

23 percent. That translates to jobs and prosperity. In the 5 years since the free trade agreement between the United States and Chile took effect, trade between our two nations has increased by more than 180 percent. And that's positive. In other words, these agreements are mutually beneficial. And most importantly, they help small-business owners and workers and farmers and ranchers.

In the nearly 15 years since NAFTA entered into force, trade between the United States, Canada, and Mexico has increased by a combined total of more than 200 percent.

Today our countries are launching the Pathways to Prosperity in the Americas Initiative to continue this progress. This initiative will provide a forum where leaders can work to ensure that the benefits of trade are broadly shared. It will deepen the connections among regional markets. It will expand our cooperation on development issues. This is a very promising initiative, and I expect positive results when our representatives meet on these issues later this year.

It's important for the American people to understand that exports benefit workers. Half of our growth last year was the result of trade. And therefore, it's in our interest to continue to open up markets, particularly in our own neighborhood. There are three free trade agreements pending in the Congress today: South Korea, Panama, and Colombia. Obviously, two of those are with nations in our own hemisphere. The Colombia free trade agreement will be good for Colombia; it will be good for America. The President and I have worked diligently to make sure this is a fair agreement, and Congress needs to pass it.

The Panamanian agreement—it's good for Panama, it's good for America. And Congress ought to pass that agreement too. It's important that these agreements be passed as soon as possible.

I want to thank the leaders for joining us. I'm looking forward to our discussion. I appreciate your hard work in working to make sure your people and your countries have great opportunities. One such opportunity is access to jobs provided by markets.

Thank you for your vision, and thank you for your leadership. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:01 a.m. at the Council of the Americas Headquarters. In his remarks, he referred to President Alvaro Uribe Velez of Colombia. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks During a Discussion With President Elias Antonio Saca Gonzalez of El Salvador in New York City

September 24, 2008

President Bush. Mr. President, thank you.

I want to let my friend know, and the people of El Salvador, that the United States will extend TPS status to El Salvadorians living in our country. This is a decision that was made to improve the lives of El Salvadorians.

I'm proud to make this announcement with you standing by my side. You've been a very strong and courageous leader, and you have been a friend. And I know this is an issue of concern to you because you care deeply about the people of your country. And so when you get back home, you can tell the people that TPS has been extended.

Thank you, sir.

President Saca. Thank you very much. Thank you very much, President, for extending for 18 months more the TPS for the people of El Salvador. This is going to benefit our Salvadorian people with—since we have been walking in liberty, in democracy, and in integration.

Thank you very much this morning for this extension.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:53 a.m. at the Council of the Americas Headquarters. President Saca spoke in Spanish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Statement on Provincial Elections Legislation in Iraq

September 24, 2008

Today Iraq's Parliament passed a Provincial elections law enabling Iraq to hold Provincial elections by January 31, 2009. Elections in Iraq can now be held under a new system that will give Iraqis more say in choosing their elected representatives.

Nothing is more central to a functioning democracy than free and fair elections. Today's action demonstrates the ability of Iraq's leaders to work together for the good of the Iraqi people and represents further progress on political reconciliation. I congratulate the members of the Iraqi Council of Representatives for coming together to pass this significant legislation.

Proclamation 8293—Gold Star Mother's Day, 2008

September 24, 2008

*By the President of the United States
of America*

A Proclamation

Throughout our history, the men and women of the Armed Forces have put our Nation's security before their own, doing their duty in the face of grave danger. On Gold Star Mother's Day, we pay solemn tribute to the mothers of the patriots lost serving this great Nation.

Gold Star Mothers inspire our Nation with their deep devotion to family and country. These extraordinary women serve their communities, dedicate their time to helping members of our Armed Forces and veterans, and bring comfort and hope to families whose loved ones laid down their lives in the defense of our liberty. Nothing can compensate for their sacrifice and loss, yet Gold Star Mothers demonstrate tremendous courage and resolve while working to preserve the memory and legacy of all our fallen heroes.

On this day, we honor our country's Gold Star Mothers and remember their sons' and daughters' noble service and great sacrifice. We offer them our deepest gratitude and our

most profound respect, and we ask for God's blessings to be upon them and their families.

The Congress, by Senate Joint Resolution 115 of June 23, 1936 (49 Stat. 1895 as amended), has designated the last Sunday in September as "Gold Star Mother's Day" and has authorized and requested the President to issue a proclamation in its observance.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim Sunday, September 28, 2008, as Gold Star Mother's Day. I call upon all Government officials to display the flag of the United States over Government buildings on this special day. I also encourage the American people to display the flag and hold appropriate ceremonies as a public expression of our Nation's sympathy and respect for our Gold Star Mothers.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-fourth day of September, in the year of our Lord two thousand eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-third.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., September 26, 2008]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on September 29.

Address to the Nation on the National Economy

September 24, 2008

Good evening. This is an extraordinary period for America's economy. Over the past few weeks, many Americans have felt anxiety about their finances and their future. I understand their worry and their frustration. We've seen triple-digit swings in the stock market. Major financial institutions have teetered on the edge of collapse, and some have failed. As uncertainty has grown, many banks have restricted lending. Credit markets have frozen, and families and businesses have found it harder to borrow money.

We're in the midst of a serious financial crisis, and the Federal Government is responding with decisive action. We boosted confidence in money market mutual funds