

Weekly Compilation of
**Presidential
Documents**



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Editor's Note: The President was at Camp David, MD, on April 15, the closing date of this issue. Releases and announcements issued by the Office of the Press Secretary but not received in time for inclusion in this issue will be printed next week.

WEEKLY COMPILATION OF

PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS

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Week Ending Friday, April 15, 2005

The President's Radio Address

April 9, 2005

Good morning. This week I have been in Rome to attend the funeral mass of Pope John Paul II. The ceremonies were a powerful and moving reminder of the profound impact this Pope had on our world. And on behalf of America, Laura and I were honored to pay tribute to this good and holy man.

During nearly three decades on the Chair of Saint Peter, this Pope brought the gospel's message of hope and love and freedom to the far corners of the Earth. And over this past week, millions of people across the world returned the Pope's gift with a tremendous outpouring of affection that transcended differences of nationality, language, and religion.

The call to freedom that defined his papacy was forged in the experiences of Pope John Paul's own life. He came to manhood during the Nazi occupation of his beloved Poland, when he eluded the Gestapo to attend an underground seminary. Later, when he was named Poland's youngest bishop, he came face to face with the other great totalitarianism of the 20th century, communism. And soon he taught the communist rulers in Warsaw and Moscow that moral truth had legions of its own and a force greater than their armies and secret police.

That moral conviction gave the man from Krakow a confidence that inspired millions. In 1978, when he looked out at the crowd in front of Saint Peter's as their new Pope, the square rang with his words "Be Not Afraid."

Everywhere he went, the Pope preached that the call of freedom is for every member of the human family because the Author of Life wrote it into our common human nature.

Many in the West underestimated the Pope's influence, but those behind the Iron Curtain knew better, and ultimately even the

Berlin Wall could not withstand the gale force of this Polish Pope.

The Pope held a special affection for America. During his many visits to our country, he spoke of our "providential Constitution," the self-evident truths about human dignity enshrined in our Declaration, and the blessings of liberty that followed from them. It is these timeless truths about man, enshrined in our founding, the Pope said, that have led freedom-loving people around the world to look to America with hope and respect. And he challenged America always to live up to its lofty calling. The Pope taught us that the foundation for human freedom is a universal respect for human dignity. On all his travels, John Paul preached that even the least among us bears the image of our Creator, so we must work for a society where the most vulnerable among us have the greatest claim on our protection.

And by his own courageous example in the face of illness and suffering, he showed us the path to a culture of life where the dignity of every human person is respected and human life at all its stages is revered and treasured.

As the Pope grew physically weaker, his spiritual bond with young people grew stronger. They flocked to him in his final moments, gathering outside his window to pray and sing hymns and light candles. With them, we honor this son of Poland who became the Bishop of Rome and a hero for the ages.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:45 a.m. on April 8 at the U.S. Ambassador's residence in Rome, Italy, for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on April 9. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 8 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

**The President's News Conference
With Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of
Israel in Crawford, Texas**

April 11, 2005

President Bush. Mr. Prime Minister, welcome to my home. Appreciate you coming. I appreciate our meeting. I'm looking forward to serving you some good food for lunch. Most importantly, I'm looking forward to driving you around the ranch; I want you to see my place. I know you love the land. The Prime Minister was telling me he's really a farmer at heart, and I look forward to sharing with my friend what life is like here in central Texas. So, welcome. He invited me to his place one day, in Israel, and it's something that I look forward to doing as well.

The United States and the State of Israel have a deep and lasting friendship based on our shared values and aspirations for a peaceful world. The United States is committed to Israel's security and well-being as a Jewish state, including secure and defensible borders. We're committed to preserving and strengthening Israel's capability to deter its enemies and to defend itself.

Today we discussed ways to expand cooperation of our economies. The Prime Minister believes that developing Negev and the Galilee regions is vital to ensuring a vibrant economic future for Israel. I support that goal, and we will work together to make his plans a reality.

Prime Minister Sharon is showing strong, visionary leadership by taking difficult steps to improve the lives of people across the Middle East, and I want to thank you for your leadership. I strongly support his courageous initiative to disengage from Gaza and part of the West Bank. The Prime Minister is willing to coordinate the implementation of the disengagement plan with the Palestinians. I urge the Palestinian leadership to accept his offer. By working together, Israelis and Palestinians can lay the groundwork for a peaceful transition.

The Prime Minister and I discussed the important and encouraging changes taking place in the region, including a Palestinian election. We discussed the need for Israel to work with the Palestinian leadership to improve the daily lives of Palestinians, espe-

cially their humanitarian situation, so that Israelis and Palestinians can realize a peaceful future together.

I reiterated that the United States supports the establishment of a Palestinian state that is viable, contiguous, sovereign, and independent. The United States will continue working with the international community to help Palestinians develop democratic political institutions, build security institutions dedicated to maintaining law and order and dismantling terrorist organizations, reconstruct civic institutions, and promote a free and prosperous economy.

I remain strongly committed to the vision of two democratic states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. The Prime Minister and I reaffirmed our commitment to that vision and to the roadmap as the only way forward to realize it. The roadmap has been accepted and endorsed by both Israel and the Palestinian Authority, along with virtually the entire international community. The Prime Minister and I share a desire to see the disengagement from Gaza and part of the West Bank serve to reenergize progress along the roadmap.

The United States is working with Palestinians and Israelis to improve security on the ground. We are cooperating with the Palestinians to help them fulfill all their obligations under the roadmap, especially sustained, effective operations to stop terrorism and dismantle terrorist capabilities and infrastructure. Building true security for Israelis and Palestinians demands an immediate, strong, and sustained effort to combat terrorism in all its forms.

I've told the Prime Minister of my concern that Israel not undertake any activity that contravenes roadmap obligations or prejudice final status negotiations. Therefore, Israel should remove unauthorized outposts and meet its roadmap obligations regarding settlements in the West Bank.

As part of a final peace settlement, Israel must have secure and recognized borders. These should emerge from negotiations between the parties in accordance with United Nations Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338. As I said last April, new realities on the ground make it unrealistic to expect that the outcome of final status negotiations

will be a full and complete return to the armistice lines of 1949. It is realistic to expect that any final status agreement will be achieved only on the basis of mutually agreed changes that reflect these realities. That's the American view. While the United States will not prejudice the outcome of final status negotiations, those changes on the ground, including existing major Israeli population centers, must be taken into account in any final status negotiations.

I'm grateful to the Prime Minister for his friendship. I'm impressed by his leadership. I want to thank you for coming, sir, and I look forward to working with you in the years ahead.

Prime Minister Sharon. Thank you, Mr. President, for this important meeting and for your generous hospitality. It was a pleasure to be invited to your home here at the ranch. On behalf of the State of Israel, I wish to thank you, your administration, and the American people for your warm and steadfast friendship. Of course, I would be very glad, Mr. President, to have you as a guest on our farm, not only because we are short of labor. [Laughter]

President Bush. You're desperate for labor if you're counting on me. [Laughter]

Prime Minister Sharon. The people of Israel dream of a peaceful life for themselves and for all the peoples of the Middle East. We are encouraged by many of the positive changes that we see taking place in our region. We call upon our Palestinian neighbors to choose the path of democracy and law and order, so that they can establish an independent and viable state.

This is an opportunity for us to break from the continuous path of violence and bloodshed, which has been forced upon us, particularly, over the past, say, 4½ years. I told the Palestinian Authority Chairman, Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, that this is a year of great opportunity to start building a better future for our children and grandchildren and that both our peoples must make sure that this opportunity is not missed. But we must act now. The ongoing violence and terror must not prevail. We should make all a commitment not to accept any temporary solutions regarding terror but to act decisively to dis-

mantle terrorist infrastructure and to eliminate terrorism once and for all.

Defeating terror is the only way to build peace. The Israeli people have no intention of missing this opportunity. That is why we are acting quickly and with determination to improve the conditions for the Palestinian population. We have released hundreds of Palestinian prisoners. We are preparing to release more as the security situation allows. We have removed many roadblocks in the West Bank to allow greater mobility for the Palestinians. We have transferred the cities of Jericho and Tulkarm to the security control of the Palestinian Authority. And we will transfer more in the coming period as the security situation allows.

Mr. President, as I said in Aqaba 2 years ago, it is not in our interest to govern over the Palestinians. We would like the Palestinians to govern themselves in their own state, a democratic state with territorial contiguity in Judea and Samaria, living side by side with Israel in peace and security. We seek to rebuild trust and respect the dignity and human rights of all people.

Regarding the unauthorized outposts, I wish to reiterate that Israel is a society governed by the rule of law. As such, I will fulfill my commitment to you, Mr. President, to remove unauthorized outposts. As for settlements, Israel will also meet all its obligations under the roadmap, as I said also in Aqaba. We accept the principle that no unilateral actions by any party can prejudice the outcome of bilateral negotiations between us and the Palestinians.

The position of Israel is that in any final status agreement, the major Israeli population centers in Judea and Samaria will be part of the State of Israel. We seek a genuine and honest dialog with the Palestinians so that we can transform these initial steps into a sound basis for our relations with them in the future.

I wish to thank you, Mr. President, for the support of the disengagement plan which I initiated. The plan is not a political one. It was a unilateral decision driven by a need to reduce terror as much as possible and grant Israeli citizens maximum security. The process of this disengagement will strengthen Israel, improve the quality of life for Israeli

citizens, reduce the friction between us and the Palestinians, and can pave the way towards the implementation of the roadmap.

In light of the changes in the Palestinian Authority, what began as a unilateral initiative does not have to remain so. I call upon the Palestinians to work together with us and to coordinate the implementation of the disengagement plan.

I also want to thank you, Mr. President, for your intention to support Israel's effort to develop the Negev and the Galilee. It is important for Israel's national interest, economic strength, and social development.

I look forward to the beginning of work by our teams. I have stated in the past and I will say today, the roadmap based on your June 2002 speech, adopted by my Government and approved by the Palestinians and the majority of the international community, will be the only way forward to realizing your vision. Only full implementation of the roadmap can lead toward security and true peace.

I wish to thank you again, Mr. President, for your hospitality and for your friendship in support of the State of Israel. Thank you, Mr. President.

President Bush. Thank you, Prime Minister.

We'll take two questions a side, starting with Mr. Raum, Thomas Raum [Associated Press].

Israeli-U.S. Cooperation

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, given the continuing settlement activity on the West Bank, are you satisfied that Israel will do enough, once they pull out of Gaza, to meet the terms of the roadmap and put it back on track?

And Mr. Prime Minister, did you get the support you were looking for today, or do you sometimes hear contradictory signals from the administration?

President Bush. If he listens to what I say, he won't hear anything contradictory. I've been very clear about, Israel has an obligation under the roadmap. That's no expansion of settlements. I look forward to continuing to work and dialog with Israel on this subject. We've got—this is an ongoing process. This is a process that's going to take a lot of work to get a democracy stood up on

Israel's border, and we look forward to working with Israel.

The thing that I want people to understand is that the Prime Minister of Israel has made a commitment toward the vision of two states living side by side in peace.

And I appreciate that commitment, Mr. Prime Minister, and we look forward to continuing to work with you on it.

Prime Minister Sharon. Thank you.

Q. Mr. Prime Minister, did you get the support you were looking for today, or do you sometimes hear contradictory messages coming from the White House?

Prime Minister Sharon. No, I think it was a very good meeting, beside the fact it was, as usual, a very friendly meeting. And I think that we discussed many issues that we agreed upon and no doubt that we will continue to work together, as we are doing in recent years.

President Bush. Do you want to call on somebody from the Israeli press, Ariel?

Q. Thank you to you, Mr. President.

President Bush. You're welcome.

West Bank Settlements and the Roadmap

Q. Thank you. Regarding your quid pro quo letter to Prime Minister Sharon and the statement you just stated now, do you see Ariel and Ma'aleh Adumim as part of the major population centers, and I want to emphasize, as they are now, as they exist now, without any extensions—

President Bush. No, I—

Q. —or do you see them as an obstacle to the contiguity of a future Palestinian state?

And for Prime Minister Sharon, please—

[At this point, the reporter continued in Hebrew, and no translation was provided.]

Thank you.

President Bush. I don't get the second part of the question.

Interpreter. I wanted—she wanted to ask—she wanted to ask—

Prime Minister Sharon. Mr. President, I will answer the second part. [Laughter]

President Bush. Okay. [Laughter]

Q. The second part was for the Prime Minister.

President Bush. No, I got that part. [Laughter] I just didn't get the last part of the second part.

Interpreter. She wanted to know if you have any objections to the continuity of the—

President Bush. Yes, the expansion. I got that part. You asked the same question to both of us, then. No? Okay.

Interpreter. Can she repeat—

President Bush. Never mind, that's enough. Go ahead and answer it.

Prime Minister Sharon. Thank you. I would like, first, to answer about construction in the major blocs. It is the Israeli position that the major Israeli population centers will remain in Israel's hands under any future final status agreement with all related consequences.

Now, about the other question that you had, you asked what would be the day after—that was your question. So the roadmap is the only plan which sets the political agenda between us and the Palestinians. Only after the Palestinians fulfill their obligations, primarily a real fight against terrorism and the dismantling of its infrastructure, can we proceed toward negotiations based on the roadmap.

I hope that this phase will arrive soon. Implementation of the disengagement plan has the potential of paving the way toward the roadmap.

[Prime Minister Sharon continued his remarks in Hebrew. Some reporters responded in Hebrew, and no translation was provided.]

Now I have to do something for all the Israelis at home.

