



Bush puts terror war foremost

By BONNA de la CRUZ *Staff Writer*

Nashville visit raises \$1.2M for president's re-election bid

(edited)

President Bush collected \$1.2 million from Tennessee Republicans at a fund-raiser last night at the Loews Vanderbilt Hotel, promoting the war on terrorism and continuing to lay the groundwork for his 2004 re-election bid.

"This visit demonstrates how important the president feels Tennessee is, not only with what he's trying to achieve with his domestic and international agenda but as he approaches the 2004 election season," said David Kustoff, the Memphis lawyer who led Bush's 2000 campaign in Tennessee.

Bush touched on familiar campaign themes — from tax cuts to job creation and capping medical malpractice awards — but spent much of his time talking about the war on terrorism.

A day after delivering a prime-time televised speech on the topic, Bush told the Tennessee crowd, "Terrorists declared war on the United States of America, and war is what they got.

"In Afghanistan and Iraq, we gave ultimatums to terror regimes. They chose defiance, and those regimes are no more. Fifty million people in those two countries once lived under tyranny, and now they live in freedom."



In a run-up to the second anniversary of the Sept. 11 attacks, Bush said, "We're a strong country and will use our strength to defend the peace. We're an optimistic country, confident in ourselves and in ideals bigger than ourselves.

"Abroad, we seek to lift up whole nations by spreading freedom. At home, we seek to lift up lives by spreading opportunity to every corner of America. This is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it. And we know that for our country, and for our cause, the best days lie ahead."

The 25-minute speech was carried live by three local television news stations, which pre-empted their 6 p.m. newscasts.

In introducing the president, U.S. Sen. Bill Frist reminded the Texan that Tennessee volunteers, including David Crockett, gave their lives at the Alamo and many later enlisted to aid in the Mexican War.

Bush later responded, "Without Tennessee, there would be no Texas." Then to loud applause, he added: "Without Tennessee, there would be no President George W. Bush."

Tennessee's 11 electoral votes in the 2000 race went to Bush and kept Tennessee son Al Gore from picking up enough to win outright.

Among Nashville celebrities attending the event, whom Bush called out by name, were Christian singer Michael W. Smith, country singers Ricky Skaggs, Brad Paisley and Steve Wariner and former NASCAR driver Darrell Waltrip.