percentage of our population. And as the percentage of the population is increasing nationally, somehow the allegation that we don't care and we're going to give money for this interest or that interest and not for children in the State of Texas is totally absurd. Let me just tell you who the jury is. The people of Texas. There's only been one governor ever elected to back-to-back four-year terms, and that was me. And I was able to do so with a lot of Democrat votes, nearly 50% of the Hispanic vote, about 27% of the African-American vote, because people know I'm a conservative person and a compassionate person. So he can throw all the kinds of numbers around. I'm just telling you our state comes together to do what is right. We come together both Republicans and Democrats.

[LEHRER]:
Let me put that directly to you, Vice President Gore. The reason you brought this up, is it -- are you suggesting that those numbers and that record will reflect the way Governor Bush will operate in this area of health insurance as president?

[GORE]:
Yes, yes. But it's not a statement about his heart. I don't claim to know his heart. I think he's a good person. I make no allegations about that. I believe him when he says that he has a good heart. I know enough about your story to admire a lot of the things that you have done as a person. But I think it's about his priorities. And let me tell you exactly why I think that the choice he made to give a tax cut for the oil companies and others before addressing this -- I mean, if you were the governor of a state that was dead last in health care for families, and all of a sudden you found yourself with the biggest surplus your state had ever had in its history, wouldn't you want to maybe use some of it to climb from 50th to, say, 45 or 40 or something or maybe better? I would. Now, but here is why it's directly relevant, Jim. Because by his own budget numbers, his proposals for spending on tax cuts for the wealthiest of the wealthy are more than the new spending proposals that he has made for health care and education and national defense all combined. According to his own numbers. So it's not a question of his heart, as far as I know. It's a question of priorities and values. See, you know -

[LEHRER]:
Let me ask --

[BUSH]:
First of all, that's simply not true what he just said, of course. And secondly, I repeat to you --
[LEHRER]:
What is not true, Governor?

[BUSH]:
That we spent -- the top 1% receive 223 as opposed to 445 billion in new spending. The top -- let's talk about my tax plan. The top 1% will pay one-third of all the federal income taxes. And in return, get one-fifth of the benefits, because most of the tax reductions go to the people at the bottom end of the economic ladder. That stands in stark contrast, by the way, to a man who is going to leave 50 million -- 50 million Americans out of tax relief. We just have a different point of view. It's a totally different point of view. He believes only the right people ought to get tax relief. I believe everybody who pays taxes ought to get tax relief. Let me go back to Texas, for example, for a minute. We pay 4.7 billion. I can't emphasize to you how much. I signed a bill that puts CHIPS in place. The bill finally came out at the end of the 1999 session. We're working hard to sign up children. We're doing it faster than any other state our size, comparable state. We're making really good progress. And our state cares a lot about our children. My priority is going to be the health of our citizens. These folks have had eight years to get something done in Washington, D.C. on the uninsured. They have not done it. They've had eight years to get something done on Medicare. And they have not got it done. And my case to the American people is, if you're happy with inactivity, stay with the horse. The horse is up there now. But if you want change, you need to get somebody that knows how to bring Republicans and Democrats together to get positive things done for American.

[LEHRER]:
New question, new subject. Vice President Gore, on the environment. In
your 1992 book you said, quote, "We must make the rescue of our environment the central organizing principle for civilization and there must be a wrenching transformation to save the planet." Do you still feel that way?

[GORE]:

I do. I think that in this 21st century we will soon see the consequences of what's called global warming. There was a study just a few weeks ago suggesting that in summertime the north polar ice cap will be completely gone in 50 years. Already people see the strange weather conditions that the old timers say they've never seen before in their lifetimes. And what's happening is the level of pollution is increasing significantly. Now, here is the good news, Jim. If we take the leadership role and build the new technologies, like the new kinds of cars and trucks that Detroit is itching to build, then we can create millions of good new jobs by being first into the market with these new kinds of cars and trucks and other kinds of technologies. You know the Japanese are breathing down our necks on this. They're moving very rapidly because they know that it is a fast-growing world market. Some of these other countries, particularly in the developing world, their pollution is much worse than anywhere else and their people want higher standards of living. And so they're looking for ways to satisfy their desire for a better life and still reduce pollution at the same time. I think that holding onto the old ways and the old argument that the environment and the economy are in conflict is really outdated. We have to be bold. We have to provide leadership. Now it's true that we disagree on this. The governor said that he doesn't think this problem is necessarily caused by people. He's for letting the oil companies into the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Houston has just become the smoggiest city in the country.
And Texas is number one in industrial pollution. We have a very different outlook. And I’ll tell you this, I will fight for a clean environment in ways that strengthen our economy.

[LEHRER]:
Governor?
[BUSH]:
Well, let me start with Texas. We are a big industrial state. We reduced our industrial waste by 11%. We cleaned up more brown fields than any other administration in my state’s history, 450 of them. Our water is cleaner now.

[LEHRER]:
Explain what a brown field is to those who don’t follow this.
[BUSH]:
A brown field is an abandoned industrial site that just sits idle in some of our urban centers. And people are willing to invest capital in the brown fields don’t want to do so for fear of lawsuit. I think we ought to have federal liability protection, depending upon whether or not standards have been met. The book you mentioned that Vice President Gore wrote, he also called for taxing -- big energy taxes in order to clean up the environment. And now that the energy prices are high, I guess he’s not advocating those big energy taxes right now. I believe we ought to fully fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund to -- with half the money going to states so states can make the right decisions for environmental quality. I think we need to have clean coal technologies. I propose $2 billion worth. By the way, I just found out the other day an interesting fact, that there is a national petroleum reserve right next to -- in Prudhoe Bay that your administration opened up for exploration in that pristine area. And it was a smart move because there’s gas reserves up there. We
need gas pipelines to bring the gas down. Gas is a clean fuel that we can burn to -- we need to make sure that if we decontrol our plants that there's mandatory -- that the plants must conform to clean air standards, the grandfathered plants, that's what we did in Texas. No excuses. You must conform. In other words, there are practical things we can do. But it starts with working in a collaborative effort with states and local folks. If you own the land, every day is Earth Day. People care a lot about their land and care about their environment. Not all wisdom is in Washington, D.C. on this issue.

[LEHRER]:
Where do you see the basic difference in very simple terms in two or three sentences between you and the governor on the environment?
If a voter wants to make a choice, what is it?

[GORE]:
I'm really strongly committed to clean water and clean air, and cleaning up the new kinds of challenges like global warming. He is right that I'm not in favor of energy taxes. I am in favor of tax cuts to encourage and give incentives for the quicker development of these new kinds of technologies. And let me say again, Detroit is rearing to go on that. We differ on the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, as I have said. We differ on whether or not pollution controls ought to be voluntary. I don't think you can -- I don't think you can get results that way. We differ on the kinds of appointments that we would make.

[LEHRER]:
Would you say it's a fundamental difference?

[GORE]:
I think it's a fundamental difference. Let me give you an example.

[LEHRER]:
Hold on one second.

[GORE]:
Okay, sure.

[LEHRER]:
We've talked about supply. I just want to know for somebody -- we're getting close to the end of our time here. If somebody wanted to vote on the environment, how would you draw the differences, Governor?

[BUSH]:
Well, I don't believe in command and control out of Washington, D.C. I believe Washington ought to set standards, but again I think we ought to be collaborative at the local levels and I think we ought to work with people at the local levels. And by the way, I just want to make sure -- I can't let him just say something and not correct it. The electric decontrol bill that I fought for and signed in Texas has mandatory emission standards, Mr. Vice President. That's what we ought to do at the federal level when it comes to grandfathered plants for utilities. I think there's a difference. I think, for example, take -- when they took 40 million acres of land out of circulation without consulting local officials, I thought that was --

[LEHRER]:
That was out in the west?

[BUSH]:
Out in the west, yeah. And so -- on the logging issue. That's not the way I would have done it. Perhaps some of that land needs to be set aside. But I certainly would have consulted with governors and elected officials before I would have acted unilaterally.

[LEHRER]:
Would you believe the federal government still has some new rules and new regulations and new laws to pass in the environmental area or
do you think --

[BUSH]:
Sure, absolutely, so long as they're based upon science and they're reasonable. So long as people have input.

[LEHRER]:
What about global warming?

[BUSH]:
I think it's an issue that we need to take very seriously. But I don't think we know the solution to global warming yet. And I don't think we've got all the facts before we make decisions. I tell you one thing I'm not going to do is I'm not going to let the United States carry the burden for cleaning up the world's air. Like Kyoto Treaty would have done. China and India were exempted from that treaty. I think we need to be more even-handed, as evidently 99 senators -- I think it was 99 senators supported that position.

[LEHRER]:
Global warming, the Senate did turn it down. I think --

[BUSH]:
99 to nothing.

[GORE]:
Well, that vote wasn't exactly -- a lot of the supporters of the Kyoto Treaty actually ended up voting for that because the way it was worded. But there's no doubt there's a lot of opposition to it in the Senate. I'm not for command and control techniques either. I'm for working with the groups, not just with industry but also with the citizen groups and local communities to control sprawl in ways that the local communities themselves come up with. But I disagree that we don't know the cause of global warming. I think that we do. It's pollution, carbon dioxide, and other chemicals that are even more
potent, but in smaller quantities, that cause this. Look, the world’s temperature is going up, weather patterns are changing, storms are getting more violent and unpredictable. What are we going to tell our children? I’m a grandfather now. I want to be able to tell my grandson when I’m in my later years that I didn’t turn away from the evidence that showed that we were doing some serious harm. In my faith tradition, it is -- it’s written in the book of Matthew, "Where your heart is, there is your treasure also." And I believe that -- that we ought to recognize the value to our children and grandchildren of taking steps that preserve the environment in a way that’s good for them.

[BUSH]:
Yeah, I agree. I just -- I think there has been -- some of the scientists, I believe, Mr. Vice President, haven’t they been changing their opinion a little bit on global warming? A profound scientist recently made a different --

[LEHRER]:
Both of you have now violated -- excuse me. Both of you have now violated your own rules. Hold that thought.

[GORE]:
I’ve been trying so hard not to.

[LEHRER]:
I know, I know. But under your all’s rules you are not allowed to ask each other a question. I let you do it a moment ago.

[BUSH]:
Twice.

[LEHRER]:
Now you just -- twice, sorry. (LAUGHTER)

[GORE]:
That's an interruption, by the way.

