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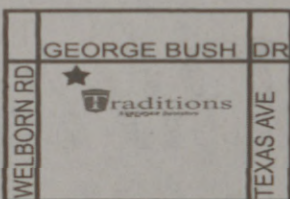
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Bush: Tax relief today and not tax relief tomorrow

By Deb Reichman
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

DES MOINES, Iowa — Tax Day 2004, President Bush told voters in the heartland that his policies are fattening their wallets and that tax cuts he passed through Congress should be permanent to fuel the economy.

"Tax relief today, and we do something about it," the president said.

Bush marked the occasion with a day trip to Iowa, a state he narrowly lost to Democratic Sen. Gore in the 2000 election.

"Tax day is something people really don't look forward to, but this year it's a little better because of the tax relief delivered and the economy stronger for it," he told 500 people at a symposium.

The Internal Revenue Service says the average tax rate increased 5 percent this year to \$2,090, and Bush says he is pumping more money into the economy. He called on Congress to make the tax cuts permanent.

Among the tax cuts set to expire at year's end is an increase in the child tax credit and reductions for some married couples who would pay less if they filed as individuals, an expansion of the bottom 15 percent tax bracket.

"Now is not the time to raise taxes on hardworking people," Bush said.

Though Iowa has just elected electoral votes, Bush and Kerry, the presidential Democratic presidential nominee, are battling hard for the state.

But just before he spoke, Labor Department reported the number of Americans with new claims for unemployment benefits shot up last week to the largest amount since 2002. A new report dealt a serious blow to the president's hopes that the economy is beginning to produce a sustained recovery in jobs.

Kerry, who likes to tell voters about the net 1.84 million jobs lost under Bush, said the president Thursday was leading the public about the policies espoused by both.

"George Bush has made a deal out of trying to convince America that he's lowered taxes for all Americans and that he's going to come along and tell us how raise taxes on Americans," Kerry told students at Sterling University in Washington.

"This president is busy trying to run away from his own record and create a phony one for himself," the Massachusetts governor said.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Chain of Spanish language papers to launch in Texas

NEW YORK (Dow Jones) — A subsidiary of a Spanish newspaper publisher Tuesday said it will launch four Spanish language daily newspapers in Texas in June, joining the nation's fast-growing Hispanic population.

The newspapers will be published in Houston, San Antonio, Austin and the Rio Grande Valley. The publisher, Mexico Media, a unit of the Grupo Repletos de Comunicacion S.A.

The newspapers, the "Rumbo," will be tabloid-sized and aimed at Hispanics between the ages of 18 and 45. They will include Mexican and U.S. and international news, as well as sports, entertainment and lifestyle content.

The San Antonio Express-News, owned by Hearst, is scheduled to introduce a bilingual weekly, Conexion in early May.