

Weekly Compilation of
**Presidential
Documents**



Monday, March 5, 2007
Volume 43—Number 9
Pages 209–247

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WEEKLY COMPILATION OF

PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS

Published every Monday by the Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC 20408, the *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents* contains statements, messages, and other Presidential materials released by the White House during the preceding week.

The *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents* is published pursuant to the authority contained in the Federal Register Act (49 Stat. 500, as amended; 44 U.S.C. Ch. 15), under regulations prescribed by the Administrative Committee of the Federal Register, approved by the President (37 FR 23607; 1 CFR Part 10).

Distribution is made only by the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402. The *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents* will be furnished by mail to domestic subscribers for \$80.00 per year (\$137.00 for mailing first class) and to foreign subscribers for \$93.75 per year, payable to the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402. The charge for a single copy is \$3.00 (\$3.75 for foreign mailing).

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US GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE
SUPERINTENDENT OF DOCUMENTS
Washington DC 20402

OFFICIAL BUSINESS
Penalty for private use, \$300

PRESORTED STANDARD
POSTAGE & FEES PAID
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Week Ending Friday, March 2, 2007

The President's Radio Address

February 24, 2007

Good morning. This week, I traveled to a hospital in Chattanooga, Tennessee, where I visited with doctors and health care experts. We discussed an urgent priority for our Nation, how we can make health care coverage more affordable and accessible for all Americans.

This week, the Department of Health and Human Services released a study that showed why we must act now to reform our health care system. The study forecast that our Nation's health care spending will almost double by the year 2016. If this happens, health care spending will account for nearly one out of every \$5 spent in our economy. The study forecast that the Government's share of these costs will rise as well. Unless the system is reformed, within a decade taxpayers will be shouldering nearly half of all health care spending in our Nation.

There's also some encouraging news in this study. It provides fresh evidence that the Medicare prescription drug benefit we enacted is working to help get seniors the drugs they need. Millions of seniors are filling more prescriptions because they now have coverage, yet overall national spending on prescription drugs is lower than it would have been without this program. This is because we set up a system where private drug plans must compete for the business of Medicare beneficiaries. This competition is delivering better prices for seniors and good results for taxpayers. We need to maintain the gains we made by keeping competition in Medicare and by opposing any effort that would put the Federal Government in charge of negotiating and setting drug prices.

We should also apply the same market-based principles to other parts of our health system. Today, we have a big problem with our Tax Code: If you buy health insurance on your own, you do not get the same tax

advantages as people who get their health insurance through their jobs. When it comes to health care, everyone should get the same tax breaks.

So I've proposed a standard tax deduction for health insurance that would be like the standard deduction for dependents. This commonsense solution will level the playing field for all Americans, whether you get your health insurance through your job or on your own.

One person who would benefit from this plan is Danny Jennings, a father of two who does not have health insurance for his family. I met Danny earlier this week. Under my plan, Danny would save about \$4,500 on his taxes, and these tax savings would put basic coverage within the reach of his family.

Now imagine if this standard tax deduction were already in place for people like Danny, and some politician suggested taking it away. Critics would say that the politician was giving an unfair advantage to people who work for big businesses that provide insurance and harming millions of working families who have to buy their own coverage. The critics would be right.

My proposal would provide the same deduction for all Americans who buy health insurance, whether they get it through their job or on their own. That is fair, and it's the right thing to do.

Another way we can reform our health care system is to support Governors who are coming up with innovative plans to help their citizens get health coverage. These Governors know their people, and they know their needs. As a former Governor, I believe the Federal Government ought to help, not hinder our States as they innovate. So I have proposed the Affordable Choices grants initiative. Under my proposal, States that make basic private health insurance available to all their citizens would receive Federal funds to help them provide this coverage to the poor and the sick. By taking existing Federal funds

and turning them into Affordable Choices grants, we will give America's Governors more money and more flexibility, so they can help provide private health insurance for those who need it most.

America has the best health care system in the world, because it puts doctors and patients in charge, encourages new technologies, and finds new ways to improve quality. By giving our States more flexibility and making our Tax Code fairer, we can reform our health care system and restrain costs. And by implementing these reforms now, we can help ensure every American has a future with better choices, better care, and greater hope for a healthy tomorrow.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:50 a.m. on February 23 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on February 24. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 23 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. In his address, the President referred to Danny Jennings, manager, Tennessee Valley Nursery. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks at a Dinner for the National Governors Association Conference

February 25, 2007

Laura and I are honored to have you here. Welcome. This is really one of the dinners that we look forward to the most. And we welcome the Governors and their spouses. We welcome Governors without their spouses. *[Laughter]*

I appreciate members of my Cabinet for joining us. I also thank very much Governor Napolitano, who is the chairman of the Governors Association—National Governors Association, and Tim Pawlenty, the vice chairman of the Governors Association, for joining us.

I thank the former Governors who are in my Cabinet who have joined us: Secretaries Kempthorne, Johanns, and Leavitt. There's life after being a Governor. *[Laughter]*

I'm looking forward to our meetings tomorrow. It's a really good chance to talk about important issues for the country. I'm—

I believe that Governors add a lot to the worth of our Nation. And I believe if we work together, we can do a lot of good things. I'm looking forward to talking about the issue of homeland security. We need to protect our country. I'm looking forward to talking about education and health care and good, sound immigration policy. I'm looking forward to reminding me and you that when we work together, we can do big things, that we have an obligation to serve all the people.

And so tonight is a night to—a festive night. Our friend, Ronan Tynan, is going to entertain you. I'm looking forward to it. I hope you are as well.

And before I call up Janet, I'd like to offer a toast to the Nation's Governors.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:30 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Janet Napolitano of Arizona; and Gov. Tim Pawlenty of Minnesota.

Remarks During a Meeting With the National Governors Association Conference

February 26, 2007

Thank you all. Please be seated. I'm looking for some of the crumbs that got dropped last night here. *[Laughter]* Glad you're here; thanks for coming. I hope you enjoyed the dinner as much as we did last night. It was a—*[applause]*. I thought it was a good, relaxing evening. And I thank you all for joining us today.

I want to thank the members of my Cabinet for talking to the Governors about how important it is for us to work together. I do want to spend some—a little time talking about some issues here, and then I'll answer questions from you.

First, obviously—well, I don't know if it's obvious to you or not, but my biggest concern is protecting this country. You got to know something, that a lot of my thinking was defined on September the 11th. I wake up every day thinking about another attack. And that's my job. It's what the people expect. I think about how to have the best intelligence possible to find out where the enemy is and what they're thinking so we can react.

I think about making sure that Homeland Security and our States work closely together. I wish that wasn't the way it was, but it is. That's the reality of the world in which we live. It's easy to kind of hope that these radicals and extremists go away. We've got a two-pronged strategy in dealing with them: One is to stay on the offense and bring them to justice; and two, spread the conditions necessary to defeat an ideology of hatred. I like to say, "We're in an ideological war that's going to last awhile." That's what I believe. That's the basis on which I'm making decisions to protect the country.

We've got active fronts in this war on terror. One is Afghanistan; the other is Iraq. These are the most visible fronts—let me rephrase that—there are other active fronts; the most visible fronts are in Afghanistan and Iraq.

I thank you very much for going over to visit the Guard troops and Reserve troops from your States that are there. I appreciate it. It matters to those troops that you take time as a commander in chief to thank them. And it matters to their families that people are paying attention to them.

You've got two Governors who are active in the Guard and Reserve—Governor Blunt and Governor Sanford. He's not here because he's at a Air Force Reserve meeting, as I understand, and I appreciate very much the example you all are setting.

Obviously, there's concerns about the decisions I have made regarding Iraq, and I understand that. Look, I mean, there's a lot of debate here in Washington, DC. And if you want, we can spend some time during the question-and-answer talking about why I make the decisions I made. But you've just got to understand, the main reason why is because I understand the consequences of failure in Iraq. If we leave before that country can govern itself and sustain itself and defend itself, there will be chaos. And out of chaos will come vacuums; and out of vacuums will come an emboldened enemy that would like to do us harm. I like to remind people that if we leave Iraq before the job is done, the enemy will follow us here. And if our job is to protect this country, it's important we get it right in Iraq.

And so I made a decision that I think is more likely to succeed than any of the alternatives that were presented to me. And I know you're concerned about the funding for your troops; so am I. I hope out of all this debate—and by the way, there is—you've just got to understand, here in Washington, I do not believe that someone is unpatriotic if they don't agree with my point of view. On the other hand, I think it's important for people to understand the consequences of not giving our troops the resources necessary to do the job.

So I'm looking forward to a healthy debate. I'm also looking forward to defending, strongly defending the budgets we send up to Congress to make sure those troops who are in harm's way have the resources and that we have the flexibility necessary to—and our commanders have the flexibility necessary to execute the plan we've laid out.

I understand Pete Pace was here and visited with you. I hope he was able to answer your questions about Guard funding. We submitted a strong budget for 2008, and we're going to need your help to make sure Congress keeps that budget intact. The temptation sometimes is, take a little bit from the defense and add it to here. And if you're concerned about making sure your troops get what they need, make sure you call your Congressman or your Senator.

The economy is good, and we intend to keep it that way. We're not going to raise taxes. We don't need to raise taxes to balance the budget. We can work with Congress on a lot of issues, and one issue we can work with them on is the budget. They want to balance the budget; the administration wants to balance the budget. And Director Portman submitted a plan that balances the budget within 5 years without raising taxes. The reason I think it's important to keep taxes low is because I think that's important to sustain economic growth and vitality. I'm worried about running up taxes and slowing down the entrepreneurship that is alive and well here in America.

I wish I had the line-item veto like you all do—or some of you do. *[Laughter]* It makes it easier to deal with the issues like earmarks or these interests that get stuffed

into these bills at the last minute without having been debated. And I'm going to keep working with Congress to try to get line-item vetos. If you want to give the President a hand, you might suggest to Congress to let me have the tools that many of you have, in this room. You know it works; it makes sense. It helps keep those budgets lean and focused and having the priorities real clear.

I'm looking forward to working with Congress on health care. I know that Michael has been spending some time with you. I firmly believe, and I know Mike agrees, that the States are oftentimes the best place to reform systems and to work on programs that meet needs. We believe one of the biggest needs is to make sure private health insurance is available to a lot of folks in our country. And so the Affordable Choices program is a real program. And I thank Mike for spending time with you talking about it and wanting to work with you to get it designed properly so it works.

And I also strongly believe we need to change our Tax Code. It's a Tax Code that says, if you're single or you're working for a company that doesn't provide insurance, you're discriminated against, relative to the person working for a big corporation. And it doesn't make sense. If you want people to be able to have health insurance, to be able to afford private insurance, it makes sense to reform the Tax Code. And we look forward to working with you on that.

Look forward to working with you and Congress on reauthorizing No Child Left Behind. I know Margaret talked about it. The real challenge facing this country is whether or not we're going to be competitive, whether or not we've got the skill set necessary to fill the jobs of the 21st century. If we don't, they'll go elsewhere. That's just what happens in a globalized world.

No Child Left Behind is the beginning of a comprehensive, competitive program, and we want to work with you to make sure it works properly, to make sure that accountability is used properly. The thing I like most about the law is that when we find a youngster who is struggling with reading, that we provide extra help to make sure he or she gets up to speed early, before it's too late. I also like the idea of us being able to say,

"We're making progress toward high goals." And we know we are, or we know we aren't if we're not, because we measure. I don't see how you can fix a problem unless you measure the problem.

I look forward to working with you on immigration. It's a tough issue here in Washington. I strongly believe Congress needs to pass comprehensive immigration reform. I strongly believe that we need to uphold our laws, enforce our borders, and uphold our traditions in America. We need to treat people fairly.

I'm looking forward to working with Congress on energy policy. We've made some progress through comprehensive energy bills. There's more to be done. We've spent about \$12 billion since I've been the President on technologies that will enable us to become less dependent on oil. We're going to continue to invest, by the way, in clean coal technologies and solar technologies and wind technologies. But the area where we're pretty close to some amazing breakthroughs is on getting—changing our usage of gasoline. Some amazing battery technologies that are now heading toward the market, which will enable people in New York City, for example, to drive the first 20 to 40 miles on electricity. That will make us less dependent on oil from overseas.

Another exciting technological breakthrough is going to come with cellulosic ethanol. That's a long, fancy word for making gasoline—or making ethanol out of product other than sugar and corn, like switch grass or wood chips. The ethanol production from corn is full-steam ahead, but it's beginning to squeeze some of the hog farmers and cattle raisers. And therefore, we're going to have to accelerate research into alternative feedstocks for ethanol to enable us to meet a goal I set, a mandatory goal of using 35 billion gallons of alternative sources of fuel by 2017. It reduces our gasoline consumption by 20 percent over the next 10 years.

I wouldn't have put out the goal if I didn't think it was possible and achievable. I also know it's necessary. Becoming less dependent on oil is in our national security interests, it's in our national economic interests, and it will enable us to be better stewards of the environment.

I believe we can find a lot of common ground with the Congress on these issues. I've had some good meetings with the Democratic leadership. I appreciate the openness of our discussions. I'm—will continue to reach out to find common ground with them and, as well, with you. We owe it to the people to do so.

Anyway, thanks for giving me a chance to come by. I appreciate it.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:22 a.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Matt Blunt of Missouri; Gov. Mark Sanford of South Carolina; Gen. Peter Pace, USMC, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff; Office of Management and Budget Director Robert J. Portman; Secretary of Health and Human Services Michael O. Leavitt; and Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings.

Remarks on Presenting the Congressional Medal of Honor to Bruce P. Crandall

February 26, 2007

Welcome. I am pleased that you all are here on a very special day. Presenting the Medal of Honor is one of the great privileges for the President. The medal is the highest military decoration a President can confer. This medal is awarded for actions above and beyond the call of duty.

Today I am proud to bestow this medal on a daring pilot, a devoted soldier, and a selfless leader, Lieutenant Colonel Bruce Crandall. I welcome Bruce and his wife, Arlene, back to the White House. I congratulate you on 50 years of marriage. She must be a patient woman. *[Laughter]* I also am glad that their three sons and three of their grandchildren are here. Welcome. I'm especially pleased that some of Bruce's comrades have joined us.