[LEHRER]:
That's an interruption, okay. But anyhow, you just did it so now --

[BUSH]:
I'm sorry. I apologize, Mr. Vice President.

[LEHRER]:
You aren't allowed to do that either, see? (LAUGHTER) I'm sorry, go ahead and finish your thought. People care about these things I've found out.

[BUSH]:
Of course they care about them. Oh, you mean the rules.

[LEHRER]:
Yeah, right, exactly right. Go ahead.

[BUSH]:
What the heck. I -- of course there's a lot -- look, global warming needs to be taken very seriously, and I take it seriously. But science, there's a lot -- there's differing opinions. And before we react, I think it's best to have the full accounting, full understanding of what's taking place. And I think to answer your question, I think both of us care a lot about the environment. We may have different approaches. We may have different approaches in terms of how we deal with local folks. I just cited an example of the administration just unilaterally acting without any input. And I remember you gave a very good answer to New Hampshire about the White Mountains, about how it was important to keep that collaborative effort in place. I feel very strongly the same place. It certainly wasn't the attitude that took place out west, however.

[LEHRER]:
New question. Last question. For you, Governor. And this flows
somewhat out of the Boston debate. You, your running mate, your campaign officials have charged that Vice President Gore exaggerates, embellishes and stretches the facts, etcetera. Are you -- do you believe these are serious issues? This is a serious issue that the voters should use in deciding which one of you two men to vote for on November 7?

[BUSH]:
Well, we all make mistakes. I've been known to mangle a syllable or two myself, you know, if you know what I mean. I think credibility is important. It is going to be important for the president to be credible with Congress, important for the president to be credible with foreign nations. And yes, I think it's something that people need to consider. This isn't something new. I read a report, or a memo, from somebody in his 1988 campaign -- I forgot the fellow's name -- warning then Senator Gore to be careful about exaggerating claims. I thought during his debate with Senator Bradley saying he authored the EITC when it didn't happen. I mention the last debate --

[LEHRER]:
EITC?
[BUSH]:
The Earned Income Tax Credit, sorry.

[LEHRER]:
That's all right.

[BUSH]:
A lot of initials from a guy who's not from Washington, isn't it? Anyway, he co-sponsored McCain-Feingold, and yet he didn't. And so I think this is an issue. I found it to be an issue in trying to defend my tax relief package. I thought there was some exaggerations about the numbers. But the people are going to have to make up their mind on
this issue. And I am going to continue to defend my record and defend my propositions against what I think are exaggerations. Exaggerations like, for example, only 5% of seniors receive benefits under my Medicare reform package. That's what he said the other day, and that's simply not the case. And I have every right in the world to defend my record and positions. That's what debates are about and that's what campaigns are about.

[LEHRER]:
Vice President Gore?

[GORE]:
I got some of the details wrong last week in some of the examples that I used, Jim, and I'm sorry about that. And I'm going to try to do better. One of the reasons I regret it is that getting a detail wrong interfered several times with the point that I was trying to make. However many days that young girl in Florida stood in her classroom, however long, even if it was only one day, doesn't change the fact that there are a lot of overcrowded classrooms in America and we need to do something about that. There are seniors who pay more for their prescriptions than a lot of other people, more than their pets, sometimes. More sometimes than people in foreign countries. And we need to do something about that. Not with the measure that leaves the majority of them without any real basic help until the next president's term of four years is over. But right away. And that means doing it under the Medicare program. I can't promise that I will never get another detail wrong. I can promise you that I will try not to, and hard. But I will promise you this with all the confidence in my heart and in the world, that I will do my best if I'm elected president, I'll work my heart out to get the big things right for the American people.
[LEHRER]:
Does that resolve the issue, Governor?
[BUSH]:
That's going to be up to the people, isn't it?
[LEHRER]:
Does it resolve it for you?
[BUSH]:
Depends on what he says in the future in the campaign.
[LEHRER]:
Your folks are saying some awful things.
[BUSH]:
I hope they're not awful things. I think they may be using the man's own words.
[LEHRER]:
Well, what I mean is calling him a serial exaggerator --
[BUSH]:
I don't believe I've used those words.
[LEHRER]:
No, but your campaign ads.
[BUSH]:
Maybe they have.
[LEHRER]:
And your campaign officials have. And your campaign officials, Mr. Vice President, are now calling the governor a bumbler.
[BUSH]:
Wait a minute. (LAUGHTER)
[LEHRER]:
I mean, my point is, should this -- is this --
[GORE]:
I don't use language like that and I don't think that we should.

[LEHRER]:
It's in your commercial.

[GORE]:
I understand. The -- I haven't seen that, in my commercials?

[BUSH]:
You haven't seen the commercial?

[LEHRER]:
Your --

[GORE]:
I think that what -- I think the point of that is that anybody would have a hard time trying to make a tax cut plan that is so large, that would put us into such big deficits, that gives almost half the benefits to the wealthiest of the wealthy. I think anybody would have a hard time explaining that clearly in a way that makes sense to the average person.

[BUSH]:
That's the kind of exaggeration I was just talking about. (LAUGHTER)

[GORE]:
Well, I wasn't the one having trouble explaining it.

[LEHRER]:
Gentlemen, it's time to go to the closing statements. And Vice President Gore, you have two minutes.

[GORE]:
Jim, one of the issues that I would like to close with in my statement is education, because it's an example of the overall approach that I think is important. This race is about values, it's about change, it's about giving choices to the American people. And education is my number one priority, because I think that it's the most important big
major change that we can bring in our country. I agree with Governor Bush that we should have new accountability, testing of students. I think that we should require states to test all students, test schools and school districts, and I think that we should go further and require teacher testing for new teachers also. The difference is that while my plan starts with new accountability and maintains local control, it doesn't stop there. Because I want to give new choices to parents. To send their kids to college with a $10,000 tax deduction for college tuition per child per year. I want to reduce the size of the classrooms in this country. For one basic reason, so that students can get more one-on-one time with teachers. And the way to do that is first to recruit more teachers. I've a plan in my budget to recruit 100,000 new, highly qualified teachers and to help local school districts build new schools. I think that we have to put more emphasis on early learning and pre-school. Now, here is how that connects with all the rest of what we've been talking about. If you have -- if you squander the surplus on a huge tax cut that goes mostly to those at the top, then you can't make education the top priority. If the tax cut is your number one, two, three and four priority, you can't do education. You can't do both. You have to choose. I choose education and health care, the environment and retirement security, and I ask for your support.

[LEHRER]:
Governor Bush, two minutes.

[BUSH]:
Jim, thank you very much. Mr. Vice President, thank you very much, and I would like to thank the folks here at Wake Forest, and I want to thank you all for listening. I'm running to get some things done for America. There's too many issues left unresolved. There's been too
much finger pointing and too much name calling in Washington, D.C. I would like to unite this country to get an agenda done that will speak to the hopes and aspirations of the future. I want to have an education system that sets high standards, local control of schools and strong accountability. No child should be left behind in America. I want to make sure we rebuild our military to keep the peace. I worry about morale in today’s military. The warning signs are clear. It is time to have a new commander in chief who will rebuild the military, pay our men and women more, make sure they’re housed better and have a focused mission for our military. Once and for all, I want to do something about Medicare. This issue has been too long on the table because it’s been a political issue. It’s time to bring folks together to say that all seniors will get prescription drug coverage. I want to do something about Social Security. It’s an important priority, because now is the time to act and we’re going to say to our seniors, our promises we’ve made to you will be promises kept. But younger workers, in order to make sure the system exists tomorrow, younger workers ought to be able to take some of your own money and invest it in safe securities to get a better rate of return on that money. And finally, I do believe in tax relief. I believe we can set our priorities. I don’t believe, like the vice president does, in huge government. I believe in limited government. By having a limited government and a focused government, we can send some of the money back to the people who pay the bills. I want to have tax relief for all people who pay the bills in America, because I think you can spend your money more wisely than the federal government can. Thank you for listening. I’m asking for your vote, and God bless.
And we will return next Tuesday night, October 17th, from Washington University in St. Louis for the third and final debate. Thank you, Vice President Gore, Governor Bush. See you next week. For now, from Winston-Salem, I'm Jim Lehrer, thank you and good night.

(APPLAUSE)
[LEHRER]:
Good evening from the Field House at Washington University in St. Louis. I'm Jim Lehrer of the News Hour on PBS. And I welcome you to this third and final Campaign 2000 debate between the Democratic candidate for president, Vice President Al Gore, and the Republican candidate, Governor George W. Bush of Texas. Let's welcome the candidates now. Before proceeding tonight we would like to observe a moment of silence in memory of Governor Mel Carnahan of Missouri, who along with his son and his former chief of staff, died in a private plane crash last night near St. Louis. A reminder, as we continue now, that these debates are sponsored by the Commission on Presidential Debates. The formats and the rules were worked out by the commission and the two campaigns. Tonight's questions will be asked by St. Louis area voters who were identified as being uncommitted by the Gallup organization. Earlier
today each of them wrote a question on a small card like this. Those cards were collected and then given to me this afternoon. My job, under the rules of the evening, was to decide the order the questions will be asked and to call on the questioners accordingly. I also have the option of asking follow-ups which -- in order to get to more of the panel’s questions. For the record, I plan to do sparingly and mostly for clarifications. The audience participants are bound by the following rule. They shall not ask follow-up questions or otherwise participate in the extended discussion. And the questioner’s microphone will be turned off after he or she completes asking the question. Those are the rules. As in Winston-Salem last week, no single answer or response from a candidate can exceed two minutes. There is an audience here in the hall and they have promised to remain absolutely quiet, as did their predecessors this year in Boston, Danville, and Winston-Salem. Before we begin, a correction from last week’s debate. I was wrong when I said Vice President Gore’s campaign commercials had called Governor Bush a bumbler. That specific charge was made in a press statement by Gore campaign spokesman Mark Fabiani, not in a TV Guide.

[GORE]:
I'm glad you clarified that.

[LEHRER]:
Now, let's go to the first question. Of over the 130 questions we received from this panel, we will begin with one of the 19 on health issues, and it goes to you, Mr. Vice President, and it will be asked by James Hankin. Mr. Hankin? MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: How do you feel about HMOs and insurance companies making the critical decisions that affect people’s lives instead of the medical professionals, and why are the HMOs and insurance companies not held accountable
for their decisions?