President Bush. Okay.

[Prime Minister Sharon continued his remarks in Hebrew, and the translation follows.]

Interpreter. The position of the Israeli is that the construction of the blocs of settlements will remain with Israel and in all agreement with what will happen the day after the disengagement. The roadmap is the only plan between us and the Palestinians.

After the—we will continue to fight the terror, and after the continued commitment to fight terror, we will continue with the ne-

gotiations—only after the Palestinians agree to stop the terror. I hope that this stage will happen and that we will only move to the roadmap after this intervention by the Palestinians against terror.

President Bush. Israel has obligations under the roadmap. The roadmap clearly says no expansion of settlements. And we'll continue to work with Israel on their obligations, and the Palestinians have got obligations. And it seems like an important role for the United States is to remind people of the obligations and to work with people—continue to work with people so that we can achieve the peace.

And we have a chance to achieve peace. The Prime Minister made a very courageous decision to withdraw from Gaza, and now I would hope, as I said in my statement, the Palestinians accept his proposal to coordinate the withdrawal so that we can begin the stages necessary for a viable democracy to emerge, one that will be peaceful, one that will listen to the aspirations of the people. I'm convinced most Palestinians want to live in peace, and they want hope, and they want a chance to make a living, and they want to send their children to schools in a peaceful way. And now we have an opportunity to try to achieve that vision.

But there is a roadmap. There is a process, and we've all agreed to it. And part of that process, no expansion of settlements.

Adam [Adam Entous, Reuters].

Israeli-Palestinian Relations

Q. Thank you. Prime Minister, considering recent Palestinian mortar fire at Jewish settlements and what Israel sees as a lack of cooperation on Gaza, is Israel considering taking military action against militants if President Abbas doesn't act?

And Mr. President, do you see a lack of progress by Abbas? Do you expect more before you meet with him at the White House?

President Bush. Want me to go first, or do you want to go first?

Prime Minister Sharon. Please.

President Bush. Want me to go first? All right.

This is a very complicated, difficult part of the world. And I believe President Abbas wants there to be a state that will live at peace

with Israel. Remember, we met with him in Aqaba, Jordan, and he had a very strong statement. I tend to take people for their word, Adam, just like I trust the Prime Minister in his word. He's a man of his word.

And the Prime Minister of—President Abbas is, I'm told, in touch with the Prime Minister. That's positive. I appreciate the fact that they've taken some action on security. We want to continue to work with them on consolidating security forces. That's why we sent a general to the region to work with the Palestinians. I hope that he, the President, responds to the Prime Minister's offer to coordinate the withdrawal from Gaza. To me, that's where the attention of the world ought to be, on Gaza.

This is the opportunity for the world to help the Palestinians stand up a peaceful society and a hopeful society. The Prime Minister has said, "I'm withdrawing." He said that, "I want to coordinate the withdrawal with the Palestinians." But he's going to withdraw, coordination or no coordination. And I believe it's incumbent upon the world which is desirous of peace to then step up and say to the Palestinians, "We want to help you." I think President Abbas wants that help. I know he needs that help. He needs the help to not only help coordinate security forces and train security forces but the help necessary to put the infrastructure in place so a peaceful democracy can grow, and that there can be an economy which provides hope for the Palestinian people.

And so this is a opportunity that I intend to focus my Government's attention on, and we will work with our friends and allies around the world to keep their attention focused on succeeding in this—in helping Gaza become peaceful and self-governing, part of, eventually, a Palestinian state.

Prime Minister Sharon. Thank you. The Palestinian Chairman, Abu Mazen, started by taking some steps against terror. By now, those steps—and we can see, as you mentioned in your questions, that terror still continue. And therefore, I believe that in order to move forward, in order to be able later to move to the roadmap, the Palestinians must take more steps, because it should be completely quiet. The situation, in order to

move forward, must be full cessation of terror, hostilities, and incitement.

So some initial steps were taken. More steps should be taken. And I hope that Abu Mazen wants peace, and the only thing I expect now that he will take the right steps in order to bring the situation that might enable us to move forward to the next step.

President Bush. Final Israeli question, please, or final question from the Israeli side.

Moving the Peace Process Forward/ Implementing the Disengagement Plan

Q. Mr. President, do you support the Prime Minister position as he stated now that after the disengagement, there will be no—any other political steps until a final and complete dismantling of terror organization, and only then we can proceed on the political track?

And Mr. Prime Minister, do you really fear a civil war in Israel over the disengagement, as you stated in NBC interview? What are you going to do to prevent it? And are you disappointed with the President's declaration regarding the expansion of settlements?

President Bush. First part of the question again? Sorry.

Q. The question was, do you support Israeli position that there will be no—any political steps after disengagement, until the complete dismantling of Palestinian organization—

President Bush. I got it. I got it. Yes, thanks. Sorry.

I think what is necessary to achieve the vision of two states living side by side in peace is for there to be progress. Look, there's a lack of confidence in the region. I can understand that. There's been a lot of deaths; a lot of innocent people have lost their lives. And there's just not a lot of confidence in either side.

And I think we have a chance to build confidence. The Prime Minister is taking a bold step and a courageous step, and basically he's saying that, you know, until he sees more progress, he doesn't have confidence. And I suspect if we were to have a frank discussion about it, the Palestinians would say, "Well, we don't have confidence in Israel."

So what's needed is confidence. And I'm convinced the place to earn—to gain that

confidence is to succeed in the Gaza. And so we're kind of prejudging what is going to happen based upon a rather pessimistic point of view. I'm an optimist. I believe that it is possible to work to set up a self-governing entity in the Gaza. And I believe a self-governing entity is one that is going to be peaceful, because most people want there to be peace. And when that happens, then all of a sudden I think we'll have a different frame of mind.

I suspect that the tone of your question—I'm not being critical, but I just suspect that if there is success in the Gaza, in other words, if there's a state that's emerging, the Prime Minister will have a different attitude about whether or not it makes sense to continue the process. And I suspect that people will say, you know, it is possible for democracy to take hold.

And so there's skepticism now about the process, because as I said earlier, it's a complicated part of the world with a lot of history. And so I want to focus the world's attention on getting it right in the Gaza, and then all of a sudden people will start to say, "Gosh, well, that makes sense." The Palestinians will see it's a hopeful—there's a hopeful way forward. The Palestinian moms will say, "Well, here's an opportunity for my child to grow up in a peaceful world." And then I think the dialog will shift. But in the meantime, there is a process to go forward, and we're now ready to help the Palestinians seize the moment that this Prime Minister has provided in the Gaza. So that's where you'll see our attention focused.

Prime Minister Sharon. You asked—I think one of your two questions were, do I see a civil war in Israel? No, I said that—and I repeat it again—the recent atmosphere of a civil war, but I'm fully convinced that I'll make every effort to avoid that, and I'm sure that we will be able to implement the disengagement plan, with all its difficulties, quietly and peacefully. So what I really mentioned, it was the atmosphere. But I hope it will be quiet, and we will manage to do it.

You had another question.

Q. I asked if, are you disappointed with the President's position regarding expansion

of settlements, specifically about the Jewish population center in Ma'aleh Adumim—

Prime Minister Sharon. No, I'm not disappointed. We think—both of us are committed to the roadmap, and the roadmap says—and elaborates on this issue.

It's about Ma'aleh Adumim. Ma'aleh Adumim is one of the blocs of Jewish population, and our position is that they should be part of Israel. I think I mentioned it before; it will be part of Israel. And of course, we are very much interested that it will be contiguity between Ma'aleh Adumim and Jerusalem, but I think altogether, we are too early because everything happens there really altogether might take many years, and I believe that we will have enough opportunities to come and continue our talks with the United States.

President Bush. Thank you, sir. Thank you all for coming.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 11:41 a.m. at the Bush Ranch. In his remarks, he referred to President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) of the Palestinian Authority; and Lt. Gen. William E. Ward, USA, Senior U.S. Security Coordinator, Department of State.

Remarks at Fort Hood, Texas

April 12, 2005

The President. Thank you all for the warm welcome. It wasn't all that long ago that I brought my family over to go to church Easter Sunday here at Fort Hood. I've been looking forward to coming back and giving you a proper Army greeting: Hooah!

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. It's an honor to be with the courageous men and women of the "Phantom Corps."

The soldiers and families of Fort Hood have contributed mightily to our efforts in the war on terror. Many of you have recently returned from Iraq.

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. Welcome home, and thank you for a job well done.

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. Others are preparing to head out this fall—

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. —some for a second tour of duty.

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. Whether you're coming or going, you are making an enormous difference for the security of our Nation and for the peace of the world. I want to thank you for defending your fellow citizens. I want to thank you for extending liberty to millions. And I want to thank you for making America proud.

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. I especially want to thank the military families who are here today. I want to thank you for your sacrifices in the war on terror. It isn't easy being the one left behind when a loved one goes to war. You have a wonderful community here at Fort Hood. I thank you for the support you have given to each other. By loving and supporting a soldier, you are also serving our Nation. Americans are grateful for your sacrifice and your service, and so is your Commander in Chief.

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. I want to thank Lieutenant General Tom Metz and his wife, Pam. I want to thank Command Sergeant Major Joe Gainey and his lovely wife. I want to thank all the officers and soldiers of this fantastic base.

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. I appreciate our fine Governor from the State of Texas, Governor Rick Perry, for joining us today.

I want to thank Congressman John Carter and Congressman Chet Edwards for joining us today. I'm looking forward to giving them a ride back to Washington on Air Force One. [Laughter] I suspect they're looking forward to the ride back. [Laughter]

I want to thank Major General Pete Chiarelli for being with us today, and his wife, Beth; Major General J.D. Thurman and his wife, Dee; Command Sergeant Major Tom McMurtrie; and all the soldiers, airmen, military families, veterans, friends of Fort Hood, and the III Corps.

This weekend we marked the 2-year anniversary of the liberation of Baghdad.

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. Coalition forces crossed more than 350 miles of desert to get there,

pushing through dust storms and death squads. They reached the Iraqi capital in 21 days, and that achievement will be studied for generations as the fastest armored advance in military history.

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. The coalition assault was rapid, and it wasn't easy. The enemy hid in schools and hospitals. They used civilians as human shields. Yet our troops persevered. We protected civilian lives while destroying the Republican Guard's Medina Division, pushing through the Karbala Gap, capturing Saddam International Airport, and, on April 9th, we liberated the Iraqi capital.

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. For millions of Iraqis and Americans, it is a day they will never forget. The toppling of Saddam Hussein's statue in Baghdad will be recorded alongside the fall of the Berlin Wall as one of the great moments in the history of liberty. And 8 months later, soldiers of the Ivy Division—

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. —brought the real Saddam Hussein to justice. When Ironhorse soldiers left for Iraq, Saddam Hussein was a brutal dictator sitting in a palace, and by the time you came home, he was sitting in a prison cell.

When it came time to drive the terrorists and insurgents from Fallujah, soldiers of the 1st Cavalry Division spearheaded the assault. The "First Team" was "First in Fallujah," and when the dust settled, what you found there reminds us why we are at war: Blood-stained torture chambers used by terrorists to execute hostages; you found videos of beheadings and brutal terrorist attacks; you found over 600 improvised explosive devices, including an ice cream truck that had been loaded with bombmaking materials for a terrorist attack.

The men and women of the Phantom Corps know why we are in Iraq. As one First Team soldier, Lieutenant Mike Erwin, put it, "If we can start to change the most powerful country in the Middle East, the others will follow, and Americans 20 years down the road won't have to deal with a day like September the 11th, 2001."

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. The terrorists have made Iraq a central front in the war on terror. Because of your service, because of your sacrifice, we are defeating them there where they live, so we do not have to face them where we live.

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. Because of you, the people of Iraq no longer live in fear of being executed and left in mass graves. Because of you, freedom is taking root in Iraq. Our success in Iraq will make America safer for us and for future generations.

In my liberation message to the Iraqi people, I made them a solemn promise: “The Government of Iraq and the future of your country will soon belong to you.” I went on to say, “We will help you build a peaceful and representative government that protects the rights of all citizens. And then our military forces will leave.”

From the beginning, our goal in Iraq has been to promote Iraqi independence by helping the Iraqi people establish a free country that can sustain itself, rule itself, and defend itself. And in the last 2 years, Iraqis have made enormous progress toward that goal. Iraqis have laid the foundations of a free society, with hundreds of independent newspapers and dozens of political parties and associations and schools that teach Iraqi children how to read and write, instead of the propaganda of Saddam Hussein. Iraqis have laid the foundation of a free economy, with a new currency and independent central bank, new laws to encourage foreign investment, and thousands of small businesses established since liberation.

The troops from Fort Hood have done their part. In Baghdad, soldiers of the 1st Cavalry Division launched Operation Adam Smith, and the new generation of Iraqi entrepreneurs you helped nurture will create jobs and opportunities for millions of their fellow citizens. Iraqis have laid the foundation for a society built on the rule of law. Today, courts are functioning across Iraq, and hundreds of independent Iraqi judges have been trained in Bahrain and Jordan and Czech Republic and Britain and Italy.

An Iraqi special tribunal has been established that will try senior leadership, including Saddam Hussein.

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. He will get the trial that he did not afford his fellow citizens when he was in power. Slowly but surely, the land that gave civilization the first written code of law is now restoring the rule of law and setting the example for people across the Middle East.

