

THE BUDGET MESSAGE OF THE PRESIDENT

To the Congress of the United States:

Americans will never forget the murderous events of September 11, 2001. They are for us what Pearl Harbor was to an earlier generation of Americans: a terrible wrong and a call to action.

With courage, unity, and purpose, we met the challenges of 2001. The budget for 2003 recognizes the new realities confronting our nation, and funds the war against terrorism and the defense of our homeland.

The budget for 2003 is much more than a tabulation of numbers. It is a plan to fight a war we did not seek—but a war we are determined to win.

In this war, our first priority must be the security of our homeland. My budget provides the resources to combat terrorism at home, to protect our people, and preserve our constitutional freedoms. Our new Office of Homeland Security will coordinate the efforts of the federal government, the 50 states, the territories, the District of Columbia, and hundreds of local governments: all to produce a comprehensive and far-reaching plan for securing America against terrorist attack.

Next, America's military—which has fought so boldly and decisively in Afghanistan—must be strengthened still further, so it can act still more effectively to find, pursue, and destroy our enemies. The 2003 Budget requests the biggest increase in defense spending in 20 years, to pay the cost of war and the price of transforming our Cold War military into a new 21st Century fighting force.

We have priorities at home as well—restoring health to our economy above all. Our economy had begun to weaken over a year before September 11th, but the terrorist attack dealt it another severe blow. This budget advances a bipartisan economic recovery plan that provides much more than greater unemployment benefits: it is a plan to speed the return of strong economic growth, to generate jobs, and to give unemployed Americans the dignity and security of a paycheck instead of an unemployment check.

The plan also calls for maintaining low tax rates, freer trade, restraint in government spending, regulatory and tort reform, promoting a sound energy policy, and funding key priorities in education, health, and compassionate social programs.

It is a bold plan—and it is matched by a bold agenda for government reform. From the beginning of my Administration, I have called for better management of the federal government. Now, with all the new demands on our resources, better management is needed more sorely than ever. Just as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 asks each local school to measure the education of our children, we must measure performance and demand results in federal government programs.

Where government programs are succeeding, their efforts should be reinforced—and the 2003 Budget provides resources to do that. And when objective measures reveal that government programs are not succeeding, those programs should be reinvented, redirected, or retired.

By curtailing unsuccessful programs and moderating the growth of spending in the rest of government, we can well afford to fight terrorism, take action to restore economic growth, and offer substantial increases in spending for improved performance at low-income schools, key environmental programs, health care, science and technology research, and many other areas.

We live in extraordinary times—but America is an extraordinary country. Americans have risen to every challenge they have faced in the past. Americans are rising again to the challenges of today. And once again, we will prevail.

George W. Bush

February 4, 2002