[GORE]:

Mr. Hankins, I don’t feel good about it, and I think we ought to have a patient's bill of rights to take the medical decisions away from the HMOs and give them back to the doctors and nurses. I want to come back and tell you why, but if you will forgive me, I would like to say something right now at the beginning of this debate following on the moment of silence for Mel Carnahan and Randy Carnahan and Chris Sifford. Tipper and I were good friends with Mel and Randy, and I know that all of us here want to extend our sympathy and condolences to Jean and the family and to the Sifford family. And I would just like to say that this debate in a way is a living tribute to Mel Carnahan because he loved the vigorous discussion of ideas in our democracy. He was a fantastic governor of Missouri. This state became one of the top five in the nation for health care coverage for children under his leadership. One of the best in advancing all kinds of benefits for children to grow up healthy and strong. And of course, this debate also takes place at a time when the tragedy of the USS Cole is on our minds and hearts and insofar as the memorial services tomorrow, I would like to also extend sympathy to the families of those who have died and those who are still missing, and the injured. Now, Mr. Hankins, I think that the situation that you describe has gotten completely out of hand. Doctors are giving prescriptions, they’re recommending treatments, and then their recommendations are being overruled by HMOs and insurance companies. That is unacceptable. I support a strong national patient's bill of rights. It is actually a disagreement between us, a national law that is pending on this, the Dingle-Norwood bill, a bipartisan bill, is one that I support and that the governor does not.
[LEHRER]:
Two minutes response, Governor Bush.

[BUSH]:
I, too, want to extend my prayers and blessings, God's blessings on the families whose lives were overturned yes -- tod -- last night. It's a tragic moment. Actually, Mr. Vice President, it's not true. I do support a national patient's bill of rights. As a matter of fact, I brought Republicans and Democrats together to do just that in the State of Texas to get a patient's bill of rights through. It requires a different kind of leadership style to do it, though. You see, in order to get something done on behalf of the people, you have to put partisanship aside, and that's what we did in my state. We have one of the most advanced patient's bill of rights. It says, for example, that a woman doesn't have to go through a gate keeper to go to her gynecologist. It says that you can't gag a doctor, doctor can advise you. The HMO, the insurance company, can't gag that doctor from giving you full advice. And this particular bill, it allows patients to choose a doctor, their own doctor if they want to. But we did something else that was interesting. We're one of the first states that said you can sue an HMO for denying you proper coverage. Now there's what's called an Independent Review Organization that you have to go through first. It says you have a complaint with your insurance company, you can take your complaint to an objective body. If the objective body rules on your behalf, the insurance company must follow those rules. However, if the insurance company doesn't follow the findings of the IRO, then that becomes a cause of action in a court of law. It's time for our nation to come together and do what's right for the people, and I think this is right for the people. You know, I support a national patient's bill of rights,
Mr. Vice President, and I want all people covered. I don't want the law to supersede good law like we've got in Texas. I think --

[LEHRER]:
Governor, time is up, sir.

[GORE]:
Jim, we have a direct disagreement on this.

[LEHRER]:
Just a minute, Mr. Vice President. I want to -- the way the rules go here now, two minutes, two minutes, and then I'll decide whether we go on. Okay. So what I want to make sure is we understand here is before we go on to another question in the health area, would you agree that you two agree on a national patient's bill of rights?

[GORE]:
Absolutely not. I referred to the Dingle-Norwood bill. It is the bipartisan bill that is now pending in the Congress. The HMOs and the insurance companies support the other bill that's pending, the one that the Republican majority has put forward. They like it because it doesn't accomplish what I think really needs to be accomplished to give the decisions back to the doctors and nurses and give you a right of appeal to somebody other than the HMO or insurance company, let you go to the nearest emergency room without having to call an HMO before you call 911, to let you see a specialist if you need to, and it has strong bipartisan support. It is being blocked by the Republican leadership in the Congress.

[LEHRER]:
Sir.

[GORE]:
And I specifically would like to know whether Governor Bush will support the Dingle-Norwood bill, which is the main one pending.
[LEHRER]:
Governor Bush, you may answer that if you'd like. But also I'd like to
know how you see the differences between the two of you, and we
need to move on.

[BUSH]:
Well, the difference is that I can get it done. That I can get something
positive done on behalf of the people. That's what the question in
this campaign is about. It's not only what's your philosophy and
what's your position on issues, but can you get things done? And I
believe I can.

[GORE]:
What about the Dingle-Norwood bill?

[LEHRER]:
All right. We're going to go now to another -- all right. Yes.

[BUSH]:
I'm not quite through. Let me finish. I talked about the principles and the
issues that I think are important in a patient's bill of rights. It's kind
of Washington, D.C. focus. Well, it's in this committee or it's got this
sponsor. If I'm the president, we're going to have emergency room
care, we're going have gag orders, we're going to have direct access to
OB/GYN. People will be able to take their HMO insurance company
to court. That's what I've done in Texas and that's the kind of
leadership style I'll bring to Washington.

[LEHRER]:
All right. Another -- the next question also on health issue is from -- it
will be asked by Marie Payne Kloep, and it goes to Governor Bush.

MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: Are either of you concerned with -- are
either of you concerned with finding some feasible way to lower the
price of pharmaceutical drugs such as education on minimizing
intake, revamp of the FDA process or streamlining the drug companies' procedures instead of just finding more money to pay for them?

[BUSH]:

Well, that’s a great question. I think one of the problems we have, particularly for seniors, is there is no prescription drug coverage in Medicare. And therefore, when they have to try to purchase drugs they do so on their own, there’s no kind of collective bargaining, no power of purchasing among seniors. So I think step one to make sure prescription drugs is more affordable for seniors, and those are the folks who really rely upon prescription drugs a lot these days, is to reform the Medicare system, is to have precipitation drugs as an integral part of Medicare once and for all. The problem we have today is like the patient's bill of rights, particularly with health care, there’s a lot of bickering in Washington, D.C. It’s kind of like a political issue as opposed to a people issue. So what I want to do is I want to call upon Republicans and Democrats to forget all the arguing and finger pointing, and come together and take care of our seniors' prescription drug program, that says we’ll pay for the poor seniors, we’ll help all seniors with prescription drugs. In the meantime, I think it’s important to have what's called Immediate Helping Hand, which is direct money to states so that seniors, poor seniors, don’t have to choose between food and medicine. That’s part of an overall overhaul. The purchasing powers. And I’m against price controls. I think price controls would hurt our ability to continue important research and development. Drug therapies are replacing a lot of medicines as we used to know it. One of the most important things is to continue the research and development component. And so I’m against price controls. Expediting drugs through the FDA makes
sense, of course. Allowing the new bill that was passed in the Congress made sense to allow for, you know, drugs that were sold overseas to come back and other countries to come back into the United States. That makes sense. But the best thing to do is to reform Medicare.

[LEHRER]:
Vice President Gore, two minutes.

[GORE]:
All right, here we go again. Now look, if you want someone who will spend a lot of words describing a whole convoluted process and then end up supporting legislation that is supported by the big drug companies, this is your man. If you want someone who will fight for you and who will fight for the middle-class families and working men and women, who are sick and tired of having their parents and grandparents pay higher prices for prescription drugs than anybody else, then I want to fight them. And you asked a great question because it's not only seniors. Listen, for 24 years I have never been afraid to take on the big drug companies. They do some great things. They discover great new cures and that's great. We want them to continue that. But they are now spending more money on advertising and promotion. You see all these ads? Than they are on research and development. And they are trying artificially extend the monopoly patent protection so they can keep charging these very high prices. I want to streamline the approval of the competing generic drugs and the new kinds of treatments that can compete with them so we bring the price down for everybody. Now, briefly, let me tell you how my prescription drug plan works. The governor talked about Medicare. I propose a real prescription drug benefit under Medicare for all seniors, all seniors, and here's how it works.
You pick your own doctor, and nobody can take that away from you. The doctor chooses the prescription that you need and nobody can overrule your doctor. You go to your own pharmacy and then Medicare pays half the price. If you’re poor, they pay all of it. If you have extraordinarily high cost, then they pay all over $4,000 out-of-pocket. And I’ll bring new competition to bring the price down. And if you pass the big drug companies’ bill, nothing will happen.

[LEHRER]:
All right. Another health question, it comes from Vickie French, and it’s for you, Vice President Gore. Vickie French, where are you? Oh, there she is. MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: You spend billions of dollars every year on taxes, or pay billions of dollars in taxes. Would you be open to the idea of a national health care plan for everybody? And if not, why? If so, is this something you would try to implement if you are elected into office and what would you do to implement this plan?

[GORE]:
I think that we should move step-by-step toward universal health coverage, but I am not in favor of government doing it all. We’ve spent 65 years now on the development of a hybrid system, partly private, partly public, and 85% of our people have health insurance, 15% don’t. That adds up to 44 million people. That is a national outrage. We have got to get health coverage for those who do not have it and we’ve got to improve the quality for those who do with a patient’s bill of rights that’s real and that works, the Dingle-Norwood bill, and we have got to fill in the gaps in coverage by finally bringing parity for the treatment of mental illness, because that’s been left out. We have got to deal with long-term care. Now, here are the steps that I would take, first of all. I will make a commitment to bring
health care coverage of high quality that is affordable to every single child in America within four years. And then we'll fill other gaps by covering the parents of those children when the family is poor or up to two and a half times the poverty rate. I want to give a tax credit for the purchase of individual health insurance plans. I want to give small business employers a tax credit, 25%, to encourage the providing of health insurance for the employees in small businesses. I want to give seniors who are, well, the near elderly, I don't like that term because I am just about in that category, but those 55 to 65 ought to be able to buy into Medicare for premiums that are reasonable and fair and significantly below what they have to get now. Now, we have a big difference on this. And you need to know the record here. Under Governor Bush, Texas has sunk to be 50th out of 50 in health care -- in health insurance for their citizens. Last week he said that they were spending 3.7 billion dollars, or 4.7 billion dollars on this.

[LEHRER]:
Mr. Vice president.

[GORE]:
Okay.

[LEHRER]:
Time is up. Governor Bush, two minutes.

