

Week Ending Friday, May 26, 2006

**Message on the Observance of
Cuban Independence Day, 2006**

May 18, 2006

I send greetings to those celebrating the 104th anniversary of Cuban Independence.

The hope of freedom is found in every heart, and it is the future of every land. The United States is committed to advancing the values that sustain liberty and helping establish a just and peaceful government in Cuba. On this anniversary of Cuba's independence, we look forward to the day when Cuba embraces democracy and human rights for all her people.

This anniversary also is an opportunity to recognize the generations of Cuban Americans who have contributed to the vitality, success, and prosperity of our great Nation. Through their devotion to faith, family, and freedom, they have helped make our country stronger and better.

Laura and I send our best wishes. May God bless the people of Cuba.

George W. Bush

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 19. An original was not available for verification of the content of this message. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

**Remarks on American
Competitiveness in Highland
Heights, Kentucky**

May 19, 2006

The President. Thanks. Please be seated. Geoff, thanks for the introduction. He said I was the last sitting President—the last sitting President to be here before me was a Texan. *[Laughter]* I don't know what took the other ones so long to get here—*[laughter]*—but I'm proud to be here; particularly proud to be in NKU, Northern Kentucky

University. Thank you very much for letting me come by.

It's a good place to come to, to make sure that America understands we don't need to fear the future, because we can shape it. That's what I want to talk to you about today, is the need for the United States of America to remain the leader of the world. And one way you remain the leader is, you have places like excellence—centers like Northern Kentucky University, where you've got innovative curriculum, high standards, the willingness to work in your community—all aimed at making sure our kids have got the skills necessary to compete. And that's why I'm here.

So I want to thank the president—Mr. President, thanks for having me. *[Laughter]* He'd probably rather be called "Doctor." But, Jim, thank you for having us. Thank the faculty for letting me come. I appreciate you teaching; teaching is a noble profession. For the students who are here, one career path you ought to think about is being a teacher. And one thing you've always got to remember is, the child's first teacher is a mother and a father.

I bring my RSVP's from Laura. She is giving a graduation speech tomorrow—she just didn't get the invitation to come to NKU to give the graduation speech here. *[Laughter]* If you had been wise, you would have had her and not me. *[Laughter]* She sends her best. She is really, really a good person, and I'm proud to—*[applause]*—I'm proud to call her wife. She's got to be the most patient woman in America. *[Laughter]* She's doing great; she sends her best.

I appreciate very much Congressman Geoff Davis. He's an interesting person. He served his country in the United States military. He didn't have to run for the United States Congress; chose to do so—I think sets a good example for people to understand, public service is a noble calling. And I want to thank you for inviting me here, Geoff.

I appreciate Senator Jim Bunning being here as well. So I was asking him what it was like to face the Cincinnati Reds. [*Laughter*] You might remember those days—[*laughter*—at least I do. He’s not only a fine Senator, he’s a wonderful person. And his wife, Mary, reminded me, she came here to NKU just a couple of years ago. [*Laughter*] She had the same kind of career my mother did. Got in; got out without a degree, but nevertheless loved the experience. [*Laughter*]

I appreciate very much State Senator David Williams, president of the State senate. Thanks for coming. Make sure they got plenty of money to run this university, senator. I’ve known Williams long enough where I can tell him that, see. [*Laughter*] It’s great to see you. It’s good to see the Judge as well. I appreciate Katie Stine—is with us today. Senator Stine, thanks for coming.

I want to thank the mayor—I want to thank Mayor Roettger, who is the mayor of Highland—the city of Highland Heights. Thanks for being here, Mr. Mayor. I want to thank all the local and State officials here. I want to thank Gary Toebben who is the president of the Northern Kentucky Chamber. Thanks for having me here. I met Dr. Ed Hughes. If you don’t know Ed, Ed is the founding president and CEO of Gateway Community and Technical College.

I want to say a quick word about community colleges. They’re a really important part of making sure the United States is able to compete. People around here, if you’ve got a growing economy and are looking for labor, you need to support your community colleges. They’re one of the really important institutions of the United States. And so for the community college students who are here, welcome; thanks for coming. Appreciate you taking advantage of the opportunities available to you.

We’re living in historic times. They are exciting times. If you’re a student getting ready to graduate from NKU, you’ve got a job available for you that’s paying better than a lot of other college graduates have ever been able to get. This is a good time to be getting out of college.

