

# Former Presidents Bush and Clinton Seek Unity Through Wireless

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The pair says the wireless industry should focus on ways to use technology to help grow the global economy.

Former Presidents George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton on March 29 urged the wireless industry to help create unity and reduce division using wireless communications in innovative ways to help the global economy grow.

At the CTIA conference here, President Clinton noted that more than half the world lives on wages that are below two dollars a day, and he said that in many places wireless communications media, including cell phones, are all that's needed to enable commerce in otherwise depressed areas.

President Bush said that wireless communications and global communications technology are already making the world a safer place than when he was president. "The importance of telecommunications in my time was obvious when Desert Storm reached the end game," Bush said. "In 1991 in a meeting with my advisors we realized our objective of kicking Saddam out of Kuwait had been achieved." Bush said that he was advised that the time had come to stop the war, especially after the horrifying images of the "Highway of Death" surfaced. "No one in the Oval Office dissented; I asked if the generals agreed," he said. "Colin Powell went around to my desk and asked for General Schwarzkopf, and we were talking to 'Stormin' Norman' in 30 seconds. At midnight that night desert storm officially ended after a 100-hour ground war."

Bush said that since that time, world leaders have had unprecedented access to global communications. He related one instance in which he helped defuse a crisis in the Middle East while using a cell phone from the deck of his boat while fishing. Bush predicted that wireless communications would be a powerful force in bringing democracy to the world. He related a story in which he was told about former German Chancellor Helmut Kohl's prediction that East Germany would soon fall. The reason? Television commercials that were being seen by the East Germans were showing them a better life.

"Thanks to technology the genie was coming out of the bottle," Bush said. He said that the same thing will happen in China. He said that since he was Ambassador to China 25 years ago, he has seen the changes there. "Since 25 years ago you can say your industry brought more democracy to China," Bush said. "We have seen a world divided become a world transformed," he said, "There is more democracy and there is more freedom."

Clinton said that by their very nature, Americans communicate. "This country in the oldest democracy in human history because we're in the solutions business," Clinton said, explaining that solutions are only possible through communications.

Clinton said that the world is becoming more interdependent and with such interdependency, communications at all levels becomes critical. "The fundamental nature of the world today is interdependence," Clinton said. "You are on the cutting edge of the economy," Clinton noted, but he added that the interdependence isn't equal. "Half of the world is living on less than two dollars a day," he said.

Clinton said that an increase in interdependency and equality could go a long way to reducing tensions. "If you think about - it - , a lot of the world's problems - are - rooted in the perversions of religion. An identity

is picked out and is made to be more important than an identity they might have with someone else." Clinton said that with improved communications, people might avoid this both because they are less alienated economically, and because they view others as people rather than objects to be attacked.

Clinton also said that wireless technology is helping economies in a variety of unexpected ways. He said that when he was in Haiti, the fastest-growing business there was people selling SIM cards on the street, people that might otherwise be involved in crime. "In health care, we have a big project in Rwanda," Clinton said. "We couldn't function out there without cell phones and solar power."

Clinton said that another promising area of growth is in micro credit via the Internet. He said that one unique use for such credit is loans to Afghan women, who use their loans to buy cell phones. They then sell time on those phones to other Afghans who want to make calls for business or to their relatives in other countries. "There is a Web site called kiva.org," Clinton said. He said that the site allows individuals to provide funds for micro lending. "You can become an international micro credit lender," he said. "You can have a chance to bring the world together rather than being torn apart by destructive identities," Clinton said.

A short question-and-answer session was devoted to Bush's enthusiasm for his BlackBerry and on the value of bloggers as antidotes to the Washington press corps. "The hour that I'm going to be here is the longest I can be away from my BlackBerry," Bush said, "I'm hooked."

Following the speeches, Bush and Clinton toured the CTIA show to check out the latest in wireless technology.

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## *International*

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