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Ten Key Facts on Key Issues

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HOMELAND SECURITY

- 1) **Terrorism:** There have been no major terrorist attacks in the U.S. since 9/11, unlike in Europe (e.g., Baslan school children, London and Madrid train bombings).¹
- 2) **Terrorism:** Government authorities have prevented at least 16 major terrorist attacks against the US since 9/11, including the recent August 10 plot to destroy numerous planes with liquid explosives inbound from London.²
- 3) **Terrorism:** Since 9/11, the Senate has passed more than 100 laws related to the war against terrorists.³
- 4) **Terrorism:** 288 defendants charged with terrorism or terrorism-related crimes have been convicted since 9/11, and 168 others have been charged for those crimes.⁴
- 5) **Terrorism:** 284 visas denied to terrorists or terror-related applicants.⁵
- 6) **Department of Homeland Security:** Congress undertook the largest reorganization of government since World War II, creating the Department of Homeland Security and a restructured Intelligence Community under a Director of National Intelligence.⁶
- 7) **Watchlist:** The watchlist has grown from small, disjointed watch lists before 9/11, to 400,000 names at the National Counterterrorism Center.⁷
- 8) **Watchlist:** All visa holders now must be fingerprinted and checked on the expanded watchlist, both at the time of visa issuance and at the border.⁸
- 9) **9/11 Commission:** The President, with the support of Congress, addressed 37 of 39 recommendations of the 9/11 Commission that apply to the Executive Branch.⁹
- 10) **Border Security:** Since 9/11, the Department of Homeland Security increased border interdiction of aliens illegally crossing the border to 1.2 million apprehensions per year.¹⁰

DEFENSE

- 1) **Afghanistan/Iraq:** 50 million people in Iraq and Afghanistan have been delivered from oppression and are now responsible for their own destiny.¹¹
- 2) **Afghanistan:** Over 76,000 Afghan Security Forces are trained, equipped, and engaged in security operations.¹²
- 3) **Military Commissions Act:** Congress has authorized the creation of military commissions so that terrorists can be put on trial for their war crimes in a manner that is consistent with national security.¹³
- 4) **Military Commissions Act:** Congress has authorized a CIA interrogation program that has demonstrably prevented attacks on the U.S. homeland.¹⁴
- 5) **Missile Defense:** 16 ground-based interceptors have been deployed as part of the missile defense program to defend America from ballistic missile attack.¹⁵
- 6) **WMD Commission:** 70 of the 74 recommendations of the WMD Commission have been endorsed by the President.¹⁶
- 7) **Military Pay:** 2.2 percent across-the-board pay raise for military personnel authorized for next year, after a 3.1 percent pay raise for 2006, 3.5 percent for 2005, and an average pay raise of 4.15 percent in 2004.¹⁷
- 8) **Death Gratuity:** Increased the death gratuity payable to survivors from \$12,000 to \$100,000.¹⁸
- 9) **Recruiting Goals:** Exceeded 100 percent of the recruiting goals for all active duty services for next year.¹⁹
- 10) **IEDs:** Directed \$2.1 billion to a dedicated effort to defeat Improvised Explosive Devices.²⁰

IRAQ

- 1) **Political participation:** 12.2 million Iraqis (77 percent) participated in the December 2005 parliamentary elections, an increase from the participation of 9.8 million voters in the October 2005 referendum on the Constitution, and 8.5 million voters in the January 2005 elections for an interim Parliament.²¹
- 2) **Security operations:** 110 were terrorists killed and over 520 detained in 164 operations in September 2006.²²
- 3) **Security Forces:** Over 307,000 Iraqi Security Forces have been trained and equipped, a 12 percent increase since July 2006.²³
- 4) **Security Forces:** 88 Iraqi Army battalions have assumed responsibility for counterinsurgency operations, a 24 percent increase since July 2006.²⁴
- 5) **Self Governing:** 34 of 110 forward operating bases were transferred to Iraqi control and responsibility by May 2006; 48 by August 2006; and 13 more scheduled by January 2007.²⁵
- 6) **Self Governing:** 4,600 actionable intelligence tips were received from the Iraqi population in March 2006, up from 450 in March 2005.
- 7) **Reconstruction:** Of the \$20.9 billion appropriated to the Iraqi Relief and Reconstruction Fund, \$20.6 billion of it has been committed, and \$15.9 billion has been disbursed.²⁶
- 8) **Reconstruction:** Iraqi GDP per capita has doubled since 2002.²⁷
- 9) **International Support:** 32 countries and NATO support Iraqi stability operations.²⁸
- 10) **International Support:** 80 percent of Iraq's sovereign debt held by 18 Paris Club members, who are the world's major lenders, has been forgiven.²⁹