[BUSH]:
I'm absolutely opposed to a national health care plan. I don't want the federal government making decisions for consumers or for providers. I remember what the administration tried to do in 1993. They tried to have a national health care plan. And fortunately, it failed. I trust people, I don't trust the federal government. It's going to be one of the themes you hear tonight. I don't want the federal government
making decisions on behalf of everybody. There is an issue with the uninsured, there sure is. And we have uninsured people in my state. Ours is a big state, a fast-growing state. We share a common border with another nation. But we're providing health care for our people. One thing about insurance, that's a Washington term. The question is, are people getting health care, and we have a strong safety net, and there needs to be a safety net in America. There needs to be more community health clinics where the poor can go get health care. We need a program for the uninsured. They've been talking about it in Washington, D.C. The number of uninsured has now gone up for the past seven years. We need a $2,000 credit, rebate for people, working people that don't have insurance, they can get in the marketplace and start purchasing insurance. We need to have -- allow small businesses to write insurance across jurisdictional lines so small business can afford health care, small restaurants can afford health care. So health care needs to be affordable and available. We have to trust people to make decisions with their lives. In the Medicare reform I talk about it says if you are a senior, you can stay in Medicare if you like it, and that's fine, but we're going to give you other choices to choose if you want to do so, just like they do the federal employees. The people that work in Washington, D.C. for the U.S. Congress or the United States senate. Get a variety of choices to make in their lives. And that's what we ought to do for all people in America.

[LEHRER]:
Yes, sir, sorry.

[GORE]:
Follow-up?

[LEHRER]:
Not right now. Education. These folks submitted 18 questions on education, and the first one is that will be asked on education will go to you, Governor, and asked by Angie Pettig. Angie Pettig, where are you? There she is, Governor, right there. MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: I’ve heard a lot about education and the need to hold teachers and schools accountable, and I certainly agree with that. But as an individual with an educational background, and also a parent, I have seen a lot of instances where the parents are unresponsive to the teachers or flat out uninvolved in their child’s education. How do you intend to not only hold the teachers and schools accountable but also hold parents accountable?

[BUSH]:
Well, you know, it’s hard to make people love one another. I wish I knew the law because I would darn sure sign it. I wish I knew the law that said all of us would be good parents. One of the things the next president must do is to remind people that if we are going to have a responsible period in America, that each of us must love our children with all our heart and all our soul. I happened to believe strong accountability encourages parental involvement, though. I think when you measure and post results on the Internet or in the town newspapers, most parents say wait a minute, my child’s school isn’t doing what I want it to do and, therefore, become involved in education. I recognize there are some who just don’t seem to care. But there are a lot of parents who feel like everything is going well in their child’s school, and all of a sudden they wake up and realize that wait a minute, standards aren’t being met. That’s why I’m so strong for accountability. I believe we ought to measure a lot, three, four, five, six, seven, eighth grade. We do so in my state of Texas. One of the good things we’ve gone in Texas is we have strong
accountability because you can’t cure unless you know. You can’t solve a problem unless you diagnose it. I strongly believe that one of the best things to encourage parental involvement also is to know that the classrooms will be safe and secure. That’s why I support a teacher liability act at the federal level, that says if a teacher or principal upholds reasonable standards of classroom discipline they can’t be sued. They can’t be sued. I think parents will be more involved with education when they know their children’s classrooms are safe and secure as well. I also believe that we need to say to people that if you cannot meet standards, there has to be a consequence. Instead of just comes the soft bigotry of low expectations, that there has to be a consequence. We can’t continue to shuffle children through school. And one of the consequences to allow parents to have different choices.

[LEHRER]:
Governor. Vice president Gore.

[GORE]:
We have huge difference between us on this question. I’d like to start by telling you what my vision is. I see a day in the United States of America where all of our public schools are considered excellent, world class. Where there are no failing schools, where the classrooms are small enough in size, number of students, so that the teacher can spend enough one-on-one time with each student. Now that means recruiting new teachers for the public schools. It means in my plan hiring bonuses to get 100,000 new teachers in the public schools within the next four years. It means also helping local school districts that sometimes find the parents of school age children outvoted on bond issues, to give them some help with interest-free bonding authority so that we can build new schools and modernize
the classrooms. We need to give teachers the training and professional development that they need, including a paid time off to go visit the classroom of a master teacher to pick up some new skills. I want to give every middle-class family a $10,000 a year tax deduction for college tuition so that middle-class families will always be able to send their kids on to college. I want to work for universal free school because we know from all the studies that the youngsters learn, kids learn more in the first few years of life than any where else. Now, I said there was a contrast. Governor Bush is for vouchers, and in his plan he proposes to drain more money, more taxpayer money out of the public schools for private school vouchers than all of the money that he proposes in his entire budget for public schools themselves. And only one in 20 students would be eligible for these vouchers, and they wouldn't even pay the full tuition to private school. I think that's a mistake. I don't think we should give up on the private schools and leave kids trapped in failing schools. I think we -- I think we should make it the number one priority to make our schools the best in the world, all of them.

[LEHRER]:
Governor, what is your position on that?

[BUSH]:
Yeah, I appreciate that. I think any time we end with one of these attacks, it's appropriate to respond. Here's what I think. First of all, vouchers are up to states. If you want to do a voucher program in Missouri, fine. I strongly believe in local control of schools. I'm a governor of state and I don't like it when the federal government tells us what to do. I believe in local control of schools. But here's what I said. I've said to the extent we send federal money on disadvantaged children, we want the schools to show us whether or not the children
are learning. What's unreasonable about that? We expect there to be standards met and we expect there to be measurement. And if we find success we'll praise it. But when we find children trapped in schools that will not change and will not teach, instead of saying oh, this is okay in America just to shuffle poor kids through schools, there has to be a consequence. And the consequence is that federal portion or federal money will go to the parent, so the parent can go to a tutoring program or another public school or another private school. You see, there has to be a consequence. We've got a society that says hey, the status quo is fine, just move them through. And guess who suffers.

[LEHRER]:
What's the harm on that, what's the other side on that?

[GORE]:
Well, the program that he's proposing is not the one that he just.
Described under your plan, Governor Bush, states would be required to pay vouchers to students to match the vouchers so that the federal government would put up. Now, you're -- and the way it would happen is that under his plan, if a school was designated as failing, the kids would be trapped there for another three years and then some of them would get federal vouchers and the state would be forced to match those, that money. Under my plan, if a school is failing, we work with the states to give them the authority and the resources to close down that school and reopen it right away with a new principal, a new faculty, a turn-around team of specialists who know what they're doing. It's based on the plan of Governor Jim Hunt in North Carolina, and it works great.

[LEHRER]:
So no vouchers under -- in a Gore administration?
[GORE]:
If I thought that there was no alternative, then I might feel differently.
   But I have an obligation to fight to make sure there are no failing schools. We have to turn around -- most schools are excellent, but we have to make sure that all of them are.

[LEHRER]:
Andrew Kosberg has a related question on education that's right on this subject. Mr. Kosberg, where are you? And it's for Vice President Gore. MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: Mr. Vice President, in a school district in which I work and in countless others across the nation, we face crumbling school buildings, increased school violence, student apathy, overcrowding, lack of funding, lawsuits, the list goes on. I could mention low teacher pay but I won't. What can you tell me and my fellow American teachers today about your plans for our immediate future?

[GORE]:
What grade do you teach?

[LEHRER]:
That's a violation of your rule, Vice President Gore.

[GORE]:
High school. I mentioned before that the local communities are having a harder time passing bond issues. Traditionally, if you've been involved in a campaign like that, you know that the parents with kids in school are the ones that turn out and vote. It's ironic that there are now -- there is now a smaller percentage of the voters made up of parents with children than ever in American history because of the aging of our population, but at the same time we've got the largest generation of students in public schools ever. More than 90% of America's children go to public schools. And it's the largest
number ever this year and they'll break the record next year and every year for ten years running. We've got to do something about this. And local -- it's not enough to leave it up to the local school districts. They're not able to do it and our future depends upon it. Look, we're in an information age. Our economic future depends upon whether or not our children are going to get the kind of education that lets them go on to college. And again, I want to make it possible for all middle-class families to send their kids to college and more Pell grants for those who are in the lower income groups also, and then I want to make sure that we have job training on top of that and lifelong learning, but it all starts with the public school teachers. My proposal gives $10,000 hiring bonuses for those teachers who are -- who get certified to teach in the areas where they're most needed. Now, accountability, we basically agree on accountability. My plan requires testing of all students. It also requires something that Governor Bush's plan doesn't. It requires testing of all new teachers, including in the subjects that they teach. We have to start treating teachers like the professionals that they are, and give them the respect and the kind of quality of life that will draw more people into teaching because we need a lot more teachers.

[LEHRER]:

Governor Bush, two minutes.

[BUSH]:

When you total up all the federal spending he wants to do, it's the largest increase in federal spending in years. And there's just not going to be enough money. I have been a governor of a big state, I have made education my number one priority. That's what governors ought to do. They ought to say this is the most important thing we do as a
state. The federal government puts about 6% of the money up. They put about, you know, 60% of the strings where you have to fill out the paperwork. I don't know if you have to be a paperwork filler-outer, but most of it's because of the federal government. What I want to do is to send flexibility and authority to the local folks so you can choose what to do with the money. One size does not fit all. I worry about federalizing education if I were you. I believe strongly that the federal government can help, need the funds, Headstart. We need to have accountability. The Vice President's plan does not have annual accountability, third grade, fourth grade, fifth grade. We need to demand on results. I believe strongly in a teacher protection act like I mentioned. I hear from teachers all the time about the lawsuits and the threats, respect in the classroom. Part of it's because you can't -- you can't control the classroom. You can't have a consequence for somebody without fear of getting sued under federal law. So I'm going to ask the Congress to pass a teacher protection act. So I believe in flexibility, I believe in a national reading initiative for local districts to access with K through 2 diagnostic testing, curriculum that works, phonics works, by the way, it needs to be a part of our curriculum. There needs to be flexibility for teacher training and teacher hiring with federal money. The federal government can be a part, but don't fall prey to all this stuff about money here and money there because education is really funded at the local level. 94% comes from the local level.

[LEHRER]:
Vice President Gore, is the governor right when he says that you're proposing the largest federal spending in years?

[GORE]:
Absolutely not. Absolutely not. I'm so glad that I have the chance to
knock that down. Look, the problem is that under Governor Bush’s plan, $1.6 trillion tax cut, mostly to the wealthy, under his own budget numbers, he proposes spending more money for a tax cut just for the wealthiest 1% than all the new money he budgets for education, health care and national defense combined. Now under my plan we’ll balance the budget every year. I’m not just saying this. I’m not just talking. I have helped to balance the budget for the first time in 30 years, paid down the debt. And under my plan, in four years, as the percentage of our gross domestic product, federal spending will be the smallest that it has been in 50 years. One reason is, you know, the third biggest spending item in our budget is interest on the national debt? We get nothing for it. We keep the good faith and credit of the United States. I will pay down the debt every single year until it is eliminated early in the next decade. That gets rid of the third biggest intrusion of the federal government in our economy. Now, because the governor has all this money for a tax cut mostly to the wealthy, there is no money left over, so schools get testing and lawsuit reform and not much else.

