

**REMARKS BY  
SECRETARY DONALD L. EVANS  
TO THE MEDWEEK LUNCHEON  
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(Text As Prepared for Delivery)**

Thank you, Ron, for that kind introduction. And thank you for the leadership you've shown this agency. I recently traveled with Ron to MBDA's Minority Business Incubator in Philadelphia. I continue to be impressed by his passion and commitment to minority businessmen and women across America. On behalf of President Bush, I want to thank you for your dedication and your many, many hours of hard work.

I'm pleased to be here with all of you. This is my fourth MedWeek, and I have to say, I'm very impressed with the progress made among minority businesses.

Today, minority-owned enterprises are the fastest growing segment of the business community. There are more than three million minority businesses across America, according to the most recent data. Most of them are small businesses, and we know that small businesses are the engine of our economy.

Our nation's small businesses create 70 percent of all jobs in America. In fact, our numbers show that minority businesses have 4.5 million employees and generate \$591.3 billion in gross receipts.

Each day, all of you sitting in this audience strengthen our communities by providing products, services and most importantly, good jobs.

Increasingly, you're on the cutting edge, breaking frontiers in new industries and creating a new roadmap to prosperity for other minorities to follow.

You're more than just entrepreneurs. You are the true role models of our communities. And a testament to so many who came before you

- like A.G. Gaston, who started with an insurance company in 1923 and went on to become one of the first African American multimillionaires;
- like Mary Kay Ash who took what seemed like a simple idea in 1963 and founded a cosmetics powerhouse;
- like Arte Moreno, who last year made history by becoming the first Hispanic to own a major sports team in the U.S. – the Anaheim Angels.
- And like Paul Hsu, the CEO of an aerospace/defense electronics firm in Florida, Manufacturing Technology Inc., which has been cited as one of the fastest growing private companies in America. Paul also happens to be with us today.

All of you represent the best of America. After all, it is America's ability to offer a handshake of opportunity to citizens from all walks of life that makes her great and the envy of the world.

Protecting and expanding their opportunities is one of our greatest responsibilities. President Bush is committed to this call, and I believe his policies, along with the resilience of American businesses, are strengthening our economy each day.

More Americans are working today than have ever worked before. The unemployment rate dropped last week to 5.4 percent and is significantly lower than the average rates of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. 1.7 million new jobs have been created in the last year.

We're the world's fastest growing major, industrialized economy. Over the last four years productivity posted the fastest rate of growth in a half century.

Take-home pay increased 3.6 percent over the last year—faster than the averages of the 1980s and 1990s. Interest rates, mortgage rates, and inflation continue to be extremely low.

And as many of you know, President Bush is committed to ensuring that we create an ownership society in America with opportunity for all. All of you here are already a part of that – as owners of your own business.

Well, I'm pleased to report to you that tonight, more Americans will be returning to a house they own than on any evening in our history.

In fact, more minorities own homes now than ever before – 51 percent!

President Bush has a plan to expand affordable housing by 7 million over the next 10 years.

This Administration has continuously promoted economic policies to unleash the potential of all our communities . . . so that our workers have more money to keep in their pockets and our businesses have more capital to grow and expand.

Big government has no right to get in the way of your prosperity.

President Bush truly believes that the most important thing that government can do is to make it easier, not harder, for American workers and enterprises to compete and create jobs. One of the most important steps is to get the right incentives in place. If you want more jobs, you tax less. If you want more work, you tax less.

That's why President Bush has pushed for not one, but three rounds of tax cuts for families and small businesses since 2001.

For a family of four earning \$40,000 a year, that means they now pay nearly \$2,000 less in federal taxes – enough to pay the average home electricity bill for more than a year, or fill up your gas tank for a year.

For the 25 million small business owners, the Bush Administration tax cuts mean average savings of \$2,853 this year.

One of the most important steps we've taken in the new tax policies is to lower the cost of capital.

When we tax capital less – or anything else – we get more of it. And capital is one of the key entrepreneurial resources in our economy.

Now, I know that access to capital remains a major problem for too many of our businesses, particularly those that are minority-owned. I pledge to you that we will continue to build an aggressive Access to Capital program to help you.

