

**From:** "17324305"  
**To:** "Kavanaugh, Brett M."  
**Subject:** Re: Dan's proposed q's and a's -- are you ok with this going forward including with a's? We can discuss in morning before President arrives.  
**Sent:** Tue, 26 Apr 2005 21:18:42 -0500

Yes, and we'll discuss in the a.m. b(6) Andy

-----Original Message-----

From: Kavanaugh, Brett M. <Brett\_M.\_Kavanaugh@who.eop.gov>  
To: 17324305 <4941813@who.eop.gov>  
CC: West, Christal R. <Christal\_R.\_West@who.eop.gov>; Weinstein, Jared B. <Jared\_B.\_Weinstein@who.eop.gov>  
Sent: Tue Apr 26 22:16:46 2005  
Subject: Dan's proposed q's and a's -- are you ok with this going forward including with a's? We can discuss in morning before President arrives.

Possible Questions

SOCIAL SECURITY

You have campaigned in more than 20 states over 60 days for private accounts, yet the more people learn about your plan the more they oppose it. Is that the kind of progress you were hoping for?

After my State of the Union address, my administration traveled the country to educate the American people about the problems facing Social Security. The vast majority of the American people now recognize that reforms are needed to fix the problem.

I recognize that many Americans get nervous when Washington starts talking about Social Security in the past, seniors were told they would lose their checks. Now, critics want to suggest that people can't be trusted with their own money that it would be too risky. But as I just explained, there are very safe ways to invest and still do better than the current system. The plan is also voluntary. If you choose not to set up an account, you will still receive SS benefits equal to or greater than today's retirees.

We're just beginning the preseason is over. Now the legislative process begins. And the American people will judge us by the results.

You have just outlined four more principles, but still haven't given a detailed plan. How can you expect members of Congress to offer painful reforms if you're not willing to do so yourself?

The principles I have outlined make it very clear that I am interested in a permanent fix. The details discussed tonight will solve more than 70% of the funding problem facing Social Security. I have also demonstrated how personal retirement accounts can be designed in a fiscally responsible way (phased-in, etc.).

I have said that all options are on the table, except raising the payroll tax rate. I will not disparage or attack others who come forward with their own ideas. That's how we will move the process forward.

Since you have already admitted that personal accounts don't solve the problem, are you willing to consider making them an add-on to the current system in order to get legislation moving?

Voluntary accounts are an important part of the solution. They are critical to giving the next generation a more secure retirement. They also fix a major flaw in the current system the inability to pass on your savings to your family when you die. It is your money, you control it, and the government can't take it away.

I will work with the Congress on the details of the accounts and listen to their ideas. But I am concerned about

creating a new entitlement when we're trying to fix the current one.

Are you willing to fund the transition costs of personal accounts by temporarily raising taxes either by removing the cap on payroll taxes or by holding off on making some of the tax relief permanent for the wealthiest earners?

I will work with the Congress and how best to fund the accounts. I have outlined a responsible way to do it. I have made clear that I will not raise the payroll tax rate. And we should be mindful that raising taxes hurts workers and consumers and our economy.

The Dow Jones has lost 6% in 2005 and is on a rollercoaster ride right now. Isn't that the main reason not to do private accounts, which is that it is too risky and you might lose it all just as you're beginning to retire?

Personal Retirement Accounts will be invested over the entire career of a worker—not just a few months. And every analysis covering a long period in the stock market has shown solid gains.

I do recognize that some people might be apprehensive about personal retirement accounts. That's why they are voluntary. And if do chose to invest some of your own money, there will be very safe options to invest in Treasury bonds that have no risk at all.

Life-cycle accounts so people don't lose their savings on the eve of retirement.

The Senate finance committee is at loggerheads. You haven't convinced every Republican on the Finance Committee, not to mention a single Democrat, to support private accounts, and even John Breaux says you need an exit strategy. When will you give up personal accounts and move on to other parts of your agenda?

I'm pleased the committee held a meeting. Important first step. At this early phase, we should be ruling ideas to fix Social Security in—not out.

BOLTON

Were you aware of the all the allegations that have come forward against John Bolten before you picked him for the UN job?

John Bolten is distinguished public servant with more than 20 years of foreign policy experience. The US Senate has confirmed him in various capacities on 5 different occasions.

We have reviewed his long record of public service and believe he is the agent of reform that is so needed at this critical time at the United Nations.

Do you think all the people who have come forward to make allegations against John Bolton for abusive behavior have a political agenda?

That's for those individuals to explain. I do think the effort to block his nomination is more about defending the status quo at the United Nations. John is a passionate man who believes in getting things done. He's not a go-along-to-get-along kind of guy. And that's exactly what we need as the UN ushers in a new era of reforms.