As an officer, Bruce always put his men before himself. Today, his men are here for him. And this afternoon, 41 years after his heroic actions in Vietnam, America recognizes Bruce Crandall with our highest award for valor, the Medal of Honor.

I appreciate Secretary of Defense Bob Gates joining us today. Mr. Secretary, you're always welcome here at the White House.

I appreciate the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Jim Nicholson; welcome. I appreciate Members of the United States Congress who have joined us, starting with the ranking member of the Senate Appropriations Committee—Subcommittee on Defense, Ted Stevens, the Senator from Alaska. Congressman Norm Dicks, who happens to be the U.S. Congressman from Colonel Crandall's district. Congressman, welcome. Congressman Jim Marshall, Congressman Patrick Murphy, we are glad you're here. Thank you for coming.

I appreciate very much Dr. Fran Harvey, the Secretary of the Army; General Pete Pace, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs; General Pete Schoomaker, Chief of Staff of the United States Army.

I thank all the other members of the military who joined us. I particularly want to say thanks and welcome to the Medal of Honor recipients who are with us today: Harvey "Barney" Barnum, Bob Foley, Jake Jacobs—Jack Jacobs, Joe Marm, Bob Patterson, Al Rascon, Gordon Roberts, and Brian Thacker. Welcome.

I appreciate the families, friends, and comrades of Bruce Crandall. David Hicks, thank you for your blessings.

The journey that brought Bruce Crandall to this day began 74 years ago in Olympia, Washington. Growing up, Bruce was a gifted athlete and a bit of a handful. *[Laughter]* A teacher once observed that he had, quote, "a unique ability to get into trouble and out of trouble without any trouble at all." *[Laughter]* At Olympia High School, Bruce was named an All American in baseball. He batted .612 for the league champs; I think we better check the scorecards. *[Laughter]* His dream was to be drafted by the New York Yankees. Instead, he got drafted by the U.S. Army. *[Laughter]*

He was commissioned as an officer, trained as an aviator. His early career took him on mapping missions over Alaska and North Africa and Latin America. In 1963, he reported to Fort Benning to help lead a new unit that would become known as the air cavalry. Two years later, he arrived in Vietnam as a major and as a commanding officer in the 229th Assault Helicopter Battalion.

As a leader, Major Crandall earned the respect of his men with his honesty and his humor. He earned their admiration with his remarkable control over a Huey. His radio call sign was “Ancient Serpent 6,” which his men shortened to “Old Snake.” [Laughter] Or sometimes, they used a more colorful nickname—[laughter]—which we better not pronounce. [Laughter]

On the morning of November 14th, 1965, Major Crandall’s unit was transporting a battalion of soldiers to a remote spot in the Ia Drang Valley, to a landing zone called X-Ray. After several routine lifts into the area, the men on the ground came under a massive attack from the North Vietnamese Army. On Major Crandall’s next flight, three soldiers on his helicopter were killed; three more were wounded. But instead of lifting off to safety, Major Crandall kept his chopper on the ground—in the direct line of enemy fire—so that four wounded soldiers could be loaded aboard.

Major Crandall flew the men back to base, where the injuries could be treated. At that point, he had fulfilled his mission. But he knew that soldiers on the ground were outnumbered and low on ammunition, so Major Crandall decided to fly back into X-Ray. He asked for a volunteer to join him. Captain Ed Freeman stepped forward. In their unarmed choppers, they flew through a cloud of smoke and a wave of bullets. They delivered desperately needed supplies. They carried out more of the wounded, even though medical evacuation was really not their mission.

If Major Crandall had stopped here, he would have been a hero. But he didn’t stop. He flew back into X-Ray again and again. Fourteen times he flew into what they called the Valley of Death. He made those flights knowing that he faced what was later described as an “almost unbelievably extreme risk to his life.” Over the course of the day, Major Crandall had to fly three different choppers; two were damaged so badly they could not stay in the air. Yet he kept flying until every wounded man had been evacuated and every need of the battalion had been met.

When they touched down on their last flight, Major Crandall and Captain Freeman

had spent more than 14 hours in the air. They had evacuated some 70 wounded men. They had provided a lifeline that allowed the battalion to survive the day.

To the men of Ia Drang, the image of Major Crandall’s helicopter coming to their rescue is one they will never forget. One officer who witnessed the battle wrote, “Major Crandall’s actions were without question the most valorous I’ve observed of any helicopter pilot in Vietnam.” The battalion commander said, “Without Crandall, this battalion would almost have surely been overrun.” Another officer said, “I will always be in awe of Major Bruce Crandall.”

For his part, Bruce has never seen it that way. Here’s what he said: “There was never a consideration that we would not go into those landing zones. They were my people down there, and they trusted in me to come and get them.”

As the years have passed, Bruce Crandall’s character and leadership have only grown clearer. He went on to make more rescue flights in Vietnam. He served a second tour, and he retired from the Army as a lieutenant colonel. As a private citizen, he’s continued to serve. He’s worked in local government, and he speaks to students all across our country. One of his favorite stops is Midland, Texas. [Laughter] It happens—where Laura and I grew up. In fact, he’s been to Midland so many times they gave him the key of the city. It’s not exactly the Medal of Honor. [Laughter] It’s not a bad thing to have. [Laughter] Maybe one day I’ll get a key to the city. [Laughter]

A few years ago, Bruce learned he was being considered for our Nation’s highest military distinction. When he found out that Captain Freeman had also been nominated, Bruce insisted that his own name be withdrawn. If only one of them were to receive the Medal of Honor, he wanted it to be his wingman. So when I presented the medal to Captain Freeman in 2001, Bruce was here in the White House. Captain Freeman wished he were here today, but he got snowed in, in Iowa. But his spirit is with us. And today the story comes to its rightful conclusion; Bruce Crandall received the honor he always deserved.

In men like Bruce Crandall, we really see the best of America. He and his fellow soldiers were brave, brave folks. They were as noble and selfless as any who have ever worn our Nation's uniform. And on this day of pride, we remember their comrades who gave their lives and those who are still missing. We remember the terrible telegrams that arrived at Fort Benning, the families devastated, the children who traced their father's name on panel three-east of the Vietnam Memorial Wall.

Our sadness has not diminished with time. Yet we're also comforted by the knowledge that the suffering and grief could have been far worse. One of the reasons it was not is because the man we honor today. For the soldiers rescued, for the men who came home, for the children they had and the lives they made, America is in debt to Bruce Crandall. It's a debt our Nation can never really fully repay, but today we recognize it as best as we're able, and we bestow upon this good and gallant man the Medal of Honor.

Commander, please read the citation.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:30 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Maj. Gen. David Hicks, USA, Army Chief of Chaplains. Following the President's remarks, Lt. Comdr. Geoffrey Gagnier, Coast Guard Aide to the President, read the citation.

Proclamation 8107—Irish-American Heritage Month, 2007

February 26, 2007

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

The friendship between Ireland and the United States has deep roots, and Irish Americans have played an integral role in making our country a place of hope and opportunity. During Irish-American Heritage Month, we recognize the vital contributions of Irish Americans to our Nation.

Since our founding, Irish immigrants have come to America's shores in search of better lives. Today, millions of American citizens are of Irish descent, and they and their

forebearers have helped shape our way of life, strengthened our economy, and contributed to the arts, and protected our Nation. Irish Americans have shown their devotion to our country by serving in our Armed Forces. America is especially grateful to these brave men and women for the sacrifices that have helped preserve the ideals of our country and made the world a safer place.

During the month of March, we reflect on our Nation's past and how Irish Americans helped create the country we live in today. America is a melting pot of cultures, and Irish-American Heritage Month is an opportunity to celebrate the accomplishments of Irish-American citizens and remind our people we are blessed to be a Nation of immigrants.

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 March 2007 as Irish-American Heritage Month. I call upon all Americans to observe this month by celebrating the contributions of Irish Americans to our Nation.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-sixth day of February, in the year of our Lord two thousand seven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-first.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 9:35 a.m., February 28, 2007]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on March 1.

Notice—Continuation of the National Emergency Relating to Cuba and of the Emergency Authority Relating to the Regulation of the Anchorage and Movement of Vessels

February 26, 2007

On March 1, 1996, by Proclamation 6867, a national emergency was declared to address the disturbance or threatened disturbance of

international relations caused by the February 24, 1996, destruction by the Cuban government of two unarmed U.S.-registered civilian aircraft in international airspace north of Cuba. In July 1996 and on subsequent occasions, the Cuban government stated its intent to forcefully defend its sovereignty against any U.S.-registered vessels or aircraft that might enter Cuban territorial waters or airspace while involved in a flotilla or peaceful protest. Since these events, the Cuban government has not demonstrated that it will refrain from the future use of reckless and excessive force against U.S. vessels or aircraft that may engage in memorial activities or peaceful protest north of Cuba. On February 26, 2004, by Proclamation 7757, the scope of the national emergency was expanded in order to deny monetary and material support to the repressive Cuban government, which had taken a series of steps to destabilize relations with the United States, including threatening to abrogate the Migration Accords with the United States and to close the United States Interests Section. Further, Cuba's most senior officials repeatedly asserted that the United States intended to invade Cuba, despite explicit denials from the U.S. Secretaries of State and Defense that such action is planned. Therefore, in accordance with section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)), I am continuing the national emergency with respect to Cuba and the emergency authority relating to the regulation of the anchorage and movement of vessels set out in Proclamation 6867 as amended and expanded by Proclamation 7757.

This notice shall be published in the *Federal Register* and transmitted to the Congress.

George W. Bush

The White House,
February 26, 2007.

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:49 a.m., February 27, 2007]

NOTE: This notice was published in the *Federal Register* on February 28.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Continuation of the National Emergency Relating to Cuba and of the Emergency Authority Relating to the Regulation of the Anchorage and Movement of Vessels

February 26, 2007

Dear Madam Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent the enclosed notice to the *Federal Register* for publication, which states that the emergency declared with respect to the Government of Cuba's destruction of two unarmed U.S.-registered civilian aircraft in international airspace north of Cuba on February 24, 1996, as amended and expanded on February 26, 2004, is to continue in effect beyond March 1, 2007.

Sincerely,

George W. Bush

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Richard B. Cheney, President of the Senate.

Remarks at the Republican Governors Association Gala

February 26, 2007

Thanks for coming. Thank you all for being here tonight. I am honored to join you. You might remember, I am a former member of the Republican Governors Association. And now I am a proud brother of another former member. Now he's out of office, I understand Jeb is spending a lot of time on Florida's beaches. [Laughter] He says people still recognize him; when he's out there in his Speedo, they come up and say, "How you doing, Governor Schwarzenegger?" [Laughter]

He made a promise to me that when he left office, he'd make sure that he had a good man following him, and he kept his promise when Charlie Crist got elected Governor of the great State of Florida.

And I also want to welcome some of the newly elected Governors: Governor Jim Gibbons of Nevada; Butch Otter of Idaho—he's out there getting a hors d'oeuvre—and Governor Sarah Palin of Alaska. And I thank my friends, the Governors, who have joined us. I really enjoyed our visit today. I appreciate the kindness you have shown to me, and I appreciate your hard work.

I particularly want to pay tribute to the spouses of the Governors, the people who work hard to make sure the Governors are capable of doing their jobs. And speaking about spouses, Sonny took it a little far when he said Laura was a courageous person—I think he was referring to the fact that she was courageous when she said yes when I asked her to marry me. But I'm real proud of Laura. I love her dearly. I think she's a great First Lady for the country and I—[*applause*].

And I thank Sonny Perdue and Mary. I appreciate my friend Matt Blunt and Melanie. You know, this is a record-setting evening, and it took an extraordinary leader from a great State to convince you to contribute. And so I want to thank—say thanks to my friend and my Governor, Rick Perry and the first lady of Texas, Anita. I want to thank the members of my administration who have joined us today, and I appreciate you coming.

I think the thing that's important for you all to realize is that we are the party of ideas. We're results-oriented people. That's how we got the majority, and that's what it's going to take to get the majority back—standing on principle, not worrying about polls and focus groups, but saying what you think is right and acting on it.

In the battle of ideas, we stand with the American people. We believe in a strong national defense. We believe in less government and lower taxes. And we believe that you've got to trust the values and the good judgment of the American people.

And I appreciate the innovative ideas that Governors—Republican Governors are

pushing all around this country. And that's why, when I spoke to them today, I think I said, it's very important for this administration to work with our Governors. The States are laboratories for reform. The States are the place where some of the best innovation can take place to make sure the entire country benefits.

I've set a big agenda here in Washington, DC; I want to share some of that with you. But my political agenda is this: more Republican Governors, take back control of the House and the Senate, and make sure we keep the White House in 2008.

And I want to thank you all for helping make those goals become reality, and I appreciate you contributing of your hard-earned money. It means a lot to candidates who are running for office. It means a lot to the organizers, people like Sonny, who are going to recruit good people to run for office, to know that there's something besides the telephone call awaiting them; there's support. And you're making a big difference, and I appreciate it.

We've got a lot to do here in Washington. The most important job for the Federal Government is to protect the American people from harm. And the best way to do that is to stay on the offense against these terrorists, is to defeat them overseas so we don't have to face them again here in America.

And that's exactly what we're doing. Every single day, there are good and decent people in my administration and around the country who are securing this homeland. There are good, honorable people overseas chasing down these killers and bringing them to justice. Part of our strategy is to keep the pressure on them. The other part of our strategy is to defeat their hateful ideology by spreading freedom around the world. I believe that freedom is universal, and I believe it's in the interest of the United States to free people, so that the world will become a more peaceful place.

There are two major theaters in this global war against these extremists. One is Afghanistan, and the other is Iraq. I'd like to spend a little time on the subject of Iraq. As you know, I recently announced a plan for victory in Iraq. I was confronted with a serious decision to make: Did I accept the status quo

and hope that the capital of that young democracy would somehow be able to regain its footing; or did it make sense for the United States to gradually withdraw from that country, before democracy was able to take hold; or did it make sense to reinforce our troops then in the theater to make sure the capital city of Baghdad became secure? And I chose the latter because I think it gives us the best chance to achieve our objective, which is a democracy that can defend itself, sustain itself, and govern itself and serve as an ally in this war against these extremists.

