

wavered. We are defending the peace of the world. We're bringing freedom to corners of the world that haven't seen freedom in years. We're also building the prosperity of our country.

This is a unique moment in our history, and the American people are rising to meet it.

I want to thank each of you for your hard work. I want to thank each of you for the faith you have shown in this country's future. May God bless you, and may God continue to bless America. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:16 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Christine J. Bierman, founder and chief executive officer, Colt Safety, Fire & Rescue; Karla Aaron, owner, Hialeah Metal Spinning, Inc.; Tim Barrett, owner, Wood World; Frank C. Fillmore, Jr., founder and president, The Fillmore Group; Steven C. Anderson, president and chief executive officer, National Restaurant Association; Salvador Gomez, chairman of the board and chief executive officer, Denver Hispanic Chamber of Commerce; Thomas J. Donohue, president and chief executive officer, U.S. Chamber of Commerce; Jerry Jasinowski, president, National Association of Manufacturers; Karen Kerrigan, chairman, Small Business Survival Committee; Tom Musser, chairman of the board, National Federation of Independent Business; Terry Neese, president and co-founder, Women Impacting Public Policy; William Parsley, president, Carswell Distributing Co.; Dirk Van Dongen, president, National Association of Wholesaler-Distributors; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

### **Proclamation 7664—National Fair Housing Month, 2003**

*April 15, 2003*

*By the President of the United States  
of America*

#### **A Proclamation**

The Fair Housing Act was signed on April 11, 1968, just one week after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. This landmark bill, Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968, resulted from the hard work and leadership of Dr. King and others in the civil rights movement and was an important step

toward confronting discrimination against minorities in housing. As we celebrate the 35th anniversary of this historic legislation, we reaffirm our commitment to ensuring that all Americans have equal access to housing.

The Fair Housing Act of 1968 has helped open doors of opportunity for countless families. Since its passage, America has made significant progress in achieving equal housing access for all individuals.

Despite this progress, more work remains in our struggle to achieve equality and racial justice. Prejudice and discriminatory practices in housing still exist in America. A recent lending study showed that minorities continue to receive less information, less assistance, and less favorable terms and conditions than non-minorities while applying for home loans. These practices are wrong. As a Nation, and as individuals, we must be vigilant in responding to discrimination wherever we find it and ensuring that minority families have access to housing. With my minority homeownership initiative and its partnership with the private sector, I have set a goal to increase the number of minority homeowners by 5.5 million by 2010.

All Americans should know their housing rights, and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is working to increase public awareness of fair housing laws, including those combating discrimination in mortgage lending. The 2004 budget request for HUD includes \$50 million for fair housing—a 9 percent increase over 2003 funding—with a substantial portion specifically allocated for increased education and outreach efforts. The Department is also collaborating with the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation on a financial education program in minority neighborhoods. In addition, the HUD, Education, and the Treasury Departments are advancing initiatives to educate families about homeownership through counseling programs and financial literacy efforts.

We are also vigilantly enforcing fair housing laws, showing no tolerance for those who discriminate. The Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity at HUD is working with private industry and fair housing and community advocates to promote voluntary compliance and to ensure that consumers are treated in a lawful, respectful manner. When

warranted, the Department of Justice takes legal action to protect our citizens from discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin.

Finally, we are working to increase the supply of accessible housing for citizens with disabilities. HUD continues to aggressively enforce the law on behalf of people with disabilities, and the Department is working cooperatively with builders, architects, and others to provide technical assistance to help construct more handicapped-accessible housing.

Fair Housing Month provides an opportunity to place special emphasis on our goal to increase homeownership throughout our country. Together, we can advance toward a future where all our citizens have access to a key element of the American Dream—homeownership.

**Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush,** President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim April 2003 as National Fair Housing Month. I call upon the people of the United States to learn more about their rights and responsibilities under the Fair Housing Act and the roles they can individually and collectively play to combat housing discrimination.

**In Witness Whereof,** I have hereunto set my hand this fifteenth day of April, in the year of our Lord two thousand three, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-seventh.

**George W. Bush**

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., April 17, 2003]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on April 18.

**Letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives Requesting Disaster Relief Funds**

*April 15, 2003*

*Dear Mr. Speaker:*

In accordance with provisions of Public Law 107-73, the Departments of Veterans

Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and Independent Agencies Appropriations Act, 2002, I hereby request and make available \$250 million for the disaster relief program of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

These funds would allow DHS to continue providing assistance for disasters in several States, including the recovery of the *Columbia* space shuttle and the damaging winter storms on the East Coast. These funds also would be available for ongoing response to prior disasters and to ensure that DHS has resources on hand to provide timely response to future disasters.

I designate these funds made available today as an emergency requirement pursuant to section 251(b)(2)(A) of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985, as amended.

The details of this action are set forth in the attached letter from the Director of the Office of Management and Budget. I concur with his comments and observations.

Sincerely,

**George W. Bush**

**Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting a Report on the National Emergency With Respect to Significant Narcotics Traffickers Centered in Colombia**

*April 15, 2003*

*Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)*

As required by section 401(c) of the National Emergencies Act, 50 U.S.C. 1641(c), and 204(c) of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, 50 U.S.C. 1703(c), I transmit herewith a 6-month periodic report prepared by my Administration on the national emergency with respect to significant narcotics traffickers centered in Colombia declared in Executive Order 12978 of October 21, 1995.

Sincerely,

**George W. Bush**

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Richard B. Cheney, President of the Senate.