[LEHRER]:
Governor, the vice president says you’re wrong.

[BUSH]:
Well, he’s wrong. (LAUGHTER) Just add up all the numbers. It’s three times bigger than what President Clinton proposed. The Senate Budget Committee --

[LEHRER]:
Three times -- excuse me, three times bigger than what President Clinton proposed?

[GORE]:
That was in an ad, Jim, that was knocked down by the journalists who
analyzed the ad and said it was misleading.

[BUSH]:
My turn?

[LEHRER]:
Yes, sir.

[BUSH]:
Forget the journalists. He proposed more than Walter Mondale and Michael Dukakis combined. This is a big spender. And you ought to be proud of it, it’s part of his record. We just have a different philosophy. Let me talk about tax relief. If you pay taxes, you ought to get tax relief. The Vice President believes only the right people ought to get tax relief. I don’t think that’s the role of the president to pick you’re right and you’re not right. I think if you’re going to have tax relief, everybody ought to get it. And therefore, wealthy people are going to get it. But the top 1% will end up paying one-third of the taxes in America and they get one-fifth of the benefits. And that’s because we structured the plan so that six million additional American families pay no taxes. If you’re a family of four making $50,000 in Missouri, you get a 50% cut in your federal income taxes. What I’ve done is set priorities and funded them. And there’s extra money. And I believe the people who pay the bills ought to get some money back. It’s a difference of opinion. He wants to grow the government and I trust you with your own money. I wish we could spend an hour talking about trusting people. It’s just the right position to take.

[GORE]:
Can we take the time --

[LEHRER]:
Governor -- yeah, hold on one second here, thought. The governor just
reversed the thing. What do you say specifically to what the vice president said tonight, he said it many, many times, that your tax cut benefits the top 1% of the wealthiest Americans, and you've heard what he said.

[BUSH]:
Of course it does. If you pay taxes, you are going to get a benefit. People who pay taxes will get tax relief.

[LEHRER]:
All right. Why shouldn't they?

[BUSH]:
Let me finish. Under my plan, if you make -- the top -- the wealthy people pay 62% of the taxes today. Afterwards they pay 64%. This is a fair plan. You know why? Because the tax code is unfair for people at the bottom end of the economic ladder. If you're a single mother making $22,000 a year today and you're trying to raise two children, for every additional dollar you earn you pay a higher marginal rate on that dollar than someone making $200,000, and that's not right. So I want to do something about that.

[LEHRER]:
Vice President Gore?

[GORE]:
Yeah, look. Look, this isn't about Governor Bush, it's not about me. It is about you. And I want to come back to something I said before. If you want somebody who believes that we were better off eight years ago than we are now and that we ought to go back to the kind of policies that we had back then, emphasizing tax cuts mainly for the wealthy, here is your man. If you want somebody who will fight for you and who will fight to have middle-class tax cuts, then I am your man. I want to be. Now, I doubt anybody here makes more than
$330,000 a year. I won't ask you, but if you do, you're in the top 1%.

[LEHRER]:
It would be a violation of the rules. They couldn't --

[GORE]:
I'm not going to ask them. But if everyone here in this audience was dead on in the middle of the middle-class, then the tax cuts for every single one of you all added up would be less than the tax cut his plan would give to just one member of that top wealthiest 1%. Now you judge for yourselves whether or not that's fair.

[LEHRER]:
Quick, and then we're moving on.

[BUSH]:
Good. 50 million Americans get no tax relief under his plan.

[GORE]:
That's not right.

[BUSH]:
You may not be one of them, you're just not one of the right people. And secondly, we've had enough fighting. It's time to unite. You talk about eight years? In eight years they haven't gotten anything done on Medicare, on Social Security, a patient's bill of rights. It's time to get something done.

[GORE]:
Hey, I've got to answer that, Jim.

[LEHRER]:
All right.

[GORE]:
Medicare -- I cast the tie-breaking vote to add 26 years to the life of Medicare. It was due to go bankrupt in 1999 and that 50 million figure again, the newspapers -- I said -- you said forget the
journalists, but they are the keepers of the score card and whether or not you're using facts that aren't right. And that fact is just not right.

[LEHRER]:
Speaking of keepers of the score card, that's what I'm trying to do here Mr. Vice President and Governor Bush. We're gonna move on. We're gonna have to move on. All right, there were 12 questions on foreign and military matters, and the first one that we're going to ask will be directed to you, Governor Bush. And David Norwood is going to ask it. Mr. Norwood, where are you? There you are. MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: What would you make -- what would make you the best candidate in office during the Middle East crisis?

[BUSH]:
I've been a leader. I've been a person who has to set a clear vision and convince people to follow. I've got a strategy for the Middle East. And first let me say that our nation now needs to speak with one voice during this time, and I applaud the president for working hard to diffuse tensions. Our nation needs to be credible and strong. When we say we're somebody's friend, everybody has got to believe it. Israel is our friend and we'll stand by Israel. We need to reach out to modern Arab nations as well. To build coalitions to keep the peace. I also need -- the next leader needs to be patient. We can't put the Middle East peace process on our timetable. It's got to be on the timetable of the people that we're trying to bring to the peace table. We can't dictate the terms of peace, which means that you have to be steady. You can't worry about polls or focus groups. You've got to have a clear vision. That's what a leader does. A leader also understands that the United States must be strong to keep the peace. Saddam Hussein still is a threat in the Middle East. Our
coalition against Saddam is unraveling. Sanctions are loosened. The man who may be developing weapons of mass destruction, we don't know because inspectors aren't in. So to answer your question, it requires a clear vision, a willingness to stand by our friends, and the credibility for people both friend and foe to understand when America says something, we mean it.

[LEHRER]:
Vice President Gore?

[GORE]:
I see a future when the world is at peace, with the United States of America promoting the values of democracy and human rights and freedom all around the world. Even in Iran they have had an election that began to bring about some change. We stand for those values and we have to be willing to assert them. Right now our military is the strongest in the entire history of the world. I will -- I pledge to you I will do whatever is necessary to make sure that it stays that way. Now, what can I bring to that challenge? When I was a young man, my father was a senator opposed to the Vietnam War. When I graduated from college, there were plenty of fancy ways to get out of going and being a part of that. I went and I volunteered, and I went to Vietnam. I didn't do the most or run the greatest risk by a long shot, but I learned what it was like to be an enlisted man in the United States Army. In the Congress, in the House of Representatives, I served on the House Intelligence Committee and I worked hard to learn the subject of nuclear arms control and how we can diffuse these tensions and deal with non-proliferation and deal with the problems of terrorism and these new weapons of mass destruction. Look, we're gonna face some serious new challenges in the next four years. I've worked on that long and hard. When I went
to the United States Senate, I asked for an assignment to the Armed Services Committee. And while I was there I worked on a bipartisan basis, as I did in the House, I worked with former President Reagan on the modernization of our strategic weaponry. In the Senate I was one of only ten Democrats, along with Senator Joe Lieberman, to support Governor Bush's dad in the Persian Gulf War Resolution. And for the last eight years I've served on the National Security Council. Can I say just one other thing here?

[LEHRER]:
No, sir. We'll get that -- I'm gonna -- the next question is to you.

[GORE]:
Fine, I'll wait.

[LEHRER]:
It's a related -- it's a related question that is going to be asked by Kenneth Allen. Mr. Allen?

[GORE]:
I think he gets a -- oh, I'm sorry, you're right, go ahead.

[LEHRER]:
Mr. Allen, right there. MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: Today our military forces are stretched thinner and doing more than they have ever done before during peacetime. I would like to know what you are -- I think we would all like to know what you as president would do to ensure proper resourcing for the current mission and/or more selectively choosing the time and place that our forces will be used around the world.

[GORE]:
Thank you, sir. Just to finish briefly, I started to say that for the last eight years I've been on the National Security Council. Last week I
broke up -- I suspended campaigning for two days, or parts of two
days, to go back and participate in the meetings that charted the
President's summit meeting that he just returned from earlier today.
And our team of -- our country's team over there did a great job. It's
a difficult situation. The United States has to be strong in order to
make sure that we can help promote peace and security and
stability. And that means keeping our military strong. Now, I said
earlier that we are the strongest military, but we need to continue
improving readiness and making sure that our military personnel are
adequately paid and that the combination of their pay and their
benefits and their retirement as veterans is comparable to the stiff
competition that's coming in this strong economy from the private
sector. And I have supported the largest pay raise in many a year,
and I support another one now. I also support modernization of our
strategic and tactical weaponry. The governor has proposed skipping
a generation of technology. I think that would be a mistake, because
I think one of the ways we've been able to be so successful in Kosovo
and Bosnia and Haiti and in other places is by having the
 technological edge. You know, we won that conflict in Kosovo
without losing a single human life in combat, a single American life
in combat. Now, readiness. The trends before we -- before I got my
current job were on the decline, the number of divisions were
reduced. I argued that we should reverse that trend and take it back
up. And I'm happy to tell you that we have. Now, in my budget for
the next ten years I propose $100 billion for this purpose. The
governor proposes $45 billion. I propose more than twice as much
because I think it's needed.

[LEHRER]:

Governor Bush, two minutes.
[BUSH]:
If this were a spending contest, I would come in second. I readily admit
I'm not going to grow the size of the federal government like he is.
Your question was deployment. It must be in the national interests,
must be in our vital interests whether we ever send troops. The
mission must be clear. Soldiers must understand why we're going.
The force must be strong enough so that the mission can be
accomplished. And the exit strategy needs to be well-defined. I'm
concerned that we're overdeployed around the world. See, I think the
mission has somewhat become fuzzy. Should I be fortunate enough
to earn your confidence, the mission of the United States military
will be to be prepared and ready to fight and win war. And therefore
prevent war from happening in the first place. There may be some
moments when we use our troops as peacekeepers, but not often.
The Vice President mentioned my view of long-term for the military. I
want to make sure the equipment for our military is the best it can
possibly be, of course. But we have an opportunity -- we have an
opportunity to use our research and development capacities, the
great technology of the United States, to make our military lighter,
harder to find, more lethal. We have an opportunity, really, if you
think about it, if we're smart and have got a strategic vision and a
leader who understands strategic planning, to make sure that we
change the terms of the battlefield of the future so we can keep the
peace. This is a peaceful nation, and I intend to keep the peace.
Spending money is one thing. But spending money without a
strategic plan can oftentimes be wasted. First thing I'm going to do is
ask the Secretary of Defense to develop a plan so we are making sure
we're not spending our money on political projects, but on projects to
make sure our soldiers are well-paid, well-housed, and have the best
equipment in the world.