Iraqis have laid a solid foundation for democratic self-government. The world watched in awe as the Iraqi people defied the car bombers and assassins to cast their votes in the country’s first free and democratic election in decades. It took courage, the kind of courage displayed by a 29-year-old Iraqi policeman named Abdul Amir. On election day, Amir noticed a suspicious man walking toward the line of voters at a Baghdad polling station. With complete disregard for his own safety, he threw his arms around the man and dragged him into a nearby intersection, where the man detonated the belt of explosives that was wrapped around his body. Amir took the brunt of the blast, giving his own life to save scores of innocent civilians. He is a hero of a free Iraq, and the world honors his valor and his sacrifice.

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. Because of brave Iraqis like Abdul Amir, today, the free nation of Iraq has elected a Transitional Assembly, a President, and two Deputy Presidents, leaders who answer to the people instead of the other way around.

I’ve spoken with the new leaders of Iraq, President Talabani as well as Speaker—Assembly Speaker al-Hasani. I congratulated them on their achievement. I told them I look forward to working with the new Government that will soon be established. I assured them that the United States will continue to stand with the Iraqi people as they take control of their destiny and assume the blessings of self-government.

There’s a lot of hard work ahead. The Iraqi people face brutal and determined enemies. But Iraqis are also determined, and they have the will to defeat the insurgency. The soldiers and police of a free Iraq learned on election day they can face down the insurgents, and they learned they can prevail. The Iraqi people now have confidence that the soldiers and police of a free Iraq have the courage and

resolve to defend them. The Iraqi security forces are fighting bravely for the future of their country, and in the last 6 months alone, more than 800 have given their lives in the struggle.

The soldiers of Fort Hood have seen their courage in action. Sergeant First Class Troy Hawkins recently put it, "The Iraqis will stand and fight. I've seen guys with grenade fragments in them, bleeding, pulling people off the street and getting kids out of the way. Then they'll fight the enemy. They're determined to make this work." And the United States is determined to help the Iraqis succeed.

As Iraq's new Government assumes increasing responsibility for the stability of their country, security operations are entering a new phase. Iraq's security forces are becoming more self-reliant and taking on greater responsibilities. And that means that America and its coalition partners are increasingly playing more of a supporting role. Today, more than 150,000 Iraqi security forces have been trained and equipped, and for the first time, the Iraqi army, police, and other security forces now outnumber U.S. forces in Iraq.

Like free people everywhere, Iraqis want to be defended and led by their own countrymen. We will help them achieve this objective so Iraqis can secure their own Nation. And then our troops will come home with the honor they have earned.

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. The Iraqi people know the sacrifices you are making. They're grateful to you. They are grateful to your families. One Iraqi army colonel put it this way: "These U.S. soldiers leave their wives and kids to come here and give us freedom. We have to thank them for doing that for us." You are making possible the peace of Iraq, and you are making possible the security of free nations. Yours is noble work. It's important work, and I thank you for assuming your duty.

As the Iraqi democracy succeeds, that success is sending a message from Beirut to Tehran that freedom can be the future of every nation. The establishment of a free Iraq at the heart of the Middle East will be a crushing defeat to the forces of tyranny and

terror and a watershed event in the global democratic revolution.

In the last 2 years, you have accomplished much, yet your work isn't over. Freedom still faces dangerous adversaries. Terrorists still want to attack our people, but they're losing. These terrorists are losing the struggle because they're under constant pressure from our Armed Forces, and they will remain under constant pressure from our Armed Forces.

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. And they are losing the struggle because they are on the wrong side of history. Across the broader Middle East, the tide of freedom is surging. The people of Afghanistan have embraced free government after suffering under one of the most backward tyrannies on Earth. The people of the Palestinian Territories cast their ballots against violence and corruption of the past. The people of Lebanon are rising up to demand their freedom and independence. Saudi Arabia has held its first municipal elections in decades. Egypt is taking its first steps on the path to democratic reform. A critical mass of events is taking that region in a hopeful new direction. And as freedom spreads in the Middle East and beyond, the American people will be safer and the free world more secure.

You have fought the battles in the war on terror, and you have served the cause of freedom. And you can be proud of all that you have achieved.

This time of brave achievement is also a time of sacrifice. Many of our soldiers have returned from war with grave wounds that they will carry with them the rest of their lives. And America will fulfill its duty by providing them the best medical care possible. Still others have given their lives in this struggle—your friends, your comrades. We honor their memory. We lift them up in prayer. Their sacrifice will always be remembered by a grateful nation.

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. We can live as free people because men and women like you have stepped forward and have volunteered to serve.

I came here today to thank you in person for your courageous choice of service. You're

making America proud. You're making America free. And you're making the world more peaceful. I want to thank you for all you've done for our great Nation. May God bless you and your families. And may God continue to bless this great land of liberty, the United States of America.

Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:14 a.m. at Cooper Field. In his remarks, he referred to Lt. Gen. Thomas F. Metz, USA, commanding general, III Corps and Fort Hood, and his wife, Pam; CSM William J. "Joe" Gainey, USA, command sergeant major, III Corps and Fort Hood, and his wife, Cindy; Maj. Gen. Peter Chiarelli, USA, commanding general, First Cavalry Division; Maj. Gen. James D. Thurman, USA, commanding general, 4th Infantry Division, and his wife, Dee; CSM Thomas O. McMurtrie, USA, command sergeant major, U.S. Army Garrison, Fort Hood; Gov. Rick Perry of Texas; President Jalal Talabani of the Iraqi Transitional Government; and Hajim al-Hasani, Speaker, Iraqi Transitional National Assembly. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks Honoring the 2005 Super Bowl Champion New England Patriots

April 13, 2005

The President. Thank you all. Please be seated. Welcome. Well, back again. [*Laughter*] I was thinking that Coach Belichick was so comfortable coming to the Rose Garden that he might just wear one of those designer sweatshirts. [*Laughter*] I'm a little disappointed. [*Laughter*] I'm glad to see you own a tie, though.

I want to welcome—

Head Coach Bill Belichick. Is this a roast? [*Laughter*]

The President. Yes. I want to welcome the Krafts back. Congratulations once again. Obviously, this club has got fine ownership, and you know how to run a team. Welcome back.

And obviously, you know how to coach. I'm pretty impressed with the way you handle yourself. I think some of us involved in the political arena could spend a little time

getting tutelage on how to handle the mike like you do. [*Laughter*]

I want to welcome members of my Cabinet who are here. Thank you for coming. Alphonso, I thought, like, you're a Cowboy fan or something. What are you doing here, you know? [*Laughter*]

Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Alphonso Jackson. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Oh, thank you, sir.

The Secretary of Agriculture is with us.

We appreciate so very much Senator Kennedy and Senator Kerry. Welcome. Marty Meehan—I'm glad you all are here. Thanks for coming. I'm surprised more of the delegation hasn't come, but, you know, Red Sox one week, Patriots the next—it's getting to be old hat here. But glad you all are here.

Tedy Bruschi, it's good to see you. I congratulate you on showing such incredible courage on the field and off the field. There's a lot of people that were praying for you, I know. And I'm glad you're feeling good, and I'm glad you're back. You look great.

I want to welcome all the staff, the coaches who are here. Last time I didn't pay much attention to the managers and the people passing out the equipment, so I'd like to pay special tribute to the people who do all the work in the locker room and probably never get recognized except by the players, who love you. So welcome to the White House, and welcome to the Rose Garden.

I want to say a special welcome to all the Patriots fans from around the DC area. I see some from New Hampshire who have come as well, and Boston. And you're welcome. Glad you're here. You're honoring a team that showed a lot of heart.

You know, the commentators would say, well, they're not the flashiest bunch; they're not the fanciest bunch; they just happen to be the best team. They're the team that showed that when you play together, when you serve something greater than yourself, you win.

I'm sorry your fieldgoal kicker is not here. You're probably sorry you didn't have to use him this year to win. But I do wish Adam all the best with the birth of their second child. He has got an excused absence.

One of the things about this club is you set a lot of records. You know, in sports, they

always talk about, records are made to be broken. Let me talk about some of the records of the New England Patriots. In back-to-back championship seasons, you've won 34 games. That's a record. You've won nine straight playoff games, which ties a record. The coach has the best playoff record in league history. This is a club that has won 20 games in a row in the home park. If you're going to win 20 games, it's probably good to do it in your home stadium, you know. It tends to make the fans want to come back—doesn't it, Marty?

I appreciate the inspiration you've shown for the region—inspired the Red Sox. I think the Patriots have also inspired the Celtics. But whatever is happening in New England, it's a pretty strong sports record, anchored by the great New England Patriots, champs 3 out of 4 years.

And so, welcome back. We're glad you're here. I want to thank you for what you've done off the field. I did so the last time you were here; I want to do it again. I want to thank you for the importance that you've shown for education and literacy. I appreciate the example that you've set for kids. I want to thank you for working in youth football. I want to thank you for supporting the Boys and Girls Clubs of Massachusetts. There's nothing better than encouraging mentoring to help save a child's life. And as a pro football champion, you have an opportunity to do just that.

I appreciate Larry Izzo. He went to Rice, as I understand it. Is that right? Yes, Rice University in Houston, Texas. Guess what he did? He went overseas to the USO—the Pat Tillman USO in Afghanistan. And I want to thank you for doing that. Is it Izzo or “Eyezo?”

Linebacker Larry Izzo. Izzo.

The President. Yes. Well, if you're from Texas, you say “Eyezo,” and if you're from—*[laughter]*.

Mr. Izzo. It sounds good to me.

The President. If you're from Massachusetts, it's Izzo. At least I got Rice right. *[Laughter]*

I also want to thank you all for going by Walter Reed and the National Naval Medical Center here in Washington. I think you saw firsthand the definition of courage when you

saw those young soldiers who had been wounded that are working hard to overcome their injuries. I can assure you that your visit helped lift their spirits. There's nothing better than a Super Bowl champ encouraging somebody to continue to work hard to recover. And I want to, again, thank you for that. Thank you for your example.

I once again welcome you back. You know, I think I said last time there's a chance you'll be back. I wasn't sure about me. *[Laughter]* I'm confident I'll be back next year—*[laughter]*—and the way you've been playing, there's a good chance you will be too. Congratulations, and welcome.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:35 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Robert Kraft, chairman and owner, Jonathan Kraft, vice chairman, Tedy Bruschi, linebacker, and Adam Vinatieri, kicker, New England Patriots.

Executive Order 13376— Amendments to Executive Order 12863, Relating to the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board April 13, 2005

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, including the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 (Public Law 108-458), and to update and clarify Executive Order 12863, which created the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, Executive Order 12863 of September 13, 1993, as amended by Executive Orders 13070 of December 15, 1997, and 13301 of May 14, 2003, is further amended as follows:

- (a) effective upon appointment of the Director of National Intelligence, by striking “Director of Central Intelligence” each place it appears and inserting in lieu thereof “Director of National Intelligence”; and
- (b) by adding at the end thereof the following new section:

“**Sec. 3.4.** This order is intended only to improve the internal management of the executive branch of the Federal Government, and is not intended to, and does not, create

any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity, against the United States, its departments, agencies, or other entities, its officers or employees, or any other person.”.

George W. Bush

The White House,
April 13, 2005.

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., April 15, 2005]

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

**Executive Order 13377—
Designating the African Union as a
Public International Organization
Entitled To Enjoy Certain Privileges,
Exemptions, and Immunities**
April 13, 2005

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, including sections 1 and 12 of the International Organizations Immunities Act (22 U.S.C. 288 and 288f–2), as amended by section 569(h) of the Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2005 (Division D of Public Law 108–447), it is hereby ordered as follows:

Section 1. Designation. The African Union is hereby designated as a public international organization entitled to enjoy the privileges, exemptions, and immunities provided by the International Organizations Immunities Act.

Sec. 2. Non-Abridgement. The designation in section 1 of this order is not intended to abridge in any respect privileges, exemptions, or immunities that the African Union otherwise may have acquired or may acquire by law.

Sec. 3. Revocation. Executive Order 11767 of February 19, 1974, is revoked.

George W. Bush

The White House,
April 13, 2005.

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., April 15, 2005]

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

**Remarks and a Question-and-Answer
Session at the American Society of
Newspaper Editors Convention**
April 14, 2005

The President. Thank you all. Please be seated. Thanks, Rich. I appreciate the chance to come back—more than you know. [Laughter] I miss my hometown newspaper. Austin was my hometown newspaper for quite a while. I miss reading it every morning as it was thrown on the Governor’s Mansion doorsteps, but not enough to want to stay here for 4 more years. [Laughter]

I appreciate your leadership, Rich. Two thoughts came to mind when I first saw Rich. One, he has to work with a guy named Ken Herman. [Laughter] Is Herman in the pool today?

Ken Herman. Yes, sir, Mr. President.

The President. Yes, okay. [Laughter] Just trying to help you out—[laughter]—kind of like you try to help me out, you know what I mean? [Laughter]

And second, I know Rich is proud of his son, Rich, Jr., who is Baghdad. My daughter Barbara—one of our daughters went to Yale, and she brought a fellow over the other day. I said, “What are you doing?” He said, “Well, I was in your daughter’s class. I’m in Baghdad, and I’m working with the State Department to help shepherd the press corps.” I said, “Oh, who are some of the characters you’ve run into there?” And he mentioned a guy named John Burns, who I had known when my dad was the liaison officer in China. And believe it or not, he mentioned Oppel. I said, “I know the old man.” [Laughter]

I know you’re proud of him. I appreciate the service he’s providing.

