

With this bill, Congress has taken a strong step to address the turbulence in the housing market. Yet there's more work to be done. The Congress needs to pass legislation permitting State and local governments to issue tax-exempt bonds for refinancing existing home loans. And Congress needs to pass legislation strengthening the independent regulator of Government-sponsored enterprises like Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae, so we can keep them focused on the mission to expand homeownership. Congress needs, as well, to complete work on responsible legislation modernizing the Federal Housing Administration, so that we can give the FHA the necessary flexibility to help hundreds of thousands of additional families qualify for prime-rate financing.

By taking these steps, we can help our homeowners—and we'll help more Americans become homeowners. We want people to have a place they can call their own. After all, it's an essential part of the American Dream. And we want that dream to extend throughout our Nation.

I want to thank the Members for joining us. I wish you all happy holidays. And this is going to make a happy holiday for many homeowners. Thanks for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:05 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. H.R. 3648, approved December 20, was assigned Public Law No. 110-142.

Remarks Following a Visit With Wounded Troops at Walter Reed Army Medical Center

December 20, 2007

Thank you all for joining me. I've just come down from a tour of a couple of the wards up there here at Walter Reed. First, I'm inspired by the quality of health care. Americans may wonder whether or not our troops are getting the best possible health care, and they are. They're not only getting great care from good docs and nurses; they're getting a lot of compassion and a lot of love up in the wards. And so I want to thank you all. General, thank you very much for taking the lead.

This past month is the lowest number of patients being admitted here since '02, and that's good news. It's good news for families who worry about their loved ones in harm's way, and it's good news for the staff here who would like nothing more to be—to have nobody come in here. Every time I come to a facility like this, I count my blessings. And one of the great blessings is to be the President of a country that produces such brave men and women.

And so as we head into the holiday seasons, I ask for the good Lord's blessings on those in harm's way and their families. And I want to thank you again, General, for your hospitality. I appreciate you having me. Thank you. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:14 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Maj. Gen. Carla G. Hawley-Bowland, USA, commanding general, North Atlantic Regional Medical Command and Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

Proclamation 8213—To Implement an Amendment to the Dominican Republic-Central America-United States Free Trade Agreement

December 20, 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 Congress approved the Agreement in section 101(a) of the Dominican Republic-Central America-United States Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act (the "CAFTA-DR Act") (19 U.S.C. 4011).

2. The Parties to the Agreement entered into an amendment to the Agreement on July 27, August 6, and August 14, 2007 (the "Amendment"). The terms of the Amendment are contained in letters of understanding between the United States and the Agreement countries described in sections

1634(a)(2) and 1634(b)(2) of the Pension Protection Act of 2006 (Public Law 109–280, 120 Stat. 780).

3. Section 1634 of the Pension Protection Act authorizes the President to proclaim modifications to the Harmonized Tariff Schedule of the United States (HTS) as necessary to carry out the understandings described therein subject, in the case of certain provisions of the Amendment, to the consultation and layover requirements in section 104 of the CAFTA–DR Act (19 U.S.C. 4014).

4. Section 203(o) of the CAFTA–DR Act (19 U.S.C. 4033) authorizes the President to proclaim, as part of the HTS, the provisions set out in Annex 4.1 of the Agreement.

5. 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.

6. Section 604 of the Trade Act of 1974, as amended (the “1974 Act”) (19 U.S.C. 2483), 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 203 of the CAFTA–DR Act, section 1634 of the Pension Protection Act, section 301 of title 3, United States Code, and section 604 of the 1974 Act, do proclaim that:

(1) In order to provide generally for the modifications in the rules for determining whether goods imported into the customs territory of the United States are eligible for

preferential tariff treatment under the Agreement, to provide preferential tariff treatment for certain other goods under the Agreement, and to make technical and conforming changes in the general notes to the HTS, the HTS is modified as set forth in:

(a) Sections A, B, and C of the Annex to this proclamation; and

(b) Section D of that Annex.

(2) The modifications to the HTS made by paragraph (1)(a) of this proclamation shall enter into effect on the date, as announced by the United States Trade Representative in the *Federal Register*, that the Amendment enters into force and shall be effective with respect to goods entered, or withdrawn from warehouse for consumption, on or after that date.

(3) The modifications to the HTS made by paragraph (1)(b) of this proclamation shall enter into effect on the date, as announced by the United States Trade Representative in the *Federal Register*, that the Amendment has entered into force and the conditions set forth in paragraph (a), paragraph (b), or both, of footnote 1 to Appendix 4.1–B of the Agreement have been fulfilled, and shall be effective with respect to goods entered, or withdrawn from warehouse for consumption, on or after that date.

(4) The CITA is authorized to exercise my authority under section 203(o) of the CAFTA–DR Act to implement Appendix 4.1–B of the Agreement by determining whether and, if so, by what amount, to increase in accordance with paragraph 3 or footnote 2 of that Appendix the quantitative limits in the provisions of the HTS set out in section D of the Annex to this proclamation.

(5) The United States Trade Representative shall modify U.S. note 21 to subchapter XXII of chapter 98 of the HTS in a notice published in the *Federal Register* to reflect determinations pursuant to paragraph (4) of this proclamation by the CITA.

(6) 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 twentieth 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, 9:06 a.m., December 26, 2007]

NOTE: This proclamation and its attached annex were released by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 21, and they will be published in the *Federal Register* on December 27. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language version of this proclamation.

Message on the Observance of Christmas 2007

December 21, 2007

“But the angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High . . . his kingdom will never end.’”

Luke 1:30–33

During the Christmas season, our thoughts turn to the source of joy and hope born in a humble manger on a holy night more than 2,000 years ago. Each year, Christians everywhere celebrate this single life that changed the world and continues to change hearts today. The simple and inspiring story of the birth of Jesus fills our souls with gratitude for the many blessings in our lives and promises that God’s purpose is justice and His plan is peace.

At this special time of year, we give thanks for Christ’s message of love and mercy, and we are reminded of our responsibility to serve. America is blessed to have fine citizens who reach out with a compassionate hand to help brothers and sisters in need. We also remember our brave men and women in uniform who have volunteered to defend us in distant lands. Many of those who have answered the call of duty will spend Christmas far from home and separated from family. We honor their sacrifice, ask God to watch

over them and their families, and pray for their safe return.

Christmas is a time to rejoice and remember the birth of Jesus Christ. Laura and I pray your Christmas will be blessed with family and fellowship, and we wish you a day of glad tidings. Merry Christmas.

George W. Bush

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

Message Sending Holiday Greetings to Members of the Armed Forces

December 21, 2007

To the Men and Women of the United States Armed Forces

On behalf of a grateful Nation, Laura and I send our best wishes for the holidays.

In this season of giving, we remember our duty to others, and we see that sense of duty fulfilled in the men and women who wear our Nation’s uniform. Our country owes you a debt of gratitude for your courage and resolve to serve the cause of peace. Americans are proud of your dedicated service, and I am proud to be the Commander in Chief of the greatest force for freedom in the history of the world.

Our Nation is thankful for the many sacrifices you and your families make every day. During the holidays and throughout the coming year, we ask the Almighty to bestow His protection and care on you and your loved ones. We pray for your safety and for liberty, justice, and peace on Earth.

Laura and I wish you a joyful holiday season. May God bless you, and may God continue to bless America.

George W. Bush

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

Message on the Observance of Kwanzaa 2007

December 21, 2007

I send greetings to those observing Kwanzaa.