

Proclamation 7680—National Maritime Day, 2003

May 21, 2003

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Today, as in the past, America depends on our maritime services to help ensure our security, promote our prosperity, and advance the universal hope of freedom. We honor the service and proud history of our merchant mariners and also recognize their important contributions in strengthening our economy.

For generations, merchant marines and commercial sailors have assisted in the defense of our Nation. Most recently, more than 5,000 merchant mariners supported Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom by serving aboard 157 ships moving essential supplies to our troops. As they continue to support our troops in the ongoing war on terror, their mission continues to be dangerous and difficult, and remains vital to our efforts to defend the peace.

We also remember the vital role the Merchant Marine has played in past conflicts. More than 6,000 merchant mariners lost their lives during World War II, and more than 700 U.S. merchant ships were lost. Even before the United States declared war, merchant mariners were making perilous runs to Europe with desperately needed supplies. President Franklin Roosevelt, the first President to issue a proclamation honoring merchant mariners, wrote of their role during wartime: “They have delivered the goods when and where needed in every theater of operations and across every ocean in the biggest, the most difficult and dangerous transportation job ever undertaken.” We are grateful for the contributions and sacrifices of America’s merchant mariners before and after World War II, in Korea, Vietnam, the Persian Gulf, and around the world today.

In addition to their efforts to support our troops, merchant marines play a vital role in moving the goods that we produce around the United States and throughout the world. Their work provides jobs and economic benefits to our country, and strengthens our economy. By operating as the eyes and ears

of America at sea, they also help protect our homeland.

In recognition of the importance of the U.S. Merchant Marine, the Congress, by joint resolution approved on May 20, 1933, as amended, has designated May 22 of each year as “National Maritime Day,” and has authorized and requested that the President issue an annual proclamation calling for its appropriate observance.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim May 22, 2003, as National Maritime Day. I call upon the people of the United States to celebrate this observance and to display the flag of the United States at their homes and in their communities. I also request that all ships sailing under the American flag dress ship on that day.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-first day of May, 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

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NOTE: This proclamation will be published in the *Federal Register* on May 27.

Remarks at the 2003 President’s Dinner

May 21, 2003

Thank you all. Thanks for the warm welcome. It’s always nice to have a nice quiet dinner with a few friends. [*Laughter*] Can’t tell you how much we appreciate you coming, though.

First I want to thank my friend George Allen for putting together this fine event. I want to thank all those who’ve helped. I particularly want to thank all of you all for coming from all across the great country. Thank you for your support. It makes a huge difference to our “Grand Party.” Your participation in the process makes a great difference to our great country.

All of us who serve this country have important responsibilities. You've got responsibilities at home to love your children with all your heart and all your soul. You've got responsibilities in your communities to love a neighbor like you'd like to be loved yourself. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you have a responsibility to tell the truth to your employees and shareholders. And we have responsibilities here in Washington, DC, to work together to keep this Nation strong and secure and prosperous and hopeful, and we accept that responsibility.

I appreciate so very much the Speaker of the House, Denny Hastert. He is such a good Speaker. We want to keep him as the Speaker. And the same goes for the majority leader in the United States Senate, Senator Bill Frist. It is a joy to work with these two fabulous Americans.

I'm also honored to be on the—sharing the stage with the Senate dinner chairman, Senator Orrin Hatch from Utah; the chairman of the National Republican Campaign Committee from the State of New York, Congressman Tom Reynolds; the House dinner chairman, Congressman Dave Camp from Michigan. I want to thank all the Senators and Members of the House of Representatives who are here. America is fortunate to have you—your service on behalf of all of us.

I want to thank the members of the Cabinet who are here. I want to thank the Oak Ridge Boys for sharing their beautiful voices. Most of all, I want to thank you all for supporting us and what we're doing for the country.