On the other hand, these are difficult times in some ways, when you think about

it. I mean, we’re at war. And war is unsettling to people. War puts a strain on the United States of America. War causes people to think about the future in different ways.

These are times of globalization. In other words, we’re all connected now. Competition is coming at the United States from different places around the world. These are times of change. Technology changes so rapidly that it can create a sense of concern amongst our citizens.

I don’t know if you know this or not, but by the time somebody gets 30 in this job market, people have changed jobs several times. That stands in stark contrast to the days when previous generations would go to work and stay at the job all their life. Pension funds are different now. We’ve got 401(k), defined contribution plans as opposed to defined benefit plans. These are changing times. And the fundamental question facing any nation, but particularly ours, is how do we adjust to those times? What do we do about it?

The temptation during changing times and unsettling times, for some, is to retreat and say, you know, it’s really not worth it. We’ve been through this period in our Nation’s history, a time when people would look abroad or look afar and say, “Well, these just seem such difficult problems that it’s probably best that we don’t take them on,” or that, “Competition in the economic sphere is such that the best way to deal with that kind of competition is just to wall ourselves off.”

Those two tendencies, which have happened in our Nation’s history—tenants of thought—would be called isolationism and protectionism. And I’m here to talk today about why it is really important for us to reject those two notions—that the United States of America must not wall ourselves off from the world and must not forget our duty to help lead the world to be a better place.

Now there’s a practical reason why we shouldn’t isolate ourselves, and that is, there’s an enemy that still wants to hurt us. And it’s important for you all to know that everyday that I wake up I think about the war on terror. I knew that after September the 11th—and many of the decisions I make are based upon what happened on that day,

September the 11, 2001. My job is to do everything I can to protect the American people. And I knew that after the attacks there would be a tendency by people to say, well, maybe there's not a war, maybe that's just an isolated incident. Part of my job, by the way, was to say to the American people, "Go about your business; create jobs; go to school; raise your families—let us worry about it in Washington, DC."

But I think about this all the time. I know that in order for us to be able to defend ourselves, we have got to be active in the world. Another way to put it is, we will stay on the offense and bring the terrorists to justice before they hurt us again.

What's unsettling about these times for some is that we face a determined enemy. Let me tell you what I think about the enemy. The enemy is—they're coldblooded killers, the best way to describe them. They will take innocent life to achieve a tactical and strategic objective. These are people that are bound by an ideology. See, they're driven by an ideological fervor. In other words, they're not just isolated angry people; they're people that have got a point of view.

Perhaps the best way to describe the point of view is to remind people what life was like under the Taliban in Afghanistan: There's no freedom to dissent, no freedom to worship; if you're a woman, you were a second class citizen; if you were a young girl, you had no chance, very little chance to be educated. In other words, they had a view of the world which is 100 percent opposite of us. And that's the ideology of these people. And they believe it. They strongly believe that they should distort a great religion and convert it to meet their means. It's totalitarian in nature. It's something akin to dealing with fascism and communism but with a different flavor to it.

Now, I recognize some in our country don't believe that, and that's okay. The great thing about our country is, we all have different views. But I believe it. And I know that if we were ever to retreat and isolate and say it's just too difficult to get involved, that ideology would flourish. After all, they've told us what their ambitions are, through intercepted communications and the different ways of finding out information. They

have made it clear in their communications with each other that democracies are soft, capitalism is a failed system, and that it's just a matter of time before the United States of America were to lose its nerve.

That's what they believe. They believe if they can make life painful enough that we will retreat from the battlefield, that we will give them safe haven—allow them to get safe haven. They want to reestablish roots in a country like they did in Afghanistan so they can help topple moderate governments in the Middle East as well as launch attacks against the United States of America. That's what they have said. As your Commander—as your President and as the Commander in Chief, it's probably pretty wise that I take the words of the enemy seriously, which I do.

And so therefore, for those who think it's probably best to let the world kind of drift off without American leadership or American involvement, they really don't see the world the way—at least the way I see it. And I understand some would like to see the world the way they hope it would be. But you've got to have a President who sees the world the way it is. And the way it is, is a dangerous place that requires the United States of America to be on the offense. And so we're waging the global war on terror.

And the global war on terror has a variety of fronts. The two most notable fronts, of course, are Afghanistan and Iraq. In Afghanistan, I said if you harbor a terrorist, you're as guilty as a terrorist. I know full well that when the President says something, he better mean it. I meant it. And when the Taliban didn't believe us, we liberated the country. And today, there's a new democracy in the world, and that's important, particularly for the students to understand, because eventually I'm going to tie in democracy and peace. But there is a new democracy, and we're helping that democracy survive and grow.

