

the development of a market for private individuals, which will help your small-business owners and obviously help families.

Now, one of the interesting things that has taken place in the States, and one of—I think our jobs is—I said last night, you know, that the Governors are policy entrepreneurs. And I meant what I said. And I find it interesting that in certain States, like in Florida, private companies compete for Medicaid business. Like in Indiana, you know, Mitch has helped uninsured be able to participate in an HSA. Like in Oklahoma, you've helped the uninsured or low-income workers purchase health care through competition from—with Medicaid dollars.

In other words, there's some wonderful things going on, all market-driven. And we just want to facilitate those decisions because, in my judgment, the opposite of having the Government here in Washington be the decisionmaker will undermine private medicine, will make quality care more difficult.

And so those are some of the thoughts I wanted to share with you. I appreciate you giving me time. I'll answer a couple of your questions. I thank the national press corps for joining us. See you later. *[Laughter]*

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:10 a.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Tim Pawlenty of Minnesota, chairman, and Gov. Edward G. Rendell of Pennsylvania, vice chairman, National Governors Association; Janet Creighton, Deputy Assistant to the President and Director of Intergovernmental Affairs; Gov. Eliot Spitzer of New York; and Gov. Mitchell E. Daniels, Jr., of Indiana.

Statement on the Situation in Burma *February 25, 2008*

The situation in Burma remains deplorable. The regime has rejected calls from its own people and the international community to begin a genuine dialog with the opposition and ethnic minority groups. Arrests and secret trials of peaceful political activists continue, such as the recent arrest of journalists Thet Zin and Sein Win Maung. Severe human rights abuses by the Burmese Army,

including burning down homes and killing civilians, continue in ethnic minority areas in eastern Burma.

The United States continues to seek a peaceful transition to a democratic government that will promote stability and prosperity in Burma and in the region. We support continued engagement by the U.N. Security Council and United Nation Secretary-General Ban's good offices mission, as well as sustained regional engagement.

As one element of our policy to promote a genuine democratic transition, the U.S. maintains targeted sanctions that focus on the assets of regime members and their cronies who grow rich while Burma's people suffer under their misrule. Therefore, today the Department of the Treasury has applied financial sanctions against Steven Law, a regime crony also suspected of drug trafficking activities, and his financial network, including his wife, father, and 14 companies, pursuant to Executive Order 13448.

Additionally, the Department of the Treasury has applied sanctions to two resorts owned and operated by known regime crony and arms merchant Tay Za, himself designated for sanctions in October 2007. Today's actions add to the 33 individuals and 11 entities previously designated. Furthermore, as a result of the enhanced visa restrictions that I announced in September 2007, 898 Burmese officials and their family members are now subject to visa restrictions.

Concerted international pressure is needed to achieve a genuine transition to democracy in Burma. We encourage Burma's neighbors and other stakeholders in Southeast Asia to impress upon the regime the need to release all political prisoners, including Aung San Suu Kyi, to end military offensives and human rights abuses against ethnic minorities, and to begin a genuine transition to democracy in response to the demonstrated aspirations of all the peoples of Burma.

NOTE: The statement referred to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon of the United Nations; Cecilia Ng and Lo Hsing Han, wife and father of Steven Law; and Aung San Suu Kyi, leader of the National League for Democracy in Burma.

Remarks at the Republican Governors Association Gala

February 25, 2008

Thank you all. Please be seated—unless, of course, you don't have a seat.

Governor, thank you very much for your kind introduction. Thank you all for coming, and thanks for supporting our Republican Governors. If you want to raise money, if you want to get a job done, call on the Texas Governor—and this Governor has delivered.

I appreciate all the other Governors who are here. I particularly want to thank Matt Blunt and Mark Sanford, who are leading the RGA, and all the other Governors that have—on the stage today. I can't thank you enough for your service to the country.

I also want to recognize Laura. She's starring in a new movie: mother of the bride. [*Laughter*] I'm not very objective when I say this, but Laura is a fabulous First Lady. I appreciate the members of the Cabinet who are here.

Republican Governors are smart, capable people. I'd like to read the roster of former Governors who worked in the Bush administration: Thompson, Ashcroft, Ridge, Whitman, Cellucci, Johanns, Leavitt, Kempthorne, and Schafer. Three people that worked in the Bush administration went on to be Governors: Daniels, Huntsman, and Jindal. I'm smart enough to hire Republican Governors, and so are the people in the States that these men are from.

I don't know about you, but I'm confident we'll hold the White House in 2008. And I don't want the next Republican President to be lonely—[*laughter*]. And that is why we got to take the House, retake the Senate, and make sure our States are governed by Republican Governors.

Our ideas are those embraced by the American people. American people want strong national defense, and they want the Government to protect the people from further attack, and that's precisely what Republicans will give them. Americans want lower taxes and less government, and it's precisely what Republicans will give them. Americans want strong, principled leadership, and that is precisely what Republicans will give them.

And so when I say I'm confident, I am so because I understand the mentality of the American people, and I understand the mentality of our candidates. And there's no question in my mind, with your help, 2008 is going to be a great year.

I want to talk about two issues that will affect the upcoming elections. The first is, is that we must elect candidates who understand that this Nation is involved with an ideological struggle against coldblooded killers who would like to do us harm again, and that we better be strong and resolute in the face of this enemy.

Our philosophy is that the best way to defend America is to defeat the enemy overseas so we do not have to face them here at home. And that's precisely what the United States of America is doing.

There are two major fronts in this war; one is in Afghanistan and one is in Iraq. And I want to spend a little time on Iraq. First of all, the decision to remove Saddam Hussein was the right decision for world peace and for the security of the American people.

One year ago, extremists, coldblooded killers, people who kill innocent men, women, and children to achieve their ideological objectives were succeeding in their efforts to plunge Iraq into chaos. So I had a choice to make. Do I suffer the consequences of defeat by withdrawing our troops, or do I listen to my commanders, the considered judgment of military experts, and do what it takes to secure victory in Iraq? I chose the latter. Rather than retreating, we sent 30,000 new troops into Iraq, and the surge is succeeding.

High-profile attacks are down. Civilian deaths are down. Sectarian killings are down. U.S. and Iraqi forces, who are becoming more capable by the day, have captured or killed thousands of extremists in Iraq, including hundreds of key Al Qaida leaders—the very same people that would like to hurt America once again.

The progress in Iraq is tough; the progress in Iraq is tangible; and the progress in Iraq is enabling this young democracy to begin to make progress under the most modern Constitution written in the Middle East.

I can promise you this: For the next 10 months, I will make the necessary decisions