I made some changes, nominated a good man to lead the cause there in Baghdad, General David Petraeus. He recently went up for confirmation in the United States Senate. He received a fair hearing and was approved unanimously by the Senators, and I appreciated them for their strong support. During his testimony, General Petraeus strongly supported the idea of sending reinforcements into Baghdad to help the capital city, to help this new Government find breathing space necessary to do the reconciliation necessary after years of tyranny. And yet, shortly after his unanimous confirmation, the House of Representatives passed a symbolic resolution that expressed disapproval of the very plan that he thought was necessary to accomplish our objective.

I have no problems with debate; as a matter of fact, one of the healthy things about our society is the right for people to express their opinion. I never question anybody's patriotism who disagrees with me. But soon the United States Congress will have to make a decision that will have real consequences, whether or not to fund the troops we have sent into harm's way. Our men and women in uniform risk their lives to carry out our plan to support this new democracy and to secure Baghdad. And wherever Members may stand on my decision, we have a solemn responsibility to give our troops the resources and the flexibility they need to prevail.

This is tough work, but it's necessary work. It's necessary to help this young Government survive, because, you see, if we were to leave Iraq before the job is done, the enemy would follow us here. Failure in Iraq would invite chaos, would embolden those who would do us harm again, would enable them to recruit

more of their fanatics that are willing to kill the innocent. Failure in the Iraq would cause the extremists to rejoice and those who hunger for a better way of life to wonder about the resolve of the United States of America. Failure in Iraq is unacceptable. It would affect generations of Americans to come. And that is why I made the decision I made, a decision that will help us secure the peace for our children and our grandchildren.

Our foreign policy is more than war and diplomacy. I believe to whom much is given, much is required. And we're a blessed nation. Therefore, it is in our national interests to defeat disease and hunger and poverty as best as we can. I will continue to call upon the United States Congress to fund the HIV/AIDS initiative on the continent of Africa, so we can save life. Do you realize as a result of your generosity and the support of the Congress, the PEPFAR initiative has now delivered antiretroviral drugs, lifesaving drugs, to more than 800,000 people in less than 5 years?

A robust foreign policy that reflects the heart of the American people is one that recognizes that we can eliminate malaria in countries around the world. And I thank Laura and others in this audience for leading the fight against malaria, and I call upon other free nations of the world to join the United States to do our duty, to save lives no matter where they may be. We will challenge corruption where we find it. We will insist for freedom where we can insist, in places like Cuba and Belarus and Burma. And we will always remember that this great Nation not only must take care of the unfortunate in our own land but help others realize the great blessings of freedom. I'm proud of our foreign policy, and for the next 2 years, I will conduct it with all the—with all my soul and with all my might, because I believe it is in the best interests of the United States of America.

Here at home the most important thing the Government can do is to create the conditions for the entrepreneurial spirit to flourish. Oh, I know they don't talk too much about it, but I am—and that's the economy. And it's cooking, and we intend to keep it that way. We believe government doesn't create wealth but the environment in which

small businesses can grow to be big businesses, an environment where people can realize their dreams. And the best way for the Federal Government to create that environment is to cut taxes and to keep them low, which is precisely what we did.

If the Congress wants to continue this economic vitality, the best gesture they can make is to make the tax cuts we passed permanent. Oh, I know you'll hear them say up here in Washington, "Well, you cannot balance the budget unless you raises the taxes on the American people." We're proving them wrong. I set the goal of cutting the deficit in half in a 5-year period of time, and we exceeded that goal by 3 years. You know why? Because when the economy is strong, it yields more tax revenues for the U.S. Treasury. And so when you combine that with fiscal austerity, we're on our way to balancing the budget. And I just submitted a budget to the United States Congress that says, we'll balance the budget in 5 years, so long as they keep taxes low to keep the economy going and they're wise about how we spend your money.

We've got a slight problem up here, what's called earmarks. And I intend to do something about it, and I intend to work with Congress to do something about it. An earmark is a special-interest item. It gets stuck into one of these appropriations bills. A lot of times they never even see the light of day. In other words, they don't debate them; they don't vote on them; they just show up on my desk. Those days have got to end if we're going to make sure we're wise about how we spend your money. You know what Congress needs to do? They need to give me the same power these—many of these Governors have, and that's the line-item veto.

I'm looking forward to working with both Republicans and Democrats on doing something about Social Security and Medicare. It's tough—it's tough political work up here to do that. A lot of people don't want to deal with that issue. My advice and my call is for people to bring their ideas to the table. Come to the table with how best to save a generation from high taxes or reduced benefits. You bring your ideas to the table, and so will I, and we'll see if we can't do something good for the American people, set aside politics

and solve the Social Security issue once and for all.

I'm looking to working with my friends, the Governors, on health care. I believe some of the most innovative ideas on health care are being proposed by our Governors. Michael Leavitt, who is head of HHS, is asking Congress to give affordable grants—in other words, the flexibility of that Federal money we're spending in the States so that these Governors can design programs all aimed at making sure our uninsured can afford private insurance. And I emphasize "private insurance." Some in Washington believe the best way to solve the health care issue is for the Federal Government to solve it. I don't believe that. I believe the best solution in health care is to empower consumers to make choices. The best way to do that at the State level is to have flexibility in Federal funding so they can design programs for basic health insurance, coupled with this reform: I believe that there ought to be a \$15,000 standard deduction—if you're married—off your income taxes and payroll taxes to help you afford insurance.

If you're working uninsured or if you're working for a small business who has no health insurance, you pay with after-tax dollars, and if you work for a corporation, you can get your insurance free, and that is unfair. The Tax Code needs to be reformed.

Congress needs to pass association health plans to let small businesses pool risk across jurisdictional boundaries so our small-business owners can better afford health insurance. We need to continue to promote health savings accounts. We need medical liability reform in Washington, DC, to keep good docs in the practice and keep the cost of medicine reasonable. We need information technology. In all I'm telling you, the best policy for health care is to make sure that it's doctors and patients making the decisions, not bureaucrats and insurance companies.

I'm looking forward to working with our Governors on No Child Left Behind. That bill comes up for reauthorization in Congress, and Congress needs to reauthorize it, and here's why. I believe strongly States ought to have flexibility. I believe strongly in local control of schools. But I believe in

setting high standards for children, and I believe it is important to measure to determine whether or not our children can read and write and add and subtract early. And if they can't, there ought to be special help. And when they do, we ought to thank our teachers and thank our Governors and thank the legislature for adequately funding education. But one thing we can't do is we can't leave children behind by just guessing whether or not they're learning. The best policies are to measure, and when we find schools that will not change, then we've got to give parents different choices so that no child is left behind in the United States of America.

We need an immigration policy that holds the values of the United States of America. We'll enforce our borders, but we need more than that. We need a temporary-worker program that will enable willing workers to do jobs Americans are not doing, so that we can get the pressure off the border and uphold the values of the United States of America.

I can keep going—[laughter]—but Laura is giving me the hook.

I do want to talk about one other subject, though, before I leave, and that is energy. This country—and that's going to sound odd for a Texan to say—this country is too dependent on oil, and we need to do something about it right now. You see, dependency on energy from foreign sources is a national security problem. Sometimes we get that oil from countries that don't like us. Dependency on oil is a economic problem. When a country like China demands more oil, relative supply, the price of crude oil goes up and so does the price of gasoline at the pump. Dependency on oil means we're not being good stewards of the environment. And therefore, we have spent \$12 billion thus far in my Presidency to promote new technologies to enable us to say, we're becoming less dependent on oil.

And I want to share with you a novel idea I threw out for the Congress and asked for their passing. I believe that we can reduce the gasoline we use by 20 percent over the next 10 years. And I believe we can do so by promoting hybrid batteries and ethanol. And so I laid out a mandatory fuel standard

of 35 billion gallons of alternative fuels by 2017. It is a bold initiative; it is a necessary initiative; and it's a practical initiative because of the technological advances this country is going to make.

We can only feed—we can only fuel our automobiles with so much ethanol from corn; after a while the hog growers begin to get nervous when that price of corn gets up. And so, therefore, we're spending a lot of your money, and so is the private sector, on developing ways to make ethanol out of wood chips or switch grass or agricultural refuse. The whole purpose is for this Congress to work with this administration to make the difficult decisions now to fund technologies that will enable us to say that we're less dependent on oil, we're better stewards of the environment, and we're conscious about our national security. And that day is coming.

Good policy drives good politics. And the best policy is based upon solid principles—principles like the marketplace, principles like low taxes, principles like trusting people to spend their money, principles like a strong national defense is necessary to protect generations that are coming, principles like the power of freedom to make the world a better place. I'm looking forward to working with the United States Congress on principled policy.

I've got to tell you, I'm really optimistic about our country. I believe our future is a bright future. And the reason I do is because I know the character and nature of our citizens. We're a decent land, a courageous land, and a compassionate land, and it is my honor to be the President of such a fine group of people.

Thanks for coming, and may God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:50 p.m. at the National Building Museum. In his remarks, he referred to former Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida; Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger of California; Gov. Sonny Perdue of Georgia; Gov. Matt Blunt of Missouri; and Lt. Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq.

**Remarks Following a Meeting With
President Elias Antonio Saca
Gonzalez of El Salvador**

February 27, 2007

President Bush. *Puesta bienvenidos a mi amigo, el Presidente de nuestro amigo de El Salvador. Gracias.* Thanks for coming. We spent a lot of time talking together, because I value the advice of the President.

We talked about a lot of subjects. We talked about the fact that the first year of the trade agreement between the United States and El Salvador is coming up. And the President told me that a lot of people are benefiting—a lot of people in his country are benefiting from the opportunity presented by trade. And I told him that people in our country benefit from the relationship. Under his leadership, the economy of El Salvador is strong. And I congratulate you for your leadership.

We talked about interesting opportunities available. And one, of course, is biofuels. We both recognize that the development of biofuels is in our national interests. And I thank you for your vision.

We talked about the Millennium Challenge Account that the President has ably led. And it's going to enable people in the northern part of his country to realize the benefits of free trade and commercialism.

I expressed my concerns and our condolences about the three gentlemen who were recently assassinated, which led us into a broad discussion about security and my desire to help the President deal with security issues.

And finally, the President reminded me that TPS expires next September. Every time he comes to the Oval Office, he's expressed his deep concern and strong support for his citizens that may be here in our country. And I assured him that I was openminded to his request, but more importantly, I'm working hard to get a comprehensive bill, immigration bill passed out of the United States Congress.

And so once again, we had a substantial and meaningful conversation. And that's what you expect when you have two friends together. *Gracias, senor.*

President Saca Gonzalez. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

We have talked extensively with the President on varied—array of issues. And I spoke to President Bush about how meaningful his trip to Latin America is going to be, because this is going to give a signal that the United States is interested in Latin America.

President Bush. Thank you, sir.

President Saca Gonzalez. We have talked about free trade. On March 1st, the CAFTA agreement that is with El Salvador with the United States of America is going to be one year old. And during this year, we have increased in 20 percent all our exports. And our economy has doubled its size. So there's no doubt that free trade has allowed this to become true.

We have also talked about the Millennium Account, and the project to develop the northern part of El Salvador is going to be a complete success, and very soon, we're going to have the first disbursements made. And we wanted that to be—the project of the development of the northern part of our country to become a success story for the Millennium Account.

We also talked about the TPS with President Bush today. And the President always has a very positive answer for El Salvador. But more importantly, today is the comprehensive immigration reform. And we will have to wait and see what happens between the Executive and the Congress of the United States. We have more than 2 million Salvadorans living here in the United States. The majority are legal citizens; many are already North Americans. And the President has always been very sensitive to this issue of the Salvadorans here, for which I feel very grateful.

President Bush. Thank you.

President Saca Gonzalez. We talked about regional security and its importance, and also the combat to drug dealing and the combat to the gangs. And we have found many points of coincidence with the President.

And we also talked with the President about biofuels and the importance of biofuels, and how necessary it is, you know, to develop biofuels in the region so that we need less gas and less oil to have our cars

run. And in El Salvador, we're about to pass a new law on biofuels, and it's almost ready. And we want to work hand-in-hand with President Bush for the development of these biofuels in the region.

And anyway, I always feel so comfortable, you know, sitting down and talking with my good friend every time that I come here. Thank you for receiving me.

President Bush. *Gracias, senior. Gracias.*

President Saca Gonzalez. *Gracias.*

President Bush. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:51 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. President Saca Gonzalez spoke in Spanish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks at a Swearing-In Ceremony for John D. Negroponte as Deputy Secretary of State

February 27, 2007

Thank you, Madam Secretary. Madam Secretary, thanks for the introduction. Thanks for the really fine job you're doing.

I'm pleased to be with you today, and I'm really honored to stand with a personal friend and a man I admire a lot, the new Deputy Secretary of State, John Negroponte.

I too welcome John's family—all five of them here, as well as his wife, Diana. I appreciate all his friends who have shown up. Thanks for coming to pay honor to this good man.

American diplomacy is really critical to ensuring the safety and the security of our citizens. Terrorist enemies follow an ideology of hatred and death. In the long run, the only way to defeat them is to offer a vision that is hopeful and positive and optimistic. Spreading that vision requires strong leadership here at the State Department, and John Negroponte has the talent and the experience our Nation needs in a Deputy Secretary of State. He's going to do a superb job for the American people.

I appreciate very much Congresswoman Jane Harman for joining us. It's a great tribute to a good man. I appreciate the former Deputy Secretary of State, Rich Armitage, for being here. I'm honored that other members of my administration have come. I want

to thank the members of the diplomatic corps. I'm proud to see you all here. Thanks for coming. Distinguished guests, the folks who serve our Nation here at the State Department.

As the Deputy Secretary of State, John Negroponte is going to play a key role, an important role, in shaping our foreign policy. He's going to help guide diplomats deployed around the globe. He will act as the chief operating officer of the State Department. He will work with Secretary Rice and the leaders of other Federal agencies to ensure that America speaks with one voice.

John is uniquely qualified. As America's first Director of National Intelligence, John took on one of the most demanding assignments in Government. His work was to ensure that all our intelligence agencies function as a single, unified enterprise. He handled this vital task with skill and determination. His leadership of the intelligence community improved our ability to collect, analyze, and share intelligence. His vigilance has helped keep the American people safe from harm.

