

Remarks Honoring 2006 and 2007 NCAA Championship Teams

September 21, 2007

Thank you all. Please be seated. It is a beautiful day to welcome champs to the White House. And I'm honored to stand with some of our country's finest student athletes—and look at some of our finest student athletes—and glad to give you an excuse to skip class. [Laughter] But I'm really glad to welcome you here and to congratulate you on being a champion.

I really enjoy a day like today. You didn't get to see, but I got to shake hands with athletes and coaches and people, some of whom have come a long way to be recognized here at the White House. And it is really a lot of fun to be with people who set high standards and work hard to achieve goals, which you've done.

And there are some others here who want to recognize you as well: Senator Lamar Alexander from Tennessee—thanks for coming, Lamar; Lisa Murkowski from Alaska; Senator Gordon Smith and Sharon from Oregon. We're sure glad you all are here. Zach Wamp from the State of Tennessee and Kim, proud you all are here as well. They are here because the States they represent happen to have teams who are champs as well.

I want to welcome all the team captains, the coaches, the school officials, and all the fans who have joined us. You're different—you've come from different schools, different sports, but you deserve to be called "champion."

The first champions I want to recognize are the Arizona State indoor track and field and outdoor track and field champs. I learned a new symbol. [Laughter] The women's track team from Arizona State claimed two national championships in 1 year. In the winter, the Sun Devils earned the indoor title; in the spring, the outdoor title. It makes Arizona State one of only three schools in NCAA history to win women's indoor and outdoor track and field championships in the same season. I congratulate Coach Kraft and all the athletes who've joined us today. Thanks for coming.

Coach Pat Casey and the Oregon State baseball team have joined us. Oregon State

is here to celebrate two consecutive national championships in baseball. Earlier this summer, the Beavers won all five of their games in the College World Series. That is hard to do. You outscored your opponents 42–16. You trailed for only one inning. You took the lead and never looked back. And as a result, you're the first college baseball team to win back-to-back titles in 10 years. And I'm proud you're here, and congratulations on the job you're doing.

Speaking about repeat champs, the Duke women's golf team is with us today. The ladies of the golf team have now won three NCAA championships in a row and five overall. They're really hard to beat. This spring, the team played through wind and rain to win the championship tournament by 15 strokes. And I want to welcome Coach Brooks and the team here today. Coach Brooks picked up his 102d career win. This is the most in the history of NCAA women's golf. You've got a good coach; you've got good players. When you play hard, you end up right here at the White House. Congratulations, and thanks for coming.

How about the Johns Hopkins men's lacrosse team? Coach Pietramala and the team won a tough championship game. This is not the first time they've been here, by the way. They were here back in 2005. Everybody is going to remember—at least people who pay attention to lacrosse will remember that the Blue Jay team scored a goal in just 12 seconds in the game and hung on to win 12–11 in a tough game. This is the ninth men's lacrosse championship for Johns Hopkins. I congratulate you on carrying on a proud tradition at a fine university, and welcome to the White House.

Pat Summitt knows something about coaching. We're proud to welcome this soon-to-be, if not already, Hall of Fame coach and the ladies basketball team from the University of Tennessee. This team is upholding a long-time tradition for Tennessee women's basketball. After all, this is their seventh national title under Coach Summitt. Here's how the coach described the moment. She said, "To win anything, you have to be a tight team. They believed in each other and obviously had one goal: to cut down the nets."

They did, and we're proud to welcome you here to the White House. Thanks for coming.

Brown University women's crew is with us today. Brown University crew has a lot to celebrate in recent years. After all, they have won the NCAA title five out of the last nine seasons. These women know how to row. [Laughter] Brown is the winningest women's crew program in the history of the NAAs. We wish their coaches all the very best as they deal with a personal problem. I'm sorry they're not here, but these women—if anybody can lift their spirits—because they performed brilliantly. I also appreciate the fact that we've got Academic All-Americans and National Scholar-Athletes on this team as well. Congratulations on achieving excellence on all fronts, and welcome to the White House.

Coach Robinson and others coach the mighty Golden Gophers of Minnesota in the University of Minnesota men's wrestling team—grapplers. This spring, you earned the third national title in team history. And I appreciate the fact that you train hard, work hard, and as we say in Texas, "out-wrestle 'em." [Laughter] Congratulations, and welcome to the White House.

Here's the final group of champs. From the great State of Alaska, the men and women's rifle team from the University of Alaska Fairbanks. It is safe to say, this team traveled the furthest to be here. You earned the trip. This is, by the way, the eighth time in 9 years that the Nanooks have been the NCAA champions in rifle. Interestingly enough, guess who they beat? West Point. Any time you outshoot West Point, you're really good at what you do. [Laughter] And so we welcome you to the White House, and thanks for coming.

As I explained to some of the teams, one of the reasons why I love to welcome people here is to remind you that you can be a champ on the field, and you can be a champ off the field, that because you're a champ on the field, you have a chance to inspire somebody to make right choices in life. You have the opportunity to set a good example. You don't know how many youngsters are looking at you, but there's a lot. People are wondering how champs behave. So by setting

high standards and working hard to achieve them, you're influencing other people.

I also appreciate the fact that you're involved with raising money for cancer awareness or collecting toys and clothing for those in need. Some of the teams have supported the Special Olympics. A lot of the folks on these teams have volunteered in the communities in which they live. And I thank you for that. You're proving what I know is true, that you have to be a dedicated soul to get here in the White House—to get here to the White House when it comes to athletics, but it is that same dedication that makes you achieve excellence in sports that helps you be an excellent person in life.

And so we welcome you here. We thank you for coming. May God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:26 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Greg Kraft, track and field program head coach, Arizona State University; Dan Brooks, women's golf team head coach, Duke University; Dave Pietramala, men's lacrosse team head coach, Johns Hopkins University; and J Robinson, men's wrestling team head coach, University of Minnesota.

Proclamation 8179—Gold Star Mother's Day, 2007

September 21, 2007

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

The gift of liberty is secured by heroes who have answered the call to serve when America needed them most. On Gold Star Mother's Day, we honor the mothers of the service men and women who have given their lives in the defense of our great Nation.

America's Gold Star Mothers are remarkable patriots who serve their communities by demonstrating good citizenship, providing support and services to our troops and veterans, and helping comfort the families whose loved ones have made the ultimate sacrifice. Their sense of duty and deep devotion to our country inspire our Nation, and we thank them for their compassion, determination, and strength. Though they carry a great burden of grief, these courageous