Did you feel blind-sided by Senator Voinovich when he asked for the committee to hold off on a vote?

I wouldn't put it that way. Senator Voinovich said he wants to review Mr. Bolten's answers to questions were raised. I'm confident he will be satisfied with the answers and approve him for this post. The Senator knows what I know, that the UN needs reform.

Were you disappointed or surprised to read that your former Secretary of State, Colin Powell, expressed concerns about John Bolton's nomination to Senate Republicans on the committee?

I saw the press reports, but I don't believe he actually publicly said anything one way or the other. Sec. Powell recognizes that the UN is going through some fundamental reforms to ensure its relevance as we meet the national security challenges of the 21st Century.

If a member of your staff were involved in the type of abusive behavior John Bolton is accused of engaging in, would that be acceptable?

I don't agree with your premise. These allegations have been addressed. Is John Bolton passionate at times blunt and not your typical diplomat? Yes, and that's my point. He's the right person to help change the status quo at the UN.

Career intelligence officials have testified that John Bolton constantly tried to exaggerate intelligence and sought to punish those who didn't agree with him. Are you confident John Bolton has the right temperament, and more importantly, did he abuse his position?

Allegations have been addressed during his hearings. He has a long and distinguished career. He followed internal procedures; his speeches and testimony were cleared by the intelligence community.

## NORTH KOREA

What are you prepared to do if North Korea tests a nuclear weapon, as your own intelligence now suggests they may be preparing to do?

Hypothetical situation that we will deal with if it were to happen. Our focus remains on diplomacy six party talks, etc.

What action would you like to see out of the UN Security Council if North Korea does not return to the 6-party talks?

Focused on making the six party talks work.

North Korea's provocative statements and actions only further isolate it.

Would consult with our partners in the region about what to do if North Korea refuses to come back to the talks.

## IRAQ

Do you think the failure of Iraq to form a new government has emboldened the insurgency and led to the recent increase in violence?

The terrorists will kill innocent people regardless if the new government is formed. What has changed with the election is that more and more Iraqis understand their future is tied to a free and representative government than answers to them.

The new government should form as quickly as possible so they can gain the confidence of the Iraqi people.

How are you pressing the new leaders in Iraq to get the government formed?

The new Iraqi leadership understands the need to form a government as quickly as possible. We are not involved in who will serve in their new government. We have stressed to them the benefits of moving as quickly as possible (gain the confidence of Iraqis, etc.)

Can Iraq still meet the timetable for drafting a Constitution and holding elections given the delay in forming the new government?

Yes. Each time a deadline was set, skeptics said it couldn't be met. And each time the Iraqis succeeded.

What is your assessment of the training of Iraqi security forces?

Briefed last week on the progress by Gen Casey and Gen Patreaus -- good progress. Recruiting is very high. Focused on building a military chain-of-command.

Is there any concern that the on-going violence in Iraq could lead to civil war?

Impressed with the restraint shown by all sides. The formation of the government will reflect the diversity of Iraq.

In recent polling, a majority of Americans believe the Iraq war was not worth it. What do you say to those Americans?

By liberating Iraq from a brutal dictator who was a sworn enemy of America made us safer. And when a free Iraq emerges in the heart of the Middle East, it will help bring change to millions of others who desire to be free. Democracies don't attack each other. Free people are peaceful people.

## ENERGY

You met with Crown Prince Abdullah earlier this week. Are you satisfied that Saudi Arabia is doing all it can to keep prices down? Why didn't you ask them to expand production to capacity to help lower gas prices?

The Crown Prince assured me his country is doing all that it can to ease global energy prices. He also outlined an aggressive plan to build more capacity over the coming years.

Our country needs to face the root cause of high gas prices. In the last 20 years, we have not taken the necessary steps to deal with growing demand for affordable energy.

Do you think there is anything that can be done to lower gas prices more in the short term?

We will continue to ensure oil producing countries are bringing as much supply to the market as possible. We will continue to ensure there is no price gouging.

But there is no magic wand. We have to address the root cause.

Would you support an increase in CAFÉ standards to force automakers to build more fuel efficient cars?

For the first time in over a decade, my admin increased cafe standards on suvs and light trucks -- we did that in april 2003 and those vehicles are in the showrooms now. We are also looking into another increase on those vehicles.

We believe that the best place to make fuel efficiency decisions is at the national highway safety transportation administration -- not Congress -- because that's where they have the experts who can determine how best to increase cafe standards while also saving lives, saving jobs and saving fuel.

## ECONOMY

How concerned are you about rising prices on consumers and the impact of inflation on the economy?

