

The President. I think the interesting thing is that when you first talk to people entering into the workplace, their reaction when they first get their checks, what—their reaction to what it's like to not have quite as much money as you expected. That happen to you?

Ms. McKenna Weitzel. Yes, that was a shocker. [*Laughter*]

The President. Yes, in other words, Government tends to take out a pretty good chunk. And it seems like to me that a significant chunk that is being taken out ought to at least be able to say to young kids, “There’s a reason why. It’s worthwhile for the money to go out, because it will help me in my retirement age.” That’s kind of what we’re talking about, isn’t it?

Okay, now that you’ve got your kids watching, anything else you want to say?

Ms. Riley Weitzel. Just, be good today. That’s all.

The President. How about you, McKenna? McKenna, you got anything else you need to say?

Ms. McKenna Weitzel. Well, I just also want to state that I feel like it’s just encouraging to know that we could collect money in the end, that we aren’t hoping that there will be money there, that it truly will be, and also just the responsibility of knowing that you’re setting aside money and that you will be getting it.

The President. See, it’s a little lack of trust right now, it sounds like to me, “Don’t quite trust the Government to have a Social Security system available for my—for the money I put in.” This is a matter of trust. This is a big issue.

I want to thank our panelists for coming to discuss this issue. Very good job.

Washington has a duty to earn the trust of the people by making wise decisions about how the people’s money will be used. We have a chance—both Republicans and Democrats have a chance to come together and to solve the Social Security issue forever. And when we do—and I believe we will, because the people’s voices are going to resonate on this issue—and when we do, all of us who are fortunate enough to serve this country can look back and say, “We did our duty for generations to come.”

Listen, thank you all for coming. May God bless you all, and may God continue to bless our country.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:48 a.m. in the Athena Performing Arts Center at Greece Athena Middle and High School. In his remarks, he referred to Robert C. Pozen, former member, President’s Commission to Strengthen Social Security.

Remarks on Bioethics

May 24, 2005

Thank you all. Please be seated. Good afternoon, and welcome to the White House.

I have just met with 21 remarkable families. Each of them has answered the call to ensure that our society’s most vulnerable members are protected and defended at every stage of life.

The families here today have either adopted or given up for adoption frozen embryos that remained after fertility treatments. Rather than discard these embryos created during in vitro fertilization or turn them over for research that destroys them, these families have chosen a life-affirming alternative. Twenty-one children here today found a chance for life with loving parents.

I believe America must pursue the tremendous possibilities of science, and I believe we can do so while still fostering and encouraging respect for human life in all its stages. In the complex debate over embryonic stem cell research, we must remember that real human lives are involved—both the lives of those with diseases that might find cures from this research and the lives of the embryos that will be destroyed in the process. The children here today are reminders that every human life is a precious gift of matchless value.

I appreciate Mike Leavitt, Department of Health and Human Services, for being here. He’s the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services. I picked a really good man to take on this assignment. He’s doing a fine job.

I want to thank the executive director of Nightlight Christian Adoptions, Ron Stoddart, for joining us today. Welcome. I want to thank Lori Maze, the director of

Snowflakes Frozen Embryo Adoption Program. Welcome, Lori. Thank you for coming. And thank you all for being here.

The rapid advance of science presents us with the hope of eventual cures for terrible diseases and with profound moral and ethical dilemmas. The decisions we make today will have far-reaching consequences, so we must aggressively move forward with medical research while also maintaining the highest ethical standards.

Research on stem cells derived from human embryos may offer great promise, but the way those cells are derived today destroys the embryo. I share the hope of millions of Americans who desperately want to find treatments and cures for terrible diseases such as juvenile diabetes and Parkinson's disease. That is why my administration completing—completed the doubling of the NIH budget to \$29 billion a year, to encourage research. I also made available for the first time Federal funds for embryonic stem cell research in order to explore the potential of these cells.

But I also recognize the grave moral issues at stake. So in August 2000—first—2001, I set forward a policy to advance stem cell research in a responsible way by funding research on stem cell lines derived only from embryos that had already been destroyed. This policy set a clear standard: We should not use public money to support the further destruction of human life.

Under this policy, we have supported a great deal of ethical research. About 600 shipments of eligible stem cell lines are already being used by researchers across the country, and over 3,000 more shipments are still available. We've increased funding for all forms of stem cell research by more than 80 percent since I took office. A tremendous amount of both public and private research is underway in America on embryonic as well as adult stem cells and stem cells from umbilical cord blood.

Today the House of Representatives is considering a bill that violates the clear standard I set 4 years ago. This bill would take us across a critical ethical line by creating new incentives for the ongoing destruction of emerging human life. Crossing this line would be a great mistake.

Even now, researchers are exploring alternative sources of stem cells, such as adult bone marrow and umbilical cord blood as well as different ethical ways of getting the same kind of cells now taken from embryos, without violating human life or dignity. With the right policies and the right techniques, we can pursue scientific progress while still fulfilling our moral duties.

I want to thank Nightlight Christian Adoptions for their good work. Nightlight's embryo adoption program has now matched over 200 biological parents with about 140 adoptive families, resulting in the birth of 81 children so far, with more on the way.

The children here today remind us that there is no such thing as a spare embryo. Every embryo is unique and genetically complete, like every other human being. And each of us started out our life this way. These lives are not raw material to be exploited, but gifts. And I commend each of the families here today for accepting the gift of these children and offering them the gift of your love.

Thank you for coming today. By the way, we're having a little birthday gathering just in a second for Tanner and Noelle. You all are invited to partake in a little birthday cake. *[Laughter]* In the meantime, may God bless you and your families, and may God continue to bless our country. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:07 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to birthday guests Tanner Brinkman and Noelle Faulk.

Remarks With Judge Priscilla R. Owen on Senate Action To Allow Votes on Judicial Nominations

May 24, 2005

The President. I'm proud to welcome Judge Priscilla Owen to the Oval Office, along with Leader Frist and my two buddies from the great State of Texas, Senator Hutchison and Senator Cornyn.

Over 4 years ago, I put Judge Owen's name up to the Senate for confirmation to the 5th Court of Appeals. Thanks to the good work of the leader, whose work cleared the way, Judge Owen is finally going to get an