And I want to thank Karla Garrett Harshaw as well, from Clark County, Ohio. Happens to be one of my favorites. [Laughter]

Just a couple of brief thoughts, and I’d be glad to answer some questions if you have any. [Laughter] Here’s what Jefferson said. Jefferson said, “Our liberty depends on freedom of the press; that cannot be limited without being lost.” He also went on to say, “I’ve

given up newspapers, and I find myself much happier.” [Laughter]

I haven’t given up newspapers. I do find myself much happier than I’ve been in a long time in Washington. I’m enjoying myself. It’s been a fascinating experience to be the President of the country. It’s been a remarkable time in Washington. You know, as Rich said, the last time I was here we were talking about the EP-3. It seems like an eternity ago. A lot has happened.

Somebody said, “Well, how do you describe the Presidency?” I said, “It is a decisionmaking job. I make a lot of decisions.” At your next editorial board, when you’re dealing with a future President, you ought to say, “How do you intend to make decisions? What is the process by which you will make large decisions and small decisions? How do you decide?”

I’ve got a decision to make today. Do I go with the fastball or a slider? [Laughter]

A couple of thoughts about this year and the agenda, and then questions. First, we’ve got a problem with energy. And it’s a problem that didn’t happen overnight. It’s a problem that’s been brewing for quite a while because the country has yet to implement a strategy that will make us less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

I was at Fort Hood the other day and sitting, having lunch with some soldiers, and the second question that the fellow asked me was, “Why don’t you lower gasoline prices?” I said, “I’d like to.”

You see, the problem is, the supplies are out of balance with demand when it comes to the major feedstock of gasoline, which is crude oil. We’ve got to think long term in this country, and Congress needs to pass the bill that I suggested in 2001 to begin the process of changing how we consume energy in America. We need to be better when it comes to conservation. We need to continue spending money on research and development to find ways to make corn economic—ethanol and biodiesel. We’ve got to continue exploring ways to make sure we can burn coal in environmentally friendly ways. I know we need to continue to explore for natural gas in our own hemisphere in environmentally friendly ways. But Congress needs to get off

the dime. I’m looking forward to working with them.

And so one of the initiatives that I will push—again—is to get an energy bill out. I will tell you, with \$55 oil we don’t need incentives to oil and gas companies to explore. There are plenty of incentives. What we need is to put a strategy in place that will help this country over time become less dependent. It’s really important. It’s an important part of our economic security, and it’s an important part of our national security.

I’m also talking about retirement security. I’m talking about it a lot. Frankly, I’m not a really popular fellow on Capitol Hill for talking about it. I recognize that. It’s one of these issues that I think people would rather avoid than take on. There’s—you’ve written about this, I’m confident—the old third rail of American politics: If you touch it, you know, you don’t do so well politically.

I think Rich would attest to this, that when I was Governor, I felt like it was important to take on big issues, and I tried to convince the legislature to work with me on the school funding issue before it became adjudged by the courts to be unconstitutional or property taxes got so high that it created a real problem. Well, I tried and worked hard. Now, they’re dealing with it, I think.

I feel the same way about Social Security. We’ve got a serious problem. I don’t care what your party is or what your political philosophy is; you can’t ignore the math. And the math really is this: Baby boomers like me are ready to retire in 4 years. I’ll be 62 in 4 years. That’s actually a fairly convenient date for me. [Laughter] And we’re living longer. And people ran for office saying, “Vote for me. I promise you more benefits.” So you’ve got a lot of people like me getting ready to retire, living longer, and we’ve been promised greater benefits than the previous generation. And yet, there are fewer people to pay the bill. And so what ends up happening is, is that a pay-as-you-go system goes in the red in a relatively short period of time, and every year it’s in the red, it gets worse and worse and worse.

And the fundamental question confronting Congress is, are they willing to take on this issue now, before it’s too late—before, by waiting, the cost becomes more and more

severe? And so I'm going to spend a lot of time on Social Security. I enjoy it. I enjoy taking on the issue. I guess, it's the mother in me. I appreciate calling people to action. I like doing it. And the more resistance I find for people to protect the status quo, the more determined I am to continue building the case that there is a problem and assuring seniors that they're going to get their check.

And we've just started the process. It may seem like a long time to you, but realistically, we've really just started. If you ask questions about it, I'd be glad to expand on what I mean by that. But there's—I've got a lot more time to tell people there is a problem. See, I think the American people are beginning to realize it, but they've got to understand the significance of the problem. And then seniors have got to realize they're fine when it comes to the check. Because once I make that case, then the issue becomes a generational issue. Grandparents are going to start to ask the question, "What are you going to do about my grandkids?"

Now, in my State of the Union Address, I did lay out options. And I think I have a responsibility to lay out options. I bet I'm the first President ever to talk about a variety of options that ought to be on the table, that people ought to come forth and discuss. And so I'm looking forward to working with Congress. I'm looking forward to continue to remind people we got a problem. I'm absolutely convinced that, when it's all said and done, inaction will create a political problem for people. The third rail of politics will be failure to solve the problem. And so just to give you a heads up, I'll be coming to your communities, continuing to talk about this issue a lot. I'm going to Cleveland tomorrow to talk about the issue.

Overseas, there's a lot going on. And it's—I believe our actions have helped make the world a more peaceful place. Rich was right; obviously, times changed dramatically on September the 11th, 2001, and we're still at war with terrorists. There are still people there who'd like to create harm to America. The only way to deal with them, in my opinion, is to keep them on the run, is to keep enormous pressure—pressure on their finances, pressure on their safe havens, pressure on their—on people who are willing to

accommodate their philosophy. And we're doing that—and not only doing it alone, we're doing it in a lot of other countries. We've got a lot of folks who understand the stakes in dealing with Al Qaida.

We've got a lot of people around the world who are more than willing to share intelligence and to help follow leads and to bring people to justice. Today I was with the Indian Foreign Minister, and we were talking about the neighborhood. And I reminded him that I was appreciative of the efforts of President Musharraf and his efforts in fighting Al Qaida. I thought it was in the best interests of the United States and India that President Musharraf be tough when it comes to running down people in caves that are trying to do harm to free people. After all, India is a free country. It made sense to encourage a leader like President Musharraf.

We're getting help in Saudi Arabia. The terrorists made a tactical mistake, in my judgment, by attacking the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. They now understand the stakes, and so we've got an ally in chasing down Al Qaida. And we'll continue to do so. You've just got to know we're going to be relentless and unyielding, and we'll do everything we can to bring people to justice.

The long term to solve the problem, however, of a radical ideology is to defeat it with freedom, is to encourage societies to become open, free, transparent societies based upon rule of law, with respect for minority rights, honoring each human being. Oh, I know, some people say that's not possible in certain societies. I don't believe that. I just don't believe it. I believe everybody longs to be free. I believe deep in everybody's soul is the desire to live in a free world. The people of Afghanistan proved that theory right, as poor people were subjugated to incredible brutality—brutality from the Taliban, and yet, when give a chance to vote, millions voted.

The same in Iraq—over 8 million people voted in spite of the fact that they were threatened, cajoled, and some killed as they tried to exercise something that they believe is their right, God-given right to do, which is to express yourself freely in a society.

Lebanon—there's a movement in Lebanon now to be free, to have a democracy

that works. And we're working with France and other countries to enable Lebanon's democracy to flourish by insisting that, first and foremost, Syria get completely out of the country. I don't mean halfway out. I don't mean 80 percent out. I mean 100 percent out, not only Syrian military but the secret police and secret service and intelligence officers that are embedded in the Syrian—in the Lebanese Government.

I met with Prime Minister Sharon this weekend. I am hopeful that there will be a Palestinian state living side by side with Israel in peace. I believe in order for that to work, however, we need to work—the free world needs to work with the Palestinians to develop the institutions necessary for a democracy to survive. And that's going to take work.

I felt Prime Minister Sharon's decision to withdraw from the Gaza was bold and necessary. He came to Washington on—I think it was April the 14th last year—and informed me that he was going to do this. And I thought it was a really interesting decision. I admire strong, courageous decisionmaking. It created—his decision created an opportunity now for America, the EU, Russia, the United Nations to work with the Abbas Government to set up a democratic state in the Gaza.

And today I announced that Jim Wolfensohn, the former head of the World Bank, is going to be the director of our operation with Abbas, to help him build a Government, to help them try to pull out of this ash heap of what used to exist, a Government that will function and meet the will of the people. And I think it's possible. I wouldn't be expending U.S. capital if I didn't. And I know it's necessary if you want to see peace in that part of the world.

So a lot is going on worldwide, based upon the fundamental premise that freedom is a necessary part of achieving a peaceful world. And so I'm looking forward to the next 4 years, working on this agenda, working with friends and allies to continue the spread of freedom, defying the cynics and the critics who believe the free only belong to a certain type of religion or a certain type of person. And my hope, of course, is, when it's all said and done, to look back and say this world

is a more peaceful place after 8 years of my administration.

So, Rich, thanks for having me. Looking forward to taking a few questions. You've got the floor.

Rich Oppel. President Bush has graciously agreed to take questions as time allows. ASNE members are invited to come to the microphones in the audience. Please tell us your name and newspaper. And I'm going to take the opportunity, Mr. President, to ask the first question.

I thought at one time that you had a hard time with the political crowd here in DC, the voters and the entrenched. And I see that—I picked up a baseball cap for this new team you've got here, and I see they named it after you; it's got a big "W" on it. Are you going to the game tonight?

The President. I thought you were going to ask about FOIA. [Laughter]

Mr. Oppel. That's to come.

The President. Go ahead. Do you want to ask the first question?

Mr. Oppel. No, there will be questions out here.

The President. Okay, I'll ask them myself, then. [Laughter]

Yes, sir.

Social Security Reform

Q. Mr. President, Clarence Pennington, retired Ohio editor. We remember—I remember you saying that you're not going to give up all your ideas for a while, until you find out what the opposition is saying about Social Security. When I heard that, I thought it was a good idea. Well, it's been a while. Is there anybody talking yet, and what are they saying?

The President. Yes. I don't remember putting it that way. I thought what I said was I welcome all ideas on the table and that if you're a Democrat or a Republican, please bring your ideas forward, and I'll do my best to make sure you don't get ridiculed, punished—whatever word you want to use—for being bold enough to come up and discuss ways to solve the problem.

But it's interesting, you said we've been here for a while. We have been talking about it for a while, but it's going to take a while more to continue making clear to people in

Congress that we've got a problem, see. They're not going to respond until the people say clearly, "There's a problem, and what are you going to do to fix it?" And it takes a while because, frankly, this is a heavy lift for some in Congress. You know, why deal with an issue if you don't have to? And so I'm going to spend a lot more time talking about the problem, making it clear to people.

There's a dialog going on quietly up there. People are slowly but surely beginning to share ideas. And we spend a lot of time on Capitol Hill—"we," my staff, in particular—working with Members, trying to listen to their ideas, trying to begin to fashion a long-term, permanent solution to the Social Security issue.

Q. Just between us, what is being said? Any of them saying anything?

The President. Are they saying anything?

Q. Well, yes, about—nobody from the opposition has had a new idea for you?

The President. Oh, they may have, but they're not willing to put it on the table yet, publicly. It's going to take a while. This is a process. I, unfortunately, don't get to write the legislation. I propose; Congress disposes. But yes, we've had some good ideas. Remember, a lot of the interesting ideas that I quoted in the State of the Union were ideas from people like Bill Clinton or Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan. These are citizens who have stepped forward and have talked about ways to permanently fix Social Security.

And I keep emphasizing "permanently" because, in 1983, President Reagan and Tip O'Neill came together and said, "Let's fix—put a 75-year fix out there for Social Security," and here we are, 22 years later, worrying about permanently fixing it again. And so now is the time to do it forever.

But I'm pleased with the progress. I'm also understanding that we're—this is just the beginning stages of what is a difficult debate for some. Remember, some in Congress would rather not discuss this issue at all. They would rather say, "Well, please don't jeopardize—put me in jeopardy. Please don't cause me to have to take a tough vote."

And I've just got a different perspective. I think now is the time to fix the problem. The longer you wait, every year you wait, it costs a future generation \$600 billion. And

so I'll continue talking about the issue a lot. But it's kind of a—beginning a little movement up there. People are talking. They just haven't made their cards all public yet.

Okay, yes.

Border Security/Immigration Reform

Q. Mr. President, George Condon with Copley News Service. A month ago you stood in Crawford with the leaders of Mexico and Canada and talked about the importance of balancing security but maintaining the free flow of trade and people across the borders. But this month, your Department of Homeland Security has said that they're going to be requiring passports for tourists coming across the border. As somebody who is familiar with the long lines at today's border, do you—what's your reaction to the protests from the business and tourism community? And do you support the requirement of passports?

The President. Yes, I'm aware of the issue, obviously. When I first read that in the newspaper, about the need to have passports, for particularly today's crossings that take place—about a million, for example, in the State of Texas—I said, "What's going on here?" I thought there was a better way to do—to expedite legal flow of traffic and people. Evidently this has been mandated in law. And so I've talked to Condi and the Homeland Security people about making—seeing if there's some flexibility in the law that will allow for, for example, finger imaging to serve as the so-called passport for daily traffic. But you're right, it's going to—if people have to have a passport, it's going to disrupt honest flow of traffic. I think there's some flexibility in the law, and that's what we're checking out right now.

On the larger scale, look, we've got a lot to do to enforce the border. For those of you in Arizona, now know that Arizona has got more illegal immigrants coming across their border than, I guess, any other State right now. My view is Congress needs to work with us to pass immigration reform. One, we've got to enforce the border better. We've increased border spending by 34 percent since, I think, 2001. But it doesn't make any sense to me to have a system that kind of forces an industry to develop, an industry

that smuggles people, an industry that forges documents, an industry that really doesn't represent the best of America.

