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## Chairman's Message To W: Stop Campaigning and Start Governing

“Consider adding to the White House staff a member or former member of Congress who is knowledgeable about and supports your major policy initiatives.”

President Bush, last year you proposed an ambitious second-term agenda of important domestic policy initiatives—Social Security choice, tax reform, immigration reform, and tort reform. That agenda will go *nowhere*, however, unless you stop campaigning and start governing, for the political strategy to win elections is very different from that necessary to win congressional approval of major new legislation.

You have demonstrated that a campaign strategy to increase the turnout of Republican voters has been sufficient to win two presidential elections and to increase the Republican margins in Congress with little effort to attract the support of potential swing voters. But that campaign strategy has polarized Congress and is not a sufficient strategy to win congressional approval of major legislation on which the Republican members of Congress are not almost completely united. For that objective, you *must* work with Democratic members of Congress who may agree to negotiate with you on an issue-by-issue basis. Otherwise, your initiatives will be held hostage by any small group of Republican members of Congress who differ with your proposed legislation.

The failure to bring any proposed reform of Social Security to a vote in 2005 is one example of this problem. The 60-day, 60-city tour to promote your Social Security proposal was not even enough to energize a unified Republican approach to this issue, and there was no attempt to reach out to potential Democratic support. Another unfortunate example of this problem was the replacement of your generous approach to undocumented aliens and immigration by a much more hard-line House bill. Much the same happened when a small group of Republicans who do not favor opening ANWR to oil drilling or a small reduction in the *growth* of spending for programs that help the poor blocked the initial House vote to approve a routine budget reconciliation bill, in this case because there was no attempt to enlist the support of fiscal conservatives among the Democrats.

The record indicates that substantial support from both major parties is necessary both to approve and to sustain any major policy reform. The first leading politicians to support the basic structure of the 1986 tax reform, for example, were Sen. Bill Bradley and Rep. Dick Gephardt, and the Reagan administration worked closely with House Ways and Means Committee chairman Dan Rostenkowski for many months to gain and ensure his support. The important 1996 welfare reform

was initiated by Republican members of Congress, gained the support of a substantial number of congressional Democrats, and, ultimately, after two vetoes, was approved by President Clinton. Moreover, the first of these important reforms was approved in a congressional election year and the second in a presidential election year, suggesting that it is not necessary to wait for what may seem to be a less politically sensitive time to address a major reform. In 1998 a number of leading Democrats, including President Clinton, supported some form of Social Security reform, an opportunity that was missed primarily because of the impeachment hearings.

President Bush, you have raised a number of important policy issues and have three years left to serve. In order to gain some initiative on your second-term agenda, I urge you to do the following:

- Reiterate your endorsement of the *general structure* of those reforms that you believe would be most valuable in a major address.
- Invite discussions between members of your administration and both Republican and Democratic members of Congress about each of these proposed reforms *before* you submit proposed legislation to implement them.
- Submit proposed legislation only for those reforms for which there is a prospect of nearly unified support by Republican members of Congress or substantial support by Democratic members.
- Be prepared to be patient and to be gracious, giving public credit to those members of Congress from either party who lead the effort for approval of the legislation that would implement these reforms.
- Consider adding to the White House staff a member or former member of Congress who is knowledgeable about and supports your major policy initiatives. Your current staff has served you well in campaigning but not as well in the politics of governing.

President Bush, you and the nation have a lot at stake in how the issues raised by your second-term initiatives are resolved. For your sake, and ours, stop campaigning and start governing.