[LEHRER]:
Governor Bush, another kind of gun question. It will be asked by Robert Lutz. Mr. Lutz?

MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: Governor Bush --

[BUSH]:
Yes, sir. MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: We would just like to know what is your opposition to the Brady Handgun bill?

[BUSH]:
I'm sorry, I didn't hear that. MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: We would like to know why you object to the Brady Handgun bill, if you do object to it. Because in a recent TV ad it showed that the National Rifle Association says that if you are elected, that they will be working out of your office.

[BUSH]:
I don't think the National Rifle Association ran that ad. But let me just tell you my position on guns in general, sir, if you don't mind.

[LEHRER]:
Excuse me, I'm not sure he's finished with his question.

[BUSH]:
I'm sorry. MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: That kind of bothers me when I see an ad like that. I want you to explain that ad to me.

[BUSH]:
Well, I don't think I ran the ad. I think somebody who doesn't want me to be president might have run that ad. That wasn't my ad. I think it might have been one of my opponent's ads. Here is what I believe, sir. I believe law-abiding citizens ought to be allowed to protect themselves and their families. I believe that we ought to keep guns out of the hands of people that shouldn't have them. That's why I'm for instant background checks at gun shows, I'm for trigger locks, I
think that makes sense. Matter of fact, we distributed free trigger locks in the State of Texas so that people can get them and put them on their guns to make their guns more safe. I think we ought to raise the age at which juveniles can have a gun. But I also believe strongly that we need to enforce laws on the books that the best way to make sure that we keep our society safe and secure is to hold people accountable for breaking the law. If we catch somebody illegally selling a gun, there needs to be a consequence. If we keep somebody -- you know, illegally using a gun, there needs to be a consequence. Enforcement of law, and the federal government can help. There is a great program called Project Exile in Richmond, Virginia, where we focused federal taxpayers' money and federal prosecutors and went after people who were illegally using guns. To me that's how you make society the safest it can be. And so, yeah, sometimes I agree with some of these groups in Washington and sometimes I don't. I'm a pretty independent thinker. The one thing I'm for is a safe society. And I'm for enforcing laws on the books. And that's what is going to happen should I earn your confidence.

[LEHRER]:
Vice President Gore?

[GORE]:
Well, it was not one of my ads, either, Governor. But I am familiar with the statement, and it was made by one of the top-ranking officials of that organization. Let me tell you my position. I think that some common sense gun safety measures are certainly needed with the flood of cheap handguns that have sometimes been working their way into the hands of the wrong people. But all of my proposals are focused on that problem, gun safety. None of my proposals would have any effect on hunters, or sportsmen, or people who use rifles.
They're aimed at the real problem. Let's make our schools safe, let's make our neighborhoods safe. Let's have a three-day waiting period, cooling off, so we can have a background check to make sure that criminals and people who really shouldn't have guns don't get them. But I would like to use my remaining time on this exchange, Jim, to respond to an exchange that took place just a moment ago. Because a couple of times the governor has said that I am for a bigger government. Governor, I'm not. And let me tell you what the record shows. For the last eight years I have had the challenge of running the streamlining program called Reinventing Government. And if there are any federal employees in this group, you know what that means. The federal government has been reduced in size by more than 300,000 people. And it's now the smallest number that we have had since the -- the smallest in size since John Kennedy's administration. During the last five years, Texas's government has gone up in size. Federal government has gone down, Texas's government has gone up. Now, my plan for the future, I see a time when we have smaller, smarter government where you don't have to wait in line because you can get services online cheaper, better, faster. We can do that.

[LEHRER]:

Steve Luecker has a question, and it is for Vice President Gore. Mr. Luecker? There you are. MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: Vice President Gore. The family farms are disappearing and having a hard time even in the current positive economic environment. What steps would you or your administration take on agricultural policy developments to protect the family farms for this multi-functional service they perform?

[GORE]:
We've got a bumper crop this year. But that's the good news. You know what the bad news is that follows on that. The prices are low. In the last several years, the so-called Freedom To Farm Law has, in my view, been mostly a failure. I want to change many of its provisions. Now, many here who are not involved in farming don't -- won't follow this, so just forgive me. Because the 2% of the country that is involved in farming is important because the rest of us wouldn't eat except for them. And you guys have been having a hard time, and I want to fight for you. I want to change those provisions. I want to restore a meaningful safety net. And I think that you pointed the way in your comments, because when you say there are multiple things accomplished by farmers, you're specifically including conservation and protection of the environment. And yes, farmers are the first environmentalists. And when they decide not to plow a field that is vulnerable to soil erosion, that may cost them a little money, but it helps the environment. I think that we ought to have an expanded conservation reserve program. And I think that the environmental benefits that come from sound management of the land ought to represent a new way for farmers to get some income that will enable them -- enable you to make sensible choices in crop rotation, and when you leave the land fallow and the rest. Now, I'll go beyond that and say I think we need much more focus on rural economic development programs. I see a time when the Internet-based activities are more available in the rural areas and where the extra source of income that farm families used to have from shoe factories is replaced by an extra source of income from working in the information economy. So we need to do a lot of things, but we ought to start with a better safety net.

[LEHRER]:
Governor Bush, two minutes.

[BUSH]:

I would like our farmers feeding the world. We're the best producers in the world, and I want -- I want the farmers feeding the world. We need to open up markets. Exports are down, and every time an export number goes down, it hurts the farmer. I want the next president to have fast track negotiating authority to open up markets around the world with the best and the most efficient farmers. I don't want to use food as a diplomatic weapon from this point forward. We shouldn’t be using food. It hurts the farmers. It's not the right thing to do. I'm for value-added processing. We need more work on value-added processing. You take the raw product you produce, I presume you're a farmer, off your farm, and you convert it. Value-added processing is important. I'm for research and development. Spending research and development money so that we can use our technological base to figure out new uses for farm products. I'm for getting rid of the death tax, completely getting rid of the death tax. One reason family farmers are forced to sell early is because of the death tax. This is a bad tax. The President shouldn't have vetoed that bill. It's a tax that taxes people twice. It penalizes the family farmer. So should I be fortunate enough to earn your vote, I also understand -- I want to open up markets, but I also understand that farming is a part of our national security. I'm from a big farm state. We're the second biggest state -- farming state in the country. And I hear from my farmers and friends all the time. The Vice President is right, by the way. Every day is earth day if you own the land. I like the policies that will encourage farmers to put -- set aside land as well for conservation purposes. Thank you.

[LEHRER]:
A quick thing on the inheritance tax. There is a difference between the two of you on this. Vice President Gore?

[GORE]:
Yeah. I'm for a massive reform of the estate tax or the death tax. And under the plan that I've proposed, 80% of all family farms will be completely exempt from the estate tax. And the vast majority of all family businesses would be completely exempt, and all of the others would have sharply reduced. So 80% -- now the problem with completely eliminating it goes back to the wealthiest 1%. The amount of money that has to be raised in taxes for middle-class families to make up for completely eliminating that on the very wealthiest, the billionaires, that would be an extra heavy burden on middle-class families. And so let's do it for most all, but not completely eliminate it for the very top.

[LEHRER]:
What's the case for doing that, Governor?

[BUSH]:
Eliminating the death tax.

[LEHRER]:
Completely.

[BUSH]:
Because people shouldn't be taxed twice on their assets. It's either unfair for some or unfair for all. Again, this is just a difference of opinion. If you're from Washington, you want to pick and choose winners. I don't think that's the role of the president. I think if you're going to have tax relief, everybody benefits. Secondly, I think your plan -- a lot of fine print in your plan, Mr. Vice President, with all due respect. It is -- I'm not so sure 80% of the people get the death tax. I know this, 100% will get it if I'm the president. I just don't think it's fair to
tax people's assets twice regardless of your status. It's a fairness issue. It's an issue of principle, not politics.

[LEHRER]:
New issue. New issue. And the question will be asked by Joyce Cleamer of Governor Bush. Joyce Cleamer? There you are.

[BUSH]:
Hi, Joyce. MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: Hi, Governor. I'm very concerned about the morality of our country now. TV, movies, the music that our children are, you know, barraged with every day. And I want to know if there's anything that can be worked out with the -- Hollywood, or whoever, to help get rid of some of this bad language and whatever, you know. It's just bringing the country down. And our children are very important to us and we're concerned about their education at school. We should be concerned about their education at home, also. Thank you.

[BUSH]:
Appreciate that question. Laura and I are proud parents of teenage girls, twin daughters, and I know what you're saying. Government ought to stand on the side of parents. Parents are teaching their children right from wrong, and the message oftentimes gets undermined by the popular culture. You bet there's things that government can do. We can work with the entertainment industry to provide family hour. We can have filters on Internets where public money is spent. There ought to be filters in public libraries and filters in public schools so if kids get on the Internet, there is not going to be pornography or violence coming in. I think we ought to have character education in our schools. I know that doesn't directly talk about Hollywood, but it does reinforce the values you're teaching. Greatly expand character education funding so that public schools will teach children values,
values which have stood the test of time. There's afterschool money available. I think that afterschool money ought to be available for faith-based programs and charitable programs that exist because somebody has heard the call to love a neighbor like you would like to be loved yourself. That will help reinforce the values that parents teach at home as well. Ours is a great land, and one of the reasons why is because we're free. And so I don’t support censorship. But I do believe that we ought to talk plainly to the Hollywood moguls and people who produce this stuff and explain the consequences. I think we need to have rating systems that are clear. I happen to like the idea of having technology for the TV, easy for parents to use so you can tune out these programs you don't want in your house. I'll remind mothers and dads the best weapon is the off/on button, and paying attention to your children, and eating dinner with them and being -- I'm sorry.

[GORE]:
My turn.

[LEHRER]:
Vice President Gore.