It seems like to me what we ought to do is be open about it and say, "Look, if you're a willing worker and a willing employee, and you can't find an American, here's a legal way to work. Here's a document which enables you to be here legally so that if you decide to go home for a little bit, you can." And there will be time limit on the document, a time limit on the right to be here to work. To me it's a more humane way than a system which encourages employers who are looking for workers to break the law, to accept—unknowingly accept illegal documentation, for example. And so I—and this is a tough issue. Look, I understand. The danger with the immigration issue is that it can be—it can lead to nativism and encourage behavior which is really not how Americans should view the world.

The long-term solution, by the way, to—for example, immigration issues with Mexico, is for Mexico to grow a middle class. That's why I'm such a big believer in NAFTA. It's in our interest that wealth be spread out through the hemisphere—the best way to spread wealth is through trade—so that Mexico can grow and become a vibrant place, so people are more likely to be able to find a job closer to home. But the reality is if you make 50 cents in the interior of Mexico and \$5 in Texas, you're going to do \$5 if you can make it. And so now is the time for legal—reforming of the immigration system.

I don't believe in blanket amnesty. I think it would be mistake. I think that wouldn't—all that would do is create another incentive for 8 million people, whatever the number is, to come. And so I think if somebody wants to be a citizen, they ought to get in line like everybody else who has gotten in line to become a citizen of the United States. And so my vision is one that's work-related, and hopefully we can get Congress to move on it. There's some bipartisan movement on this issue as well. But I'm under no illusions; this is a tough issue for people, and it's a hard one. But the system is not working right now.

And when you talk about border security, George, it's—it would be better if our Border Patrol agents were chasing down drugs and

guns than trying to chase down people. And by that I mean it would be a much more efficient use of taxpayers' money if the system were legal, the worker system was legal so that the Border Patrol could focus on other issues. In other words, if it were legal, people wouldn't have to get in the back of an 18-wheeler. If it were legal to come here and work, you wouldn't have to walk miles across the hot desert. And it would make it easier to protect our border with an immigration system that worked on legalizing work.

Yes, sir.

Government Video News Releases

Q. Thank you, Mr. President, Bryan Monroe from Knight Ridder. We're all aware of the past issues with Armstrong Williams and the video news releases and using Government funds to promote, through media and journalism, positions that you feel you need to get out. Is that consistent with your values and your First Amendment beliefs? And do you think that's deceptive to the American people?

The President. Yes, it's deceptive to the American people if it's not disclosed. And I, first of all, in reviewing this issue, have been told this has gone on for quite a while. It makes—that doesn't excuse the behavior here, but nevertheless it has been, in that it's a legal—it's legal for—to use these video news clips. But it's incumbent upon people who use them to say, "This news clip was produced by the Federal Government."

Armstrong Williams—it was wrong what happened there in the Education Department. But no, I think there needs to be full disclosure about the sourcing of the video news clip in order to make sure that people don't think their taxpayers' money is being used to—in wrong fashion.

Thank you.

Death Penalty/Theresa Marie Schiavo Case

Q. Mr. President, Wendy Zomparelli of the Roanoke Times in Virginia. In the aftermath of the terribly distressing national debate over the case of Terri Schiavo, you spoke of the need to establish a culture of life, and yet there's one way in which the United States has long been out of step with much

of the rest of the world in terms of one's appreciation of life, and that is in the use of the death penalty.

The President. Right.

Q. Can you please talk about a little bit about your view of the death penalty and how that fits into your vision of a culture of life?

The President. Sure. Thanks. I have been supportive of the death penalty both as Governor and President. And the difference between the case of Terri Schiavo and the case of a convicted killer is the difference between guilt and innocence. And I happen to believe that the death penalty, when properly applied, saves lives of others. And so I'm comfortable with my beliefs that there's no contradiction between the two.

Representative Tom DeLay

Q. Mr. President, Bill Sternberg with USA Today.

The President. Oh, hi there. Got a great seat, didn't you? [Laughter]

Q. Yes. Your fellow Republican from Texas, Tom DeLay, has blamed the ethical controversy around him largely on bias by the liberal news media. Do you agree with him on that—

The President. Of course not. [Laughter] No, go ahead. Sorry to interrupt you.

Q. —and do you think Mr. DeLay has become a liability to your party or your agenda?

The President. No, I appreciate that. Look, as I've read his comments today, he wants the Ethics Committee to review his case, and he's willing to step up and talk to the Ethics Committee about it. And secondly, I'm looking forward to working with Tom. He's been a very effective leader. We've gotten a lot done in the Legislature, and I'm convinced we'll get more done in the Legislature. And I'm looking forward to working with him.

Yes, sir.

Freedom of Information Act

Q. Mr. President, Tim Franklin from the Baltimore Sun. I know you'd be disappointed if you didn't get an FOI question—

The President. I thought you were going to ask about the, like the Oriole-National

thing, you know—[laughter]—the broadcast agreement or whatever. [Laughter]

Q. In processing FOI requests, should Government officials presume that information should be given to citizens? Or should the burden fall on citizens to convince Government to give them access to information?

The President. That's an interesting way to put the question. Look, the presumption ought to be that citizens ought to know as much as possible about the Government decisionmaking. Rich and I talked about this backstage a little bit, of course. He's constantly lobbying me. [Laughter]

I know there is a tension now between making the decision of that which is—that which can be exposed without jeopardizing the war on terror, and I understand there's a suspicion that we—we're too security-conscience [conscious]. * Let me refer you to the WMD report that the Silberman-Robb Commission—as an example, of how I hope that we're becoming balanced between that which the public ought to know and that which, if we were to expose, would jeopardize our capacity to do our job, which is to defend America.

Ninety percent of the report was declassified. I think that might have surprised the press corps. I don't know; I don't want to speak for you all. But I think people following this issue were surprised that so much was declassified. And yet, the Silberman-Robb Commission made it really clear that had the other 10 percent been declassified, it would have created—it would have jeopardized our capacity to protect the country. It would have exposed sources and uses.

Rich talked about, you know, I didn't realize we spent that much money on protecting it, but we also spend a lot of money on analyzing FOIA, because somebody told me there's 3.5 million FOIA requests a year, which is a lot. I can't tell you the percentage which pass or not pass, but there is an active interest in people reading documents. And I would hope that those who expose documents are wise about the difference between that which truly would jeopardize national security and that which should be read.

* White House correction.

Look, John Cornyn is a good friend, and we look forward to analyzing and working with legislation that will make—it would hope—put a free press’ mind at ease that you’re not being denied information you shouldn’t [should]° see. I will tell you, though, I am worried about things getting in the press that put people’s lives at risk. And I know you—I’m sure you feel the same way, and everybody in the room would feel that same way. And it’s that judgment about what would put somebody’s life at risk and what doesn’t, is where there’s tension.

And to answer your question, I believe in open government. I’ve always believed in open government. Rich is right. You know, I don’t e-mail, however. And there’s a reason. I don’t want you reading my personal stuff. There has got to be a certain sense of privacy. You know, you’re entitled to how I make decisions, and you’re entitled to ask questions, which I answer. I don’t think you’re entitled to be able to read my mail between my daughters and me.

And so I’ve made an easy decision there. I just don’t do it, which is sad, really, when you think about it. Everything is investigated in Washington, and that’s just the nature of the way here right now. And so we’re losing a lot of history, not just with me but with other Presidents as well. And so there’s a balance through all this. And I hope it’s said—when it’s all said and done, that we were fair to the press corps and the American people.

I said it’s hard—in my Inaugural Address, I did talk about, we’ve got to be consistent. I talked to Vladimir Putin about a free press. We’ve got to make sure our own press is free. I know that. I talked to the people in Iraq about a free press and transparency and openness, and I’m mindful we can’t talk one way and do another. But we’re still at war, and that’s important for people to realize.

Right after September the 11th, I was fully aware that the farther we got away from September the 11th, the more likely it would be that people would forget the stakes. I wish I could report that all is well. It’s not. It’s just not. It’s going to take a while. What is better is that there’s fewer Al Qaida, and we got them off balance, and we’re continuing

to press. And so long as people can be endangered by leaks, we just got to be real careful.

Anyway, I don’t know if—I probably talked your—talked you to death. That’s call filibustering. [Laughter]

Thank you.

CIA Employee Identity Disclosure Investigation

Q. Mr. President, Mike Lloyd, the Grand Rapids Press, Grand Rapids, Michigan, kind of a followup on the same topic. When you talk about risks of exposing sources of information that could have an impact on life, do you think that Judith Miller and Matt Cooper are wrong for not disclosing their sources?

The President. Why don’t we let the courts decide that. You think I’m going there? You’re crazy. [Laughter]

Q. Then I have a followup—

The President. Right answer, Herman? Now, if it were Herman, I would say, lock him up. [Laughter]

I’m not going to talk about that, seriously—

Q. I have a followup that might help you, then. Do you have two tickets to tonight’s game? [Laughter]

The President. Yes. Depends on what you write next time. [Laughter]

No, look, this is all—we’re all under the microscope on this issue. This is an issue that there is a—Mr. Fitzgerald is looking into all aspects of this issue, and so it’s—on the advice of counsel, I’m not talking. [Laughter]

Freedom of Information Act

Q. Good afternoon, Mr. President. I’m Craig Klugman from the Fort Wayne Journal Gazette. I, too, have a follow-up question on FOIA. The longest pending FOIA request is over two decades old. My own newspaper has received answers to FOI requests long after the reporter has left the newspaper. Is there anything your office can or should do to speed up responses to legitimate FOI requests?

The President. First of all, I was happy to hear that the request was more than two decades. I thought he was going to say, like, 4 years and 2 months old. [Laughter] I have no idea how to answer your question on this particular request. And I will be glad to get

° White House correction.

Rich to send it over. I really don't. I'm not dodging. I don't know what the request is. I don't know who you made the request to. I don't know why it's taken 20 years.

Q. It's not that particular request; it is just the whole nature that some FOI requests take years and years to get an answer.

The President. Was this a request to the White House or was it to—

Q. It was an FBI request. But I'm talking in general terms: Is there anything your office can or should do?

The President. I think that FOIA requests ought to be dealt with as expeditiously as possible. But again, I just don't know the facts on this one. And I would hope that, at least the FOIA requests to the White House, our staff deals with them quickly or as quickly as humanly possible.

Yes, ma'am.

Q. Hi, Margaret Sullivan with the Buffalo News, Mr. President. Following up just a bit on the question of classified information, which we discussed, would you support a requirement that agencies submit an impact statement, sort of like an environmental impact statement, before they make a determination that large categories of information should be kept secret? Given that the U.S. Information Security Oversight Office, which monitors classification, has expressed concern about the sharp increase in unwarranted classifications of Government information.

The President. Yes. I'll look at the idea. Again, I don't know enough about it. But I think the philosophical answer I gave was that the people deserve to know so long as it doesn't jeopardize their security. Put it in that context. But if there is a—again, this is—is this a part of the Cornyn law, I presume?

Mr. Oppel. The Cornyn law would put a limit of a maximum 20 days on how long an agency has to respond.

The President. I just need to—I, frankly, haven't looked at the particulars of the Cornyn idea. Be glad to look at it. Thanks. Sorry about that.

Decency Standards for Satellite and Cable Television

Q. Mr. President, Scott Anderson with Tribune Interactive in Chicago. There are

those in Congress and elsewhere who would propose that the FCC be expanded or legislation be passed that would provide for decency standards on satellite television and cable television. Your thoughts on that, sir?

The President. I didn't quite get it all, the FCC, the Michael Powell suggestion on decency standards?

Q. Yes, there are those who would like to place on satellite and cable some decency standards.

The President. Yes, I'm for that. I think there ought to be a standard. On the other hand, I fully understand that the final edit or the final decision is a parent turning off the TV. I mean, the ultimate responsibility in a consumer-driven economy is for people to say, "I'm not going to watch it," and turn the knob off. That's how best to make decisions and how best to send influences. But I don't mind standards being set out for people to adjudge the content of a show, to help parents make right decisions. Government ought to help parents, not hinder parents in sending good messages to their children.

But look, I mean, we're a free society. The marketplace makes decisions. If you don't like something, don't watch it. And presumably, advertising dollars will wither, and the show will go off the air. But I have no problems with standards being set to help parents make good decisions.

Yes, sir.

Federal Emergency Management Agency/Florida Disasters

Q. Randy Hammer from Pensacola, Florida. The four hurricanes that hit the State and, since then, the counties that were hardest hit have had problems getting information as well as help from FEMA. At the congressional hearings last month, there was a sense that FEMA was more effective and responsive when it wasn't under the umbrella of Homeland Security. Would you support removing FEMA from under the umbrella of Homeland Security?

The President. No. I would support getting FEMA to do its job no matter what the umbrella it's under. I was, one, impressed by the FEMA response. Of course, sometimes I only get the cook's tour. But I—

Q. Well, it was pretty good when you showed up. [*Laughter*]

The President. That's what I was afraid of. [*Laughter*]

Q. It was after you left that—

The President. No, I think FEMA ought to be under the umbrella. I just think it ought to do its job as good as possible. Look, if FEMA—I don't think that is—I don't think the umbrella under which FEMA exists will make the decisions as to whether or not people respond to a national catastrophe like that.

I do get feedback from your Governor—[*laughter*—who felt like things were going all right. The Congressmen from that part of the world—the last time I was down there, I asked them if they thought the response was—the initial response was good, and the question is, is the followup response?