One of my regrets is that, in him coming back to the State Department, is, he won't be in the Oval Office every morning to share his wisdom with me. And he has plenty of wisdom to share. I strongly urge the young Foreign Service officers to get on his calendar so he can explain to you how best to do your job. *[Laughter]* I did the same thing. *[Laughter]*

As he moves over to the State Department, he knows this building really well. As Condi mentioned, he became a Foreign Service officer in the administration of Ike. Like, some of you weren't even born then. *[Laughter]* Diana and I were barely born then. *[Laughter]*

Over the course of more than four decades, he's held eight Foreign Service posts, three different continents. He served as the Deputy National Security Adviser to President Ronald Reagan. He represented America at the United Nations during my administration. He was our first Ambassador to a free Iraq. In these and other posts, he has shown diplomatic skill and devotion to our country. He really has set a great example for the people who work here.

Over the past 6 years, I know him to be a man of vision and character. He understands the importance of fighting the extremists with all elements of national power. He is a good negotiator. It doesn't hurt that he can play a mean game of poker. *[Laughter]* As one of our Nation's—as our Nation's second-ranking diplomat, he's going to be a strong and confident advocate for our interests and, equally importantly, our ideals around the world.

John is going to build upon the work done by his predecessor, Bob Zoellick. Bob helped lead the State Department during a challenging time for our Nation. He upheld the high standards and the proud tradition of this Department. I appreciate his dedicated service.

As John takes up his duties, he's going to benefit from the talent and professionalism of the men and women in our foreign and civil service, folks who serve in this building and in our Embassies around the world. The work done here and the work done abroad helps sustain America's position; it fosters freedom and helps advance the cause of peace.

I want to thank you for your willingness to serve our country. I appreciate the sacrifices you make on behalf of the American people.

You're going to have a fine leader in John Negroponte. One thing is for certain: He knows we live in challenging times; we live in dangerous times. He also knows that this is a moment of great hope and opportunity. John's broad experience and sound judgment and unquestioned integrity will make him an outstanding Deputy Secretary of State.

And so, John, I thank you once again for agreeing to serve our Nation. Congratulations.

And now Secretary Rice will administer the oath.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:27 a.m. at the U.S. Department of State. In his remarks, he referred to former Deputy Secretary of State Robert B. Zoellick. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Deputy Secretary Negroponte.

Remarks Honoring the 2006 National Basketball Association Champion Miami Heat

February 27, 2007

Thank you all. Please be seated. It is such a joy to welcome the NBA champs, the Miami Heat, to the White House. Glad you all are here. This is the Miami Heat's first NBA championship. I congratulate you on a tremendous achievement, even though you beat a Texas team. *[Laughter]*

I can assure you, however, then Governor Bush, the Governor of Florida, was thrilled, as were a lot of Florida fans. We've got a lot of members of the congressional delegation in the room. We got you a Senator here. We got Congresswoman Ros-Lehtinen, Alcee Hastings, Robert Wexler, Ander Crenshaw, Jeff Miller, Kendrick Meek, Ron Klein, and Tim Mahoney. Thank you all for coming.

Most importantly, we got members of the Miami Heat family with us today. I'm really proud of Micky Arison and Madeleine, who is with us, as well as Nick. As you know, I used to be in pro sports. I never had the pleasure of winning anything. *[Laughter]* Must be pretty cool. *[Laughter]*

I welcome Pat Riley, the president and head coach of the Heat. I welcome Randy Pfund, the general manager. I want to thank all the folks who make the organization run—the equipment people, the people that figure out how to get you to the plane on time, the folks who never really get much credit for making a franchise become a championship franchise. And we welcome you all here.

I want to say something to the spouses of the players: Welcome. You've got a tough life, in many ways, with your spouse on the road all the time, and you deserve as much of this championship as they do. And so we welcome you here to the White House as well.

All the fans who are here, thanks for coming. These players did something that they weren't supposed to do. Remember, they went into the Eastern Conference championship as the underdog. Nobody thought they could win. And then they get against the Mavericks, and they're two down—and 13 points behind with minutes remaining, 7

minutes remaining in the third game. In other words, they lose that game, it's over. They weren't supposed to win. And they did something no team has done in nearly 30 years, which is win four straight and become the NBA champs. And your fans are really proud of you.

This is a team with some of the NBA's bright stars. Dwyane Wade led the team in scoring—most valuable player in the finals. He was on the—sportsman of the year for Sports Illustrated. All it said was, Dwyane Wade plays to win. Unfortunately, he hurt his shoulder. I know a lot of NBA fans, whether they like the Heat or not, are pulling for Dwyane to get back into action. We wish you a speedy recovery.

Or take Alonzo Mourning. A lot of folks here in DC remember Alonzo Mourning. I don't know if the people understand it, but Alonzo had a kidney illness that a lot of folks said, "Well, he'll never get back on the court again." He not only got back on the court; he blocked a lot of shots—[laughter]—which helped this team become the NBA champ.

And then, of course, probably one of the most well-known figures in the United States of America is a fellow that's hard to miss—[laughter]—a fellow Texan—[laughter]—big Shaq. He scored his 25,000th point in his career last night—or recently. And we congratulate you for that—last night, yes, last night. And—but he was an important figure in seeing to—seeing this team to the championship.

But as Coach Riley gave me—he said, "Just remember, the motto wasn't, 'Each star matters;' the motto was, '15 strong.'" In other words, it was a team effort that got these men here to the White House. Yes, they had the stars; everybody knew who they—who the stars are, but it was the capacity to play together, to put the team ahead of themselves, that enabled them to be here at the White House, saying, "Congratulations NBA champs."

And I appreciate very much—[applause]. So they asked Dwyane Wade—he was the fellow that was the Sports Illustrated man—he said, "We did this together." In other words, he recognized, in spite of the fact that he had a fine series, that he couldn't have done it without his teammates.

Pat Riley had a lot to do with this team playing as a team. A team requires a good, solid leader in convincing people to put the team ahead of themselves. And that's exactly what Pat Riley has done. I'd say he's accomplished. After all, he's won seven NBA rings, that's all. [Laughter] They asked him about this ring, and I think it's interesting what he said. He said, "I would have traded them all for this one." He cares about this team. And obviously, the players responded to his leadership.

But what impresses me the most about the Miami Heat is their work in the community. That's what impresses me about them. I mean, I'm in awe of their athletic skills. Standing next to Shaq is an awe-inspiring experience. [Laughter] But I want to share some of the stories of these players and what they have done in their communities.

Alonzo Mourning dedicated his entire salary from the Heat to charities that help low-income kidney patients and underprivileged youth. It wasn't 10 percent—[applause]. I would suggest not popping up on every story—[laughter]—because you're going to be tired. [Laughter] This is a giving team. [Laughter]

Antoine Walker founded the Eight Foundation to provide education and sports opportunities for inner-city kids in his hometown of Chicago. He came from Chicago; he's putting something back in the community from whence he came.

Dwyane Wade has given a lot of his salary to his church. He donates basketball shoes to a youth sports program at his alma mater, which happens to be Marquette University. He founded Wade's World Foundation, which gives children educational and social opportunities, such as the chance to spend the day at Disney World.

And then, of course, you've got the big man, Shaq. He works as a reserve police officer with the Miami Beach Police Department. He gives new meaning to the phrase, "the long arm of the law." [Laughter]

Heat players volunteer their time in all kinds of causes, ranging from reading to drug prevention to youth basketball. This is a championship team on the court, and this is a championship team off the court, and it

is my high honor to welcome to the White House as the NBA champs.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:52 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida; and Micky Arison, owner, Nicholas Arison, limited partner, and Shaquille O'Neal, center, Miami Heat.

Proclamation 8108—American Red Cross Month, 2007

February 27, 2007

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

The American Red Cross demonstrates the power of human compassion and embodies the capacity for kindness and generosity of this great Nation. This month, we honor the men and women of the American Red Cross who exhibit the spirit and character of America by serving others in need.

Since its founding in 1881, the American Red Cross has helped millions of individuals overcome the effects of natural disasters and emergencies by providing shelter, food, counseling, and other assistance. It plays an important role in our communities by helping maintain our country's blood supply, offering programs for youth and the elderly, supporting members of the military and their families, and promoting health and emergency preparedness. This inspiring organization helps improve the lives of those in need and continues to assist in the recovery efforts in the Gulf Coast.

The humanitarian mission of the American Red Cross extends around the world. My Administration is proud to work with it to support efforts to combat malaria, measles, HIV/AIDS, and other diseases that affect millions of people each year in Africa and throughout the world. The American Red Cross is committed to helping improve the prevention and treatment of diseases and is working to strengthen community health programs in developing areas of the world. These efforts help save lives and show the strength and generosity of America.

We are grateful for the tireless work of the volunteers and staff of the American Red Cross. During this month, we pay tribute to this remarkable organization and all those who have answered the call to serve a cause greater than self and offered support and healing in times of need.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America and Honorary Chairman of the American Red Cross, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim March 2007 as American Red Cross Month. I commend the good work of the American Red Cross, and I encourage all Americans to help make our world a better place by volunteering their time, energy, and talents for others.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-seventh day of February, in the year of our Lord two thousand seven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-first.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:49 a.m., March 1, 2007]

NOTE: This proclamation was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 28, and it was published in the *Federal Register* on March 2.

Proclamation 8109—Women's History Month, 2007

February 27, 2007

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Throughout our history, the vision and determination of women have strengthened and transformed America. As we celebrate Women's History Month, we recognize the vital contributions women have made to our country.

The strong leadership of extraordinary women has altered our Nation's history. Sojourner Truth, Alice Stone Blackwell, and Julia Ward Howe opened doors for future

generations of women by advancing the cause of women's voting rights and helping make America a more equitable place. In 1855, Dr. Mary E. Walker became one of the first female physicians in the country. Dr. Walker volunteered her medical services during the Civil War and became the only woman in United States history to receive the Medal of Honor. Vivian Malone Jones stood her ground in the face of a great injustice and helped integrate the University of Alabama, breaking down racial barriers to higher education and becoming the school's first African-American graduate.

Our Nation is a land of great opportunity, and women are seizing that opportunity and shaping the future of America in all walks of life. A record number of women are serving in the halls of Congress, and the number of women-owned businesses continues to grow. The women of our Armed Forces are making a vital contribution to our Nation's security by serving the cause of freedom and peace around the world. And by giving care and guidance, America's mothers are helping to build the foundation for the success of our Nation's children and strengthening the character of our country. This month, we honor the spirit, leadership, and hard work of American women.

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 March 2007 as Women's History Month. I call upon the people of the United States to observe this month with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities that honor the history, accomplishments, and contributions of American women.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-seventh day of February, in the year of our Lord two thousand seven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-first.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:49 a.m., March 1, 2007]

NOTE: This proclamation was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 28, and it was published in the *Federal Register* on March 2.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Military Service Organizations

February 28, 2007

One of the most enjoyable things I do as the President is to hear stories of my fellow citizens—stories of compassion, stories of care. I just talked to social entrepreneurs who have decided to help improve the lives of our service men and women and their families. There are some remarkable acts of kindness by people who have taken it upon themselves to serve their country by helping a neighbor in need. And whether it be helping the chaplains help kids, or whether it be helping a family of the injured, whether it be working at Walter Reed, or supporting troops getting ready to go into combat, these good men and women really represent the very best of America.

I ask my fellow citizens to support our troops and their families. There are all kinds of ways you can find out how to do so. Americasupportsyou.mil, for example, is a web site that if you really do want to participate like these citizens have, that you can find out a way to contribute your time, your money, your talents to really send a message that America supports these brave volunteers who are out defending our country in the war on terror.

And so I thank you all for joining us. It's been my great pleasure to hear from you. I'm proud to be the President of a country with so many decent citizens. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:12 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House.

Proclamation 8110—Save Your Vision Week, 2007

February 28, 2007

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Across our Nation, millions of Americans suffer from eye diseases and vision loss. During Save Your Vision Week, we reinforce the importance of proper eye care and raise awareness about how to protect and prolong healthy vision.

By taking simple preventative steps such as wearing sunglasses and using protective goggles while exposed to hazardous objects or environments, Americans can help maintain their eyesight. Regular eye exams are also key to safeguarding healthy vision. As a result of the Medicare Modernization Act, Medicare may pay the cost of exams for those who are eligible and have a high risk of diabetic eye disease or glaucoma. More information about healthy vision and eye care can be found by visiting nei.nih.gov. My Administration is committed to helping Americans lead better, healthier lives. By working with community organizations, eye care professionals, and compassionate citizens, we can increase awareness of the importance of regular and diligent eye care and encourage people to take steps to maintain eye health and keep the precious gift of sight.

The Congress, by joint resolution approved December 30, 1963, as amended (77 Stat. 629; 36 U.S.C. 138), has authorized and requested the President to proclaim the first week in March of each year as “Save Your Vision Week.”

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim March 4 through March 10, 2007, as Save Your Vision Week. I encourage all Americans to learn more about eye care and eye safety, and take measures to help ensure a lifetime of healthy vision.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-eighth day of February, in the year of our Lord two thousand seven, and of the Independence of the United

States of America the two hundred and thirty-first.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 11:35 a.m., March 1, 2007]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on March 2.

Proclamation 8111—To Implement the Dominican Republic-Central America-United States Free Trade Agreement With Respect to the Dominican Republic and for Other Purposes

February 28, 2007

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

1. On August 5, 2004, the United States entered into the Dominican Republic-Central America-United States Free Trade Agreement (the “Agreement”) with Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua (the “Agreement countries”). The Agreement was approved by the Congress in section 101(a) of the Dominican Republic-Central America-United States Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act (the “Act”) (Public Law 109–53, 119 Stat. 462) (19 U.S.C. 4011 note).

2. Section 201 of the Act authorizes the President to proclaim such modifications or continuation of any duty, such continuation of duty-free or excise treatment, or such additional duties, as the President determines to be necessary or appropriate to carry out or apply Article 3.3 and Annex 3.3 (including the schedule of United States duty reductions with respect to originating goods) of the Agreement.

3. Consistent with section 201(a)(2) of the Act, each Agreement country is to be removed from the enumeration of designated beneficiary developing countries eligible for the benefits of the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) on the date the Agreement enters into force with respect to that country.

4. Consistent with section 201(a)(3) of the Act, each Agreement country is to be removed from the enumeration of designated beneficiary countries under the Caribbean Basin Economic Recovery Act (CBERA) (19 U.S.C. 2701 *et seq.*) on the date the Agreement enters into force with respect to that country, subject to the exceptions set out in section 201(a)(3)(B) of the Act.