For the last 2½ years, this country has faced incredible challenges, and those challenges brought out the best in America. The testing of America has revealed the spirit of America. The world has seen that we are courageous, resolute, tough when we have to be, and a compassionate people. The world has seen the strength and the idealism of the United States military. Thanks to the skill and courage of our troops and the technology of our military, the world has seen that the guilty have more to fear from the United States of America.

Thanks to the skill and bravery of our troops and coalition forces, because the guilty

can no longer hide behind the innocent, the world will be a more peaceful place. The terrorists will have fewer places to hide. Tyrants will no longer be free to enslave their people. Freedom has arrived in far corners of the Earth.

Every friend of this country and every enemy of this country can be certain America will always work to keep the peace, and we will always keep our word.

We're working hard to change the tone in Washington, DC, and I believe we have. We've raised the debate to focus on results and progress, and we're achieving great results for the American people. One reason we're able to do so is because I put together a fabulous team. To the Cabinet members here, I want to thank you for your service. But I do want to mention one member of my team that is not with us tonight but is doing a fabulous job for America, and that's the finest Vice President our Nation has ever known, Vice President Dick Cheney.

Now, my mother may have a different point of view—[laughter]—but I got the mike. [Laughter]

The Vice President and members of the Cabinet and everybody else who works for me is resolved to keep the vow we made to restore honor and dignity to the office of the President of the United States.

And I'm proud of the United States Congress. The Congress is focused on results, and they have delivered tremendous results for the American people: Major tax cuts so the working people can keep more of their own money; education reform; Homeland Security Department to better secure America; trade legislation. No, this Congress, instead of endless bickering and needless partisanship, has focused on what's—doing right for the American people. And I'm proud of what you all have done.

We've come a long way in 2½ years, but we've got a lot more work to do. We've got a lot to do. First, America is committed to expanding the realm of freedom and peace for our own security and for the benefit of the world. And second, in our own country we must work for a society of prosperity and compassion, so that every citizen has a chance to work and succeed and realize the

great promise of the United States of America.

Across the world it has never been more clear that the future of freedom and peace depend on the actions of the United States. This Nation is freedom's home and defender. We welcome this charge of history, and we will keep it.

As we saw again last week in Saudi Arabia and in Morocco, the war on terror continues. Our work is not done. The enemies of freedom are not idle, and neither are we. This country will not rest. We will not tire. We will not stop until the danger to civilization is removed.

Our national interest involves more than eliminating aggressive threats to our safety. Our greatest security comes from the advance of human liberty, because free nations do not support terror. Free nations do not attack their neighbors. Free nations do not threaten the world with weapons of mass murder. As Americans, we believe that freedom is the deepest need and hope of every human heart. And we believe that freedom is the right of every person and the future of every nation.

America also understands that unprecedented influence brings tremendous responsibilities. We have duties in the world. When we see disease, starvation, and hopeless poverty, we cannot and we will not turn away. On the continent of Africa, America is now committed to bringing the healing power of medicine to millions of men and women and children who suffer from AIDS.

I want to thank the United States Congress. I want to thank the House, once again, for voting for the package today to make sure that the great compassion of America is felt in some of the most hopeless corners of the world. I want to thank Henry Hyde and Dick Lugar and Bill Frist, who guided this important legislation through both Houses, a piece of legislation which I look so forward to signing next week before I go overseas. And when I go overseas, I will remind our partners in Europe about our great heart, our great compassion, and call upon them to join us in this great work.

We have challenges at home, and there's not doubt in my mind we are equal to those challenges. Our most urgent mission in the

months ahead is to strengthen this economy, to create the conditions for job growth, and to provide economic security and opportunity for all our American citizens. Prosperity is the result of hard work and the dreams of the American people. The role of Government is not to create wealth but the environment in which work and entrepreneurship pay off.

Republican Members of the House and Senate understand that. Each body has now passed additional tax relief to leave more money into the hands of the American people. See, we understand this: The money we talk about in Washington, DC, is not the Government's money. The money we talk about in Washington, DC, is the people's money.