U.S. ECONOMY

- 1) **GDP:** Over the first half of 2006, the economy grew at a 4.2 percent annual rate, faster than any other major industrialized country.³⁰
- 2) **Job Growth:** More than 6.6 million jobs have been created since August 2003, including 1.7 million new jobs over the past 12 months and 37 consecutive months of job gains.³¹
- 3) **Unemployment Rate:** The U.S. unemployment rate is 4.6 percent, below the average of each of the past four decades.³²
- 4) **Budget Deficit:** The FY 2006 budget deficit was \$248 billion (1.9 percent of GDP) down from an original projection of \$423 billion (3.2 percent of GDP) and significantly below the 40-year historical average of 2.3 percent of GDP.³³
- 5) **Productivity:** Productivity has grown 2.4 percent over the past four quarters, well ahead of average productivity growth in the last three decades. Strong productivity growth helps lead to GDP growth, higher real wages, and stronger corporate profits.³⁴
- 6) **Income:** Per capita disposable income has risen 9 percent in real terms since the beginning of 2001.³⁵ Disposable personal income has risen at an annual rate in 2006 of 6.3 percent, compared with 4.1 percent in 2005.³⁶
- 7) **Manufacturing:** Manufacturing production has increased 5.6 percent over the past 12 months. Manufacturing productivity has grown 3.8 percent over the past four quarters.³⁷
- 8) **Stock Market:** The stock market is at record levels. The Dow Jones Industrial Average has closed at a record high on four occasions in October 2006.³⁸
- 9) **Housing:** The housing market remains strong compared to historical levels. Housing starts are still at a very high level of 1.7 million starts per year, well above the 1.4 million average per year during the 1990s. Homeownership among all Americans, including minorities, is still near record levels.³⁹
- 10) **Net Farm Income:** In 2005, net farm income reached the second highest level on record, despite multiple hurricanes that shut down the central marketing infrastructure of the country; continued loss of Asian beef markets, and avian flu concerns.⁴⁰

TAXES

Due to the Republican pro-growth tax relief of 2001 and 2003, every taxpayer who paid income taxes will get relief this year.

- 1) A family of four earning \$40,000 will receive an average tax relief of \$2,010 per year.⁴¹
- 2) More than 5 million individuals and families will see their income tax liabilities eliminated completely. In addition, low-income families will benefit from provisions that make the child tax credit refundable for more families and reduce the marriage penalties.⁴²
- 3) 44 million families with children will receive an average tax relief of \$2,493 per year.⁴³
- 4) 14 million elderly individuals will receive an average tax relief of \$2,043 per year.⁴⁴
- 5) 25 million small business owners will receive an average tax relief of \$3,641 per year.⁴⁵
- 6) Lower rates on dividends and capital gains continue to benefit taxpayers of all income levels, not just the wealthy: 36.3 percent of all taxpayers who reported qualified dividend income in 2003 had adjusted gross income (AGI) under \$50k, while 34.7 percent of all taxpayers who reported long-term capital gains income in 2003 had AGI under \$50k.⁴⁶
- 7) FY 2005 revenues were 14.5 percent higher than the previous year and, at \$2.153 trillion, were the largest in history. This year's revenues of \$2.407 trillion increased 11.8 percent from FY 2005, and the \$71.8 billion in corporate receipts reported on September 15, 2006 were an all-time high.⁴⁷

An analysis of the 2005 tax returns reveal that Americans throughout the country benefited from the 2001 and 2003 tax cuts.

- 8) 107,387,000 total overall returns benefited from the 2001 and 2003 tax cuts.⁴⁸
- 9) 94,707,000 returns benefited from the 10-percent tax bracket; 31,972,000 returns benefited from the marriage-penalty relief; and 27,166,000 returns benefited from the increased child tax credit.⁴⁹
- 10) 23,068,000 returns benefited from the lower dividend & capital-gains tax rates.⁵⁰