5. Consistent with section 213(b)(5)(D) of the CBERA, as amended by the United States-Caribbean Basin Trade Partnership Act (CBTPA) (Public Law 106-200), each Agreement country is to be removed from the enumeration of designated CBTPA beneficiary countries on the date the Agreement enters into force with respect to that country.

6. Section 1634(c)(2) of the Pension Protection Act of 2006 (Public Law 109-280) (29 U.S.C. 1001 note) authorizes the President to proclaim a reduction in the overall limit in the tariff preference level for Nicaragua provided in Annex 3.28 of the Agreement if the President determines that Nicaragua has failed to comply with a commitment under an agreement between the United States and Nicaragua with regard to the administration of such tariff preference level.

7. Presidential Proclamation 6641 of December 15, 1993, implemented the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) with respect to the United States and, pursuant to the North American Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act (Public Law 103-182) (the "NAFTA Implementation Act"), incorporated in the Harmonized Tariff Schedule of the United States (HTS) the tariff modifications and rules of origin necessary or appropriate to carry out the NAFTA.

8. Section 202 of the NAFTA Implementation Act (19 U.S.C. 3332) provides rules for determining whether goods imported into the United States originate in the territory of a NAFTA party and thus are eligible for the tariff and other treatment contemplated under the NAFTA. Section 202(q) of the NAFTA Implementation Act (19 U.S.C. 3332(q)) authorizes the President to proclaim, as a part of the HTS, the rules of origin set out in the NAFTA and to proclaim modifications to such previously proclaimed rules of origin, subject to the consultation and lay-

over requirements of section 103(a) of the NAFTA Implementation Act (19 U.S.C. 3313(a)).

9. The United States and Mexico have agreed to modify certain NAFTA rules of origin. It is therefore necessary to modify the NAFTA rules of origin set out in Proclamation 6641.

10. Executive Order 11651 of March 3, 1972, as amended, established the Committee for the Implementation of Textile Agreements (CITA), consisting of representatives of the Departments of State, the Treasury, Commerce, and Labor, and the Office of the United States Trade Representative, with the representative of the Department of Commerce as Chairman, to supervise the implementation of textile trade agreements. Consistent with 3 U.S.C. 301, when carrying out functions vested in the President by statute and assigned by the President to CITA, the officials collectively exercising those functions are all to be officers required to be appointed by the President with the advice and consent of the Senate.

11. Section 604 of the Trade Act of 1974 (the "1974 Act") (19 U.S.C. 2483), as amended, authorizes the President to embody in the HTS the substance of relevant provisions of that Act, or other acts affecting import treatment, and of actions taken thereunder.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, acting under the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, including but not limited to section 201 of the Act, section 1634(c)(2) of the Pension Protection Act of 2006, section 202 of the NAFTA Implementation Act, section 301 of title 3, United States Code, and section 604 of the 1974 Act, and the Act having taken effect pursuant to section 107(a), do proclaim that:

(1) In order to provide generally for the preferential tariff treatment being accorded under the Agreement to the Dominican Republic, to provide certain other treatment to originating goods for the purposes of the Agreement, to provide tariff-rate quotas with respect to certain goods, to reflect the removal of the Dominican Republic from the enumeration of designated beneficiary developing countries for purposes of the GSP, to

reflect the removal of the Dominican Republic from the enumeration of designated beneficiary countries for purposes of the CBERA and the CBTPA, and to make technical and conforming changes in the general notes to the HTS, the HTS is modified as set forth in Annexes I and II of Publication 3901 of the United States International Trade Commission, entitled Modifications to the Harmonized Tariff Schedule of the United States to Implement the Dominican Republic-Central America-United States Free Trade Agreement With Respect to the Dominican Republic (Publication 3901), which is incorporated by reference into this proclamation.

(2) The CITA is authorized to exercise the function of the President under section 1634(c)(2) of the Pension Protection Act of 2006 of determining whether Nicaragua has failed to comply with a commitment under an agreement between the United States and Nicaragua with regard to the administration of the tariff preference level for Nicaragua provided in Annex 3.28 of the Agreement and, on making such a determination, to reduce the overall limit in the tariff preference level for Nicaragua provided in Annex 3.28 of the Agreement.

(3) In order to modify the rules of origin under the NAFTA, general note 12 to the HTS is modified as set forth in the Annex to this proclamation.

(4)(a) The amendments to the HTS made by paragraph (1) of this proclamation shall be effective with respect to goods entered, or withdrawn from warehouse for consumption, on or after the relevant dates indicated in Annex I or II of Publication 3901.

(b) The amendments to the HTS made by paragraph (3) of this proclamation shall enter into effect on the date that the United States Trade Representative announces in the *Federal Register* that Mexico has completed its applicable domestic procedures to give effect to corresponding modifications to be applied to goods of the United States and shall, at that time, be effective with respect to goods of Mexico entered, or withdrawn from warehouse for consumption, on or after the date indicated in the Annex to this proclamation.

(c) Except as provided in paragraphs (4)(a) and (b) of this proclamation, this proclamation shall be effective with respect to goods

entered, or withdrawn from warehouse for consumption, on or after March 1, 2007.

(5) Any provisions of previous proclamations and Executive Orders that are inconsistent with the actions taken in this proclamation are superseded to the extent of such inconsistency.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-eighth day of February, in the year of our Lord two thousand seven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-first.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., March 5, 2007]

NOTE: This proclamation and its attached annex were released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 1, and they will be published in the *Federal Register* on March 6.

Presidential Determination Under Section 490(b)(1)(A) of the Foreign Assistance Act Relating to the Largest Exporting and Importing Countries of Certain Precursor Chemicals

February 28, 2007

Presidential Determination No. 2007-14

Memorandum for the Secretary of State

Subject: Presidential Determination under Section 490(b)(1)(A) of the Foreign Assistance Act Relating to the Largest Exporting and Importing Countries of Certain Precursor Chemicals

Pursuant to section 490(b)(1)(A) of the Foreign Assistance Act, I hereby determine that the top five exporting and importing countries of pseudoephedrine and ephedrine in 2005 (Belgium, China, Germany, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Singapore, South Africa, South Korea, Switzerland, Taiwan, and the United Kingdom) have cooperated fully with the United States or have taken adequate steps on their own to achieve full compliance with the goals and objectives established by the United Nations Convention Against Illicit

Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances.

You are directed to publish this determination in the *Federal Register*, and are authorized and directed to transmit to the Congress the report under section 722 of the Combat Methamphetamine Epidemic Act.

George W. Bush

NOTE: This memorandum was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 1.

Notice—Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Zimbabwe

February 28, 2007

On March 6, 2003, by Executive Order 13288, I declared a national emergency and blocked the property of persons undermining democratic processes or institutions in Zimbabwe, pursuant to the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1701–1706). I took this action to deal with the unusual and extraordinary threat to the foreign policy of the United States constituted by the actions and policies of certain members of the Government of Zimbabwe and other persons to undermine Zimbabwe’s democratic processes or institutions. These actions have contributed to the deliberate breakdown in the rule of law in Zimbabwe, politically motivated violence and intimidation, and political and economic instability in the southern African region. On November 22, 2005, I issued Executive Order 13391 to take additional steps with respect to the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13288 by ordering the blocking of the property of additional persons undermining democratic processes or institutions in Zimbabwe.

Because the actions and policies of these persons continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the foreign policy of the United States, the national emergency declared on March 6, 2003, and the measures adopted on that date and on November 22, 2005, to deal with that emergency, must continue in effect beyond March 6, 2007. Therefore, in accordance with section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C.

1622(d)), I am continuing for 1 year the national emergency with respect to the actions and policies of certain members of the Government of Zimbabwe and other persons to undermine Zimbabwe’s democratic processes or institutions.

This notice shall be published in the *Federal Register* and transmitted to the Congress.

George W. Bush

The White House,
February 28, 2007.

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:49 a.m., March 1, 2007]

NOTE: This notice was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 1, and it was published in the *Federal Register* on March 2.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Zimbabwe

February 28, 2007

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent the enclosed notice to the *Federal Register* for publication, stating that the national emergency with respect to the actions and policies of certain members of the Government of Zimbabwe and other persons to undermine Zimbabwe’s democratic processes or institutions is to continue in effect beyond March 6, 2007.

The crisis constituted by the actions and policies of certain members of the Government of Zimbabwe and other persons to undermine Zimbabwe’s democratic processes or institutions has not been resolved. These actions and policies pose a continuing unusual and extraordinary threat to the foreign policy of the United States. For these reasons, I have determined that it is necessary

to continue this national emergency and to maintain in force the sanctions to respond to this threat.

George W. Bush

The White House,
February 28, 2007.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 1.

Remarks Following a Visit With Gulf Coast Grant Recipients in Long Beach, Mississippi

March 1, 2007

You know, it's interesting to come back down here to the gulf coast. I tried to think back about what it was like the first time I came after the storm hit. And I guess the—my most vivid recollection is the piles of rubble, literally debris stacked upon debris. It was—it's hard to believe then that I would be—I had faith that I'd be able to come to a home, but I had trouble visualizing it. And then I kept coming down, and I watched the improvement, because of the hard work of the local citizens, people like the mayor here and the Governor, who set a vision that was a hopeful vision.

The Federal Government's role has been to write checks. The Governor's role and the mayor's role is help to expedite the Federal money to the local folks. And today we are able to sit in a homeowner—the Woodward's home. Again, one of the things I like to say is, when somebody walks in, "Welcome to my home." And it has a special ring to it here in the gulf coast, because there was a time when their home was totally destroyed.

Part of the reason I've come down is to tell the people here in the gulf coast that we still think about them in Washington, and that we listen to the Governor when he speaks. The other reason I've come down is I want the taxpayers of the United States to see firsthand what their money has done to help revitalize a series of communities that were literally wiped out because of a major storm.

It's a—this is a hopeful day. There's obviously a lot more work to be done. You can see vacant lots where there's going to be new

building. There's still work to be done here in Mississippi, and the Governor and I are going to go listen to some of the local officials describe to me what's on their mind and how we can continue to help. But times are changing for the better, and people's lives are improving, and there is hope. And I congratulate the good folks in this part of the country for their resiliency, their courage, and the fact that they never abandoned hope.

So thank you for giving us a chance to come by. We're proud to be with you. Love being with you. Thank you all for your hospitality. Appreciate it. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:11 a.m. at the home of Cheryl and Ernie Woodward. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor William Skellie, Jr., of Long Beach, MS; and Gov. Haley Barbour of Mississippi.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Elected Officials and Community Leaders in Biloxi, Mississippi

March 1, 2007

Governor and First Lady, thanks for your welcome. It's great to be back in the gulf coast of Mississippi.

I've had the privilege of coming down and meeting a lot of these folks before, so I really feel like it's, in many ways, a chance to reconnect with people who I admire. I can remember the looks on your faces when I first came down here during the incredible destruction—right after the destruction of Katrina. You know, there was something about the spirit of Mississippi, though, that made it clear to me that there was no doubt that progress was going to be made.

Mayor, I remember you and I walking through the streets of Biloxi and finding people that were literally stunned and were in shock and were wondering what life meant for them. And I remember the piles of debris, Mayor, in your city. Or, Rocky, I remember talking to you when you came, and you had the same set of clothes on for the last 4 days. You were trying to recover from a brutal devastation in your county.

And I've come back again because I'm inspired every time I come here to see progress and the spirit alive. In other words, people

here said, “We refuse to be held down by the storm; we will overcome it.”

The job of the Federal Government has been to help. And I made a pledge early on in the process that I would work with the United States Congress, members of both political parties, to get some healthy checks written. And it’s important for the check writers, the taxpayers of the United States, to know that progress is being made with their money and that the people of Mississippi appreciate the fact that the country came to help when they needed help. It’s a neighborly thing to do.

And secondly, I fully understand there’s still work to be done, that even though progress has been made, this storm was so devastating that we have still got to stay focused on the task, and that we’ve got to work with the Governor and the local officials, the supervisors and the mayors, to continue to help address their needs.

And one of the things I’ve heard loud and clear is that there’s a continued frustration with the slowness of Federal response at times. And therefore, it’s important for me to hear that and my friend Don Powell to hear that so that we can come and do what the people expect us to do, which is to respond to the needs of people in Mississippi.

I’m very proud of the leadership your Governor has shown. He showed leadership during the storm; he showed leadership in the aftermath of the storm; and he continues to be deeply concerned about the people of Mississippi. And he, along with two fine United States Senators, are constantly talking to the White House in pretty plain language about what more needs to be done. And I hope he would say that we listen, and if possible, respond in a constructive way.

I’m proud to be back again. I intend to keep coming back so long as I’m the President—and perhaps after the Presidency, A.J. Now, A.J. has given me a great gift. Instead of the key to the city, he gave me a Biloxi, Mississippi, license plate. It’s got my name and my number on there. *[Laughter]* One of these days, I’ll own a private vehicle, and I may just put this on my vehicle when I come back and see you. *[Laughter]*

Anyway, thank you all very much. Appreciate you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:40 a.m. at Biloxi City Hall. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Haley Barbour of Mississippi, and his wife, Marsha; Mayor A.J. Holloway of Biloxi, MS; and Rodrick “Rocky” Pullman, supervisor, Hancock County, MS.

Remarks Prior to a Lunch Meeting With Elected Officials and Community Leaders in New Orleans, Louisiana

March 1, 2007

It is my pleasure to be back in New Orleans. I want to thank the Lieutenant Governor, the mayor, the head of the City Council, the parish presidents for joining me.

I’ve committed to stay involved in the rebuilding of—and the United States Senator, excuse me, Senator—and the Congressman, I beg your pardon. I committed to the people of this part of the world and the gulf coast that the Federal Government would fund recovery and stay committed to the recovery. And one of the reasons I have come down is to hear from you. I fully understand that there are frustrations, and I want to know the frustrations. And to the extent we can help, we’ll help. I told the people that I would work with the Congress to write a \$110 billion check to help the people of Louisiana and Mississippi, and that check has been written. And now it’s incumbent upon us to get the money into people’s hands.

Sometimes it’s hard to see progress when you’re living close to the scene. I guess the New Orleans Saints football team represents to me what’s happening in this part of the State—it is a resurgence; there’s a renewal. Even though there’s a lot of work done, the spirit of the people down here is strong.