Chairman Thomas in the House and Chairman Grassley in the Senate are working hard to reconcile any differences, and I'm confident they'll be able to do so and get a package to my desk that I can sign into law. The Members of the House and the Senate are results-oriented people. When they see a problem, they act. We want everybody in America who wants to work to be able to find a job.

Economic security also depends on a good education for every child. I came to Washington with a deep desire to pass fundamental reforms in education, to bring high standards, accountability, regular testing to every public school in America. With a solid bipartisan majority, we passed the No Child Left Behind Act. This is a good start, but it's only a start. And now we're working with Governors and chief school officers of every State to make reform a reality. Every child can learn the basics of reading and math, and every school must teach those basics. The days of excuse-making are over, and now we expect results in every classroom, so that not one single child in America is left behind.

We can use our past success as a model for meeting other priorities currently before the Congress. Members of the Congress are working with us now to strengthen and modernize Medicare, to give seniors more health care choices and access to prescription drugs. All of us on the Federal payroll get a choice in health care plans. Seniors ought to have the same choices. If choice is good enough

for Federal workers, it is good enough for the seniors in America.

Together, we've been working to cut down on frivolous lawsuits and pass meaningful medical liability reform. People who have been mistreated by doctors deserve a day in court. Yet the system should not reward lawyers fishing for large settlements. The medical liability issue is a national problem that requires a national solution. The House has passed a good bill, and the Senate should follow suit.

I also continue to work with the Congress to pass a comprehensive energy plan to lessen our dependence on foreign oil.

We must also advance our agenda of compassionate conservatism. We have a responsibility to apply the best, most innovative ideas to the task of helping our fellow citizens in need. We must continue to work for meaningful, real welfare reform, to bring work and dignity into the lives of more and more Americans. The Congress should finish work on a faith-based bill to support the armies of compassion, for mentoring children and caring for the homeless and offering hope to the addicted.

I appreciate the hard work of Orrin Hatch and Bill Frist to make sure that our judiciary functions properly. I have submitted superb nominations to our Federal courts. The confirmation process in the United States Senate should be about justice, not about empty politics.

We have a full agenda for America, and a clear and optimistic vision for our future. We believe in an ownership society. We want Americans to own their own health plan. We want Americans to be able to start their own businesses. We want more families to own homes. We want people to be owning a piece of their retirement, so that every person has the dignity and independence that come from ownership, assets and property that they can call their own.

We also have a vision for a responsibility society. We're changing the culture in this country, from one that has said, "If it feels good, just go ahead and do it," and "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else." The culture is shifting to one in which people know they're accountable for what they do, they're responsible for children they bring

into the world; a culture which says, "You have a responsibility to help a neighbor in need."

We can see the culture of service and responsibility is rising around us in America. We started what's called USA Freedom Corps, where response has been fantastic. Our fellow citizens from all walks of life, all political parties, have joined in making sure that people who hurt receive the love and affection they need. Our faith-based charities are strong and vibrant in America. We've got people who are willing to sacrifice on behalf of others, those who wear the uniform, the police and the firefighters. We've got people who are now serving in their communities and being held up as examples—positive examples—so that children can learn the meaning, the real meaning of hero. No, America's culture is changing and changing to the better.

It is such an honor to be the President of a great country. Our Nation has faced mighty challenges over 2½ years. We've been endured terrorist attacks, yet we have grown stronger. We've led the world in the fight against terrorism. We freed a great people from a ruthless dictator and eliminated the threat posed to world peace.

We met every challenge, and we will meet every challenge that comes, because this is the greatest country on the face of the Earth. And the reason it is, is because of the great strength and compassion of the American people.

It is such an honor to be here. May God bless you all, and may God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:20 p.m. at the Washington Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Senator George Allen of Virginia, chairman, National Republican Senatorial Committee; and entertainers the Oak Ridge Boys, who sang the national anthem.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Congressional Leaders

May 22, 2003

President's Legislative Agenda

The President. I just had a great meeting with Members of the House and Senate. The Vice President and I came up to congratulate