

troops escorted them into the city's all-white Central High School. Once inside, the Little Rock Nine were spit on, harassed, and called names. One of the students was a senior named Ernest Green. As graduation day approached, some suggested it might be safer for Ernest to receive his diploma in the mail. Many people would have taken this advice, not Ernest Green. In May of 1958, Martin Luther King, Jr., was on hand to watch Ernest become the first African American to graduate from Little Rock's Central High School. We're honored to welcome Ernest Green to the White House during the 50th anniversary—[*applause*].

And finally, as a young boy, Otis Williams remembers his mother packing food for their move from Texas—oh, what a tragic mistake—[*laughter*—]to Detroit. She did so because restaurants along the route refused to serve African Americans. In Detroit, Otis Williams grew up to become the leader of one of the most successful vocal groups in the history of our country, the Temptations. This group has recorded 37 top 40 singles, including 4 number-one hits on the pop charts. Their success paved the way for other African American artists. Their melodies continue bringing Americans of all races together to this day.

Otis can remember performing in a venue in South Carolina where blacks and whites in the crowd were separated by a barrier. The next year when the Temptations returned, the racial divide was gone. As Otis once put it, quote, "The highest achievement for me has been to have our music penetrate all kinds of barriers, for it to be colorless." The music of the Temptations has given countless Americans sunshine on a cloudy day—[*laughter*—]and we cannot help ourselves from loving them. [*Laughter*]

Throughout American—African American History Month, we remember how individuals, African American leaders of all kinds helped bring our Nation together. We recognize our Nation still has a long way to go. But in the example of the leaders like those we honor today, we see strength greater than any division, and we see hope for a day when freedom rings from every mountainside and every corner of the country.

And now it is my great pleasure to introduce the Temptations.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

Statement on Senate Passage of the Intelligence Reform Legislation

February 12, 2008

After a full debate, the Senate today cast a strong, bipartisan vote in support of legislation that will ensure that our intelligence professionals continue to have the critical tools they need to protect the Nation.

This good bill passed by the Senate provides a long-term foundation for our intelligence community to monitor the communications of foreign terrorists in ways that are timely and effective and that also protect the liberties of Americans. It will keep closed dangerous intelligence gaps that threatened our security. And this bill improves on the Protect America Act passed last summer by providing fair and just liability protection to those private companies who have been sued for billions of dollars only because they are believed to have done the right thing and assisted the Nation after the September 11th terrorist attacks.

I commend Senators from both sides of the aisle who came together to pass this important bill. I thank Leaders Reid and McConnell and the leaders of the Senate Intelligence Committee, Senators Rockefeller and Bond, for finishing work on this bill. Today the Senate demonstrated that protecting our Nation is not a partisan issue.

The House of Representatives now has an opportunity to put aside narrow partisan concerns and come together to pass this bipartisan bill and send it to my desk without delay. Our intelligence professionals and private sector partners need the certainty of long-term legislation that will allow us to keep programs in place to protect the Nation, so that the flow of critical intelligence information is not interrupted.

NOTE: The statement referred to H.R. 3773.

Remarks on Intelligence Reform Legislation

February 13, 2008

Director, thank you for joining me. Good morning. At this moment, somewhere in the world, terrorists are planning new attacks on our country. Their goal is to bring destruction to our shores that will make September the 11th pale by comparison. To carry out their plans, they must communicate with each other, they must recruit operatives, and they must share information.

The lives of countless Americans depend on our ability to monitor these communications. Our intelligence professionals must be able to find out who the terrorists are talking to, what they are saying, and what they're planning.

To help our intelligence agencies do this, Congress passed the Protect America Act last year. Unfortunately, Congress set the law to expire on February the 1st and then failed to pass new legislation that would keep these tools in effect over the long run. And so at the 11th hour, Congress passed a temporary 15-day extension of the current law, which will expire at midnight this Saturday. I signed that extension. I did so to give Members of the House and the Senate more time to work out their differences.

Well, the Senate has used this time wisely. I am pleased that last night, Senators approved new legislation that will ensure our intelligence professionals have the tools they need to make us safer, and they did so by a wide, bipartisan majority. The Senate bill also provides fair and just liability protections for companies that did the right thing and assisted in defending America after the attacks of September the 11th.

In order to be able to discover enemy—the enemy's plans, we need the cooperation of telecommunication companies. If these companies are subjected to lawsuits that could cost them billions of dollars, they won't participate, they won't help us, they won't help protect America. Liability protection is critical to securing the private sector's cooperation with our intelligence efforts. The Senate has passed a good bill and has shown that protecting our Nation is not a partisan issue. And I congratulate the Senators.

Unfortunately, the House has failed to pass a good bill. And now House leaders say they want still more time to reach an agreement with the Senate on a final bill. They make this claim even though it is clear that the Senate bill, the bill passed last night, has significant bipartisan support in the House.

Congress has had over 6 months to discuss and deliberate. The time for debate is over. I will not accept any temporary extension. House Members have had plenty of time to pass a good bill. They have already been given a 2-week extension beyond the deadline they set for themselves. If Republicans and Democrats in the Senate can come together on a good piece of legislation, there is no reason why Republicans and Democrats in the House cannot pass the Senate bill immediately.

The House's failure to pass the bipartisan Senate bill would jeopardize the security of our citizens. As Director McConnell has told me, without this law, our ability to prevent new attacks will be weakened, and it will become harder for us to uncover terrorist plots. We must not allow this to happen. It is time for Congress to ensure the flow of vital intelligence is not disrupted. It is time for Congress to pass a law that provides a long-term foundation to protect our country. And they must do so immediately.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:01 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to H.R. 3773.

Remarks on Signing the Economic Stimulus Act of 2008

February 13, 2008

Thank you all. Sit down. Thank you all very much. Thanks for coming. Thanks for the warm welcome. I'm pleased to be joined by leaders of both parties to enact an economic growth package on behalf of the American people.

You know, a lot of folks in America probably were saying that it's impossible for those of us in Washington to find common ground, to reach compromise on important issues. I didn't feel that way; I know the leaders didn't feel that way. And as a result, we have come