

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:50 a.m. on October 5 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on October 6. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 5 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. In his address, the President referred to H.R. 976, the "Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act of 2007." The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

### **Statement on the Death of Representative Jo Ann Davis**

*October 6, 2007*

Laura and I are deeply saddened that Representative Jo Ann Davis lost her courageous battle with breast cancer today. Her determination to fight the disease is an inspiration to all of us.

Over the course of her four terms in the U.S. House of Representatives, she was an effective advocate for the people of her district and a strong supporter of our men and women in uniform. She was a fine example of a public servant who worked hard to cut Government waste to ensure the people's money was used wisely. Her commonsense values will be missed on Capitol Hill.

Laura and I send our thoughts and prayers to her husband, Chuck, their two sons, and the rest of the Davis family during this difficult time.

### **Remarks at the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial in Emmitsburg, Maryland**

*October 7, 2007*

Thank you all. Thank you. Please be seated. Thanks for the warm welcome. David, thank you very much for your introduction. Nothing better than being introduced by an old fire chief. And I thank you for your service, Dave. It is such an honor to be here. I was telling Laura on the phone—she didn't make it; I apologize, and so does she—but I said, I'm going down the hill—I was up at Camp David—I'm going down the hill to be with some remarkable people and their families and to honor those who served. I

said, I can't wait to go and to—be in their midst because I hold the firefighters in such high regard. I have a deep respect in my soul for people who serve our communities.

As David mentioned, far too often we go to sites that have been devastated by natural disaster, for example. Every time, the firefighters are there—every time. It's clear that the people here who wear the uniform have a different view of jurisdiction than a lot of our citizens. You know, from New York after 9/11 to New Orleans after Katrina, there were firefighters from around the country there to help. The bond between the firefighters is obviously unique; it is definitely a source of strength. And it's a reminder that the work here is a calling, not a job.

I want to thank the foundation for working hard to ensure that the families of those who have died in—are well treated. I want to tell you today that the Hometown Heroes Act will be fully implemented. This program will be administrated the way it was intended to be administrated. That's the least we can do as we honor the families of those who have died in the line of service.

I also am amazed at the compassion I see amongst those who wear the uniform for their comrades. Anyway, thanks for having me. I'm sorry it's under these circumstances that we have to be together. I hope our presence can help heal your hearts just a little bit. And I'm looking forward to giving you a hug if you want a hug or smiling for a picture if you want to smile for a picture. But most of all, I'm looking forward to honoring your loved ones.

I want to thank Steny Hoyer for joining us. He is—he respects you like I respect you, and he can pay tribute about as eloquently as anybody I have heard. I appreciate Roscoe Bartlett—he's the Congressman from this district—for joining us as well.

I want to thank the mayor of Emmitsburg, Mayor Hoover, for joining us. I appreciate Chief Cade. I want to thank my friend Hal Bruno, who is the chairman of the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation. I want to thank the members of the board of directors who are here. I appreciate you all coming.

You know, it takes a special kind of person to be a firefighter. It begins with a different sense of direction. When an area becomes

too dangerous for everybody else, you take it over. When others are looking for the exits, our firefighters are looking for the way in. When the frightened occupants of a burning building are rushing down the stairwell, our firefighters are going the opposite direction—up the stairs and toward the flames.

And you wonder where people like this get their courage. I'm sure a lot of it has to do with how they were raised or the examples of other firefighters in the communities in which they live. But the truth of the matter is that courage also comes from the community of firefighters. You work as teams; you share meals together. And when tragedy strikes, your dedication to one another ensures that no family will ever have to face the pain alone.

Your presence here is a sign of that camaraderie. I see grieving widows sitting side by side with a firefighter in uniform—it's the camaraderie of respect and compassion. Today 91 new names go up on this memorial. It is sometimes said of your fallen comrades that they lost their lives in the line of duty. On this day, at this place, we say more accurately: The men and women we honor are people who gave their lives in the line of duty.

We honor the service and sacrifices of firefighters like Kevin Apuzzio of New Jersey. Kevin started his career at age 16 when he joined an emergency medical unit. In college, he signed up for the East Franklin Volunteer Fire Company. Kevin was killed when he was trying to rescue a 75-year-old woman from her burning home. At Rutgers University, where Kevin was a student, they have named a public safety training center after him. And the president of the school put it simply: "We want people to know that a hero walked on this campus."

We honor the service and sacrifice of firefighters like Amy Schnearle-Pennywitt of Michigan. Amy grew up dreaming of becoming a firefighter, and she achieved that dream. On a freezing morning in 2006, the Ann Arbor Fire Department responded to a crash on an icy highway. And Amy arrived on the scene and then was fatally struck by a pickup truck that had skidded out of control. In a tribute, the local newspaper called firefighters like Amy the backbone of our so-

ciety. I believe that too. The editorial put it this way: "We call them. And they come."

