

NOTE: The President spoke at 10 a.m. in Room 450 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Victoria Lazear, wife of Edward P. Lazear, and their daughter, Julie; Ben S. Bernanke, Chairman, Federal Reserve System; and Anne Ryun, wife of Representative Jim Ryun. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Chairman Lazear.

Statement on Representative William M. Thomas' Decision Not To Seek Reelection

March 6, 2006

Congressman Bill Thomas is a friend and a man of great accomplishment who has been a very effective leader in the House of Representatives. As chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, he helped pass legislation that has brought about strong job creation and economic growth, improved health care for people of all ages, and ensured that America continues to benefit from free and fair trade. For the last 28 years, he has worked tirelessly for the people of the Bakersfield area in California and represented them with honor and distinction. I appreciate Bill's commitment and dedication to public service, and I look forward to working with him for the remainder of the session. I wish Sharon, Bill, and the entire Thomas family all the best in the future.

Message to the Congress Transmitting a Legislative Proposal To Give the President a Line-Item Veto

March 6, 2006

To the Congress of the United States:

In my State of the Union Address, I asked the Congress to give the President a line item veto. Today, I am sending the Congress a legislative proposal to give the President line item authority to reduce wasteful spending. This legislation will help to limit spending and ensure accountability and transparency in the expenditure of taxpayer funds.

Although the Congress achieved significant spending restraint this past year, appropriations and other bills that are sent to my

desk still contain spending that is not fully justified, is a low priority, or is earmarked to avoid the discipline of competitive or merit-based reviews. When this legislation is presented to me, I now have no ability to line out unnecessary spending. In 1996, the Congress gave the President a line item veto—an important tool to limit wasteful spending—but the Supreme Court struck down that version of the law in 1998.

My proposed legislation, the "Legislative Line Item Veto Act of 2006," would provide a fast-track procedure to require the Congress to vote up-or-down on rescissions proposed by the President. There has been broad bipartisan support for similar proposals in the past. Under this proposal, the President could propose legislation to rescind wasteful spending, and the Congress would be obligated to vote quickly on that package of rescissions, without amendment. The same procedure would apply to new mandatory spending and to special interest tax breaks given to small numbers of individuals.

Forty-three Governors have a line item veto to reduce spending. The President needs similar authority to help control unjustified and wasteful spending in the Federal budget. I urge you to promptly consider and send me this legislation for enactment to reduce unnecessary spending and help achieve my goal of cutting the deficit in half by 2009.

George W. Bush

The White House,
March 6, 2006.

Remarks at a Celebration of Women's History Month and International Women's Day

March 7, 2006

Thank you all. Thank you, Laura. Welcome to the White House. We like to call this the people's house. I want to remind people from around the world that we're only temporary occupants here, but we're trying to make the most of our time here.

I want to welcome you all as we celebrate Women's History Month and International

Women's Day. Thanks for coming. We recognize the many contributions women have made to our country. We also honor those who have helped bring equality and freedom to women around the world.

A lot of strong women have influenced my life—[laughter]—beginning with my mother. [Laughter] She told me to say that, by the way. [Laughter] I am blessed to have a strong wife. And we are raising two young women to become independent, capable risk-takers—[laughter]—so that they can realize their dreams.

I have been blessed to have strong women in my Government. My administration is better off to have really capable women who feel comfortable marching in the Oval Office and giving the President their frank advice. [Laughter]

I want to thank Secretary of Labor Elaine Chao, who is with us; Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings—she's been giving me frank advice ever since I was the Governor of Texas. [Laughter] I want to thank Karen Hughes—Ambassador Karen Hughes, the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs. She's been really giving me a lot of advice. [Laughter] Paula Dobriansky, the Under Secretary for Democracy and Global Affairs; Harriet Miers, my attorney—by the way, for those of you who aren't familiar with America, it's always good to have a good attorney. [Laughter] Harriet Miers is my attorney. She gives me legal advice.