And so I want to thank these leaders for joining me. It means a lot to me. It’s good to be with you. It’s also good to be in a place where you can buy some pretty good food. *[Laughter]* I’m looking forward to the visit.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:22 p.m. at Lil’ Dizzy’s Cafe. In his remarks, he referred to Lt. Gov. Mitch Landrieu of Louisiana; Mayor C. Ray Nagin of New Orleans, LA; Oliver M. Thomas, Jr., president, New Orleans City Council; Aaron F. Broussard, president, Jefferson Parish; Kevin

Davis, president, St. Tammany Parish; Billy Nungesser, president, Plaquemines Parish; Henry Rodriguez, president, St. Bernard Parish; M.E. Taylor, president, Washington Parish; and Senator David Vitter and Representative William J. Jefferson of Louisiana.

Remarks at Samuel J. Green Charter School in New Orleans

March 1, 2007

Thank you all. Please be seated. Dr. Tony, thank you very much for your kind introduction. God, I love the smile on his face. [Laughter]

Think about this: You can play recess outside in a garden. So, like, those are the two things I was good at, at school—[laughter]—eating and playing. [Laughter]

But I really appreciate you inviting me over. Somebody said, “Well, why did you come to Samuel J. Green Charter School in New Orleans, Louisiana, when there’s other places to go?” Well, the answer is, there’s nothing better than being in the middle of a bright spot, a place that just shines with optimism, in a part of the world that has gone through some really difficult times. And so I’m here to herald success—success for today and, equally important, success for the future of this important city.

And I thank you all for giving me a chance to come. I mean, there’s nothing more illustrative of the issues that this community faces than to think that that blue line represented water and destruction. And yet we’re now dry; we’re on dry land, recovering. And so I’ve come back to New Orleans, Louisiana, to remind people that the Federal Government still knows you exist, still knows you have issues, and wants to work with your leadership to address those issues.

I know the Picard family is here. Thank you for coming. Gaylen was the wife of Cecil, who helped guide Louisiana’s schools through the worst of the storms. He has passed away. I’m honored to be in your presence. I know that you miss your good man, as does the people of New Orleans. He was a person that served your community with a lot of class. And I know he would be proud of places like Green that are setting high standards, strong centers of excellence, mak-

ing sure every single child gets an education. Thanks for being here today. It means a lot.

Sorry Laura is not here. She and I, by the way, spent some of our youth here in New Orleans. I really don’t want to go into all the details of what—[laughter]—but we know something about the town. And it’s a great place. And she loves New Orleans, as do I, and we’ve got a lot of friends here.

I want to thank Robin Jarvis, the superintendent of the Recovery School District, for joining us. I appreciate very much—[applause]—thank you, Robin. I want to thank some of the elected officials who have joined us here at the school, with whom I had lunch earlier, starting with your mayor. It’s good to see you, Mr. Mayor. Appreciate your time. A pleasure to be here.

The mayor and I have gotten to know each other—[laughter]—in a positive way—[laughter]—in a positive way. It’s interesting, you know, we’re kind of two strong-willed people who got thrown into a deal we didn’t ask for. Tell you an interesting story about the mayor. The first time I ever met him, we came in Air Force One right after the storm hit—a couple of days after, I think it was, and the mayor was a little irritable. [Laughter] He hadn’t had a shower. [Laughter] So I came off the plane—I knew I was dealing with a good man when I looked in his eyes and he was able to maintain a certain sense of humor in the midst of all the trauma. And so I sent him up the stairs for him to take a shower on Air Force One. [Laughter]

Everybody—yes, I was about to say—[laughter]—the president of the New Orleans City Council, Oliver Thomas, thanked me then, and he thanks me now. Good to see you, Big O. I have spent enough time down here, where I call him, “Big O.” [Laughter] He calls me, “Little G.” [Laughter]

I’m proud to be with your Lieutenant Governor. Mitch, thanks for coming; appreciate you being here. I flew down today from Washington—am I flying back with you all too? Yes. Flew down today with the Senator, David Vitter, and Congressman Bill Jefferson. Andrea, good to see you. Thanks for coming. I think they want a ride back. [Laughter]

We had lunch today with a lot of the parish presidents—and Ray and Oliver and Mitch and David and Jeff—talking about the issues. Oh, by the way, my friend, Don Powell—he’s from Texas; I’m from Texas, and—[*ap- plause*]. He made the mistake of answering the phone call when I called him. [*Laughter*] I said, “I need somebody to come down here to help the good folks break through the log-jams to make sure that that which we intend to do gets done.” And the czar—we call him “czar,” Don Powell—and I can’t thank my buddy enough for taking on a tough job. If you were to sit at the table with us, you’d see how tough it is—“So-and-so has the responsibility here,” “No, you’ve got the responsibility”—it’s a lot of this. And our job is to make it this: straightforward. That’s what we’re here to do.

You know, I came down here and spoke, and I said, “The Federal Government will be involved.” And I said, “We’re going to put money on the table to help follow that through.” And I believe we have, with \$110 billion. That’s not to say there may be more money needed for the gulf coast, but 110 billion is a lot. And now the question is, are we going to be able to spend it wisely? Can we get it done? Can we get it to the people that need help?

Just so you know, of the 110 billion, 86 billion of that has been obligated—in other words, it’s out the door. But only 53 billion has been spent. And so part of the day today, we talked about if the money is out the door in Washington, where is it and how come it hasn’t been out farther? And that’s one of the things that we’re going to continue to work on, to make sure that obligated money ends up in somebody’s pocket, so it helps.

I know housing is a big issue here. The mayor talks about it; Oliver talks about it a lot; the Lieutenant Governor is concerned about it. You know, I made a conscious decision when we began the rebuilding effort to say, “I want the local folks running the programs.” I felt you would get a better response and a response more tailored to the needs of the local citizens if the local folks were in charge. That was the case in Mississippi and in Louisiana. And I felt like the housing program that was devised by the folks in both Mississippi and Louisiana was a really inter-

esting solution, a creative way of saying to people, we’re going to help you rebuild your homes so that people will actually come back to New Orleans, and those who are here will have money to rebuild their homes, and those who are outside the State will receive incentives to come back.

And one of the issues we have to work on is to make sure that the money that has been sent from Washington to fund the road to recovery program, the home program, actually gets spent. I don’t know if you know this or not, but there is \$6.2 billion that has been sent down; 50 million has been spent. And so we have an obligation, all of us involved with this process, to work to make sure that people begin getting that money so they can get back to living their lives.

One of the issues that we talked—spent a lot of time about is infrastructure. And Louisiana has had—now had \$4.6 billion sent from the Federal Government. And actually, it’s your money, I mean, so we’re sending your money back to you—4.6 billion, and about 2.5 billion has not yet been spent. I guess what I’m telling you is, is that first of all, there is money in the pipeline that I hope will help improve lives. And if it is stuck because of unnecessary bureaucracies, our responsibility at the Federal, State, and local level is to unstuck it, is to make sure that it keeps moving.

The reason I herald this and the reason I want to come to a school like this, it’s important for the taxpayers from around the country who paid the bill to understand where we are in the process and to realize there’s some really positive things taking place with the money that I believe the country has been generous about. In other words, when you go to Congress and say, “We need \$110 billion to help the people in the gulf coast,” somebody has got to pay. That’s the taxpayer. And the taxpayers come from more places than just Louisiana and Mississippi. It is the collective effort of the country as a whole. And I’m proud of the generosity of our citizens, and I want them to know that while it is still difficult work here, progress has been made. And there’s more to be done.

The economic recovery here—I was talking to the mayor about Mardi Gras, a subject

I know a little bit about—[laughter]—I remember most of them. [Laughter] He said it was up to about 80-something percent capacity. In other words, it's not 100 percent; it's not as good as people would like it; but things are beginning to happen.

One of the things that you've got to continue to work on, and we want to help you at the local level, is in the criminal justice matters. It's important for the society to say loud and clear, there are consequences for crime. And there's got to be a—[applause]—there can't be any doubt in somebody's mind that this is a consequential society if you want to be able to walk your streets safely.

And so I know the Attorney General was down here the other day. He briefed me personally on working with the local folks on—for the Federal Government helping, what really is a local responsibility. And yet we want to help. We want to make sure your criminal justice system does its job so that citizens feel safe and tourists feel safe to come. It's a big responsibility we have, and to the extent that we can help, we will.

One of the things that the mayor and I have talked about is extending tax relief to businesses doing jobs here in the New Orleans area. Why? Because we want the entrepreneurial spirit to remain strong in this part of the world. And one way to encourage strong entrepreneurship is to say, there's a tax benefit for investing in this part of the country. There's certain things you can look at to determine how well an economy is doing.

Take a look at your port. It's coming back; it's strong. Commerce is beginning, and this is—it doesn't seem like much to you all since you're so close to it, but for a fellow who was here and remembers the port being completely shut down, it's pretty good progress.

Now, there's more to be done; I fully understand that. The Senator spent a little time up there on Air Force One, right up there in the Presidential cabin, talking about levees, making sure that the case is continually made about strengthening these levees. I hear him. I hear him. We have said, we're going to bring the levees up to—stronger than ever. We're making progress there. I told the Senator I understand there's still more work to be done. And I want to work

with Congress to the best we can to get money to continue meeting the obligations we set.

I'm real proud of another thing that's happened as a result of Democrats and Republicans working together—it actually happens sometime in Washington, DC—and that is that bill I signed that will enable more Federal revenues to come down here to restore the wetlands. And the reason I bring that up, I'm a strong proponent of the restoration of the wetlands, for a lot of reasons. There's a practical reason, though, when it comes to hurricanes: The stronger the wetlands, the more likely the damage of the hurricane. And so we've been working together on behalf of the city.

I do want to spend a little time on education. I like a system that is willing to challenge the status quo when the status quo is failing. And one of the reasons I've come to this school is, it represents a group of citizens, including your principal and your parents and the teachers and the citizens, who said, "We're tired of mediocrity in the school system." It is not acceptable to have children trapped in schools that will not teach and will not change. It is not acceptable to the great city of New Orleans, Louisiana, to have a failing school system.

And so the storm came, and it did terrible devastation, but it gave a great chance for renewal. And one of the areas where renewal is most evident is in the school system of New Orleans, Louisiana, in the charter system, like right here at Green, where people said—[applause].

There are now 31 charter schools in this city, as I understand it. That's up from eight. Charter schools, to me, say, innovation, individuality. You know, the No Child Left Behind Act—and I am a very strong supporter of it; I look forward to the Congress reauthorizing the bill—believes in setting high standards, local control of schools, and accountability. And the reason accountability is important is, in order to solve problems, you have to measure the problem; you have to know what the problem is. You can't guess, particularly when it comes to the life of a child. You can't guess as to whether or not a child can read or write and add and subtract. You must measure to know.

And so we said, in return for Federal money, we expect local districts and States to measure, to have tests. The principal, the good doc asked me to go into the fourth grade class and say to the kids, “Good luck on the test tomorrow.” That was music to my ears, because you don’t know whether or not a child is reading unless you test.

And the interesting thing about No Child Left Behind which is vital is that when we find a child falling behind, there is extra Federal money for that child to get up to speed early, before it’s too late. It’s a good piece of legislation, and it fits in with the philosophy of this charter school.

If you’re interested in changing a school system that hasn’t worked, please insist upon a couple of things: high standards, for starters. If you demand low standards, you’re going to get bad results—I call it the soft bigotry of low expectations. If you want to have a school system that works, insist upon measuring so that a parent will know whether or not the curriculum is meeting their child’s needs. These parents, by the way, are satisfied parents—I don’t expect the principal to have brought unsatisfied parents, but nevertheless—[*applause*].

If you’re interested in a school system that works, when you find excellence, herald it. That’s what I’m trying to do. I’m trying to lend my voice to herald this school. By the way, a good school is one that generally has an educational entrepreneur as its head; somebody who is flexible—rigid enough on the standards, but flexible enough to meet the standards; somebody willing to say, “Well, we tried this curriculum, and it hasn’t worked; let’s make sure that we focus on the children, not on the process, and get a curriculum that does work.”

One of the things that—and by the way, New Orleans is blessed not only with a strong public school system, now that you’ve got charters in it, but you’ve got some great parochial schools too. And these schools, like this school, were quick to start up after the storm. They knew their mission, and they knew their charge.

I am very conscious that this community is going to require more schools. And the Government has a role to play. We’re spending quite a bit of money, Federal money, to

help you rebuild the schools. And Margaret Spellings—who’s the Secretary of Education—I know has been down here, and I know she understands the responsibility we share. As a matter of fact, there’s been about \$450 million allocated for the New Orleans school system. I would strongly—and by the way, some of that money is flexible in use. And what I would strongly urge you to do is to use some of the unspent money to recruit and attract teachers, because in order to make sure that the school system is full—you’ve got 40 teachers. Do you need more? Yes. He needs more.

The housing issue, obviously, is important. But it’s also important to be able to use some of this money available to find educational pioneers that want to come down and lend their expertise to help rebuild a school system. There’s no doubt in my mind that the school system that you’re going to rebuild is going to be a great school system, because you’ve given it such a great start. Charter schools work. It makes a lot of sense.

And so I’ve come to Green to say, thanks to the citizens of New Orleans who pay attention to the quality of education; thanks to the parents of this school who set an example by being involved; and thanks to the leadership. Doc, you’re running a good show here. I’m proud of your job.

Thanks for letting me come by. I’m honored to be back down here. I’m reminded of the New Orleans Saints football team that—[*applause*—here’s a team that a lot of people didn’t give much hope for, did they, when the season started. And it rose; it became a national story. It was a factor in the championship. The same thing is going to happen to the city. You got work to do. You got work to do. I’m going to keep coming down so long as I’m the President. And then after I’m the President, I’m going to slide in incognito. [*Laughter*]

God bless you all. Thanks for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:44 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Anthony “Tony” Recasner, principal, Samuel J. Green Charter School; Gaylen David Picard, wife of former Louisiana State Superintendent of Education Cecil J. Picard; Mayor C. Ray Nagin of New Orleans, LA; Lt. Gov. Mitch Landrieu of Louisiana; and Andrea

Green-Jefferson, wife of Representative William J. Jefferson.