We honor the service and sacrifice of firefighters like Destry Horton. Destry worked for two fire departments in Oklahoma, the local department in Chickasha and the Grady County Fire Department. Destry was killed because he gave up a day of golfing so he could go help his comrades battling the wildfires in southern Oklahoma. He suffered terrible burns, and those burns would take his life. I found it interesting that at his funeral, a contingent of firefighters from New York showed up to pay their respects. Here's what one of them said, he said, "It's sort of payback from after September the 11th when we had firefighters from around the world who came to show their support for us. This is a brother, and we wanted to be here."

We are here this afternoon for the same reason. That's why we're here. We're here for the friends and neighbors who risked their lives to keep us safe. And we're here for the colleagues who answered a call and did not come home. We're here for the brave moms and dads who left behind families that now need our love and our strong support.

Families of our fallen firefighters have suffered a terrible loss. No words can ease the ache in your hearts. At this difficult time, we will try to help by taking you in our arms. We offer you our heartfelt and sincere compassion. We hope it is some comfort to know that your loved ones will live on forever in the memory of the communities they served so well.

To the colleagues of those who have fallen: Your fellow firefighters knew the risks when they took the oath of service. Take pride in the example they have set. Honor their memory by carrying on the fine work that they were so proud to do by your side.

And to all Americans: Across our great country, homes still stand and families can go about their lives because firefighters put themselves in harm's way to protect us. So when you walk by a firehouse or see an ambulance on a street corner, take a moment to go up and say thank you. I ask my fellow Americans to pray for their safety, and pray that we live lives worthy of the sacrifices made by those whose names we add to this memorial today.

I appreciate you having me. I ask for the Almighty's blessings on you, and may He continue to bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:38 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to R. David Paulison, Director, Federal Emergency Management Agency, who introduced the President; Mayor Jim Hoover of Emmitsburg, MD; Gregory B. Cade, Federal Emergency Management Agency Assistant Administrator for the U.S. Fire Administration; Richard L. McCormick, president, Rutgers University; and Richard Schmidt, firefighter, New York City Fire Department.

### **Remarks Following a Meeting on the No Child Left Behind Act Reauthorization**

*October 9, 2007*

Secretary Spellings and I are so pleased to welcome you all to the Roosevelt Room. With us today are a group of concerned citizens from a variety of groups, here to discuss the No Child Left Behind Act. People around this table care deeply about making sure every child gets a good education. We're deeply concerned about school systems that don't focus on each individual. Some school systems are just moving kids through, and as a result, our education system is letting too many children down, too many families without hope. So we're going to strategize and work together to make sure the No Child Left Behind Act is reauthorized and made stronger.

And so I want to thank you all for coming. I love your passion. I appreciate the fact that you care deeply about the future of this country and that you believe, like I believe, every child can learn, and we have an obligation to teach every child how to read and write and add and subtract.

So thank you for joining us. We'll see you all in the Rose Garden here in a minute.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:06 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings. Also participating in the meeting were the First Lady; John C. Brittain, chief counsel and senior deputy director, Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law; Roslyn

McCallister Brock, vice chairman, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People National Board of Directors; Michael Casserly, executive director, Council of the Great City Schools; Wade Henderson, president and chief executive officer, Leadership Conference on Civil Rights; Lawrence Hernandez, founder, chief executive officer, and principal, Cesar Chavez Academy, Pueblo, CO; Marc H. Morial, president and chief executive officer, National Urban League; Janet Murguia, president and chief executive officer, National Council of La Raza; Dianne Pich, executive director, Citizens' Commission on Civil Rights; Sonia Rodriguez, chairperson, Coalition for Access to Educational Resources; Ricki Sabia, associate director, National Down Syndrome Society Policy Center; Amy Wilkins, vice president for government affairs and communications, The Education Trust; and Peter Zamora, cochair, Hispanic Education Coalition.

### **Remarks on the No Child Left Behind Act Reauthorization**

*October 9, 2007*

Good afternoon. Thank you all for coming. I want to thank Secretary Spellings for joining me here. And I appreciate you all—the leaders of the civil rights community and advocates for minority and disadvantaged students—for joining us as well.

We just had a meaningful discussion about our joint commitment to closing an achievement gap that exists in America. We discussed why reauthorizing the No Child Left Behind Act is vital in ensuring that we have a hopeful America. We don't necessarily agree on every issue, but we do agree that education is a basic civil right and that a good education is important for America.

We agree that our Nation has reached a defining moment in our struggle to secure a good education for every child. And we've come a long way since the days when children were simply shuffled through the schools, just moved grade to grade, whether or not they were learning. See, we believe every child can learn. We don't accept a system that simply shuffles children through the schools. We believe in setting high standards. And we believe that by setting high standards, we encourage greater results for every child. And now the question is whether or not we will finish the job to ensure that every