

Remarks at the Thanksgiving Turkey Presentation Ceremony

November 17, 2004

Thank you all. Please be seated. Welcome. Welcome to a beautiful day here in the Rose Garden. I'm pleased to welcome Biscuits—*[laughter]*—the National Thanksgiving Turkey. Biscuits, welcome. *[Laughter]*

This is an election year, and Biscuits had to earn his spot at the White House. Over the past week, thousands of voters cast ballots on the White House web site. It was a close race. You might say it was neck and neck. *[Laughter]* When all the voters were in—all the votes were in, Biscuits and his runningmate, Gravy, prevailed over the ticket of Patience and Fortitude. *[Laughter]* The Vice President and I are here to congratulate Biscuits for a race well run.

It came down to a few battleground States. *[Laughter]* It was a tough contest, and it turned out some 527 organizations got involved—*[laughter]*—including Barnyard Animals for Truth. *[Laughter]* There was a scurrilous film that came out, "Fahrenheit 375 Degrees at 10 Minutes Per Pound." *[Laughter]* Now it's a time for healing.

This day took a lot of planning, and I want to thank all those who helped. I appreciate Secretary of Agriculture Ann Veneman. She has served our Nation with class and distinction. I'm going to miss having her in my Cabinet, and I wish her all the best.

Congressman, I'm honored you are here. Thanks for coming. I know that you're deeply concerned about the fate of this year's Thanksgiving turkey. You're a man of deep compassion.

I want to thank everyone here with the National Turkey Federation, especially John O'Carroll and Alice Johnson. Welcome.

I want to thank Kevin Foltz and his family for the fine job they did in raising Biscuits and Gravy on their farm in Mathias, West Virginia. They fed the turkeys American corn and American soybeans. And from the looks of it, he had a pretty healthy appetite. *[Laughter]* I'm also grateful to Kevin's children, Kolby, Kollin, and Korey, who helped to coach the turkeys to face the cameras on their big day here.

We've also got some special guests from the Immaculate Conception School. I'm glad you took this field trip to the White House. I'm grateful to your school and the parish for sharing some of your blessings during the holidays. This is the 40th year Immaculate Conception has provided food baskets to families in the Shaw neighborhood to make sure they have plenty to eat for their Thanksgiving dinner. For the sake of our feathered guests, I'm not going to elaborate on the contents of those baskets. *[Laughter]*

The Thanksgiving tradition dates back to our Nation's earliest days. We are a nation founded by men and women who deeply felt their dependence on God and always gave Him thanks and praise. As we prepare for Thanksgiving in 2004, we have much to be thankful for, our families, our friends, our beautiful country, and the freedom granted to each one of us by the Almighty.

During this holiday season, we think especially of our men and women of the Armed Forces, many of whom are spending Thanksgiving far from home. Last Thanksgiving, I had the privilege of meeting with our military serving in Baghdad area of Iraq. Those men and women, like all who wear our Nation's uniform, have volunteered to serve. Through their courage and skill and sacrifice, they are keeping our country safe and free. America is proud of our military. We're proud of our military families, and we give them our thanks every day of the year.

The National Thanksgiving Turkey will soon be on stage for all to see, but he's not going to end up on the table. I'm granting him a Presidential pardon. Not only will I grant the pardon to Biscuits; I will also grant one to Gravy as well. I wish them well as they begin their new life at Frying Pan Park in the great State of Virginia.

Laura and I and the Vice President wish every American a happy Thanksgiving. May God bless you all, and may God continue to bless our country.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:15 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to John O'Carroll, chairman, and Alice L. Johnson, president, National Turkey Federation.

Remarks on the Nomination of Margaret Spellings To Be Secretary of Education

November 17, 2004

The President. Thank you all. Please be seated. Good morning. I'm proud to announce my nomination of Margaret Spellings to be the Secretary of Education.

I've known Margaret Spellings for more than a decade. I have relied on her intellect and judgment throughout my career in public service. As Governor of Texas, I called on her to serve the children of our State as my chief education adviser, a job she carried out with conviction and great results.

When I was elected President, I asked her to serve as Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy. I've benefited from her knowledge and experience on many issues, from health care to immigration to job training. I'm now calling on this energetic reformer to serve the children of America by continuing our vital work of improving our Nation's public schools.

Margaret Spellings has a special passion for this cause. She believes that every child can learn and that every school can succeed. And she knows the stakes are too high to tolerate failure. She believes in high standards and improving the resources necessary—and providing the resources necessary to meet those standards. In Margaret Spellings, America's children, teachers, and parents will have a principled, determined ally in my Cabinet. She has my complete trust, and she will be an outstanding Secretary of Education.

With the Senate's approval, Margaret Spellings will continue the work of a fine educator and leader, Secretary Rod Paige. As Secretary of Education, this humble and decent man inspired his Department and implemented the most significant Federal education reform in a generation. Today, thanks to the No Child Left Behind Act, students of every background are making hopeful

progress in reading and math. The Nation's schools are stronger because of Rod Paige's leadership. I'm grateful for his friendship. I'm grateful for his years of service.

We've made great progress in our schools, and there is more work to do. Margaret Spellings and I are determined to extend the high standards and accountability measures of the No Child Left Behind Act to all of America's public high schools. We must ensure that a high school diploma is a sign of real achievement, so that our young people have the tools to go to college and to fill the jobs of the 21st century. And in all our reforms, we will continue to stand behind our Nation's teachers, who work so hard for our children.

The issue of education is close to my heart. And on this vital issue, there is no one I trust more than Margaret Spellings. Two decades ago, as a young aide in the Texas State legislature, Margaret dedicated herself to strengthening public schools. She went on to help lead the Texas Association of School Boards, to advise two Governors on school reform, and to serve 4 years as my top domestic policy adviser right here in the White House. And now her talent and idealism have brought her to the highest education office in the land. Through it all, she has kept her good humor and her perspective on life. She is a devoted, loving mother to Mary and Grace, and Laura and I are proud to count her and Robert as good friends.

I urge the Senate to promptly confirm Margaret Spellings as America's eighth Secretary of Education. And I look forward to having her in my Cabinet.

Congratulations.

[At this point, Secretary-designate Spellings made brief remarks.]

The President. Good job.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:07 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Secretary-designate Spellings.