

26. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 25 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks at a Dinner for the National Governors Association Conference

February 27, 2005

It's always a pleasure to host the Nation's Governors here in Washington. Laura and I are proud to have you here for our first state dinner of my second term.

It's a joyous occasion, even made more so by the fact that I learned that the Blancos, Governor Blanco and her husband, are celebrating their 40th wedding anniversary tonight.

Ever since a former Governor of Virginia, Thomas Jefferson, lived in this house, many of our Presidents have first served as Governors. And there's a reason why. The experience of running a State government, of pulling together a capable team, of setting an agenda and working with an elected legislative body, is critical to the success of any administration.

My 6 years as Governor of Texas have been invaluable to me as I carry out my duties as the Presidency. And because I know firsthand how—the valuable experience Governors get, I've asked a lot to serve in my Cabinet. I had six Governors in my first Cabinet. I am pleased that Mike Johanns—Johanns—[*laughter*]*—and Mike Leavitt—[laughter]*—have agreed to serve in my second term. I'm proud you guys are here.

When our Founders devised our Federal system two centuries ago, they recognized, in Jefferson's words, that “our country is too large to have all its affairs directed by a single government.” The President and the Governors are partners in our great enterprise, and that means we share great responsibilities. Together, we'll work to secure our homeland, to protect our environment, to strengthen our economy. Together, we will work to ensure that every child gets a good education and good health care. And together, we'll work to make sure that we care for those in our society who hurt and who need help. I'm proud of our work together

during the last 4 years. I look forward to working with you for the next 4 years.

I want to ask you to join me in a toast to our partners, the Governors and the administration, in building a more perfect Union. To the Governors of the United States.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:06 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Kathleen Babineaux Blanco of Louisiana and her husband, Raymond Blanco; Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns and his wife, Stephanie Johanns; and Health and Human Services Secretary Michael O. Leavitt and his wife, Jacalyn S. Leavitt. The transcript of these remarks was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 28.

Remarks to the National Governors Association Conference

February 28, 2005

The President. Thank you. Please be seated. Didn't take you long to get back. [*Laughter*] Hope you enjoyed that as much as I did last night. It was—Marvin was great.

I'd like to have a few—I'll make a few opening comments, and then I'll be glad to field some questions. First, I want to thank Governor Warner and Governor Huckabee for leading the NGA; I appreciate the job you've done. I thought the messaging in our local newspapers here was very positive: “Governors coming together to try to figure out how to solve common problems.” It's a good message for all of us here in Washington to hear. This town can be fairly bitter at times, and I remember fondly my days of working with people in both parties to try to get positive things done for my State. I hope that the spirit in which you all have come to Washington spreads throughout the Nation's Capital.

I appreciate the members of my Cabinet who are here. Your name is?

Secretary Johanns. Johanns. [*Laughter*]

The President. It takes a while to get to know every member of the Cabinet. [*Laughter*] And Mike Leavitt and Chertoff—oh, there you are. Good, yes. I appreciate—I hope you find these folks as candid and as