Secondly, I said if you see a threat, you've got to take threats seriously. I saw a threat. Now, I don't want to rehash the history of the decisionmaking that went on in the runup to the war of Iraq; I would just remind people that people in both political parties and people all around the world saw a threat. And I feel strongly that the world is better off without Saddam Hussein in power.

And no matter what your position was on the issue of war in Iraq—and I can understand why good people differ about my decision—but we've got to make sure we don't retreat from the world and allow the good work that has gone on to collapse, so that the enemy is able to gain a safe haven from which to create havoc and launch attacks. And so therefore, we have developed a plan for victory. It's not a plan for retreat; it's a plan for victory.

And the definition of victory is to support the Iraqis so they can sustain themselves, govern themselves, defend themselves, be an ally in the war on terror, and deny safe haven to Al Qaida. That's the goal.

The work is difficult work. It's hard to help a society go from a tyranny to a democracy. You see, the people who lived under the thumb of Saddam Hussein were terrorized by him. He divided the society up. He pitted groups of people against each other. He was ruthless in his administration of his so-called justice, and as a result, there's a lot of scarred emotions and distrust.

And yet something amazing happened in December of last year—admittedly it seems like an eternity ago—but 12 million Iraqis defied car bombers, killers, and terrorists and declared in unity, "We want to be free." It's an amazing moment in the history of freedom. They've said to their Government and said to the people, "Look, we want to live in a free society. We want to be able to express ourselves. We want to be able to elect our officials." And so the political process is one that's now moving forward to honor that request, to honor the 12 million who voted.

There's a government forming in Iraq. This is a new process for them. You might remember, we had a little trouble getting our own Constitution up and running; we weren't a perfect democracy in our beginnings either. But, nevertheless, what particularly the students now are seeing is, as a result of active involvement—not only to defend ourselves—but adherence to some basic beliefs, a new democracy in the heart of the Middle East is emerging. We're training these Iraqis so they can take the fight to the enemy. I have said clearly to the American people, as the Iraqi forces step up, we will step down.

But it's really important for us to understand that if we leave too early, the new democracy will falter. It's in the Nation's interest that democracy prevail, because democracies help yield the peace.

A nation that becomes isolationist will be one that doesn't understand that democracy can change the world; is one that says, well, let's just get out of there before we complete the mission; let's just not worry about what takes place in parts of the world other than, perhaps, our own neighborhood. But to me, that's a bad choice, because, you see, during a period of time when we thought everything was calm, there was resentment and bitterness growing, which enabled an enemy to recruit suiciders who were willing to launch an attack on our Nation, which has caused more people to lose their life than in Pearl Harbor.

And so therefore, I really think it's important for the American Government to work with allies to stay on the leading edge of change, to not lose our nerve, and to remember the lessons of history.

One of the interesting lessons of history is to look at Europe. We had World War I and World War II in a pretty quick period of time, and we lost a lot of troops there. And today, Europe is whole and at peace. So what happened? What caused the world to change? What caused the world to change was, Europe established democracies, and history has proven democracies don't war with each other.

I love to tell the story about my relationship with Prime Minister Koizumi. You know, my dad was a young guy; right before he went to college, he joined up in the United States Navy just like a lot of others did—and I'm sure some of your relatives did the same thing—to fight the Japanese. Yet today, I sit down at the peace table with Koizumi. We talk about North Korea; we talk about Iraq; we talk about how allies can work to keep the peace.

I find it really interesting that that's taking place. And what happened was, was that between the time that the United States fought the Japanese and the time old George W. sitting down there at the table with the Prime Minister, Harry Truman said, let's help the

Japanese develop a Japanese-style democracy. See, it's really important for the students here to understand, that liberty and freedom have got the—have proven the capacity to convert enemies into allies. And if you're interested in keeping the peace, it's important for the United States of America to lead.

There's something universal about freedom. I believe in the universality of freedom. I believe everybody desires to be free. I don't believe freedom is only owned by America; I don't believe only Methodists can be free. I believe everybody desires to be free, and the United States of America must lead the world to be more free.

But our concern shouldn't just be in winning the war on terror and changing the conditions that enable folks to recruit—in other words, battling the ideology of hatred with the ideology of hope. An active nation is one that also works hard in places like the Sudan, where ours is the only nation in the world that has condemned what's going on in Darfur as genocide. The United States must lead to make sure—[*applause*]. A confident nation that does its duty in the international community is one that does what we're doing now in Darfur. We provide over 85 percent of the food aid to help the refugees in this area. We're taking the lead in the United Nations to call the world to account.

I believe to whom much is given, much is required. And therefore, it's important for the United States to continue to lead in the fight against HIV/AIDS in places like the continent of Africa. I believe that when we see starvation, this great Nation of ours should lead the world to help feed the hungry. I believe when we see devastation, the United States must continue to be willing to use assets to help people such as those whose lives were turned upside down by the tsunamis or the earthquakes in Pakistan. You see, a confident nation—a nation confident in its ideals and confident in its capacity must continue to lead and not isolate ourselves from the world.

We've got a good economy right now. And that's good news. Unemployment rate is 4.7 percent nationwide. We've got—productivity is up; home ownership is up; after-tax—real after-tax income is up by over 8 percent since

2001. Things are rocking along. The entrepreneurial spirit is strong. And yet when you think about it—when some think about it, they look at our economic future, and they're very worried. They're troubled. See, they're troubled by competition from places like China and India. And I can understand that. These are vast labor markets that are just beginning to grow.

And the response, in some instances, is to say, "Let's just don't—let's don't take them on; let us kind of pull back and wall ourselves off through protectionist policy." For those of you who've studied history, you might remember we've had this kind of—we've had these decisions before in our Nation's history.

How about the 1920s? You might remember the 1920s, at least through your history books, at least—and that is, is that we were an isolationist nation. We said, "Let them figure it out in Europe; we'll let them work out their differences over there. We don't need to be involved." And we had high protective tariffs—and, by the way, really high taxes. And as a result, there's a worldwide depression. I'm not saying all of it was caused by those tendencies; I'm saying some of it was caused by those tendencies. So we've been through a period of time where we said let's—we lose our confidence; let's not be bold in our willingness to do the right things at home so that we can compete.

My attitude is this about America: We shouldn't fear the future, I told you. And I want to talk to you about some ways that we can shape the future in order to make sure America remains the leader. I'm not only talking about the leader for peace but I'm also talking about the economic leader of the world. It's in our interests that that be the case. When our Nation leads and remains the most productive place in the world, it means a higher standard of living for our people. It means better wages, better quality of life. It means you're more likely to realize your dream. If we wall ourselves off and stagnate as an economy, it's going to be harder for this great American Dream to continue to renew itself.

And so here are some ideas for you as to how to make sure we continue to shape the future. One is to keep taxes low. The reason

why it's important to keep taxes low is because in a global economy, capital will tend to flow where taxes are low. And the other reason why is, is that you want money in the hands of the entrepreneurs.

You might remember, we've been through a lot in the last 5 years: recession; stock market collapse; corporate scandals; attacks on the country; natural disasters; high energy prices—yet, we're growing; we're strong. And one of the reasons why is, is because we let the people keep more of their own money. See, the theory is, is that when somebody has more of their own money to spend, save, or invest, the economy grows. And so if we're going to be competitive, we've got to make sure that we keep money in the peoples' pockets. That's how the entrepreneurial spirit remains strong.

It's really important for our citizens to remember that 70 percent of new jobs in America are created by small-business owners. And the more money they have in their coffers, the more likely it is they're going to create jobs for the American people.

Secondly, we want this always to be the best place for entrepreneurship. We want people in our country saying, you know, "If I've got a good idea and willing to work hard, I'm going to take a risk, because I want to own my own business." There's nothing better than meeting somebody who says, you know, "I started my business recently, Mr. President, and I'm doing just fine—and by the way, thanks for the tax relief so I can keep some more money to expand."

You'll hear, in Washington, people saying, "Well, we've got to raise the taxes in order to balance the budget." That's not the way Washington works. If we were to raise your taxes, Washington would figure out new ways to spend your money. And it might sound good; the titles of the programs will sound just fine, but we've got to make sure we set priorities with your money. My number one priority is this: So long as we've got a troop in harm's way, a man or woman in uniform who's risking their lives for the security of America, they're going to get whatever it takes to do their job. *[Applause]* Thank you all.

But we can cut this deficit in half if we're wise about how we spend your money, by

setting priorities. And we will. The interesting thing about progrowth economic policies, coupled with fiscal sanity in Washington, is that when the economy grows, it creates more revenues for the Treasury. Last year, we've got about \$100 billion more revenues to our Treasury than anticipated. And this year, there's 11 percent ahead of where we were last year. And so if you hold your spending down by setting priorities and grow your economy, the deficit shrinks. And that's one way to control your budget.

But the real budget problems we face beyond the current account is—of the budget—is the unfunded liabilities inherent in Social Security and Medicare. If this Nation wants to be competitive, we have got to make sure that we reform Medicare and Social Security. And here's the problem, and this is—I'm addressing this particularly for the ones coming up, the people getting ready to get in the workplace—because the truth of the matter is, Social Security is fine for people who are eligible today. And Social Security is in pretty good shape for baby boomers. As a matter of fact, we're the problem. *[Laughter]* We're getting ready to retire—just so happens I turn 62 in 2008, which is a convenient age. *[Laughter]*

But there's a lot of us, see, and we're living longer than anybody anticipated. I'm riding that mountain bike because I'm trying to retard the aging process. *[Laughter]* But a lot of my—baby boomers are more conscious of their health. In other words, we're mindful that if you smoke, it's going to shorten your lifetime, or if you're drinking too much, it will affect you. And so there's been a—there's a health consciousness among my generation. There's a lot of us, and there's fewer people paying into the system, and we've been promised greater benefits, which means we're on a collision course for our younger workers. And you're paying into this system that's going to be broke. And it's going to affect our ability to compete. That's what I'm telling you.

And so Congress has got to listen to this. Let's get rid of all the politics once and for all up there, and come together and put a bipartisan solution to Social Security and Medicare so that we can say to a young generation of Americans, "We did our duty."

And by doing our duty, by solving a problem that, admittedly, is down the road—but the longer we wait, the more acute the problem is going to be. Now is the time to fix it to make sure the United States of America remains the economic leader of the world. [*Applause*] Thank you all.

I was just getting warmed up, and we're running out of oxygen in here. [*Laughter*]

Trade is an interesting issue. One way to determine whether the Nation has lost its confidence is whether or not the Nation is willing to trade, be a free trading nation. And I can understand people's concerns about imports coming in from China and imports coming in from India. But I don't think we ought to allow those concerns to close down markets. As a matter of fact, I feel very strongly that the United States of America must do the right things internally and also open up markets so that we can keep competition in a global way.

Here's the thing, my job is to make sure that we're treated fairly. That with opening markets—our own markets and getting other people to open their markets, that they treat us the way we treat them, because I strongly believe, one, trade is good for the world; two, it's a good way to alleviate poverty; three, it's important for creating jobs. Northern Kentucky, by the way, benefits from trade. One reason your job base is strong is because we're selling goods made here, elsewhere.

The way I like to tell the American people: It's like China, for example. I was with President Hu. I said, "Mr. President, it's fine for you, selling your goods here, but you've got to understand something about the American people: We just want to be treated fairly. So intellectual property rights, if you have a product here, we're not going to steal the patent—steal the intellectual property rights from you; don't steal it from us. If you—treat our manufacturers well; make sure your currency moves like our currency moves. That's all we want, Mr. President." The American people are fair. And the reason I'm confident in talking about why opening markets will be good for us, because I firmly believe we can compete with anybody, anytime, anywhere. And America must never, never lose that thought.

So I know I shocked some people the other day when I got up and said, we're addicted to oil and that's a problem. But if we're really interested in being a competitive nation, we're going to have to do something about our reliance upon oil—now. So I'm working with Congress to promote what's called this Advanced Energy Initiative. And we're working on a variety of fronts. First, one thing we can do is make sure we promote clean coal technology. We've got a lot of coal—like, 250-some odd years worth of coal. We also care about our environment here in America. And we've also got the capacity to make sure that we develop the technologies that will enable us to use this coal. One way to get off oil and hydrocarbons is to use our coal in an environmentally friendly way, and I believe we'll be able to do so. We're spending a lot of money in Washington, by the way, on clean coal technology, and I think it's a proper use of taxpayers' money to do so.

We're also investigating coal-to-liquid technology. In other words, we'll be able to use our coals to be able to provide liquids that we'll be able to use, as well, as an energy source. But there's some other interesting ideas going on. For example, I like the idea of our farmers being able to provide energy to power automobiles; it's called ethanol.

But there will be some technological breakthroughs that allow us to use switch grass. Somebody said, what is it? Well, it's grass that looks like a switch—[*laughter*]—that grows in dry climate. See, that makes sense, doesn't it, to be able to investigate whether or not we can convert that kind of material to energy? I think we'll be able to. Wood chips—now all of this sounds fanciful to some, which the Internet seemed fanciful at one point in time.

