



PRINTER FRIENDLY

[\[Print\]](#) [\[Close\]](#)

President predicts better times ahead

By **Jo Mannies**

POST-DISPATCH POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

Saturday, May. 03 2008

MARYLAND HEIGHTS — President George W. Bush called Friday for patience and optimism from Americans beset by high gas and food prices and grappling with rising housing foreclosures.

The president exuded confidence that rebate checks on their way to taxpayers and incentives set up to help businesses will help spur a rebound.

"The effects of a robust attempt to inject life hasn't really kicked in yet," Bush said in a speech after touring World Wide Technology Inc., a successful high-tech firm in Maryland Heights.

"I know it's tough times ... but this economy is going to come on. I'm confident it will," the president added.

Bush's message got an enthusiastic reception from his audience of several hundred World Wide employees and Republican officials and activists gathered in a company warehouse.

"He's giving us a lot of hope," said Natasha McNabb, 38, a sales representative at World Wide. "I'd like to believe him that things are going to start turning around soon."

But the president made clear that Friday's real audience went beyond the warehouse, and spanned the nation, including millions of Americans facing tough economic times.

He acknowledged April's mixed signals, including a loss of 20,000 jobs even as the nation's unemployment rate declined to 5 percent.

But Bush portrayed the situation as less serious when compared to some other challenges during the 7½ years of his administration.

"I want to remind you we have been through a recession, we have been through a terrorist attack, we have been at war," Bush said. "We have had corporate scandals, we have had major natural disasters, and yet this economy always recovers."

Bush praised the economic stimulus package jointly crafted several months ago by Congress and his administration. Beginning this week, he said, roughly 130 million American families are seeing rebate checks of up to \$600 per person.

Businesses around the country, including World Wide Technology, are benefiting from tax breaks and other incentives in the stimulus package, the president continued.

World Wide, he said, exemplified "the leading edge of optimism here in America; a leading edge in making sure that people can find good, hard-paying jobs."

Bush ignited repeated applause and cheers in the warehouse, and among crowds of onlookers gathered along the motorcade route from the airport. But at one intersection, several dozen protesters waved signs blasting the war in Iraq and calling for the impeachment of administration officials.

Although his chief focus Friday was on the general state of the economy, Bush also offered his take on several other issues — notably the rising gasoline prices and the housing problems.

Regarding the housing slowdown, Bush emphasized that he's open to helping homeowners. But he blamed the troubles largely on "too many houses."

He also observed, "Some folks probably shouldn't have tried to buy a home in the first place."

As for rising fuel prices, Bush continued his call for Congress to approve proposals to drill for oil in environmentally sensitive areas in Alaska and elsewhere in the country. And Bush reaffirmed his support for ethanol and other alternative fuels.

"It's taken us a while to get into this fix, and it's going to take us a while to get out of this fix," he said.

In a question-answer session, the president fielded queries on a variety of concerns, from health care insurance and terrorism to his plans once he leaves office next January.

He also got personal. He confessed to the audience that the White House often felt more like a museum than a home. And he noted that he lately was focused on next weekend's wedding of his daughter, Jenna, at the family ranch in Crawford, Texas. In fact, the ranch was where Bush was headed after Friday's stop here.

"I got a lot on my mind, by the way," he said, midway through Friday's remarks. "Getting ready to march down the aisle."

Adam Jadhav of the Post-Dispatch

contributed to this report.

If you enjoy reading about interesting news, you might like the 3 O'Clock Stir from STLtoday.com. Sign up and you'll receive an email with unique stories of the day, every Monday-Friday, at no charge. Sign up at <http://newsletters.stltoday.com>