Fran Townsend is in charge of our—part of the National Security Council in charge of homeland security. Protecting our homeland is a vital part of America, and I rely upon a very capable, strong woman to give me good advice.

I want to thank my friend Pat Brister who is the U.S. Representative to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, for joining us. Pat is—there she is—from Louisiana, where Laura and I will be tomorrow, by the way.

I want to thank Congresswoman Judy Biggert from the State of Illinois. She's with us. For those of you who are unfamiliar with our Congress, we have a lot of very capable women who are running for office and have become elected—and making a big dif-

ference in the Halls of Congress. I appreciate the members of the diplomatic corps who have joined us. Thank you all for coming. It's good to see so many ambassadors and ambassadors here today. [Laughter]

I want to thank the members of the United States-Afghan Women's Council who are here. You all are making a significant difference in the lives of people who are beginning to feel the freshness of the light of democracy. And as Laura mentioned, we were in Afghanistan with President Karzai. And there's nothing better than being in a country that's beginning to realize the benefits of freedom, particularly women who have been completely suppressed under the Taliban are now beginning to see the beautiful—breathe that beautiful air of a free society. And so I want to thank the members of the United States-Afghan Women's Council for being so diligent and caring and staying with this important issue—that issue being the freedom of women in Afghanistan.

I want to thank the members of the International Republican Institute and the National Endowment for Democracy. Thank you for hosting our international delegates. Thank you for helping them in their training exercises and sharing expertise and compassion. I want to thank the delegations from Afghanistan and Iraq and around the world for joining us today. You're welcome in the United States of America—I hope you feel that way.

The struggle for women's rights is a story of strong women willing to take the lead. That's particularly true in the United States of America, where women like Susan B. Anthony and Alice Stone Blackwell and Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Rosa Parks changed the course of our Nation's history. Our history was altered because strong women stood up and led. These women broke down barriers to equality. We weren't always an equal society in America, and it required strong leadership to help make America a more equal place. And we're a better place because of the leadership of women throughout our history.

Women today are shaping the future of America as scientists and entrepreneurs and teachers and astronauts. They serve our Nation with honor and distinction in our Armed

Forces. The distinguished leadership of women like Secretary of State Condi Rice—where is she—she had an excused absence—[laughter]—and Justice Sandra Day O'Connor has helped open doors for women for future generations.

Across the world, the increasing participation of women in civic and political life has strengthened democracies. A democracy is strong when women participate in the society. The nation of Liberia recently elected its first woman President, and Laura and Secretary Rice were there to witness her swearing-in. I look forward to welcoming her to America, by the way.

Women lead Governments in Germany, in Chile, and the Philippines. In Rwanda, nearly half of the members of Parliament are women. And women are now holding more parliamentary seats in nations like Morocco and Jordan and Tunisia.

In the last 4 years, we have also seen women make great strides in Afghanistan and Iraq—countries where just a few years ago, women were denied basic rights and were brutalized by tyrants. Today in Afghanistan, girls are attending school. That speaks well for Afghanistan's future. Women hold about 20 percent of the seats in the National Assembly. Nobody could have dreamed that was possible 5 years ago. In last fall's elections, about 40 percent of the voters were women. In Iraq, women are voting in large numbers, and when the new Iraqi Parliament takes office, women will hold about one-quarter of the seats.

The United States is working to increase opportunities for women in these two emerging democracies. Through the Iraqi Women's Democracy Initiative, we're providing funds for Iraqi women to receive training in political leadership and learn about the legislative process, the judicial system, and how to defend and promote human rights.

In Afghanistan, we're helping women find ways to join the political process at the local level and to acquire the skills they need for advocacy and communication. We're working with the private sector in America to help Afghan women travel abroad to learn more about the political process and to be able to exchange ideas with fellow women, just like which is taking place here in America today.

Our work to help build vibrant and functioning democracies in Afghanistan and Iraq is part of a larger effort to encourage progress across the broader Middle East. We refuse to accept the status quo in the United States of America, particularly when we find women repressed. As women become a part of the democratic process, they help spread freedom and justice and most importantly of all, hope for a future.