Statement on the Death of Mario Chanes de Armas

March 1, 2007

Cuban patriot Mario Chanes de Armas was a political prisoner of the Castro regime for 30 years, one of the longest sentences of any political prisoner in the world. Like so many Cubans, he sought a democratic Cuban society only to see his quest betrayed by a Castro dictatorship. Mario Chanes was one of the original *plantados*, Cuban political prisoners who were unyielding in their fervent desire for a free Cuba. His patriotism and strong sense of purpose are examples to all freedom-loving people. Laura joins me in sending our thoughts and prayers to his family and friends.

NOTE: The statement referred to President Fidel Castro of Cuba.

Proclamation 8112—Amending Proclamation 8031 of June 15, 2006, To Read, “Establishment of the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument”

February 28, 2007

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Whereas Proclamation 8031 of June 15, 2006, established the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Marine National Monument;

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, by the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, including section 2 of the Act of June 8, 1906 (34 Stat. 225, 16 U.S.C. 431), do amend Proclamation 8031 for the purpose of giving the monument a Native Hawaiian name and making the following conforming changes and corrections;

Section 1. The title of Proclamation 8031 is amended to read, “Establishment of the

Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument”.

Sec. 2. The phrase Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Marine National Monument is amended to read Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument, wherever it appears in Proclamation 8031.

Sec. 3. Under *Findings, Additional Findings for Native Hawaiian Practice Permits*, 2(e) is amended to read: *Any living monument resource harvested from the monument will be consumed or utilized in the monument.*

Sec. 4. The title of the map of the Monument accompanying Proclamation 8031 is amended to read, “Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument” and the word “Sanctuary” in the map is deleted wherever it appears and the word “Monument” is inserted in lieu thereof.

George W. Bush

The White House,
February 28, 2007.

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:58 a.m., March 5, 2007]

NOTE: This proclamation was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 2, and it will be published in the *Federal Register* on March 6.

Remarks on Departure for New Albany, Indiana

March 2, 2007

March 1 Tornadoes in Alabama, Georgia, and Missouri

Yesterday afternoon I spoke to Governor Riley of Alabama, this morning I spoke to Governor Perdue of Georgia, expressing my personal condolences as well as the condolences of the Nation for those who lost their lives in the recent tragedies in those two States.

Tomorrow I’m going down to Georgia and Alabama. I go down with a heavy heart. I go down knowing full well that I’ll be seeing people whose lives were turned upside down by the tornadoes. I’ll do my very best to comfort them. I ask our Nation, for those who are prayerful, to give a prayer for the victims

of the storms, and ask for the blessings that can come upon people and the comfort necessary to deal with the recent tragedy. Thank you all very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:01 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House.

Remarks at Silver Street Elementary School in New Albany

March 2, 2007

Thank you all. Please be seated. A little bossy today, aren't I? Yes. *[Laughter]* Thrilled to be here in New Albany. Thanks for coming out to say hello. I want to talk about schools and the Federal role in schools relative to local governments—is what we're here to talk about.

I'm glad to be here in the home of the Stars, the Silver Street Stars. I brought a lot of cameras and limousines—*[laughter]*—kind of fits in with the theme, doesn't it—Silver Street Stars. I understand the school is 90 years old. You've seen a lot of decent people come here to teach, I'll bet you—a lot of people who said, "I want to put my community first," and became teachers and principals and caring citizens of the State. And so I'm real proud to be with you.

I'm here because I think it's important for a President to herald success and to talk about what's possible, particularly when it comes to schools. My only regret is that my wife hasn't joined me today. She's, by far, the best deal in our family. Just like in Mitch's family, I want you to know. I know the Danielses well, and I can certify that the person from New Albany is, by far, the best part of his family too. *[Laughter]*

I'm real proud of Mitch. I know him—he worked in my administration. I hauled him out of the private sector when I first got sworn in. I said, "Would you come and work for the country?" And he did. He was the watchdog for the people's money—it's what's called the OMB. And he did a fine job there, really, and I miss him a lot. I love his sense of humor. I knew he'd make a fine Governor. He asked me about Governor; I said, "Listen, it's the greatest job in America—next to President." But it's a great—*[laughter]*. And he's an innovative, smart, ca-

pable, honest guy, and I'm proud to be with him.

I know he cares a lot about schools too. And so when I talk about education, I can talk confidently about the schools here in Indiana, because you've got a Governor who will prioritize education. I used to say to people, public education is to a State what national defense is to the Federal Government. It ought to be the number-one priority, and I know Mitch is making it that way.

I want to thank Tony Duffy. Duffy has done a fine job of dealing with an impossibly large entourage. *[Laughter]* I really appreciate your spirit. It turns out that if you were to correlate education in a school with educational entrepreneurship at the principal level, the two go hand in hand. In other words, you have to have a good principal in order to be able to challenge failure when you find it, mediocrity when you see it, and praise excellence when it's evident. And you've got a good principal here, and I can't thank you enough, Tony.

I want to thank all the teachers, as well, who teach here. Teaching is a hard job. It's a really hard job, and it's never really appreciated enough in some circles. And I just want the teachers to understand full well that I know the community here thanks you from the bottom of their heart, and the parents thank you.

And for the parents who are here, I appreciate you paying attention to your school. It turns out, parental involvement is an essential part of having excellence in the school system. So when parents pay attention, it not only gives confidence to the teachers; it also enables the school to listen to the needs of those who matter most, and those are the parents and the children.

I appreciate very much Congressman Baron Hill joining us today. The Congressman flew down on the airplane. As you know, we're not from the same political party, but we both care about education. And it's nice of you to come. You'll meet a friend of mine who is with us, Mike and Keta—appreciate you all coming.

Now is not the time to be involved with politics when we're talking about the education of our children. This is an issue that needs to rise above politics and needs to

focus on what's right, because getting the schools right in America will make sure that this country remains competitive and hopeful and optimistic. So I'm proud you traveled with me, and it's good to see you both again. Thanks for coming.

Mayor Jim Garner and Debbie are with us. Mr. Mayor, thank you for being here, sir. Proud to be in your city. I appreciate the reception that we received from the citizens. People respect the Presidency, and sometimes they like the President. [*Laughter*] I appreciate the fact that people came out to wave.

I want to thank Dr. Reed, who is the Indiana Superintendent of Public Instruction. Thank you for coming, Dr. Reed. There you are. I appreciate Mr. Don Sakel; he's the president of the School Board. Don, where are you? There you are, yes. I saw him coming in, I said, "You've probably got the toughest job in America, being on the school board." [*Laughter*] For those of you who know school politics, you know what I'm talking about. But I appreciate the school board and the board of trustees, people who serve the local community by serving on the school board, making sure that local control of schools remains an essential part of the school system in this State and around the country. Dr. Dennis Brooks, who is the superintendent of the New Albany and Floyd County school system is with us. And community leaders, thanks.

So there is a bill coming up for reauthorization called the No Child Left Behind Act. I happen to think it's, if not the, one of the most substantial pieces of legislation I will have had the honor to sign—I've signed a lot. I want to describe to you the philosophy behind the act and why I strongly believe it needs to be reauthorized by the United States Congress.

I first became directly involved with public schools from a public policy perspective as the Governor of Texas, and I was deeply concerned about systems that quit early on a child and just moved them through. In other words, I was concerned about a system where people would walk in the classroom and say, "These children are hard to educate; therefore, let's just move them through the system." It may not have happened in Indiana,

but it happened in Texas. And it was unacceptable, because guess who generally got shuffled through the system: the poor, the newly arrived, the minority student. And I knew that unless we confronted a system which gave up on children early, that my State would not be a hopeful place.

And so I decided to do something about it, and I took that spirit to Washington, DC. Now, look, I fully understand some are nervous when they hear a President talking about Federal education. You start thinking to yourself, the Government is going to tell you what to do here at the local level. Quite the contrary, in this piece of legislation. I strongly believe in local control of schools. I believe it's essential to align authority and responsibility. And by insisting upon local control of schools, you put the power where it should be—closest to the people.

On the other hand, I know full well that to make sure a system doesn't lapse into kind of the safety of mediocrity that you've got to measure. See, in my State, we said, we want to know whether or not a child can read and write early, before that child gets moved through the system. And so I insisted upon accountability, and the spirit of the No Child Left Behind Act is the same.

It says, if you spend money, you should insist upon results. Now, I recognize the Federal Government only spends about 7 percent of the total education budgets around the country, and frankly, that's the way I think it should be. In other words, if local people are responsible or the State is responsible, that's where the primary funding ought to come. But I also strongly subscribe to the idea of the Federal Government providing extra money for what's called Title I students, for example, students who go to this school—money that I think bolsters education for students in the community.

But I also believe that in return for you spending that money—it's your money, after all—it makes sense for Government to say, "Is it working? Are we meeting objectives? Are we achieving the results necessary for all of us to say that the school systems are working nationwide?" And so step one of the No Child Left Behind Act was to say, "You've got to measure."

We didn't design a Federal test, because I believe a Federal test undermines local control of schools. As a matter of fact, Mitch and Baron and I were talking in the car about how Indiana has had a longstanding accountability system, and that's good. It ought to be your accountability system; after all, it's your schools. But I do believe you need to measure, and I know you need to set high standards and keep raising those standards.

In life, if you lower the bar, you get lousy results. If you keep raising that bar, it's amazing what can happen. I call it challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations. And that's an important part of the No Child Left Behind Act. We expect people to set high standards and measure to determine whether or not those standards are being met.

Now, one of the interesting debates in the school systems is curriculum. I imagine you've had a few of those tussles here; we had a lot of them in the State of Texas. Reading curriculum, for example, there was a longstanding debate over which type of system works better. And it can get pretty heated. One way to cut through all the noise, however, is to measure. If the children are learning to read given a basic curriculum, then you know you picked the right way to teach, the right set of instructions. If your children are not meeting standards, then an accountability system gives you the opportunity to change. And school systems, in my judgment, need to be flexible. That's why local control of schools makes sense. When something isn't working, you need to correct. But what the accountability systems enable you to do is determine if it's working at all.

I think it's very important for there to be transparency. In other words, when you have scores—I don't know if you do this, Mitch, or not, but I would strongly suggest that you post them for everybody to see, across the State of Indiana. It's kind of hard to tell how you're doing relative to your neighbor unless there's full accountability—in other words, unless everybody can see the results. A lot of times people think their school is doing just great—the principal, in all due respect, says, “We're doing just fine; don't worry about it, community.” But you may not be. And it's important for people to fully understand how your school is doing relative to

other schools, so that if you need to correct, you're able to do so. See, if you have high standards, then you want to aim to those standards and make sure that you're doing well relative to other schools that are setting high standards.

Finally, what we need is to make sure that we individualize, as best as possible, the school system. That's what happens here at Silver Street. In other words, when you use your accountability system properly, you can tailor it to each individual student. That's why the act is called the No Child Left Behind Act. It doesn't say “all children shouldn't be left behind;” it says “no child.” In other words, you can individualize curriculum based upon accountability, and this school does that.

Testing data has helped teachers tailor instruction. Here's what your principal said. He said, “We drill down in the data.” In other words, they take the data and drill down—I presume you meant analyze a lot. Yes, that's good. I'm from Crawford, Texas, too, so I know. *[Laughter]* They analyze. They drill down in the data and figure out what the best practices are that we need to be using in the classroom. In other words, they use the data, not as a way to punish but as a way to improve.

The spirit of the No Child Left Behind Act says, we will spend money, we will use accountability to drill down to make sure no child gets left behind. You know, one way you can really use this, particularly in your early grades, is for literacy. Science doesn't matter if the child can't read. It's really hard to be good in math if you don't have the capacity to read the problems in the first place. And so I know this school is focused on literacy, as it should be, as a step toward educational excellence in all subjects.

I appreciate very much the fact that this school uses the accountability to focus on teaching techniques. Sometimes, probably not in this school, but sometimes teachers have got the right heart, but they don't have the techniques necessary to deliver the results that are expected. And so you can use your accountability system, if you're wise, to make sure that the techniques are analyzed and the compassion in the classroom is

backed with the skills necessary to be able to achieve objectives.

Here's what the principal also says—and this is an important part of excellence—“We never give up. There are no excuses.” Sometimes if you don't measure, you can find all kinds of excuses. And it's just not in schools; it's life. The easy position sometimes is the default—by saying, “Well, I just didn't have what was necessary to get the job done,” or something like that. This is a no-excuses school. That means high standards. Low standards are a place where people find excuses; high standards, there is no excuse, and there's a focus on what's right for each child.

And that's why I'm here at Silver Street. I appreciate so very much that this school has met State standards for progress under No Child Left Behind every year since 2002. [Applause] Isn't that interesting? Isn't it interesting to be able to say that? You can't say something that draws applause unless you measure. Without a measurement system the president would be saying, “Well, we anticipate that we are doing well. We certainly hope that we're meeting State standards.” Under this system you can say, “We know we're meeting State standards.” And that should give the parents who pay attention to this school a great comfort and give the teachers who teach here great pride.

The No Child Left Behind Act is working across the country. So when Members of Congress think about reauthorization—by the way, I'm here to—I'm not only speaking to you; I'm lobbying. This is—I'm lobbying Congress. [Laughter] I'm setting the stage for Congress to join me in the reauthorization of this important piece of legislation.

The test scores across the country are heartening. Now, there's still a lot of work to be done—don't get me wrong—but there's improvement. One of my issues is that there's an achievement gap in America; certain students are doing better than other students. White students are doing better than African American students or Latino students. And that's not—that's simply not acceptable. It's not acceptable to the country. It's not—it forebodes not a positive future, so long as that achievement gap exists. The gap is closing. It's heartening news.

Fourth graders are reading better. They've made more progress in 5 years than the previous 28 years combined. In other words, we're able to measure whether or not all children—and by the way, we disaggregate results. That is a fancy, sophisticated word meaning that we're able to focus on demographic groups. And the progress has been substantial. You just heard that it's easy to quantify how well we're doing because there's measurement.

In math, 9-year-olds and 13-year-olds earned the highest scores in the history of the test. I hear some people say, “Oh, we don't like tests.” I didn't like them either. [Laughter] But it's really important to make sure that we're achieving standards, and so reauthorizing this good piece of legislation is one of my top priorities. And my claim is, it's working. Now, we can change parts of it for the better, but don't change the core of a piece of good legislation that's making a significant difference in the lives of a lot of children.