And so we're spending money at the Federal level to investigate ways to be able to diversify. One of the interesting technologies that's now on the market is hybrid automobiles. But there's new battery technology being developed, and I'm told we're close to breakthroughs in this technology that will enable you to drive your first 40 miles on electricity alone. That's a pretty good deal, if we're able to achieve that kind of breakthrough. Particularly in big cities—a lot of

people in big cities aren't going to drive 40 miles a day. They may not drive 40 miles a week. But nevertheless, when you start taking that amount of demand off the market, for gasoline, it starts to begin to affect our national and economic security.

In terms of electricity, we have got to move forward with nuclear power. Nuclear power is clean—and we're spending money on solar energy and wind energy. There's not going to be a single breakthrough; there's going to be a variety of sources, of new renewable energy sources that are going to enable us to be able to say to the next generation coming, we're less reliant on oil. It's in our economic interests, and it's in our national security interests that we spend money now to develop the technologies that will get us off oil so we can leave behind an America that's competitive, that will be able to compete in the global economy.

I'm now getting to the reason I came here—[laughter]—and that is that this country of ours, in order to be competitive, must always be on the leading edge of technological change and therefore must be always the best at research and development and, at the same time, must educate our children so they have the skills necessary to fill the jobs of the 21st century.

NKU has got some really innovative programs, kind of a seamless transition from high school to college. You've got math and science fairs. You're focusing a lot of your attention on making sure the skill sets that you teach your children are relevant, that will actually keep us competitive.

Let me talk about research and development right quick. I believe there's a proper Federal role for basic research. The reason why is, there has been some Federal research projects which have made a difference in your lives. People here probably don't understand it, but at least understand this. But the Defense Department spent a lot of money on figuring out ways to communicate, out of which came the Internet. See, the Internet came to be as a result of Federal research dollars being spent. I like to mountain bike; I like to put a little country and western music on my iPod. [Laughter] The iPod came to be because of Federal research into microdrive storage and different tech-

nologies. And so therefore, in order to make sure America is competitive and that we're the leader of the world, I believe we ought to double the amount of money we spend in basic research at the Federal level.

Secondly, what's interesting is, most research money is spent by the private sector. One of the great things about our system is it encourages people to—encourages corporations to invest so they can remain productive and be able to compete. One of the tools that we've used to encourage people to invest in research and development is the research and development tax credit. Curiously enough, it expires on a regular basis, which then causes uncertainty. If you're not sure the tax thing is going to be around, you may not want to invest. And so in order to make sure we continue to get the \$200 billion a year we get from private sector into research and development, we need to make the research and development tax credit permanent.

Thirdly, if our children don't have the skills necessary to fill the jobs of the 21st century, the jobs are going somewhere else; make no mistake about that. In a global economy, whether we like it or not, whether we're protectionists or confident, the jobs will go somewhere else. And so therefore, it's really important that the United States of America focus hard on the math and sciences. And by the way, we made a pretty good start with No Child Left Behind. And the reason why is, is that we're beginning to change the attitudes towards one of the real keys to success, and that is measurement.

So I go to Washington, and I said, we'll be strongly committed to helping Title I students in particular with additional money, but I want the States and the local governments to show us whether or not the kids are learning. I didn't think that was too much of a request to ask.

We didn't say, "Here, you do this curriculum." We didn't say that. We didn't say, "You've got to hire so-and-so or run your schools this way," because I believe in local control in schools. But we did say, "Why don't you show us—measure." Let's stop guessing in America. Let us know for certain whether or not our children are going to be able to compete in the 21st century, starting

with making sure every child learns to read. I don't think that's too much to ask, to make sure every child can read. If you can't read, you're not going to be a scientist or an engineer. You won't be able to fill the jobs of the 21st century.

And so we started No Child Left Behind, and I want to appreciate the State of Kentucky for implementing the No Child Left Behind standards. It says we're going to raise standards—we're not going to tell you how to run your schools, but you need to measure. And by the way, if you find that a child can't read at grade level, here's a little extra money to help. In other words, we use the accountability system to be able to diagnose problems early and solve them before it's too late.

In the old days—you might remember those days—we just kind of shuffled the kids through. And guess who got shuffled through? Inner-city African American kids, just move them through; it's so much more easy; just let them go. Kids whose parents don't speak English as a first language, they're too tough; just move them through. But that's not fair, and it's not right, and it's going to mean America will not be able to compete. And so we shut that practice down, and America is better for it.