TRADE

- 1) **Exports:** U.S. exports accounted for about 25 percent of U.S. economic growth during the 1990s and supported an estimated 12 million jobs.⁵¹
- 2) **Jobs:** Jobs in exporting plants pay wages that average up to 18 percent more than jobs in non-exporting plants.⁵²
- 3) **Factory Jobs:** Approximately one of every five factory jobs in the U.S. directly depends on trade.⁵³
- 4) **Farm Exports:** American farmers export one in three acres of their crops; exports generate nearly 25 percent of farmers' gross cash sales.⁵⁴
- 5) **Exports:** Under the Bush Administration, exports to countries with whom the U.S. has completed Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) are growing twice as fast as exports to the rest of the world. The U.S. is maximizing economic gain by choosing the right countries for FTAs.⁵⁵
- 6) **Exports:** While U.S. trade with current FTA partners (and with those under negotiation) account for 14 percent of world GDP, the same countries receive 52 percent of U.S. exports.⁵⁶
- 7) **Agricultural Trade:** Farm exports in fiscal year 2006 are forecast to reach a record-high \$64.5 billion, up \$2 billion from 2005, also a record.⁵⁷
- 8) **Agricultural Trade:** USDA forecasts U.S. agricultural exports rising to nearly \$73 billion by FY 2010.⁵⁸
- 9) **Agricultural Trade:** Since 2001, the U.S. has opened new markets for American farmers, including Central America, Chile, Australia, and elsewhere.⁵⁹
- 10) **Trade-related Assistance:** The U.S. has dramatically increased its investment in building the capacity of developing countries to trade. Since 2001, U.S. trade capacity building assistance has more than doubled to \$1.3 billion in 2005.⁶⁰

ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT

- 1) **Gas Prices:** In the first week of August 2006, gasoline reached a peak average price in the U.S. of \$3.03 per gallon. By October 2006, the average price of gasoline had fallen to \$2.26 per gallon, a reduction of 25 percent.⁶¹
- 2) **Oil Prices:** The price of crude oil is \$57.56 per barrel, down from the \$77.05 per barrel reached in the first week of August, a decrease of 24 percent.⁶²
- 3) **Natural Gas:** The price of natural gas has also fallen dramatically since its peak of \$13 per MMBtu (million BTUs) in October of 2005 to \$5.65 per MMBtu in October 2006, a decrease of 56.5 percent.⁶³
- 4) **Oil Dependency:** Of the nearly 20.7 million barrels of oil consumed each day in the United States, only 11.1 percent of it comes from Persian Gulf countries.⁶⁴
- 5) **Oil Dependency:** Supply disruptions anywhere in the world, whether artificially precipitated by a foreign government, or caused by security threats or natural occurrences, have the same effect everywhere. This is true whether a country is capable of fully supplying its own oil demand or fully depends on foreign supplies.⁶⁵
- 6) **Domestic Energy Production:** A recent major oil discovery in the deep waters in the Gulf of Mexico could increase U.S. oil reserves by as much as 50 percent and may yield 800,000 barrels per year in as little as seven years.⁶⁶ By comparison, in 2005, the United States imported 1.5 million barrels per day from Saudi Arabia and 2.2 million barrels per day from the Persian Gulf. Also in 2005, the United States imported 1.5 million barrels of oil per day from Venezuela.⁶⁷
- 7) **Energy Efficiency:** The U.S. economy continues to become more energy efficient. Energy consumption per dollar of GDP produced has fallen by 28.6 percent since 1985, and by 10.42 percent since 2000.⁶⁸
- 8) **Environment:** Aggregate emissions of regulated air pollutants, carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides, particulate matter, sulfur dioxide, volatile organic compounds, and lead have fallen by 53 percent over the last 35 years, despite the fact that U.S. GDP has grown 195 percent, energy consumption has grown 48 percent, and population has grown 42 percent.⁶⁹
- 9) **Environment:** As of 1995, when Republicans became the majority in the House of Representatives, aggregate emissions of the six principal pollutants have fallen 25 percent. This occurred even though U.S. GDP grew by 38.6 percent, energy consumption by 10.1 percent, and population by 9.5 percent.⁷⁰
- 10) **Environment:** As of 2000, when President George W. Bush took office, aggregate emissions of the six principal pollutants have fallen by 12.2 percent. During the same time, GDP grew by 13.4 percent, energy consumption by 1.5 percent, and population by 4.7 percent.⁷¹