[GORE]:
I care a lot about this. It's not just movies; television, video games, music, the Internet. Parents now feel like you have to compete with the mass culture in order to raise your kids with the values that you want them to have. Tipper and I have four children. And God bless them, every one of them decided on their own to come here this evening. I don't want to embarrass our oldest daughter. She and her husband made us grandparents almost a year-and-a-half ago, and yet if she'll forgive me, when she was little, she brought a record home that had some awful lyrics in it and Tipper hit the ceiling. And
that launched a campaign to try to get the record companies to put ratings that -- warning labels for parents. And I’m so proud of what she accomplished in getting them on there. I’ve been involved myself in negotiating and helping to move along the negotiations with the Internet service providers to get a parents’ protection page every time 95% of the pages come up. And a feature that allows parents to automatically check with one click what sites your kids have visited lately. You know, some parents are worried about those filters, that you will have to ask your kids how to put them on there. But if you can check up on them, that’s real power. And recently the Federal Trade Commission pointed out that some of these entertainment companies have warned parents that the material is inappropriate for children, and then they’ve turned around behind the backs of the parents and advertised that same adult material directly to children. That is an outrage. Joe Lieberman and I gave them six months to clean up their act. And if they don’t do it, we’re gonna ask for tougher authority in the hands of the FTC on the false and deceptive advertising. I’ll tell you this, I want to do something about this. Respect the First Amendment, but I will do something to help you raise your kids without that garbage.

[LEHRER]:
All right. Vice President Gore, the next question is for you, and it will be asked by Steven Koosmann. Mr. Koosmann, where are you, sir? You're right behind me as well. There we go.

[GORE]:
Right next to the left. MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: It seems that when we hear about issues of this campaign, it’s usually Medicare, Social Security or prescription drugs. As a college professor, I hear a lot of apathy amongst young people who feel that there are no issues
directed to them. And they don't plan to vote. How do you address that?

[GORE]:

We've got to change it. I spend a good deal of time talking to young people, and in my standard speech out there on the stump I usually end my speech by saying, I want to ask you for something and I want to direct it especially to the young people in the audience. And I want to tell you what I tell them. Sometimes people who are very idealistic and have great dreams, as young people do, are apt to stay at arm's length from the political process because they think their good hearts might be brittle, and if they invest their hopes and allow themselves to believe, then they're gonna be let down and disappointed. But thank goodness we've always had enough people who have been willing in every generation to push past the fear of a broken heart and become deeply involved in forming a more perfect union. We're America, and we believe in our future and we know we have the ability to shape our future. Now, we've got to address one of the biggest threats to our democracy. And that is the current campaign financing system. And I know they say it doesn't rank anywhere on the polls. I don't believe that's a fair measure. I'm telling you, I will make it the -- I will make the McCain-Feingold Campaign Finance Reform bill the very first measure that I send to the Congress as president. Governor Bush opposes it. I wish that he would consider changing his mind on that. Because I think that the special interests have too much power, and we need to give our democracy back to the American people. Let me tell you why. Those issues you mentioned, Social Security, prescription drugs, the big drug companies are against the prescription drug proposal that I've made. The HMOs are against the patient's rights bill, the Dingle-
Norwood bill that I support. The big oil companies are against the measures to get more energy independence and renewable fuel. They ought to have their voices heard, but they shouldn't have a big megaphone that drowns out the American people. We need campaign finance reform and we need to shoot straight with young and old alike and tell them what the real choices are. And we can renew and rekindle the American spirit and make our future what our founders dreamed it could be. We can.

[LEHRER]:
Governor Bush, two minutes.

[BUSH]:
Tell you what I hear. A lot of people are sick and tired of the bitterness in Washington, D.C. and therefore they don't want any part of politics. They look at Washington and see people pointing fingers and casting blame and saying one thing and doing another. There's a lot of young folks saying, you know, why do I want to be involved with this mess? And what I think needs to happen in order to encourage the young to become involved is to shoot straight, is to set aside the partisan differences, and set an agenda that will make sense. Medicare, I know you talked about it, but Medicare is relevant for all of us, young and old alike. We better get it right now. Tax reform is relevant for old and young alike. I don't think it's the issues that turn kids off. I think it's the tone. I think it's the attitude. I think it's a cynicism in Washington and it doesn't have to be that way. Before I decided to run, I had to resolve two issues in my mind. One, could our family endure all this business. And I came to the conclusion that our love was strong enough to be able to do it. The other was could an administration change the tone in Washington, D.C. And I believe the answer is yes, otherwise I wouldn't be asking for your
vote. That's what happened in Texas. We worked together. There is a man here in this audience named Hugo Berlanga. He is the chairman of the health committee. He came here for a reason, to tout our record on health in Texas. He's a Democrat. I didn't care whether he was a Republican or Democrat. What I cared about is could we work together. That's what Washington, D.C. needs. And finally, sir, to answer your question, you need somebody in office who will tell the truth. That's the best way to get people back in the system.

[LEHRER]:
Governor Bush, Norma Curby has the next question. And it's for you. Norma Curby, where are you?

[BUSH]:
Hi, Norma. MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: Hi. How will your administration address diversity, inclusiveness, and what role will affirmative action play in your overall plan?

[BUSH]:
I've had a record of bringing people from all walks of life into my administration, and my administration is better off for it in Texas. I'm going to find people that want to serve their country. But I want a diverse administration, I think it's important. I've worked hard in the State of Texas to make sure our institutions reflect the state with good, smart policy. Policy that rejects quotas. I don't like quotas. Quotas tend to pit one group of people against another. Quotas are bad for America. It's not the way America is all about. But policies that give people a helping hand so they can help themselves. For example, in our State of Texas I worked with the legislature, both Republicans and Democrats, to pass a law that said if you come in the top 10% of your high school class, you're automatically admitted
to one of our higher institutions of learning, college. And as a result, our universities are now more diverse. It was a smart thing to do. What I called it, I labeled it affirmative access. I think the contracting business in government can help. Not with quotas, but help meet a goal of ownership of small businesses, for example. The contracts need to be smaller, the agencies need to be -- need to recruit and to work hard to find people to bid on the state contracts. I think we can do that in a way that represents what America is all about, which is equal opportunity and an opportunity for people to realize their potential. So to answer your question, I support, I guess the way to put it, is affirmative access. I'll have an administration that will make you proud. Thank you.

[LEHRER]:
Vice President Gore?

[GORE]:
I believe in this goal and effort with all my heart. I believe that our future as a nation depends upon whether or not we can break down these barriers that have been used to pit group against group, and bring our people together. How do you do it? Well, you establish respect for differences. You don't ignore differences. It's all too easy for somebody in the majority in the population to say oh, we're just all the same, without an understanding of the different life experience that you've had, that others have had. Once you have that understanding and mutual respect, then we can transcend the differences and embrace the highest common denominator of the American spirit. I don't know what affirmative access means. I do know what affirmative action means. I know the governor is against it, and I know that I'm for it. I know what a hate crime statute pending at the national level is all about in the aftermath of James
Byrd's death. I'm for that proposed law, the governor is against it. I know what it means to have a commitment to diversity. I am part of an administration that has the finest record on diversity. And incidentally, an excellent -- I mean, I think our success over the last eight years has not been in spite of diversity but because of it. Because we're able to draw on the wisdom and experience from different parts of the society that hadn't been tapped in the same way before. And incidentally, Mel Carnahan in Missouri had the finest record on diversity in any governor in the entire history of the State of Missouri. And I want to honor that among his other achievements here. Now, I just believe that what we have to do is enforce the civil rights laws. I'm against quotas. This is, with all due respect, Governor, that's a red herring. Affirmative action isn't quotas. I'm against quotas, they're illegal. They're against the American way. Affirmative action means that you take extra steps to acknowledge the history of discrimination and injustice and prejudice and bring all people into the American dream because it helps everybody, not just those who are directly benefitting.

[LEHRER]:
Governor, what is your -- are you opposed to affirmative action?
[BUSH]:
If affirmative action means quotas, I'm against it. If affirmative action means what I just described what I'm for, then I'm for it. You heard what I was for. The vice president keeps saying I'm against things. You heard what I was for, and that's what I support.

[LEHRER]:
What about -- Mr. Vice President, you heard what he said.
[GORE]:
He said if affirmative action means quotas, he's against it. Affirmative
action doesn't mean quotas. Are you for it without quotas?

[BUSH]:
I may not be for your version, Mr. Vice President, but I’m for what I just described to the lady.

[GORE]:
Are you for what the Supreme Court says is a constitutional way of having affirmative action?

[LEHRER]:
Let’s go on to another --

[GORE]:
I think that speaks for itself.

[BUSH]:
No, it doesn't speak for itself, Mr. Vice President, it speaks for the fact that there are certain rules in this that we all agree to, but evidently rules don’t mean anything.

[LEHRER]:
The question is for you, Vice President Gore, and Lisa Kee will ask it. Lisa Kee, where are you? There we go, sorry. MEMBER OF AUDIENCE:
How will your tax proposals affect me as a middle-class, 34-year-old single person with no dependents?

[GORE]:
If you make less than $60,000 a year and you decide to invest $1,000 in a savings account, you’ll get a tax credit, which means in essence that the federal government will match your $1,000 with another $1,000. If you make less than $30,000 a year and you put $500 in a savings account, the federal government will match it with $1500. If you make more than $60,000 and up to 100 you’ll still get a match, but not as generous. You’ll get an access to life-long learning and education, help with tuition if you want to get a new skill or training.
If you want to purchase health insurance, you will get help with that. If you want to participate in some of the dynamic changes that are going on in our country, you will get specific help in doing that. If you are part of the -- of the bottom 20% or so of wage earners, then you will get an expanded earned income tax credit. Now, the tax relief that I propose is directed specifically at middle-income individuals and families. And if you have a -- if you have an elderly parent or grandparent who needs long-term care, then you will get help with that. $3,000 tax credit to help your expenses in taking care of a loved one who needs long-term care.

[LEHRER]:
Governor Bush?
[BUSH]:
Let me just say the first -- this business about the entitlement he tried to describe about savings, you know, matching savings here and matching savings there, fully-funded it’s gonna cost a whole lot of money, a lot more than we have. You're going to get a tax refund in my plan. You're not going to be targeted in or targeted out. Everybody that pays taxes is going to get tax relief. If you take care of an elderly in your home, you're going to get the personal exemption increased. I think also what you need to think about is not the immediate, but what about Medicare? You get a plan that will include prescription drugs, a plan that will give you options. Now, I hope people understand that Medicare today is important, but it doesn't keep up with the new medicines. If you're a Medicare person, on Medicare, you don't get the new procedures. You're stuck in a time warp in many ways. So it will be a modern Medicare system that trusts you to make a variety of options for you. You're going to live in a peaceful world. It will be a world of peace because we're
going to have a clear sight of foreign policy based upon a strong military and a mission that stands by our friends. A mission that doesn’t try to be all things to all people. A judicious use of the military which will help keep the peace. You'll live in a world, hopefully, that is more educated so it’s less likely you’ll be harmed in your neighborhood. See, an educated child is one much more likely to be hopeful and optimistic. You’ll be in a world in which fits into my philosophy. The harder you work, the more you can keep. It’s the American way. Government shouldn’t be a heavy hand. It's what the federal government does to you. It should be a helping hand, and tax relief and the proposals I just described should be a good helping hand.