And so let me read you some interesting statistics—I'm able to read these to you because we measure. [*Laughter*] In 2005, America's fourth graders posted the best scores in reading and math in the history of the test. In other words, there's a norming test to determine whether or not the local accountability system—standards or systems are making a difference. African American fourth graders set records in reading and math. The Nation's Report Card showed eighth graders earned the best math scores recorded ever. Eighth grade Hispanic and African American students achieved the highest math scores ever.

In other words, we've had an achievement gap in our country, and because we focus on each child and measure and insist that curriculum work, that achievement gap is growing—in order for this country—is shrinking. In order for this country to be competitive, all our students have got to get a good education. Everybody must be drilled in the basics. And now it's time to add.

time to add math—focus on math and science. This college is going to—this university will benefit by making sure that we've got high school students—junior high and high school students coming out of our—these institutions with the capacity to be interested in math and the skill set necessary to be able to take on some of the really interesting courses being taught here.

And so why am I concerned about math? Well, we also know that by the time a student gets to high school, most of our students have fallen behind the rest of the developed world in math and science. You're able to measure. And that's not good enough for America. It's a warning signal, it seems like to me. If we're going to be a confident nation that doesn't wall ourselves off from the world, that competes and leads, we better make sure the next generation of children coming up not only are good readers but have got the ability to be skillful in math and science and engineering and physics and chemistry.

And here's some ideas for us. First, I believe we ought to expand Advanced Placement programs around the country by providing money to train 70,000 high school teachers over the next 5 years to teach AP. Now, AP is an interesting program. Some of you probably know what it is. Here's the way I like to describe it: We're going to set high standards, and we're going to expect the best. And we're going to have teachers with that skill set necessary to convince students it's in their interest to learn AP. I went to an interesting AP school in Dallas, Texas, and they said it's graduating more AP students than any other high school in the country. Of course, you know how Texans are. Anyway—[*laughter*].

But I walked into a classroom and had a young Latino—guy had a pony tail on, and he said, "I want to be an astrophysicist, Mr. President." And it was child after child—because they had an AP teacher raise those standards—say, I want to be a chemist; I want to be a physicist. We can do this in America. And one way to start is to make sure that AP classes flourish.

Secondly, we're going to have a program that has 30,000, what we call, adjunct professors. These will be math and science professionals who will go into classrooms—one way

to say this strategy is to say, “Look, it’s okay to be a math and scientist; it’s cool.” But we need—I went to a classroom outside of Maryland, and there was a NASA engineer in there, and he could make science really seem interesting to these kids.

Thirdly, we’ve got to make sure that we have the same rigorous examination of our math curriculum that we did with our reading curriculum. See, we went through a whole process of helping local districts determine whether or not the reading curriculum they were using was going to work. By the way, one way to determine is, you measure.

And so Secretary of Education Spellings has established what’s called the National Math—I signed, through Executive order, her recommendation—the National Math Panel. They met this week earlier; they’re 17 expert panelists and 6 members from other Government agencies. They’re going to help design standards and accountability, as well as teaching methods. In other words, we’re going to get focused on this, and we expect our States to join us and to focus on math and science. It is really important that we start laying that skill set now for the next generation of Americans if we’re going to be confident.

And by the way, in the eighth grade, if you start falling behind in math, you ought to get that supplemental service money, that extra help, just like we provide for third and fourth graders in reading, when they begin to fall behind.

Obviously, some are saying, “Well, that sounds great, Mr. President, how about helping those of us who can’t go to college, go to college.” I’m a big believer in Pell grants. Pell grants are a very important part of making sure American education lays that foundation for excellence. We’ve increased the number of Pell grants since I’ve been your President by a million. We’ve got 5 million kids now getting Pell grants, and the maximum grant has gone from 3,750 to 4,050. If you qualify you get 4,050. But I think we ought to provide additional incentives to the Pell grant program. We call them enhanced Pell grants—and we’re working with Congress—they’ve actually just passed the two ideas that I think make sense.

One is that if you’re a graduate with a 3.0, and you’ve taken a rigorous high school curriculum—if you take a rigorous high school curriculum and you go to college and maintain a 3.0 in college for your first 2 years, your Pell grant increases 750 for the first year, 1,300 for the second year. The purpose of this is to say to high schools, keep raising that standard. Keep providing rigorous courses in math and science, and for the students that qualify, there will be a reward. And by the way, once you get into college, there will be an additional \$4,000, on top of the Pell grant, for third and fourth year students who have maintained 3.0 and who major in math, science, or a critical foreign language.