Q. Right, it's the followup response.

The President. Yes, the SBA loans, the help. And he didn't complain—or they didn't complain. But I'll check back into it. No, I think FEMA ought to stay in the Homeland Security Department, though.

A couple more, and then I've got to go warm up. [*Laughter*]

Independence of the Judicial Branch

Q. Mr. President, Chris Peck, editor of the Commercial Appeal in Memphis. This morning we heard Floyd Abrams, a First Amendment attorney, who said that greatest challenge and the greatest threat to the First Amendment now is the effort that Congress is making to put pressure on judges, to try to say that judges should not act independently. And part of this grew out of the Terri Schiavo case, but there are other pressures growing. What is your thought about the role Congress should play in trying to influence the decisions of judges?

The President. I think there are three distinct branches of Government, and they ought to act independently and serve as checks and balances. I'm strongly for an independent judiciary. My focus with Congress on judges is that they're not approving enough of my judges in the United States Senate. And I think my judges ought to get an up-or-down vote, period. I think they ought to get a hearing, and I think they ought to get to the floor of the Senate, and I think

they ought to deserve an up-or-down vote. But I'm strongly for an independent judiciary.

China-U.S. Relations

Q. Mr. President, Rod Sandeen from the Freedom Forum. You talked that there's a lot going on overseas and mentioned some countries. I'd like to ask you about China. What is our Government's policy toward China?

The President. Well, that is a complex question because the relationship is complex. On trade, we're friends with China, for example, for floating our currency, so we can have free and fair trade with China. With human rights, we expect China to be a society that welcomes all religions. When it comes to foreign policy, we expect China to cooperate in the war on terror, and we expect there to be peace with Taiwan.

I mean, there is a lot to our relationship with China. My view of China is, is that it's a great nation that's growing like mad. That's one of the reasons why Americans are seeing over \$2 gasoline, is because demand for energy in China is huge, and supply around the world hasn't kept up with the increase in demand. That's why you're seeing crude go up, and crude is the feed stock for gasoline.

But we've got a very complex and a good relationship with China right now, and I intend to keep it that way. But I'm constantly reminding China that a great society is one that welcomes and honors human rights, for example; welcomes the Catholic Church in its midst; doesn't fear religious movements. As a matter of fact, a vibrant society is one that welcomes religious movements. But with China—we've got good relations with China.

Listen, I've got to hop. I want to thank you for your time, appreciate your interests. God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:22 p.m. at the J.W. Marriott Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Richard A. Oppel, past president, American Society of Newspaper Editors, who introduced the President; Ken Herman, reporter, Austin American-Statesman; Karla Garrett Harshaw, president, American Society of Newspaper Editors; Minister of External Affairs K. Natwar Singh of India; President Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan; Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of Israel; President

Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) of the Palestinian Authority; Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice; columnist Armstrong Williams; President Vladimir Putin of Russia; Patrick J. Fitzgerald, U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois; and Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida. He also referred to the Commission on the Intelligence Capabilities of the United States Regarding Weapons of Mass Destruction (Silberman-Robb Commission).

Statement on House of Representatives Action on Bankruptcy Reform Legislation

April 14, 2005

I commend the House for acting in bipartisan fashion to curb abuses of the bankruptcy system. These commonsense reforms will make the system stronger and better so that more Americans—especially lower-income Americans—have greater access to credit. I look forward to signing the bill into law.

Proclamation 7885—National Volunteer Week, 2005

April 14, 2005

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

The great strength of our Nation is found in the hearts and souls of the American people. During National Volunteer Week, we recognize the millions of individuals who touch our lives as soldiers in America's armies of compassion. Our Nation's volunteers inspire us with their dedication, commitment, and efforts to build a more hopeful country for our citizens.

Americans take pride in the example of citizens who give their time and energy to care for the most vulnerable among us. In the past year, millions of volunteers have mentored children, provided shelter for the homeless, prepared for and responded to disasters, cared for the sick and elderly, fed the hungry, and performed other acts of kindness and community service. These selfless deeds have contributed to a culture of compassion and taught young people the importance of giving back to their communities.

My Administration is encouraging volunteer service through the USA Freedom Corps, and we have seen tremendous growth in the number of volunteers. Last year, over 64 million Americans offered their time as volunteers, an increase of nearly 5 million people since 2002. In the aftermath of the Indian Ocean tsunami, the world witnessed the compassion of our Nation as millions of our citizens donated generously to help the many people affected by the disaster. By participating in public service programs such as the Peace Corps, Senior Corps, AmeriCorps, and grassroots efforts such as Citizen Corps, our citizens are helping others. My Administration also supports faith-based and community groups whose volunteers bring hope and healing to those in need.

During National Volunteer Week, we thank those who volunteer to serve a cause greater than self, and I commend the more than 200,000 Americans who have earned the Volunteer Service Award from my Council on Service and Civic Participation. I urge all those who wish to get involved to visit the USA Freedom Corps website at www.usafreedomcorps.gov. By giving back to our communities, we can change America for the better one heart and one soul at a time.

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 17 through April 23, 2005, as National Volunteer Week. I call upon all Americans to recognize and celebrate the important work that volunteers do every day across our country. I also encourage citizens to explore ways to help their neighbors and become involved in their communities.

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

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., April 15, 2005]

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

Proclamation 7886—Small Business Week, 2005

April 14, 2005

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

America's economy is the most prosperous in the world, and the small business sector is one of its great strengths. During Small Business Week, we honor small business owners and workers, and we reaffirm our commitment to keeping America the best place in the world to do business.

Our economy is strong and growing stronger. More Americans are working today than ever before. The unemployment rate is lower than the average rate of the 1970's, 1980's, and 1990's. Homeownership is at a record high. Family incomes are rising. Small businesses are at the heart of this growth, creating most new private-sector jobs in our economy and helping our citizens succeed.

My Administration is committed to keeping small businesses vibrant and strong. We provided tax relief and streamlined tax reporting requirements for small businesses. We are working to reduce the burden of unnecessary regulation and excessive litigation. We are working to make health care more available and affordable. We are opening up markets for U.S. products through free trade agreements and by enforcing existing trade laws. And we have promoted a culture of ownership so that more people can own their own homes and start their own businesses.

As small business owners and employees add to the vitality of our economy, they also inspire others to realize the full promise of our Nation. I join all Americans in celebrating the entrepreneurial spirit and hard work of our small business owners and employees.

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 24 through April 30, 2005, as Small Business Week. I call upon all the people of the United States to observe this week with appropriate cere-

monies, activities, and programs that celebrate the achievements of small business owners and their employees and encourage and foster the development of new small businesses.

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

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 9:12 a.m., April 15, 2005]

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

Memorandum on Waiver and Certification of Statutory Provisions Regarding the Palestine Liberation Organization

April 14, 2005

Presidential Determination No. 2005-22

Memorandum for the Secretary of State

Subject: Waiver and Certification of Statutory Provisions Regarding the Palestine Liberation Organization

Pursuant to the authority and conditions contained in section 534(d) of the Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2005, Public Law 108-447, I hereby determine and certify that it is important to the national security interests of the United States to waive the provisions of section 1003 of the Anti-Terrorism Act of 1987, Public Law 100-204.

This waiver shall be effective for a period of 6 months from the date hereof. You are hereby authorized and directed to transmit this determination to the Congress and to publish it in the *Federal Register*.

George W. Bush

**Remarks in a Discussion on
Strengthening Social Security in
Kirtland, Ohio**

April 15, 2005

The President. Thank you all for coming. Please be seated. I appreciate you coming, Steve, thanks. Glad to give you a ride home on Air Force One. [Laughter] I really do like working with Steve. He's a thoughtful fellow who cares about issues, and this is—what we're here to talk about is an important issue, which is Social Security.

Before I do, I want to thank the community college for hosting us. I'm a big believer in community colleges. Community colleges have got the capacity to change curriculum to meet the needs of a local workforce, for example. And one of the real challenges of the 21st century is to make sure people have got the skills necessary to fill the jobs of the 21st century. And a fabulous place to find those skills is our community colleges.

So thanks for what you do. Thanks for being a host. Thanks for letting us come and have a—what I think you'll find to be a really interesting educational experience about a vital issue confronting the country.

I want to thank Lieutenant Governor Bruce Johnson for joining us today. I appreciate State Treasurer Jennette Bradley for joining us today.

I want to thank the mayor, Ed Podojil, who is here. I appreciate you, Mr. Mayor. And I want to thank Dave Anderson. The last time I saw Dave, I said to Dave, I said, "Dave, fill the potholes." [Laughter] That's just a piece of advice. [Laughter] And so I saw him in line coming in. He said, "I'm just here to report for duty, Mr. President. I did fill the potholes." [Laughter] You'd get reelected if you want to run again. [Laughter]

Anyway, I want to thank Anita Isom, who's with us. Anita is a young lady I met when we landed there at the airport in Cleveland. She is a volunteer, and she has helped and been awarded because of her reading-related activities that benefit others. The reason I like to mention a soul like Anita is that, no matter what your age, no matter where you live, you can help this country by becoming a volunteer, by helping somebody who hurts, by teaching somebody to read, or feed some-

body who's hungry, or put your arm around somebody who needs love.

I like to remind people that the greatest strength of this country is the heart and souls of our fellow citizens and the great compassion of our people. And so if you're interested in serving America, do so by becoming a volunteer in the community in which you live and help change this country one heart and one soul at a time.

So, Anita, thanks for coming. Thanks for meeting me at the airport.

Let me talk about Social Security. I could be talking about a lot of things, peace and freedom. The world is changing right now because societies are becoming more free. And as societies become more free, more democratic, the world will become more peaceful.

Today I went to a little restaurant, and the owner happens to be Lebanese American. And he said, "Thank you, Mr. President, for staying focused on a country like Lebanon and insisting that Lebanon be allowed to have free elections." And I assured him, like I'll assure you, that when America speaks, we mean what we say. When we say "free elections" to the Syrians, we mean free elections. Get out of Lebanon, and let this good country have a free election as scheduled. When I say, "Get out of Lebanon," I mean out of Lebanon with all your troops and all your security services and all the people trying to influence that Government. It is in the world's interest that Lebanon be allowed to have free elections because a free society will help spread the peace.

We're dealing with a lot of issues, and in Washington, DC, I've submitted a tough budget and expect the Congress to be wise about how they spend your money. I also know that Congress needs to stop debating and get an energy bill to my desk now, during this session.

Congress also needs to take serious this issue about Social Security. People say, "Why did you bring it up?" I said, "I brought it up because I see a serious problem that needs to be fixed now, before it's too late. I also brought it up because the job of a President is to confront problems and not pass them on." The easy route in politics is to say, "Well, we got us a problem. We'll

just let the next person handle it.” The easy route for a Member of the United States Senate is to say, “There is a problem, but it perhaps can wait. We’ll just let another United States Senate fix it or send it to the House.” That’s not the way I think. I think I got elected because people expect me, when I see a problem, to bring it to the fore and to work with people to get it solved.

And here’s the problem in Social Security. There’s a lot of people like me getting ready to retire. [Laughter] As a matter of fact, I’m retiring in 4 years—at least I hit retirement age in 4 years, which is convenient—[laughter]—in my case. I turn 62 in 2008. And I’m not the only one turning 62 in 2008. As a matter of fact, there’s a lot of us. We’re called the baby boomer generation. And not only is my generation fixing to retire, we are living longer than previous generations. And not only are we living longer than previous generations, we have been promised greater benefits than the previous generation. In other words, people running for office say, “Put me in office, and I’ll increase your Social Security benefits for you.” And guess what? They did.

And so a lot of us are getting ready to retire, and the problem comes because there’s not a lot of people paying into the system. See, in 1950, there were 16 workers for every beneficiary. So you can imagine the load was somewhat lighter than today, when there’s now 3.3 workers for every beneficiary. And soon there’s going to be two workers for every beneficiary. You’ve got fewer workers paying into a system that is going to require more and more out-flow, because a lot of us are retiring, living longer, and been promised greater benefits. And the math just doesn’t work.

It’s a pay-as-you-go system, by the way. That means, when the money goes in, it comes right out. It’s not a trust. I mean, some people in America, I suspect, think that the Federal Government all these years has been collecting your payroll taxes and we’re holding it for you, and then when you get ready to retire, we give it back to you. That’s not the way it works. The way it works is, is that we collect your payroll taxes and we pay the current retirees their benefits, and then with leftover money, we spend it on other things.

That’s the way the system works. It’s pay-as-you-go.

And in 2017, the pay-as-you-go system is going to go negative. In other words, more money goes out than comes in through payroll taxes. And every year thereafter, if we don’t do something, it gets worse and worse and worse and worse. To give you an example of how bad it gets, in 2027 the Federal Government is going to have to come up with \$200 billion more a year just to make good on the payments, and it gets worse the next year and the next year and the next year.

I also want to assure those of you who are on Social Security, you will get your check. See, nothing changes for somebody born prior to 1950. And that’s very important for people in Ohio to hear, because I fully understand a lot of people count on that Social Security check. That Social Security check means a lot to a lot of people in America, and they’re counting on it. That’s why, for example, in some political campaigns people try to say to seniors, “You know, if so-and-so gets into office, he’s going to take your check away from you.” That’s the old scare tactics. Sometimes during this debate it seems like people are resorting to those scare tactics. They’re telling seniors, “Really what they’re talking about is taking your check away.” Let me just tell you point-blank, if you’re receiving a Social Security check in Ohio, this Government of ours will continue to honor you, honor that commitment.