[LEHRER]:
Governor, next question is for you, and Leo Anderson will ask it. Mr. Anderson. You want a mike? MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: In one of the last debates held, the subject of capital punishment came up, and in your response to the question, you seemed overly joyed and as a matter of fact proud that Texas led the nation in the execution of prisoners. Sir, did I misread your response and are you really, really proud of the fact that Texas is number one in executions?

[BUSH]:
No, I'm not proud of that. The death penalty is a very serious business, Leo. It's an issue that good people obviously disagree on. I take my job seriously. And if you think I was proud of it, I think you misread me, I do. I was sworn to uphold the laws of my state. During the course of the campaign in 1994 I was asked do you support the death penalty. I said I did if administered fairly and justly. Because I believe it saves lives, Leo, I do. If it’s administered swiftly, justly and fairly, it saves lives. One of the things that happens when you’re a
governor, at least oftentimes you have to make tough decisions. You can't let public persuasion sway you, because the job is to enforce the law. And that's what I did, sir. There have been some tough cases come across my desk. Some of the hardest moments since I've been the governor of the State of Texas is to deal with those cases. But my job is to ask two questions, sir. Is the person guilty of the crime? And did the person have full access to the courts of law? And I can tell you looking at you right now, in all cases those answers were affirmative. I'm not proud of any record. I'm proud of the fact that violent crime is down in the State of Texas. I'm proud of the fact that we hold people accountable. But I'm not proud of any record, sir, I'm not.

[LEHRER]:
Vice President Gore?

[GORE]:
I support the death penalty. I think that it has to be administered not only fairly with attention to things like DNA evidence, which I think should be used in all capital cases, but also with very careful attention. If, for example, somebody confesses to the crime and somebody is waiting on death row, there has to be alertness to say wait a minute, have we got the wrong guy? If the wrong guy is put to death, then that's a double tragedy. Not only has an innocent person been executed, but the real perpetrator of the crime has not been held accountable for it. And in some cases may be still at large. But I support the death penalty in the most heinous cases.

[LEHRER]:
Do both of you believe the death penalty actually deters crime? Governor?

[BUSH]:
I do. It's the only reason to be for it. Let me finish, sir. I don't think you should support the death penalty to seek revenge. I don't think that's right. I think the reason to support the death penalty is because it saves other people's lives.

[GORE]:
I think it is a deterrent. I know that's a controversial view, but I do believe it's a deterrent.

[LEHRER]:
Next question is for you, Vice President Gore, and Thomas Fischer will ask it. Mr. Fischer? MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: Yes. My 6th grade class at St. Claire's School wanted to ask of all these promises you guys are making and all the pledges, will you keep them when you're in office? (LAUGHTER)

[GORE]:
Yes. (LAUGHTER) I am a person who keeps promises. And, you know, we've heard a lot about -- from the governor about not much being done in the last eight years, as if the promises that I made eight years ago have not been kept. I think the record shows otherwise. We have gone from the biggest deficits eight years ago to the biggest surpluses in history today. Instead of high unemployment, we now have the lowest African-American unemployment, the lowest Latino unemployment ever measured. 22 million new jobs, very low unemployment nationally. Instead of ballooning the debt and multiplying it four times over, we have seen the debt actually begun to be paid down. Here are some promises that I'll make to you now. I will balance the budget every year. I will pay down the debt every year. I will give middle-class Americans tax cuts, meaningful ones. And I will invest in education, health care, protecting the environment and retirement security. We both made promises in this
campaign. I promise you I will keep mine. Let me tell you about one of the governor's. He has promised a trillion dollars out of the Social Security Trust Fund for young working adults to invest and save on their own. But he's promised seniors that their Social Security benefits will not be cut, and he's promised the same trillion dollars to them. So this is a show me state. Reminds me of the line from the movie, "Show me the money." Which one of those promises will be keep and which will you break, Governor?

[LEHRER]:
Governor Bush.

[BUSH]:
Thank you for your question. (LAUGHTER) I -- there's an old high school debating trick, which is to answer something and then attack your opponent at the end. You asked about promises. You were promised that Medicare would be reformed, and that Social Security would be reformed. You were promised a middle-class tax cut in 1992. It didn't happen. There's too much bitterness in Washington. There's too much wrangling. It's time to have a fresh start. One of the reasons I was successful as the governor of Texas is because I didn't try to be all things to all people. When I campaigned in a race, a lot of folks didn't think I could win including, by the way, my mother. (LAUGHTER) I said I'd do four things; tort reform, education reform, welfare reform and juvenile justice reform. And I won. And I had the will of the people in my state behind me. And then I brought folks together to get it done. And that's what we need, I think, in this election. To me that's what it's all about. I'm sure your 6th grade kids are listening and saying, these guys will say anything to get elected. But there's a record, and that's what I hope people look at. One of my promises is going to be Social Security reform, and you
bet, we need to take a trillion dollars out of that $2.4 trillion surplus. Now remember, Social Security revenue exceeds expenses up until 2015. People are going to get paid. But if you're a younger worker, if you're younger, you better hope this country thinks differently, otherwise you're gonna be faced with huge payroll taxes or reduced benefits. And you bet we're gonna take a trillion dollars of your own money and let you invest it under safe guidelines so you get a better rate of return on the money than the paltry 2% that the federal government gets for you today. That's one of my promises. But it's gonna require people to bring both Republicans and Democrats together to get it done. That's what it requires. There was a chance to get this done. It was a bipartisan approach, but it's been rejected. I'm going to bring them together.

[LEHRER]:
Both of you -- both of you on this subject. There are other questions that also go to this skepticism, not necessarily about you, but all people in politics. Why is that?

[GORE]:
Well, first of all, Jim, I would like to respond to what the governor just said. Because the trillion dollars that has been promised to young people has also been promised to older people. And you cannot keep both promises. If you're in your mid-40's under the governor's plan, Social Security will be bankrupt by the time you retire, if he takes it out of the Social Security Trust Fund. Under my plan it will be -- its solvency will be extended until you're 100. Now that is the difference. And the governor may not want to answer that question, he may want to call it a high school debating trick, but let me tell you this. This election is not about debating tricks, it is about your future. The reason Social Security -- he says it gets 2%. You know, it's not a
bank account that just pays back money that's invested. It is also used to give your mothers and fathers the Social Security checks that they live on. If you take a trillion dollars out of that Social Security Trust Fund, how are the checks going to be -- how are you going to keep faith with the seniors? Now let me come directly to your question.

[LEHRER]:
We have to go to the closing statements and --

[BUSH]:
Well, can I answer that? One reason people are skeptical is because people don't answer the questions they've been asked. The trillion dollars comes out of the surplus so that you can invest some of your own money. There's just a difference of opinion. I want workers to have their own assets. It's who you trust, government or people.

[LEHRER]:
All right. Now we're going to go to closing statements. Vice President Gore, you're first.

[GORE]:
Thank you very much, Jim, and I'll begin by answering your questions -- your last question. I believe that a lot of people are skeptical about people in politics today because we have seen a time of great challenge for our country. Since the assassination of our best leaders in the '60's, since the Vietnam War, since Watergate, and because we need campaign finance reform. I would like to tell you something about me. I keep my word. I have kept the faith. I've kept the faith with my country. I volunteered for the Army. I served in Vietnam. I kept the faith with my family. Tipper and I have been married for 30 years. We have devoted ourselves to our children and now our nearly one-and-a-half-year-old grandson. I have kept the faith with our
country. Nine times I have raised my hand to take an oath to the Constitution, and I have never violated that oath. I have not spent the last quarter century in pursuit of personal wealth. I have spent the last quarter century fighting for middle-class working men and women in the United States of America. I believe very deeply that you have to be willing to stand up and fight no matter what powerful forces might be on the other side. If you want somebody who is willing to fight for you, I am asking for your support and your vote and, yes, your confidence and your willingness to believe that we can do the right thing in America, and be the better for it. We've made some progress during the last eight years. We have seen the strongest economy in the history of the United States. Lower crime rates for eight years in a row. Highest private home ownership ever, but I'll make you one promise here. You ain't seen nothing yet. And I will keep that promise.

[LEHRER]:
Governor Bush, two minutes.

[BUSH]:
Well, Jim, I want to thank you and thank the folks here at Washington University and the vice president. Appreciate the chance to have a good, honest dialogue about our differences of opinion. I think after three debates the good people of this country understand there is a difference of opinion. There is a difference between big federal government and somebody who is coming from outside of Washington who will trust individuals. I've got an agenda that I want to get done for the country. It's an agenda that says we're going to reform Medicare to make sure seniors have got prescription drugs and to give seniors different options from which they can choose. It's an agenda that says we're listen to the young voices in Social
Security and say we're going to think differently about making sure we have a system, but also fulfill the promise to the seniors in America. A promise made will be a promise kept should I be fortunate enough to become your president. I want to have the military keeping the peace. I want to make sure the public school system in America keeps its promise so not one child is left behind. After setting priorities, I want to give some of your money back. I don't think the surplus is the government's money. I think it's the people's money. I don't think it exists because of the ingenuity and hard work of the federal government, I think in exists because of the ingenuity and hard work of the American people. And you ought to have some of this surplus so you can save and dream and build. I look forward to the final weeks of this campaign. I'm asking for your vote. For those of you for me, thanks for your help. For those of you for my opponent, please only vote once. (LAUGHTER) But for those who have not made up their mind, I would like to conclude by this promise. Should I be fortunate enough to become your president, when I put my hand on the Bible, I will swear to not only uphold the laws of the land, but I will also swear to uphold the honor and the dignity of the office to which I have been elected, so help me God. Thank you very much.

[LEHRER]:
A closing piece of business before we go. The Debate Commission wants reaction to the three kinds of formats used in the debates this year, and you may register an opinion at their website at www.debates.org. Vice President Gore, Governor Bush, thank you. And good night from Washington University in St. Louis. (APPLAUSE)