Anytime consumers are having a harder time affording daily goods -- like gasoline -- I'm concerned. That's why I feel so strongly about people keeping more of what they've earned so they can make ends meet.

Also important to maintain a strong economic climate. Our economy has created more than 3 million jobs over the last 22 months. Major forecasters predict strong, sustained economic growth next year as well. Housing sales are up. The overall picture of our economy continues to show we are in a solid expansion.

More to do; will continue to pursue pro-growth policies.

Are you concerned that the soft patch the economy is in could lead to much slower growth in the coming months?

While energy prices have hurt consumers, the overall economy remains in strong shape. Businesses are hiring. People are buying homes at a record pace. But we can't be complacent — need to get rid of junk lawsuits, fight for free and fair trade, control healthcare costs, and tackle long-term fiscal challenges facing our government.

DELAY

Do you think Tom DeLay should get out publicly all the facts about the ethics charges against him?

Tom is an effective leader who has already publicly said he's willing to discuss all the relevant issues before the House Ethics Committee.

Is Tom DeLay's negative image a liability to your agenda and the Republican Party?

No. Last week the House passed an energy bill. This week they are signing off on the budget. They are getting things done.

JUDGES

Senator Harry Reid said you lied to him. He said you assured him the White House would not get involved in the Senate Republican leadership's efforts to end the filibuster by using the nuclear option. Last week, Vice President Cheney said he would support the effort by voting in favor of the nuclear option. How does that square with you telling Senator Reid the White House would not get involved?

I have made it clear, and so has the Vice-President, that this is a decision to be made by the Senate leadership.

My position is based on the simple principle of fairness: I believe every judicial nominee should get an up or down vote on the floor of the US Senate.

Would you be open to a compromise where some of your nominees get a vote if the most controversial are withdrawn? Why would you be opposed to this?

I believe these nominees should have an up or down vote. If they lose on the Senate floor, I will pick a replacement. But they deserve a vote.

Do you support Congressman DeLay's efforts to have the House exercise greater oversight over federal judges?

As I have said before, I believe in an independent judiciary.

OTHER

Your poll numbers are declining pretty much across the board — low approval ratings, most Americans oppose your plan for private accounts, they disapprove of your handling of the economy, and believe we are getting bogged down in Iraq. Why are you having so much trouble convincing them that your policies are right?

That's why Presidents have dogs — they never disagree with you.

When you attempting to accomplish big things on behalf of the American people, the instinct is to demand instant results. Social Security reform hasn't been addressed in more than 20 years. We haven't had an energy policy in our country in two decades. And it's been less than year since we handed over sovereignty to the Iraqi people. But I'm patient

In the last few weeks, key Republicans have balked at your Social Security plan, delayed a vote on John Bolton, opposed key parts of your budget, and are uneasy with changing Senate rules to get your judges confirmed. Why do you keep

blaming the Democrats when the problem seems to be with your own party?

Republicans are united on a forward-looking agenda to keep our economy growing, win the war on terror, and to strengthen Social Security for children and grandchildren.

A key sign of a healthy party is one that invites members to bring different ideas to the table. Sadly, too often the other party just says no without offering any of their own ideas. The American people expect us to bring forward solutions — not roadblocks that smack of politics as usual.

Do you support Tony Blair's re-election as Prime Minister?

That's for the citizens of Great Britain to decide, not me. I have a strong working relationship with the Prime Minister — while we come from different sides of the political spectrum — we have always put our country's interests first when it comes to national security.

Do you have any concern about Israel possibly delaying for three weeks the Gaza withdrawal?

Prime Minister Sharon designed this initiative and is committed to it. The important part is to ensure the Palestinians are able to assume responsibility of Gaza.

With the Abu Ghraib prisoner investigation complete, are you now confident that no one higher up the chain of command was responsible?

I know the military takes these allegations seriously. In fact, all General Officers who had allegations associated with their duties while serving in Iraq were investigated by the Army Inspector General.

IG investigators conducted additional interviews and completely reviewed all prior investigations into Abu Ghraib together with their own review.

To date, the Army and DOD have conducted 11 separate investigations and reviews examining all aspects of detainee operations.

The conduct in Abu Ghraib was unacceptable and an embarrassment to our military and our country. I am confident they are taking the appropriate steps to hold people accountable and make sure it doesn't happen again.

Do you support the right of some pharmacists to refuse filling prescriptions for women seeking the morning after contraceptive pill?

I understand and appreciate that it is a matter of conscience for some. I support their right in such circumstances to act in a manner that is consistent with their conscience, as long as there are alternatives available to people — and there are.