HEALTH CARE

- 1) **Lowering Health Care Costs:** More than 3 million Americans have enrolled in HSA high-deductible health plans and many more are expected to in 2007.⁷² Over 1 million of these participants (nearly one-third) were previously uninsured and now can finally afford basic health insurance and save for future expenses.⁷³
- 2) **Emergency Public Health Preparedness:** Congress has dedicated \$3.3 billion toward helping prepare and protect our nation in case of a pandemic flu outbreak. And in 2006, another \$1.2 billion was directed to states to strengthen their capacities to respond to biological terror threats.⁷⁴
- 3) **Success of the Medicare Prescription Drug Program (Part D):** More than 20 million seniors are already enrolled in Medicare Part D in its very first year of operation. Over 80 percent of the seniors enrolled in Part D are satisfied with the program according to all major polls.⁷⁵
- 4) **Medicare Part D's Savings to Seniors:** Seniors are saving an average of \$1,100 on annual prescription drug costs.⁷⁶ Seniors also report paying less than half of what they paid monthly for medicine before Part D began.⁷⁷ Low-income seniors who require many costly medications are routinely receiving them with zero premiums and copays between \$0 and \$5.
- 5) **Medicare Part D's Savings to All Taxpayers:** Since last July, the projected cost of the benefit has come down by over 20 percent and states will spend \$37 billion less over the next ten years than projected.⁷⁸
- 6) **Medicare Part D – Even Better Benefits and Choices for Seniors for 2007:** For 2007, the average number of drugs covered by Part D plans will increase about 13 percent.⁷⁹ Many plan options do not have a coverage gap (so-called “doughnut hole”).
- 7) **The Disabled:** New spending on the disabled will increase by \$2.7 billion over five years and \$11.8 billion over ten years. Also, the disabled will have the freedom to choose to receive health services at home or in community centers.⁸⁰
- 8) **Medicaid Grants:** States will receive \$150 million in Medicaid grants over 2007 and 2008 to help them redesign their Medicaid systems to increase quality and efficiency of care.⁸¹
- 9) **Medicare Oversight:** Aggressive oversight and improvement efforts have resulted in more efficient use of taxpayer dollars to help fund seniors' health needs. There was a further reduction of the number of improper Medicare claims payments equaling a savings to taxpayers of more than \$1.3 billion in 2006.⁸²
- 10) **Medicaid Cost Projections:** The projected federal costs to taxpayers are \$224 billion lower for the next decade than had been projected previously – a reduction of 8 percent.⁸³

EDUCATION

- 1) **Education Spending:** Total taxpayer expenditure per pupil has increased 57 percent since Republicans gained control of Congress in 1995, and 22 percent since the passage of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act in 2001.⁸⁴
- 2) **Education Spending:** The United States is the second highest spender for education. Only Switzerland spends more in annual expenditures per student.⁸⁵
- 3) **Disadvantaged Students:** Congressional Republicans have increased education spending for disadvantaged students (Title I) by 90 percent since 1995 and by 45 percent since the passage of the NCLB Act in 2001.⁸⁶
- 4) **Special Education:** The federal government has increased spending for special education by 68 percent since 2001, and by over 360 percent since 1995.⁸⁷
- 5) **K-12 Education:** Total taxpayer investment in K-12 education in the United States for the 2005-2006 school year is estimated to be \$555 billion.⁸⁸
- 6) **Student Achievement:** Student achievement is up overall within the past three decades, with the largest gains over the last five years. Additionally, the achievement gap among younger students has shrunk to its smallest size in the history of the National Assessment of Educational Progress, often referred to as the “nation’s report card.”⁸⁹
- 7) **Higher Education:** The Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 substantially increased federal student aid. The law contained \$12 billion in new student benefits, including \$4.5 billion for two new grant programs.⁹⁰
 - Academic Competitiveness grants will provide first- and second-year college students \$750 and \$1,300, respectively, if they complete a rigorous high school program and maintain a 3.0 grade-point average in college.
 - SMART grants will provide \$4,000 to juniors and seniors earning a degree in a math, science, technology, or critical foreign language major.
- 8) **Higher Education:** The Deficit Reduction Act also provided in new student loan benefits by eliminating origination fees on most student loans and more than tripling “loan forgiveness” amounts (to \$17,500) for highly-qualified math, science, and special education teachers who work in challenging schools. It also closed the so-called “9.5 percent loophole” which had put billions of dollars in the hands of lending institutions rather than students.⁹¹
- 9) **Higher Education:** Funding for Pell Grants rose from \$8.8 billion in 2001 to \$13 billion in 2006. In 2006, the Department of Education expects to distribute over \$77 billion in grants, loans and other aid to over 10 million students.⁹²
- 10) **Katrina and Rita Assistance:** The federal government provided an additional \$1.3 billion specifically to restart school operations in areas directly hit by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, to assist homeless students, and to provide emergency aid to states and local school districts for the education of students displaced by the hurricanes.⁹³