This issue isn’t about you. This issue is about your grandchildren. The issue confronting the Social Security system is an issue for young workers, young people coming up. One time I was having a discussion, and the person said, “I saw a survey.” I said, “Oh, yeah, what did it say?” “It said young workers like me are more likely to see—think we’re more likely to see a UFO than get a Social Security check.” [Laughter] That may be pretty close to accurate.

I’ll tell you this, if this Federal Government doesn’t act, your bill, your payroll taxes are going to have to go up a lot in order to pay the promises made to me, or the Government is going to have to slash the benefits, or the Government is going to have to make dramatic cuts in other programs. And so I

see a problem. I think the math is clear. And so now is the time to get something done.

And so I stood up in front of the United States at my State of the Union Address and said to the Congress, "Here's the problem. And I'm going to put some ideas on the table," ideas that I didn't necessarily think of; ideas that President Clinton had thought of or Senator Moynihan, a great Member of the United States Senate from New York who, unfortunately, has passed away, or former Congressman Tim Penny—good ideas about different ways to permanently fix the problem. And that's what Congress must do. It must permanently fix the problem.

In 1983, one of my predecessors, President Ronald Reagan, got together with Speaker O'Neill from Massachusetts, and they said, "We got a problem. Let's fix it." See, the math wasn't working then, either. It was called a 75-year fix. They signed a bill—I love the spirit, by the way, of Republicans and Democrats setting aside their political parties and focusing on getting something done for the American people. And the President did that; the Speaker did that for the 75-year fix. The only problem is, 22 years later we're still talking about it. And so now is the time to bring people together from both parties to have a permanent fix, and all ideas are on the table. And I'm looking forward to discussing any good idea with a Democrat or a Republican.

I imagine there's some people fearful in Washington, DC, about maybe laying out an interesting idea and that one of the political parties will get all over them for laying it out. If I had anything to do with it, it would be political amnesty for people bringing good ideas forward. Now is not the time to play political "gotcha" with a member of any political party for stepping up and bringing forth ideas to do what they think is right to help solve this problem permanently for generations of Americans to come.

Now, one of the ideas that I think is important for the Congress to consider is to allow a younger worker to be able to set aside some of her or his own money in a personal savings account, as a part of a Social Security solution. See, I think Government ought to say, "We'll give you an opportunity, if you want to—your choice." We're not saying, "You

must set aside money." We're saying, "You ought to have the opportunity to. It ought to be voluntary to set aside some money so that you can earn a better rate of return on your money." People ought to be given a chance to invest in a conservative mix of bonds and stocks.

In other words, it's part of a permanent solution in order to make sure the younger worker gets a better deal. The younger worker ought to be allowed to set aside some of the payroll taxes. And this is a concept, by the way, that has been tried before. I haven't invented the idea. As a matter of fact, the Federal—Congress before has said we ought to allow people working in the United States Congress and Congressmen and United States Senators to do just what I described. The Federal employee Thrift Savings Plan allows Members of Congress and the United States Senate to take some of their money and set it aside in a personal savings account. Why? Because they know they'll get a better rate of return on their money than if the Federal Government held it. And it seems fair to me that if setting aside money in a personal savings account is good enough for a Member of the United States Congress, it's good enough for workers all across America.

Okay, so I went to school with a guy who made all A's. It's probably recognized by now I didn't do all that well in college at times—*[laughter]*—and I brought him with me. He's an expert. He's my National Economic Adviser. But I want you to notice, you students out there, who's the President and who's the adviser. *[Laughter]*

I've got a fabulous staff. People need to judge the President based upon who he listens to. And as you know in foreign policy matters, I listen to some really capable people, Condi—Condoleezza Rice, the Secretary of State; Secretary Rumsfeld. And on the domestic side, I've got great people working with me. One of them is Al Hubbard, a business guy out of Indiana, started businesses, ran businesses, entrepreneurial. He's agreed to come and serve as the National Economic Adviser to the President. He briefs me on a regular basis. And one of the big issues that I've got him working on is Social Security.

I want to thank you for coming, Al. And if you got something to say, now is your opportunity. *[Laughter]* Please don't try to defend yourself because the President always has the last word. *[Laughter]*

Allan B. Hubbard. Yes, sir, I've learned that very quickly. Thanks for giving me this opportunity.

[At this point, Mr. Hubbard made brief remarks.]

The President. You're the guy who authored the bill?

Raymond Sines. I had the first bill in 1994.

The President. Really.

Mr. Sines. Introduced it.

The President. If you got any spare time, you might want to come up to Washington and work the issue with me. *[Laughter]*

Mr. Sines. Well, Mr. President, I really like Lake County. *[Laughter]*

[Mr. Sines, commissioner, Lake County, OH, made further remarks, concluding as follows.]

Mr. Sines. I have three daughters, and kind of in the same mode as you, we're in a special club when you raise daughters.

The President. Yes. Your hair is about as white as mine. *[Laughter]*

Mr. Sines. Yes, it is, and it's getting whiter—and it's getting whiter.

[Mr. Sines made further remarks.]

The President. It must make you feel good to be able to sit here in front of all these TV cameras and say, "I saw a problem. I worked with people from both sides of the aisle to fix it, and it's working." That's the spirit the people in the United States Congress must hear. It's not time to play politics. It's time to fix the problem. It's time to set aside all this business about, my party may look good, or so-and-so may look good, and so-and-so may look bad. We've really got an opportunity, a need to fix it.

And secondly, I am—I just want you to know that like you went through, there were some moments as to whether or not you thought the thing would pass. Yes, well, you know something, I'm going to be relentless on the subject because I believe the American people, once they understand there's a

problem, once they understand the math, and once seniors understand that nothing is going to change, the next question to Members who have been elected is, "Why aren't you doing something about it?" See, if there's a problem—you saw the problem—and people begin to recognize the nature of the problem and the size of the problem and the cost of inactivity, and senior citizens understand that the propaganda they may have heard about somebody taking away their check simply isn't true, the next logical extension of the debate and the discussion is, "Say, if we got a problem and I'm going to get my check, what are you going to do about my grandkids?" It's a generational issue.

And we're just starting. So don't worry about me, Ray. I'm feeling pretty good about where we stand. The American people are wise. They just need to know the facts.

Part of the facts is understanding we have a problem, and part of the facts is what you're going to do about it. And today, this is an interesting opportunity for people to see a system that is—I bet most people in America don't understand what happens here in Ohio when it comes to the retirement system. And so thank you for being an innovator, and thank you for being a leader.

Now, who's next, Hubs?

Mr. Hubbard. Mr. Scott Johnson, who is very involved with the Ohio Public Employees Retirement System. And he can describe this new innovation that Ray provided through the legislature.

The President. Good. Tell us what you do.

Scott Johnson. Thank you, Mr. President. I'm Scott Johnson. I'm Governor Taft's director of administrative services. That's a central services organization similar to your General Services Administration, only adding human resources and personnel.

[Mr. Johnson made further remarks.]

The President. By the way, I went to West Virginia the other day and saw the asset base of the so-called Social Security trust. You know what? It was about four or five file cabinets full of paper. *[Laughter]* It was the IOU left behind from one hand of Government to the other hand of Government.

Mr. Johnson. We've been operating that since 1935, but of course, society has changed a bit over that period of time.

[Mr. Johnson made further remarks.]

The President. Sorry to interrupt you. Presidents do that sometimes. [Laughter] Portability—so if somebody is listening, and they're not exactly sure what that means and why that would be important to them—

Mr. Johnson. University professors typically move around—

The President. Right.

Mr. Johnson. —and in mid-career may move from one university to another. And so they've already gotten some sort of retirement system underway and would like to move that from where they are to where they're going.

The President. If they change jobs, they could take their retirement account with them.

Mr. Johnson. Exactly.

The President. Yes. That's important for people to know. That's a concept that's an important part of any good plan, would be to recognize the needs of the person that is receiving a part of their retirement. They can move.

Go ahead.

[Mr. Johnson made further remarks.]

The President. I think that's a reasonable concept. Don't you, folks? Government says to the people, "You have a choice to make," you know?

Mr. Johnson. So what you, therefore, have with that combined program is a system where the portion that the employer, the State or the county or the city, contributes is administered by the professionals at the system. And the amount that the employee himself or herself contributes could be managed by that employee.

[Mr. Johnson made further remarks.]

The President. Yes, I guess you can't take the money and put it in the lottery—

Mr. Johnson. Well, even though we run a lottery—

The President. —or on the trotting jockey—trotters or whatever it is next door here.

Mr. Johnson. No, sir, you can't do that.

The President. The point is that there is a relatively conservative or conservative mix of what's available for people to invest in. Is that an accurate assessment of the choices people have to make?

Mr. Johnson. The choices are all responsible ones, Mr. President.

The President. I don't know about the lottery being irresponsible—[laughter].

Mr. Johnson. But there is a great deal of variety and individual ability to be aggressive or not so aggressive as one chooses.

The President. That's right. See, it's an interesting concept that the people of Ohio have put in place. And the government basically said, "Hey, why don't we trust people? After all, it's their own money. Why don't we give them a chance to"—but you just can't go—there is a certain set of parameters, I presume, Scott, that—just like there is for the Federal employees, by the way. In other words, "Here's some options for you."

Some people think about whether or not people ought to be allowed to invest. They call it risky. I don't think it's risky to let people earn a better rate of return on their money, but obviously there's some parameters. There's some go-bys. And as you said, I think there's eight different options—nine different options.

Mr. Johnson. Nine, yes.

The President. In other words, the Government says—the Government does play a role and says, "Here's nine different opportunities for you to have a mix of stocks and bonds." Or it can go totally bonds, totally stocks, or is it generally a mixture? How does it—

Mr. Johnson. Mr. President, there are layers of choices you can make. You could, if you wish, choose one of three pre-mixed options.

The President. Got it.

Mr. Johnson. One would be conservative, one less conservative, and one, frankly, aggressive. Or you could, if you wish, develop your own asset mixture. You could have some bonds. You could have some equities. You could have TIPS. Conceivably, you could invest it all in bonds.

The President. Yes.

Mr. Johnson. You could do that if you wish to do so.

The President. Okay. You got any average rate of return on these programs? Or is that impossible to do?

Mr. Johnson. It's not impossible to do, but it's beyond my level of expertise. [Laughter]

The President. Okay. Well, I was talking with Senator McCain, who told me that he thought his rate of return, I think, was over 7 percent in his employee retirement Thrift Savings Plan, over time. In other words, a conservative mix of stocks and bonds that the Government—Federal Government allows Federal employees to make, a rate of return over 7 percent. You see, if you're keeping your money in the Social Security system, it's about 1.8 percent. And the difference for a younger worker between 7 percent and 1.8 percent over time is a lot of money, because interest compounds. It grows. Money grows over time.

And I think that's one of the reasons why employees said, "If it's good enough for professors, why don't you let me have a taste of this too? Why don't you give me a chance to watch my money grow and let me control it, and let me own it?"

So, I appreciate you bringing that forward, Scott. Thank you.

Mr. Johnson. Yes, sir.

The President. Very good job.

Betty Young, welcome. What do you do, Betty?

Betty Young. Thank you, Mr. President, and it's an honor and a pleasure to be here. I'm the executive director of human resource services for the University of Cincinnati.

[Ms. Young made further remarks.]

The President. First, you notice that Betty talked about 401(k)s and IRAs. I don't remember 401(k)s when I was growing up. In other words, there is a new culture in America when it comes to people managing their own assets; 401(k)s encourage management of your own assets—IRAs. In other words, more and more people in America are now becoming used to controlling their—managing their own money.

I presume you find a certain reticence initially, when—that says, "I'm not so sure I can do this."

Ms. Young. But you don't have to be a Wall Street wiz.

The President. Right.

Ms. Young. For example, the university requires that the different providers that offer these programs, that they provide educational materials.

[Ms. Young made further remarks.]

The President. That's good. You know, interesting thing that Betty talked about was encouraging people to open up a quarterly statement, or if you so choose, you can look at your wealth on a daily basis. I think that's an interesting concept. It seems like to me we'd like all of America doing that, watching their assets grow, not just Wall Street wizzes but everybody. I mean, if more people owned something—I like the idea of having a program in Ohio where it encourages ownership—not just one type of person but all people have got access to ownership.

It seems like to me a more hopeful America is going to be one in which people say, "I'm watching my assets grow, and I'm more"—let me just say, politicians will be—their actions will be a lot more scrutinized when somebody is watching whether or not the decisions made in Washington is affecting their work on a daily or quarterly basis. In other words, the more people paying attention to their assets, the more people will be paying attention to what happens in Washington, DC, or in Columbus, Ohio.

So thanks for bringing that to my mind. Let me ask you this: Obviously, there's a certain role for the State, and that is the State has chosen the providers—is that right, screened and chosen the providers?

Ms. Young. Yes. The Ohio Department of Insurance screens and chooses the providers that participate in the Ohio Alternative Retirement Program.

The President. So the charge that somehow a fly-by-night is going to get a hold of somebody's retirement account and fritter it away is just frivolous.

Ms. Young. Correct, because if there's ever a problem, for example, with one of the providers, then as the person that manages the program at the University of Cincinnati, then I can contact the Department of Insurance or go directly to that company about any issues that we may have.

The President. One of the other things that Betty talked about was mixing risk. And people need to understand that you can constantly change the risk of your asset base, that, for example, if you're 20 years old, you can take a little more risk. And when it comes time for fixing to retire, you switch from, perhaps, stocks—mix of stocks and bonds to a greater mix of bonds to stocks, so that you're able to decide for yourself what kind of asset base you have relative to where you are in the retirement—how close you are to retirement age. And I presume people are doing that, constantly switching in and out all the time to manage their assets.