MBDA recently released a report, "Access to Capital for Minority Businesses," and I encourage you all to read it. Last year, MBDA assisted minority firms in obtaining tens of millions of dollars in venture capital and other financing.

And for the upcoming fiscal year, President Bush has asked that MBDA get a funding increase of almost 20 percent.

Let me be clear. This Administration is committed to helping your businesses succeed.

We're seeing some great success stories because of MBDA's work.

As I mentioned earlier, Ron and I were recently in Philadelphia at MBDA's minority business incubator. I was honored to meet Angelo Perryman. Where are you Angelo?

Angelo started his firm, Perryman Building and Construction Service, in 1998 by tapping into his savings and borrowing from family to get the \$10,000 he needed to get started.

Now, just six years later, he has been a part of projects like the Philadelphia Eagles' stadium where his company installed the seats. And, he expects to have \$4 million in revenues this year.

The MBDA incubator has helped him get access to resources, support and technical advice to help his business thrive.

The Bush Administration wants to see more businesses like Perryman Construction. Angelo represents a new kind of minority entrepreneur – those with revenues over \$1 million.

President Bush knows that businessmen like Angelo can succeed if we create conditions friendly to the entrepreneurial spirit.

MBDA and the Commerce Department are focusing more on these entrepreneurs than ever before. We firmly believe that if all minority firms are given the resources to succeed, more jobs will be created and our communities will grow stronger.

President Bush has a strategy to carry out his economic vision for a stronger America and a stronger business community. This strategy is based on several basic principles.

It starts with legal reform.

We must address the costs that frivolous and junk lawsuits place on businesses and consumers.

They saddle the American middle class with a Tort Tax that adds up to over \$3,200 for a family of four. And less than a quarter on the dollar goes to compensate victims for their actual economic suffering while trial lawyers take huge profits.

We also need action on the President's energy plan that he delivered in 2001.

We need to lower health care expenses and provide businesses and workers with the flexibility they need in a changing economy.

We need to continue to lower regulatory burdens.

We need to remain vigilant about opening new markets for American goods and services.

This is particularly important for minority enterprises, which have been slow to enter the exporting business. We want to level the playing field so that you can expand and sell your products in other nations too.

We need to make President Bush's tax relief permanent so families and businesses can plan with confidence and certainty.

And finally, we need to provide workers with the skills to succeed in the highly skilled jobs our economy will create.

President Bush is committed to fostering a culture of job creation and a cycle of commerce. But he also knows that we need to clear the hurdles that are blocking the power of the private sector – businesses like yours. We're fighting every day to ease that path for you.

America continues to grow strong each day because of the pro-growth policies the President has put in place. But there's something else fueling our progress. And that's the hard work, entrepreneurial spirit and optimism of business men and women just like you.

Let me leave you with just one story. And that's the story of A.G. Gaston. He's the African American millionaire that I mentioned earlier. His story is one that can inspire all Americans.

You see, Mr. Gaston was born in Alabama in 1892. It wasn't an easy time to be an African American man in the South. But A.G. Gaston refused to be deterred.

He bought his first plot of land in 1914 for \$200. From there, the sky was the limit. In addition to an insurance company, he opened a bank, a motel, radio stations, a seniors' home, a construction firm, and he even started a business college for training youth.

That's the true American entrepreneurial spirit . . . continuing to persevere – in spite of all the challenges that come your way. And that's a message I want you to remember.

In the business world, there will be ups and downs. I know. I spent 26 years in the private sector. I was cycle tested, just like you. In the 1970s, I ran an oil and gas

company. At the time, we were bigger than Ford Motor Company. Then the market collapsed. And we lost everything.

But in spite of all that, we didn't quit fighting. We never gave up on the American dream. With good people and hard work, we came back.

We have the best system in the world. We have the most prosperous standard of living. We are a land of optimism. In America, we don't leave anybody out, and we don't leave anybody behind.

So, as you return to your respective towns and cities, I want you to know that this President and this Administration will never give up.

We will continue to fight on your behalf. And we will continue to create an environment for you to prosper, grow and pave a way for others to follow.

Thank you all for coming. And keep up the good work.