We're living in a competitive world. Whether people like it or not, the reality is, we live in a world where our students are going to have to compete for jobs with students in China or India or elsewhere. And if this country wants to remain the economic leader in the world, we've got to make sure we have a workforce capable of filling the jobs of the 21st century. And it's a real challenge for us. It's a challenge we're going to meet, by the way. There's no doubt in my mind we can meet it.

But it really starts with elementary school. It really starts here, in schools like this. And it's important to get it right early, to make sure that children have got that foundation necessary to become the scientists and the engineers and the leaders for tomorrow. No Child Left Behind Act is a central part of the competitiveness initiative, to make sure that America remains on the leading edge of change and is the economic leader of the world.

We can do some other things around. One thing we need to do is to make sure that we align our high school graduation requirements with college readiness standards, which is precisely what the State of Indiana has done. We want to make sure that a high

school diploma means something. I happen to believe that we ought to take the same accountability that we've got in elementaries and junior highs and get it to high school, just to make sure; to be able to say with certainty, the high school diploma that somebody gets really means something, that it's working.

I fully believe that we need to advance—that we need to spread Advanced Placement courses around the country. Advanced Placement is a fabulous program. It's a way to set high standards, isn't it? And we need to train teachers in AP and help students afford the AP exam. AP is a good way to—[*applause*—we've got an AP teacher back there.

Math and science are really important subjects. I can remember—math and science probably doesn't, like, have cachet. It's not cool, but it's important to emphasize math and science. And one way to do that is to take math and science professionals and encourage them to go into classrooms. I went to a school with Margaret Spellings, who happens to be the Secretary of Education, a dear friend of mine, and doing a fine job—and we went to a school in Maryland, and there was a scientist from NASA explaining the beauties of science.

Parents sometimes have trouble explaining the beauties of science. I certainly did when I was trying to work on those science projects. [*Laughter*] But when you get a professional, somebody who knows what they're talking about, they can really enlighten a child to the benefits of math or science focus. And so we've got a program to work with Congress to get more of those professionals in classrooms. We call them adjunct professors. I hope the Congress funds that program. So there's one way, for example, to build on the No Child Left Behind Act, focus on high schools and math and science.

Secondly, one of the things that we've got is—in our budget is to understand that when a school struggles, that there ought to be extra Federal money to help the struggling school. And I look forward to working with Congress to fully fund that. We've got incentive—a teacher incentive fund, grant programs to encourage teachers to go to schools that need extra help with the teachers. I think it makes sense to give school districts grant

money—or States to give grant money—to say, here's a district that needs focus. It's test scores probably aren't as good as they should be. If there needs to be additional qualified teachers there, we'll provide incentives for the teachers to go.

Thirdly, I strongly believe that there needs to be consequences when there's failure. And, oh, by the way, Baron and I talked about this, and Mitch and I talked about the accountability systems. They ought to be flexible; we understand that. Now, flexibility does not mean watering down standards. In other words, when we talk about accommodating special needs students in terms of the accountability system—which I understand is an issue, and so does Margaret Spellings, who is working with Congress on this issue—we cannot use that flexibility to water down accountability.

And so we—Margaret briefed the Governors and told Mitch and all the other Governors, we'll work with them, just so long as we maintain those high standards. And I believe we can make sure that we accommodate school needs without watering down this important piece of legislation. Watering down No Child Left Behind Act would be doing thousands of children a disservice, and we can't let it happen.

We've got a—one of the problems we have—well, one of the good things in the bill was that when a child is in a school and has fallen behind—a Title I child—there's going to be extra money for tutoring, which I think is a great idea. In other words, you find a young child early in his or her career, school career, and they can't read, there's extra money. Now, one of the problems we've had is for—is to make sure we get the test scores out in a timely basis to school districts who, therefore, can then get the information on a timely basis to their parents, to make sure that the extra tutorial money is available for their child.

Sometimes the best intentions get stuck in getting the information to students. And so Margaret is going to work hard with Congress to make sure that parents whose child is not meeting standards and who is eligible for this extra money gets notified early

enough to be able to take that money wherever the parent may want their child to receive tutorial help. See, I'm a person who believes that parents know best when it comes to the interests of their child. And therefore, when we find a school that is persistently in failure, parents must be given different options. There has to be a consequence. Something has to happen if schools refuse to change and a child stays trapped in mediocrity. And one such consequence is to give parents the ability to send their child to a different school, public or private, as far as I'm concerned.

Another option, and something I strongly support, is for there to be competitive grant programs for opportunity scholarships. You know, in Washington, DC, we've got a terrible problem there in the public school system because it's not meeting standards. They're just simply not getting the job done in too many instances. And so I work with the mayor, a Democrat mayor—a Democratic mayor—who, by the way, believes what I believe, that when you find failure, you can't accept it. And so you know what we did? We put forth what's called opportunity scholarships for families of the poorer students, so their family, if the school isn't meeting needs, can afford to go to a different kind of school. What matters is the child getting the education. That's what matters most. And my attitude is, if there's persistent failure, it makes sense to liberate the parents so their child can have a better chance.

So here's some reforms I look forward to working with Congress on. This is a piece of legislation that is—it's vital for the country, in my judgment. It's working, and I think we ought to make sure it stays in law. And I'm looking forward to working with both Republicans and Democrats to get it done. I've reached out to the bill sponsors in 2001, Senator Kennedy of Massachusetts, Congressman Miller of California, Congressman Boehner of Ohio, and Senator Gregg of New Hampshire. These four gentlemen worked with the White House the last time to get the bill done; we're in consultations now to get it reauthorized.

I'm pleased to report, we're all headed in the same direction. In Washington, when you get everybody like that headed in the same

direction, sometimes you can get some things done. Believe it or not, it is possible to put aside the sharp elbows of partisan politics and focus on what's right for the country. And in my strong opinion, the reauthorization of No Child Left Behind is right for the country, and that's what I've come to New Albany to tell you.

God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:38 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Mitchell E. Daniels, Jr., of Indiana, and his wife, Cheri Herman Daniels; former Representative Michael E. Sodrel and his wife, Keta; Mayor James E. Garner, Sr., of New Albany, IN; and Mayor Adrian M. Fenty of Washington, DC.

The President's Radio Address

March 2, 2007

Good morning. One of my most solemn experiences as President is visiting men and women recovering from wounds they suffered in defense of our country. Spending time with these wounded warriors is also inspiring, because so many of them bring the same courage they showed on the battlefield to their battle for recovery.

These service men and women deserve the thanks of our country, and they deserve the best care our Nation can provide. That is why I was deeply troubled by recent reports of substandard conditions at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. Most of the people working at Walter Reed are dedicated professionals. These fine doctors, nurses, and therapists care deeply about our wounded troops, and they work day and night to help them. Yet some of our troops at Walter Reed have experienced bureaucratic delays and living conditions that are less than they deserve. This is unacceptable to me; it is unacceptable to our country; and it's not going to continue.

On hearing the reports about Walter Reed, I asked Secretary of Defense Bob Gates to assess the situation firsthand and report back to me. He confirmed that there are real problems at Walter Reed, and he's taken action to hold people accountable, including relieving the general in charge of the facility. Secretary Gates has also formed an independent review group that will investigate how this

situation was allowed to happen, how it can be fixed, and how we can prevent it from happening again. Walter Reed has a long tradition of outstanding medical service, and my administration will ensure that the soldiers recovering there are treated with the dignity and respect they have earned.

As we work to improve conditions at Walter Reed, we're also taking steps to find out whether similar problems have occurred at other military and veterans hospitals. So I'm announcing that my administration is creating a bipartisan Presidential commission to conduct a comprehensive review of the care America is providing our wounded service men and women. This review will examine their treatment from the time they leave the battlefield through their return to civilian life as veterans, so we can ensure that we are meeting their physical and mental health needs. In the coming days, I will announce the members of this commission and set a firm deadline for them to report back to me with their recommendations.

We will use the commission's recommendations as part of our ongoing effort to improve our service to our Nation's veterans. Since 2001, we've helped over one million more veterans take advantage of the VA health care system, and with my 2008 budget proposal, we will have increased the VA's health care budget by 83 percent over the past 6 years, from about \$20 billion to more than \$36 billion. Overall, I'm asking Congress for more than \$86 billion for veterans' services this year. If Congress approves my request, this would amount to a 77-percent increase since I took office and the highest level of support for veterans in American history.

The men and women recovering at Walter Reed and our other military hospitals are remarkable individuals. Many have suffered wounds that even time will never fully heal. Yet they're facing the future with optimism and a determination to move forward with their lives.

One of these brave warriors is Army Specialist Eduardo Leal-Cardenas. He was injured when an improvised explosive device blew up his vehicle in Iraq. The blast shattered bones in both legs, broke his ribs, and broke his back and neck. Some questioned

whether he would ever regain the ability to walk. There was no doubt in Eduardo's mind, and he began his rehab while still bedridden. Today, he's left Walter Reed, he's walking again, and he has something else he is proud of—during his recovery, Eduardo became a U.S. citizen. I was proud to be with him at Walter Reed when he took his citizenship oath. If you ask Eduardo what American citizenship means to him, he answers with just one word: "Freedom."

Our Nation is blessed to have so many fine Americans who are willing to serve. We're blessed to have so many compassionate volunteers who give their time to care for our injured soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines. We're blessed to have so many fine medical professionals who dedicate their lives to healing our troops. This country has a moral obligation to provide our service men and women with the best possible care and treatment. They deserve it, and they will get it.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 9:25 a.m. on March 2 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on March 3. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 2.

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.

February 24

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

The White House announced that the President and Mrs. Bush will host King Abdallah II and Queen Rania of Jordan for a private dinner at the White House on March 6.

February 25

In the evening, in the East Room, the President and Mrs. Bush attended a performance by entertainer Ronan Tynan.

February 26

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with President Alan Garcia Perez of Peru. He then had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President dropped by a meeting between National Security Adviser Stephen J. Hadley and members of Lebanon's March 14 coalition.

Later in the afternoon, in an Oval Office ceremony, the President received the annual report of the Boy Scouts of America.

February 27

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Senators Pete V. Domenici and Jeff Bingaman and Representatives John D. Dingell and Joe Barton to discuss energy legislation.

During the day, in the Oval Office, the President met with Rear Adm. Stephen W. Rochon, USCG, who he named as Director of the Executive Residence and Chief Usher.

The President announced that he has named Dennis Freemyer as Deputy Director of the Executive Residence and Deputy Chief Usher.

The President announced his intention to nominate T. Timothy Ryan to be Under Secretary of the Treasury (International Affairs).

February 28

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Old Family Dining Room, the President had lunch with Andrew Roberts, author of "A History of the English-Speaking Peoples Since 1900." Later, in Room 350 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building, he met with a congressional consultative group on the war on terror.

The White House announced that the President will welcome Prime Minister Helen Clark of New Zealand to the White House on March 21.

March 1

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Gulfport, MS, where, at the Trent Lott National Guard Training Center, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Alan Petz. He then traveled to Long Beach, MS, where he toured a neighborhood and visited homes that had been rebuilt after being damaged by Hurricane Katrina. Later, he traveled to Biloxi, MS.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to New Orleans, LA, where, at Lil' Dizzy's Cafe, he had lunch with elected officials and community leaders. Later, he went to Samuel J. Green Charter School where he toured the school and met with students.

Later in the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC. While en route aboard Air Force One, he had separate telephone conversations with Gov. Bob Riley of Alabama and Gov. Matt Blunt of Missouri.

The President announced his intention to nominate Michael E. Baroody to be Chairman and member of the Consumer Product Safety Commission.

The President announced his intention to nominate Patrick D. Duddy to be Ambassador to Venezuela.

The President announced his intention to nominate David G. Nason to be Assistant Secretary of the Treasury (Financial Institutions).

The President announced his intention to appoint Blake G. Hall and John Stringer Rainey as members of the Board of Visitors to the U.S. Military Academy.

The President announced his designation of the following individuals as members of the Presidential delegation to Accra, Ghana, to attend the 50th Anniversary of Independence, March 5-7: Alphonso R. Jackson (head of delegation); Pamela E. Bridgewater; John J. Danilovich; Ronald A. Tschetter; Jendayi Elizabeth Frazer; and R. Timothy Ziemer.

March 2

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing and a briefing on the tornado damage in Alabama, Georgia, and Missouri. Later, he had a telephone conversation with Gov. Sonny Perdue of Georgia. Later, in the Yellow Oval Room, he met with Members of the Senate.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to New Albany, IN. Later, he toured Silver Street Elementary School.

Later in the afternoon, the President traveled to Louisville, KY, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Lea Fischbach. Later, he met with students from the McConnell Center.

In the evening, the President returned to Washington, DC.

The White House announced that the President will welcome President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva of Brazil to Camp David on March 31.

**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 February 26

S. Ward Casscells,
of Texas, to be an Assistant Secretary of Defense, vice William Winkenwerder, Jr.

Claude M. Kicklighter,
of Georgia, to be Inspector General, Department of Defense, vice Joseph E. Schmitz, resigned.

William Charles Ostendorff,
of Virginia, to be Principal Deputy Administrator, National Nuclear Security Administration, vice Jerald S. Paul, resigned.

Submitted February 27

Jeffrey A. Taylor,
of the District of Columbia, to be U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia for the term of 4 years, vice Kenneth L. Wainstein, 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 February 24

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Bush To Welcome King Abdallah II and Queen Rania of Jordan

Released February 26

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Tony Snow

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 742

Released February 27

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Tony Snow

Released February 28

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Tony Snow

Statement by the Press Secretary: Visit of Prime Minister Helen Clark of New Zealand

Released March 1

Transcript of a press gaggle by Deputy Press Secretary Dana Perino

Fact sheet: Working With State and Local Leaders To Help Rebuild the Gulf Coast

Released March 2

Transcript of a press gaggle by Deputy Press Secretary Dana Perino

Statement by the Deputy Press Secretary:
Visit by President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva
of Brazil

Fact sheet: The No Child Left Behind Act:
Preparing Our Nation's Students To Succeed

Fact Sheet: Fulfilling the President's Vision
for the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Ma-
rine National Monument

**Acts Approved
by the President**

Approved February 26

H.R. 742 / Public Law 110-6
Antitrust Modernization Commission Exten-
sion Act of 2007