[Ms. Young made further remarks, concluding as follows.]

Ms. Young. So I have my funds in a portion that is guaranteed 6 percent. That won't change during the life of the account.

The President. About 6 percent—it's a lot better than 1.8 percent in the Social Security system. And the difference between the 6 percent and the 1.8 percent over Betty's lifetime is a significant amount of money. And that's important for people to understand. What we're trying to do is to learn lessons from a State like Ohio, apply it at the Federal level, so workers get a better deal. And part of a better deal is a better rate of return. And part of a better deal, by the way, is saying, "I own it."

You listen to Betty's language. She's talking about her assets. She's not relying upon the Government. She says, "These are my assets, and I own these assets." And that's important. The more people own an asset, and the more people are able to say, "I'm going to pass it on to my son or daughter, whoever I choose," the better off America is, you see, being able to spread wealth.

Thank you, Betty. Good job.

Let me say one thing about the Social Security system before we get to Rick. Do you realize the system today is structured so that if you die early and you leave behind a spouse—say, you started working and contributing to the system at age 21, and you died at 51, 30 years of work, and you leave behind a spouse, and the spouse works—like many families in America, there's two spouses working—that the—and the spouse

is the same age as the husband or wife, there are no death benefits if you're younger than 62 years old. And secondly, when the surviving spouse retires, he or she will get to choose between the survivor benefits or the contributions that he or she has made—is owed by the Government, whichever is greater, but not both.

Now, think about that. That's a system in which the person who's worked for 30 years, put in the money, and it's just gone. I don't think that makes sense for a good retirement system. The system here in Ohio essentially says that, if the principle were applied to the Federal Government, you have an asset. It grows. You watch it. You manage it, and if you pass away, you can leave it to your spouse to help that person transition, then help that person live life. It's an asset. This asset doesn't exist in a file cabinet in West Virginia. It's yours. It's an asset that you call your own, that can help you.

Now, when people retire here, I presume you can't spend all your asset base at once.

Ms. Young. You could take a withdrawal on a lump-sum basis, but normally, again, your ARP provider is going to work with you to design how you should now start drawing down on your money to ensure a level of income throughout your remaining lifetime.

The President. That's what the—that's the vision at the Federal level for a personal account, is that there will be a drawdown to help complement the check, however big it's going to be, from the Federal Government. All I'm telling you is, we made promises to younger workers we can't keep. In other words, we've said, "We can pay you." We can't. Do you realize that in order to make sure that the payments that we promised to retirees are kept, that a younger worker may have to pay upwards of an 18-percent payroll tax? Try that on if you're a small-business owner. Try that on if you're struggling to get ahead. We need to fix it now, and one way to—a part of making sure the retirement system works well is to listen to the example right here in the State of Ohio.

Rick, ready to roll?

Richard Stenger. I certainly am.

The President. Okay. What do you do?

Mr. Stenger. I'm currently one of the directors of the Lake Metroparks system. We

want to welcome you back to Lake County. The last time you were here——

The President. Yes, I know—[inaudible]. Thank you.

Mr. Stenger. You and 20,000 friends came and had a good day. [Laughter]

The President. I hope LaTourette stayed behind to clean up. [Laughter]

Mr. Stenger. Steve got busy. He was there, but he was watching us. [Laughter]

The President. Okay. He was an executive. [Laughter]

[Mr. Stenger made further remarks.]

The President. How did your money do in the Social Security system?

Mr. Stenger. Yes, 1.8, I think, right?

The President. Yes. You take a 6-percent differential, or 5.2-percent differential over a number of years, and you're going to see some serious money. And it ought to grow. The Government ought to give opportunities to our fellow citizens to have their money grow in a conservative mix of stocks and bonds, just like they did. It seems to make sense to me.

Mr. Stenger. Mr. President, one of the things that I found very helpful and interesting is the system does a good job of educating, because you come in and you're not sure what to do, and many people are afraid of change. They had a battery of questions you could answer, I think 20-some questions, and it sort of guided you as to where you fit on the investment scale. If you answered the questions, it would give you a score, and the score sort of categorized you into, you're okay to aggressively do it, conservatively do it, moderately do it. So people who are afraid of it don't know—you answer this battery of questions, and it gives you a pretty neat answer.

The President. Yes. See, that's an interesting point. I think some people are fearful of the obligation, I guess, if that's what it—of investing their own money. They're not exactly sure what the words mean. It's kind of an interesting assumption here in America, the investor class is only a certain type of person. I don't buy into that. I think all people are capable of learning what investment means. People from all walks of life, all neighborhoods have got the capacity to man-

age their own money. And you say the system helps people learn the words and learn what all this means. I mean, it's kind of fancy—rate of return, bonds and stocks.

Mr. Stenger. And the nice thing about it too, as Betty mentioned earlier, you can change. If you realize, "Well, I went real aggressive," and your lifestyle changes for whatever reason and you want to change, you can get online—you can do it daily if you so desire—you can take your quarterly statement, analyze it, make changes appropriately if you so desire. It's not like you're stuck with the choice you made.

The President. How do you make sure, like, these firms don't gouge you when it comes to fees? They've got a captive audience. They've got you pretty well roped in once you make the decision. How does Ohio make sure that these fees aren't going up, that they're reasonable?

Mr. Stenger. The fees are defined—Scott would know more than I do, but if I read right, the fees are defined, depending on the plan you chose. I think the plan I chose, they're about .24, if I'm not mistaken.

The President. .24—sounds reasonable.

[Mr. Hubbard made further remarks.]

The President. I appreciate that.

What else you got, Ricky?

[Mr. Stenger made further remarks.]

The President. Well, I appreciate that. Listen, thanks for sharing this with us.

I got on the airplane; I started paying attention to what I was going to hear today; and I was amazed at the willingness of the great State of Ohio to think differently on behalf of the people who live here. And it struck me about how relevant this conversation was going to be, for others to listen to what is possible for Social Security.

Now, look, we need to come together in Washington, and we need to work on a permanent fix. All options are on the table. But part of that solution, in order to make it a better deal for younger workers, is for people of both parties to trust people with their own money, to devise a system that would work similar to the State of Ohio, that would say, "We're going to let you earn a better rate

of return for your money,” that would enable a mom or a dad to pass on their assets to whomever they chose, that would encourage portability, but that makes sense. It makes sense. The more somebody owns something in America, the more they’re going to have a vital stake in the future of this country.

The State of Ohio has incorporated a lot of really important principles in this bill, Ray, and I want to thank you for that. One of the key principles is, Government has got to trust people. The more Government trusts people, trusts people with their own money, the more content, the more prosperous our society will be.

And so I want to thank you all for sharing with us. I hope you found it as educational as I have. I look forward to continuing to take this message to the people of the United States of America. I have great faith in the wisdom of the people of this country, and I fully understand that when the people of this country understand the depth of the problem that a young generation of Americans is going to face, and when senior citizens understand that they’re going to get their check, the question is going to start to be to Members of Congress of both political parties, “How come you’re not fixing it,” because America is going to realize that every year we wait it’s going to cost the young generation of Americans \$600 billion to make this right.

And here’s a fascinating idea, started right here in the great State of Ohio, sponsored by both Republicans and Democrats, that’s working. And Congress needs to pay attention to things that work.

Thank you all for coming, and God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:03 p.m. at Lakeland Community College. In his remarks, he referred to Representative Steven C. LaTourette of Ohio, who introduced the President; Mayor Edward J. Podojil of Kirtland, OH; and Mayor David E. Anderson of Willoughby, OH. Discussion participant Scott Johnson referred to Gov. Bob Taft of Ohio.

Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President’s public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.

April 9

In the morning, at the Bush Ranch in Crawford, TX, the President had an intelligence briefing.

April 11

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he met with Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of Israel.

In the afternoon, the President had lunch with Prime Minister Sharon.

April 12

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Fort Hood, TX, where he had lunch with U.S. military personnel.

In the afternoon, at Fort Hood, the President met with family members of U.S. military personnel killed in Iraq. Later, he returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the evening.

The President announced his intention to nominate Alex M. Azar II to be Deputy Secretary of Health and Human Services.

The President announced his intention to nominate David R. Hill to be General Counsel at the Department of Energy.

The President announced his intention to nominate Brian D. Montgomery to be Assistant Secretary of Housing and Urban Development (Federal Housing Commissioner).

The President announced his intention to nominate Phyllis F. Scheinberg to be an Assistant Secretary of Transportation for Budgets and Programs and, upon appointment, to designate her as Chief Financial Officer.

The President announced his intention to nominate Craig Roberts Stapleton to be Ambassador to France.

The President announced his designation of the following individuals as members of the Presidential delegation to attend the funeral mass of Prince Rainier III of Monaco on April 15: John Lehman (head of delegation); Howard H. Leach; and Leslie McBee.

April 13

In the morning, in his private dining room, the President had breakfast with congressional leaders. He then had an intelligence briefing and met with the National Security Council. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

Later in the morning, in the Oval Office, the President met with 2005 Presidents Cup cocaptains Jack Nicklaus and Gary Player and Professional Golf Association Tour Director Tim Finchem. Later, in the Cabinet Room, he met with Republican congressional leaders.

The White House announced that the President will welcome Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia to the Bush Ranch in Crawford, TX, on April 25.

The White House announced that the President will welcome President Martin Torrijos of Panama to the White House on April 28.

April 14

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with Minister of External Affairs K. Natwar Singh of India.

Later in the morning, in the Cabinet Room, the President met with Republican Members of the House of Representatives to discuss Social Security reform. Later, in the Oval Office, he participated in an interview with representatives of sports media. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with outgoing President James D. Wolfensohn of the World Bank.

In the afternoon, the President participated in a photo opportunity with 2004 Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching recipients.

In the evening, at Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Stadium, the President threw out the first pitch to open the Major League Baseball game between the Washington Nationals and the Arizona Diamondbacks. He and Mrs. Bush and family members then watched the game.

April 15

In the morning, the President met with Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld. He then had an intelligence briefing.

Also in the morning, in the Oval Office, the President met with Prime Minister Jean-Claude Juncker of Luxembourg. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with President Paul Kagame of Rwanda.

Later in the morning, the President traveled to Cleveland, OH, arriving in the afternoon. Upon arrival at the Cleveland Hopkins International Airport, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Anita Isom.

Later in the afternoon, the President traveled to Mentor, OH, where, he had coffee with small-business owners at the Yours Truly restaurant. He then traveled to Kirtland, OH.

Later in the afternoon, the President traveled to Camp David, MD.

The President announced his intention to nominate Raymond Simon to be Deputy Secretary of Education and to designate him as Acting Deputy Secretary of Education.

The President announced his intention to designate John A. Russack as the program manager responsible for information sharing across the Federal Government, pursuant to section 1016(f) of the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004.

The President announced his intention to appoint the following individuals as members of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council: Bruce Lawrence Bialosky; Marek J. Chodakiewicz; Itchko Ezratti; Marilyn R. Fox; JoAnne Ginsberg; Constance B. GirardiCarlo; Norman Hascoe; Marcia McCraw Horwitz; Edward Koch; Michael I. Lebovitz; Elena Neuman Lefkowitz; Steven M. Levy; and William F. Weld.

The President declared a major disaster in Arizona and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms and flooding on February 10–15.

The President declared a major disaster in California and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms, flooding, landslides, and mud and debris flows on February 16–23.

The President declared a major disaster in Pennsylvania and ordered Federal aid to supplement Commonwealth and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms and flooding beginning on April 2 and continuing.

Nominations Submitted to the Senate

The following list does not include promotions of members of the Uniformed Services, nominations to the Service Academies, or nominations of Foreign Service officers.

Submitted April 11

Lt. Gen. Michael V. Hayden, USAF, to be Principal Deputy Director of National Intelligence (new position).

Submitted April 14

Robert J. Portman, of Ohio, to be U.S. Trade Representative, with the rank of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, vice Robert B. Zoellick, resigned.

Eduardo Aguirre, Jr., of Texas, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Spain, and to serve concurrently and without additional compensation as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Andorra.

David R. Hill, of Missouri, to be General Counsel of the Department of Energy, vice Lee Sarah Liberman Otis, resigned.

Phyllis F. Scheinberg, of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Transportation, vice Linda Morrison Combs.

Emil M. Skodon, of Illinois, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador to Brunei Darussalam.

Craig Roberts Stapleton, of Connecticut, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to France.

Submitted April 15

Raymond Simon, of Arkansas, to be Deputy Secretary of Education, vice Eugene Hickok, resigned.

Checklist of White House Press Releases

The following list contains releases of the Office of the Press Secretary that are neither printed as items nor covered by entries in the Digest of Other White House Announcements.

Released April 11

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Released April 12

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Statement by the Press Secretary: Congolese Government's Negotiations With FDLR

Released April 13

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Statement by the Press Secretary on the upcoming visit of Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia

Statement by the Press Secretary on the upcoming visit of President Torrijos of Panama

Released April 14

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Released April 15

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 1134

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Arizona

**Acts Approved
by the President**

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to California

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Pennsylvania

Approved April 15

Fact sheet: Millions Enjoy Ownership and Control Outside Social Security

H.R. 1134 / Public Law 109-7

Announcement: President and Mrs. Bush Release 2004 Tax Return

To amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide for the proper tax treatment of certain disaster mitigation payments