

The actions I'm announcing today represent a step that we wish were not necessary. But given the situation, it is the most effective and responsible way to address this challenge facing our Nation. By giving the auto companies a chance to restructure, we will shield the American people from a harsh economic blow at a vulnerable time. And we will give American workers an opportunity to show the world once again they can meet challenges with ingenuity and determination and bounce back from tough times and emerge stronger than before.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:01 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President-elect Barack Obama. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks on the Unveiling of the Official Portraits of President George W. Bush and First Lady Laura Bush

December 19, 2008

Secretary Clough, thank you for the introduction. Thanks for coming. I suspected there would be a good-size crowd once the word got out about my hanging. *[Laughter]*

It's a tremendous honor to have my portrait added to this gallery's Presidential collection. This is one of only two institutions with portraits of every President, starting with our first, George Washington. That means this exhibit now has an interesting symmetry. It starts with George W. and ends with George W. *[Laughter]*

I want to thank the Vice President and Chief Justice for joining us. I thank members of Smithsonian Institute's Board of Regents. I, too, appreciate Marty Sullivan being here. I want to thank members of my Cabinet, administration, and friends.

I am grateful to all the people who made this painting possible. We really appreciate your generosity. I thank the donors for coming today. They remind me of an interesting story about this collection. In 1857, the artist George Healy was commissioned by Congress to paint Presidents John Q. Adams, Van

Buren, Tyler, Polk, Fillmore, Pierce, and Buchanan. But by the time Healy got to President Buchanan, the Civil War had broken out, and an angry Congress held the former President to blame. And so when Healy presented his bill for Buchanan's portrait, the lawmakers refused to pay. Things are bad when even Congress refuses to spend money. *[Laughter]*

I want to thank the artists. Sasha, you had it easy; it does not take much to make Laura look beautiful. *[Laughter]* Anderson had a bigger challenge. *[Laughter]* And therefore, I needed to find a person who would do the painting that would be a good and forgiving friend. And so I want to thank my buddy—my college classmate Bob Anderson for painting this portrait. It actually looks like me, which is a good sign. *[Laughter]* You did a fabulous job.

This is not the first time that Bob has painted me. He had a warm-up; he did my portrait for the Yale Club. Recently, I asked him what was different this time around. He said, well, this time around he had to use a lot more gray. *[Laughter]* I also understood Bob didn't have any difficulty depicting my eyes or my hands, but he had a lot of trouble with my mouth. And I told him, "That makes two of us." *[Laughter]*

A former Washington resident once said: "Whenever you hear about somebody being done in oil in this town, you can't be sure whether that means painting or boiling." *[Laughter]* That was a wise observation from a good and decent man; one who has offered me a lot of wisdom and advice throughout my life. And I am proud to have my portrait in the same room as President 41, George H.W. Bush.

It's a humbling experience to be included here among so many extraordinary leaders. One of the great things about this collection is that visitors can examine the faces of the men who have shaped our Nation's history and study how history has shaped them. In each of their images, we're reminded of the incredible joys and responsibilities that come with the Presidency. Yet in these two centuries of history, we're also reminded that this office and the enduring ideals it represents are greater than any person.

Being the temporary custodian of the office has been a privilege of a lifetime. Over the past 8 years, I have been inspired by the character and courage of our Nation, especially the men and women of our Armed Forces. I have been moved by the compassion of our citizens, from those who mentor a child to those who save lives around the world. Most of all, I've been uplifted by the many Americans who have sent their prayers.

And so, with deep gratitude, I offer my own: For all of you in this room, for the success of our next President and those who follow, and for God's continued blessings on our wonderful Nation.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:15 a.m. at the National Portrait Gallery. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution G. Wayne Clough; Martin E. Sullivan, Director, National Portrait Gallery; and painter Aleksander "Sasha" Titovets. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included remarks by the First Lady.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority

December 19, 2008

President Bush. I'm thinking about the first time I met you—I think it was in Jordan—and I can't help but reflect on how far the process has come to bring peace to the Holy Land.

You have done a lot of important and hard work in helping the region understand the importance of two states living side by side in peace. No question, this is a hard challenge, but nevertheless, people must recognize that we have made a good deal of progress. And a lot of it has to do with your leadership, and I thank you.

I was pleased to note that the U.N. Security Council passed a resolution which confirms that bilateral negotiation—the bilateral negotiation process is irreversible, is—and it's a path to a Palestinian state and a path to peace in the Middle East.

And I've been looking forward to this visit. I'm looking forward to getting a briefing on not only the negotiations, the discussions

you've had with Israel, but also the fine progress that's being made on the West Bank, which is a credit to your leadership and the leadership of the Prime Minister.

So welcome, sir, and thank you for coming.

President Abbas. Thank you very much, Mr. President. And thank you for finding the time to meet with us during these days. There is no doubt that we will always remember the efforts that you have undertaken to promote the peace process. You were the first sitting President who accepted as a policy the establishment of two states—a state of Israel and a state of Palestine—living next to each other in peace and security. And this policy has become a reality in every corner around the world.

And we also remember very fondly, Mr. President, the great efforts that you have undertaken to convene the Annapolis conference after so many years of absent peace process accords. This conference was attended by representatives from more than 50 countries from around the world and made it a reality that the roadmap would be the way to go.

Also the Annapolis conference talked about and promoted the bilateral direct negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians over the fundamental and basic issues. These basic issues, as we all know, they include Jerusalem, settlements, borders, refugees, water, security, as well as prisoners. And of course, you pushed very hard for the two sides to carry out their commitments based on phase one of the roadmap and to carry out their responsibilities. And you were clear about both Palestinian commitments as well as Israeli commitments.

On the basis of your efforts and the convening of the Annapolis conference, two other conferences took place—the Paris and the Berlin conferences. And during the Paris conference, there was an agreement in order to support financially, in a very generous way, the Palestinian Authority. After that, we have seen on the grounds that the West Bank was much calmer, and there was performance on security throughout that part of Palestine. And we also appreciate the efforts that were given to us in the area of security, which helped our own security apparatus to carry out their responsibilities.