One important program is the Women's Democracy Network, which is holding its inaugural meeting this week in Washington. This conference provides an opportunity for women leaders around the world to connect with each other and serve as mentors for women in developing democracies so they can help shape the future of their nations.

As we work to advance the equality of women in the world's newest democracies, we must remember that many women in other countries around the world are still struggling for basic rights in places like Iran and North Korea and Burma. America will help women stand up for their freedom, no matter where they live.

Recently I welcomed two women from Belarus who were concerned about the repressive nature of their Government. We stand with the women in Belarus who advocate human rights in a runup to this month's election. America will continue to support courageous reformers around the world—women like Burmese dissident Aung San Suu Kyi, who has spent years under house arrest for her efforts to bring democracy to her nation.

We will continue to fight the threats to women across the world. We'll continue working with nations around the world to end the sexual exploitation and the trafficking of women and young girls. It breaks our hearts, our collective hearts, to realize many young girls are sold into sex slavery, and we will use our prestige to stop that evil process.

We will continue working to fight the transmission of HIV/AIDS. America is proud to lead the world in the struggle to defeat this pandemic. We understand that by defeating the pandemic of HIV/AIDS, we will help children and women, who have been disproportionately affected by this horrible pandemic.

We live in extraordinary times. These are exciting times. They are times that require a firm conviction in our beliefs that all people are created equal. We've seen the fall of brutal tyrants and the rise of democracy. We're also seeing women take their rightful place in societies that were once closed and oppressive. And the United States welcomes the arrival of women into these oppressive societies. There's no doubt in my mind, empowering women in new democracies will make those democracies better countries and help lay the foundation of peace for generations to come.

So Laura and I welcome you to the White House. We're really glad you're here. We're so glad you're here, we're about to throw a reception on your behalf. [*Laughter*] And we wish you to enjoy it.

May God bless everybody here. May God bless your families, and may God bless our respective nations. Thank you for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:44 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan; former Supreme Court Associate Justice Sandra Day O'Connor; President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia; Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany; President-elect Michelle Bachelet of Chile; President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo of the Philippines; Irina Krasovskaya and Svyatlana Zavadskaya, widows of prodemocracy advocates who disappeared in Belarus; and Aung San Suu Kyi, leader of the National League for Democracy in Burma. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady, who introduced the President.

Remarks on Election Day in Crawford, Texas

March 7, 2006

The President. Thank you all.

Q. Was it worth coming?

The President. Yes, you bet. It's always good to come home to vote. And I urge all people to vote when given a chance. It's always good to be home in Texas—get a little rest here in my homestead and then heading over to New Orleans tomorrow and Mississippi.

Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:43 p.m. at the Crawford Fire Department. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Executive Order 13397— Responsibilities of the Department of Homeland Security With Respect to Faith-Based and Community Initiatives

March 7, 2006

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, and in order to help the Federal Government coordinate a national effort to expand opportunities for faith-based and other community organizations and to strengthen their capacity to better meet America's social and community needs, it is hereby ordered as follows:

Section 1. *Establishment of a Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives at the Department of Homeland Security.*

(a) The Secretary of Homeland Security (Secretary) shall establish within the Department of Homeland Security (Department) a Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (Center).

(b) The Center shall be supervised by a Director appointed by Secretary. The Secretary shall consult with the Director of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (WHOFBCI Director) prior to making such appointment.

(c) The Department shall provide the Center with appropriate staff, administrative support, and other resources to meet its responsibilities under this order.

(d) The Center shall begin operations no later than 45 days from the date of this order.

Sec. 2. *Purpose of Center.* The purpose of the Center shall be to coordinate agency efforts to eliminate regulatory, contracting, and other programmatic obstacles to the participation of faith-based and other community organizations in the provision of social and community services.

Sec. 3. *Responsibilities of the Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives.* In carrying out the purpose set forth in section 2 of this order, the Center shall: