

whether or not troops in harm's way will get superb medical care. And the answer is: Absolutely; they get fantastic medical care.

Sometimes there's bureaucratic snafus that we're straightening out. But our citizens should never question whether or not the nurses and docs and caregivers are giving it their all in a professional way. They're saving lives, and they're healing hearts at the same time. And so it's a wonder what takes place here, Admiral. And I want to thank you and the Colonel for taking the lead. And you know, I'm—I know Americans join me in praising our troops and honoring their families.

Merry Christmas to you.

Rear Adm. Jeffries. Thank you, sir. It's an honor to serve them and you.

The President. Yes, sir. Thank you all. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:14 p.m. Participating in the visit were Rear Adm. Richard R. Jeffries, USN, commander, and Col. Leon E. Moores, USA, deputy commander for integration, National Naval Medical Center.

Message on the Observance of Eid al-Adha

December 19, 2007

I send holiday greetings to all Muslims celebrating Eid al-Adha.

During Eid al-Adha, Muslims around the world reflect on Abraham's unwavering faith and his trust in God when asked to sacrifice his son. These four days are a time for Muslims to honor Abraham's obedience by celebrating with family and friends and showing gratitude for the many blessings bestowed by God. This holiday also helps ensure the important values of compassion and devotion are passed on to future generations.

America is a land of many beliefs, and our society is enriched by our Muslim citizens. The kindness, generosity, and goodwill displayed by American Muslims during this special occasion and throughout the year have contributed to the strength and vitality of our Nation. May all those observing Eid al-Adha find love and warmth during this joyous holiday.

Laura and I send our best wishes for a memorable celebration.

George W. Bush

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this message.

Proclamation 8212—National Mentoring Month, 2008

December 19, 2007

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Millions of Americans lend their time, talent, and energy to become mentors and make a difference in children's lives. During National Mentoring Month, we honor these caring individuals for their dedication to changing our country one heart and soul at a time.

By sharing their knowledge and experiences, mentors serve as examples for young people and help teach them the skills they need to succeed in life. They also provide stability, instill important values, and build confidence in those they assist. Mentors are soldiers in the armies of compassion, and they encourage children to set goals and achieve their dreams.

My Administration is committed to helping our Nation's children realize their full potential by expanding opportunities for Americans to mentor. To raise awareness of the challenges facing our youth and encourage adults to connect with young people through family, school, and community, First Lady Laura Bush is leading the Helping America's Youth initiative. Through the USA Freedom Corps, we are connecting individuals with volunteer opportunities, including mentors who work with young people in schools and community organizations. By encouraging Americans to mentor, we are doing our part to see that more of America's children grow into strong, confident, and successful adults.

I appreciate all those who reach out to young people and inspire future generations to pass on this rich tradition that makes our country strong. I urge all Americans to get involved in mentoring programs and to visit

the USA Freedom Corps website at volunteer.gov to learn more about mentoring opportunities in their communities. Together, we can build a culture of service and foster a more compassionate society that recognizes the value and purpose in every single human life.

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 January 2008 as National Mentoring Month. I call upon all Americans to recognize the importance of mentoring, to look for opportunities to serve as mentors in their communities, and to observe this month with appropriate activities and programs.

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

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., December 21, 2007]

NOTE: This proclamation will be published in the *Federal Register* on December 26.

The President's News Conference

December 20, 2007

The President. Good morning. I hope you all enjoyed the holiday reception at the White House as much as Laura and I enjoyed it. We took an inventory of the silverware, and this year, only a few pieces were missing. So, like, if you see Gregory [David Gregory, NBC News], tell him to bring them back. [Laughter] I've decided to come in and visit with you because you're heading off on the holidays, and so are we, and we wish you happy holidays.

I think recent days have been a moment that the country can be proud of. In the past few days, we have stopped a tax increase on the middle class families, we improved our energy security, we delivered relief to struggling homeowners, and we funded our troops. I want to thank the members of both

parties for their hard work in these areas. I'm pleased that we have been able to end this year on a high note by moving beyond our differences and achieving important results for the American people.

This week, Congress passed legislation to protect middle class families from the burden of the Alternative Minimum Tax, without raising taxes. Unfortunately, Congress passed this legislation after a lengthy delay. It's going to—the delay is going to add time it takes to process tens of billions of dollars in refunds. And so we will work hard—now that the bill is passed, we will work hard to minimize the impact of the congressional delay so that Americans can get their refund checks as soon as possible.

Congress passed a good energy bill. The legislation I signed yesterday will reduce our country's dependence on foreign oil by increasing the supply of alternative fuel sources and increasing fuel economy standards. It demonstrates America's leadership in confronting climate change.

Congress also passed legislation to help homeowners struggling to make their mortgage payments. The bill I'm going to sign this afternoon increases the incentives for borrowers and lenders to work together to refinance loans. It will allow American families to secure lower mortgage payments without facing higher taxes. This is a tax reform bill. It takes away the penalty that a homeowner—a tax penalty a homeowner will receive if he or she renegotiates the loan to a lower rate, to a lower value for the house.

Finally, Congress reached agreement on a spending bill to fund the day-to-day operations of the Federal Government. They passed this bill without raising taxes. They eliminated many of the worst policy riders that would have never been approved through the ordinary legislative process. I appreciate that they included a down payment on the funding request for our troops on the frontlines in Afghanistan and Iraq without an artificial timetable of withdrawal. These brave men and women are risking their lives to protect us, and they deserve the full support of the U.S. Government.

I'm disappointed that Congress resorted to passing all this spending in one massive, more than 1,400-page omnibus bill, rather