And so here are some incentives to build on this strategy to make sure America competes. So before you all pass out, I want to say one other thing—[laughter]. Laura said, whatever you do, don’t go over to Kentucky and get a little long-winded. I obviously didn’t listen. [Laughter]

I feel passionately about our country’s future. I am optimistic about America. I’ve got a unique perspective. I am able to see America in a different way from you all. I am able to see these unbelievable acts of kindness that take place on a regular basis here in our country, people willing to say, I want to serve my country by loving a neighbor. I also understand that our value system, our belief in human liberty is just a powerful motivator for good. And I know the entrepreneurial spirit is a way to make sure people are able to realize dreams.

And so what I really want to share with you is, I understand that there’s some uncertainty and worries because of circumstances today, but you’ve got a President whose—I’ve got no doubt in my mind that the world is headed toward peace and that this country is going to remain the economic leader of the world. We just can’t lose our confidence. America shouldn’t fear the future, because we’re going to shape the future.

Thanks for letting me come by.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:30 p.m. at Northern Kentucky University. In his remarks, he referred to James C. Votruba, president, Northern Kentucky University; Katie Kratz Stine, Kentucky State senator; Mayor Charles W. Roettger III of

Highland Heights, KY; Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan; and President Hu Jintao of China. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Remarks at a Reception for Congressional Candidate Geoff Davis in Florence, Kentucky

May 19, 2006

The President. Thank you all very much. Geoff, thanks very much for your kind introduction; thanks for your service. I'm here because there's no doubt in my mind, Geoff Davis is the right candidate for the 4th Congressional District.

I've gotten to know him. I got to know the kind of person he is. And you know, when you find somebody who is full of integrity, somebody who prioritizes his faith and his family above all else is somebody you need to send back to Washington, DC. He came and campaigned hard here, and he told you what he was going to do, and he has done what he said he's going to do. Geoff Davis needs to be reelected to the United States Congress for the good of this district and for the good of the United States of America.

You know, one of the interesting things about Washington is, we've got plenty of lawyers up there. [Laughter] I'm not one. [Laughter]

Congressman Davis. Me, neither.

The President. Neither is the Congressman. [Laughter] Seems like when you've got somebody who has got the kind of experience we need in Washington—I'm talking about experience outside of politics—that you ought to keep him up there. See, he's a fellow who's a small-business owner. This is a really vibrant part of our country, right here in northern Kentucky. It's a part of the world where the entrepreneurial spirit is strong. And it makes sense to have somebody in the United States Congress who has lived the life that many of our entrepreneurs have lived.

And we're a nation that is at war. And I need allies in the United States Congress, people who understand what the military is all about. This man wore the uniform of the United States of America. Send him back to the United States Congress.

Davis really wanted—he really wanted Laura. He said, “You stay at home, Mr. President.” [Laughter]

Audience member. Next time.

The President. Yes, next time. Unfortunately, she was tied up. But she's a believer. She wants me to tell you all, thanks very much for supporting this good fellow. I bring a message from her, and I bring a message from myself: Any time when you find somebody who is willing to run, that's making a sacrifice, it means a lot to have the support of the people. And so thank you all for coming today. Thanks for contributing to this man's campaign.

And I want to remind you that money is one thing, but he's also going to need people out working those coffee shops, working the neighborhoods. And so I'm going to thank you not only for what you have done; I want to thank you for what you're going to do, which is turn out the vote to make sure he gets back to Washington, DC.

Anyway, Laura sends her best. And old Geoff is like me; he married well. [Laughter] All you've got to do is—if your six kids were 21, it would be a landslide. [Laughter]

But we flew down on Air Force One together. We talked about two things, I think, that will interest you. You can get to know a person pretty well when you're with them for a while and nobody else is around listening, and there's not any—not any cameras and not any agenda papers. And so guess what he wanted to talk about? First, he wanted to talk about his children. I thought that was interesting. He could have talked about anything. He could have said bridges, or how about—

Congressman Davis. We did talk about— [laughter].

The President. How about this, Mr. President? Or why don't you tell them this, Mr. President? Presidents get a lot of advice. Some of it is solicited, and some of it is unsolicited. [Laughter] He wanted to talk about his family, how proud he was of his family. He wanted me to make sure I understood that he had six children and that one of them is going to NKU, and one of them is 6. [Laughter] He wanted me to know how much he loved his wife, and how much he respects her. I think that says something