JUSTICE SYSTEM

- 1) **Low Crime Rate:** The violent crime rate is at its lowest level since 1973, when the Justice Department's Bureau of Justice Statistics started collecting crime victimization data.⁹⁴
- 2) **Prosecution:** The Department of Justice prosecuted a record number of 13,062 defendants for violations of federal gun crimes in FY 2005 – more than a 62 percent increase since FY 2000.⁹⁵
- 3) **Enforcement:** Enforcement of federal firearms laws has been vigorously pursued, and the number of cases filed remains at an historic high. The department filed 10,841 federal firearms cases in FY 2005 – a nearly 73 percent increase since FY 2000.⁹⁶
- 4) **Punishment:** In FY 2005, over 93 percent of serious violent offenders targeted by Project Safe Neighborhoods, the President's initiative to combat gun violence, received prison terms and over 68 percent were sentenced to three or more years in prison.⁹⁷
- 5) **Less Gun Crime:** Non-fatal gun crimes are at their lowest level ever recorded and are down 42 percent since 2000.⁹⁸
- 6) **Less Violent Crime:** The violent crime rate has steadily declined during the Bush Administration, and from 2001-2004, it was, on average, nearly 33 percent lower than in the preceding four years.⁹⁹
- 7) **Fewer Victims:** In 2004, there were 117,520 fewer victims of non-fatal violent crimes than in 2003, and 201,840 fewer than there were in 2000.¹⁰⁰
- 8) **More Resources:** Since 2001, more than \$1.6 billion has been committed to federal, state, and local efforts to fight gun crime and gang violence. These funds have been used to hire new federal, state, and local prosecutors, provide training, hire research and community outreach support, and develop and promote effective prevention and deterrence efforts.¹⁰¹
- 9) **Combating Child Crimes:** In fiscal year 2005, federal prosecutors charged 1,447 child exploitation cases involving child pornography, coercion, and enticement offenses against 1,503 defendants.¹⁰²
- 10) **AMBER Alerts:** In 2005, the Department of Justice met its goal having statewide AMBER Alert plans in place in all 50 states. In 2001, only four states had statewide AMBER Alert plans. These alerts have saved the lives of more than 265 children since the program began in 1996.¹⁰³

VETERANS

- 1) **Veterans Health:** The Department of Veterans Affairs runs the largest integrated health care system in the world, serving 5 million patients, with more than 1,400 hospitals, clinics, and nursing homes employing 14,800 doctors and 61,000 nurses.¹⁰⁴
- 2) **Veterans Health:** In the past ten years, VA has doubled the number of veterans treated, from 2.5 million to over 5.3 million, with the same number of employees.¹⁰⁵
- 3) **Veterans Health:** Last year the Journal of the American Medical Association noted that VA's health care system "has quickly emerged as a bright star in the constellation of safety practice, with system-wide implementation of safe practices, training programs and the establishment of four patient-safety research centers."¹⁰⁶
- 4) **Veterans Health:** For the sixth consecutive year, VA has set the public and private sector standard for health care satisfaction on the American Customer Satisfaction Index conducted by the National Quality Research Center at the University of Michigan. Patients included in the study gave VA health care higher marks than those received by private-sector facilities.¹⁰⁷
- 5) **Efficiency:** The percentage of patients who report being seen within 20 minutes of scheduled appointments at VA health care facilities has improved from 65 percent in 2002, to 73 percent through the end of 2005. The percentage of primary care appointments scheduled within 30 days of the desired date has improved from 89 percent in 2002, to 96 percent through the end of 2005.¹⁰⁸
- 6) **Health Care Facilities:** VA has spent over \$3 billion to modernize VA's health care system by providing veterans with greater access to high-quality medical care.¹⁰⁹
- 7) **Employment:** The unemployment rate for veterans is 3.5 percent, lower than overall unemployment rate of 4.6 percent.¹¹⁰
- 8) **Seamless Transition:** VA staff are located at 140 military installations around the nation, as well as in Korea and Germany, to assist active duty service members in applying for benefits before they separate from military service.¹¹¹
- 9) **VA Cemeteries:** By 2007, the Department will increase the percentage of veterans served by a burial option in a national or state veterans cemetery within 75 miles of their residence to nearly 84 percent.¹¹²
- 10) **Education:** The GI Bill education benefit for veterans has been boosted by 65 percent since 2001, raising the lifetime benefit from \$23,400 to \$38,700.¹¹³

ENDNOTES

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