only as the President of your country but as a leader of the African Union.

We had a very constructive discussion about a variety of issues. We talked about our common commitment to help end the genocide in Darfur. I appreciate the President's leadership in helping negotiate a peace agreement, and I appreciate his leadership in working with the United Nations so we can get the AU forces blue-helmeted as quickly as possible.

And one of my interests, of course, is to join with African nations in combating HIV/AIDS, and I want to congratulate the President for the low infection rate in Congo. Thank you for your leadership on that issue.

We've had a very good visit here, and I look forward to seeing you in St. Petersburg, Russia, where we can continue our discussions. So, welcome.

President Sassou-Nguesso. I, first of all, thank you, Mr. President, and I want to say to everyone that I'm very happy and honored to be here, actually for the second time, because in 1990, President Bush—father of President Bush now—welcomed me to this house on a state visit. So I'm very happy to be here, Mr. President.

Indeed, President Bush is absolutely right; we discussed a lot of issues that we're all interested in: peace, security, and not just in Africa, but beyond Africa, in the world. We talked about terrorism; we talked about the Iranian nuclear issue; we talked about the dialog that's about to open up, I hope, and that will bring good results to that problem.

And on behalf of all of Africa, I thank President Bush for his commitment in fighting AIDS, the commitment of the United States in the fight against HIV/AIDS. As you know, we had a special meeting on AIDS at the United Nations General Assembly, and as you know also, Africa is the continent that suffers the most from this scourge.

And we also talked about African development issues. We talked about the situation in the Gulf of Guinea, and the Congo Basin, the NEPAD, Project for African Development in Africa. And I was happy to see President Bush give his entire support to the development of Africa.

And I'm, again, very happy with this very useful meeting that we had with President Bush here. And I'm very happy for the fact that we're going to see each other in St. Petersburg, because President Putin invited me to come to the G–8 Summit as a representative for Africa.

I thank President Bush for his very friendly and warm welcome. And I'm very happy to be here, back in the White House.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:51 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. President Sassou-Nguesso spoke in French, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. President Sassou-Nguesso referred to President Vladimir Putin of Russia.

Remarks Following Discussions With President Manuel Zelaya Rosales of Honduras

June 5, 2006

President Bush. Mr. President, welcome. It's good to have you here. We've had a very good discussion, as you would expect amongst friends. We discussed our common interests, and one of our common interests is expanded commercial opportunity. And CAFTA gives us a chance to realize those opportunities. We talked about our common desire to make sure the democracies in the region are strong.

We talked about the immigration issue. The President is very concerned about the immigration issue. I assured him that my administration supports a comprehensive immigration bill that treats people with respect and, at the same time, upholds our laws. And over lunch, I will give him our strategy to continue to press for a comprehensive bill that will enforce our borders but allow people to come to our country in a legal way to work on a temporary basis.

So, Mr. President, thank you. The people of America respect your country and appreciate our close ties. And we're sure glad you're here.

President Zelaya. Thank you. I have expressed my appreciation to the President. I'd like to reiterate my thanks to him for the frankness with which he has spoken about the solutions to the common problems we face in the Western Hemisphere.

And we come to this meeting with President Bush with great enthusiasm. And in coming here, we have asked for God's blessing so that this is a meeting that will truly strengthen the fraternal ties that join us in trying to achieve peace in our day.

I thank you very much, Mr. Bush. Your trust makes both of our nations strong.

President Bush. Thank you, sir. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:51 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. President Zelaya spoke in Spanish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks on a Proposed Constitutional Amendment To Protect Marriage

June 5, 2006

Thank you all. Please be seated. Good afternoon, and welcome to the White House. It is a pleasure to be with so many fine community leaders, scholars, family organizations, religious leaders, Republicans, Democrats, independents. Thank you all for coming.

You come from many backgrounds and faith traditions—yet united in this common belief: Marriage is the most fundamental institution of civilization, and it should not be redefined by activist judges. You are here because you strongly support a constitutional amendment that defines marriage as a union of a man and a woman, and I am proud to stand with you.

This week, the Senate begins debate on the marriage protection amendment, and I call on the Congress to pass this amendment, send it to the States for ratification so we can take this issue out of the hands of overreaching judges and put it back where it belongs—in the hands of the American people.

The union of a man and woman in marriage is the most enduring and important human institution. For ages, in every culture, human beings have understood that marriage is critical to the well-being of families. And because families pass along values and shape character, marriage is also critical to the health of society. Our policies should aim to strengthen families, not undermine them. And changing the definition of marriage would undermine the family structure.

America is a free society which limits the role of government in the lives of our citizens. In this country, people are free to choose how they live their lives. In our free society, decisions about a fundamental social institution as marriage should be made by the people.

The American people have spoken clearly on this issue through their elected Representatives and at the ballot box. In 1996, Congress approved the Defense of Marriage Act by large bipartisan majorities in both the House and the Senate, and President Clinton signed it into law. And since then, 19 States have held referendums to amend their State constitutions to protect the traditional definition of marriage. In every case, the amendments were approved by decisive majorities with an average of 71 percent.

Today, 45 of the 50 States have either a State constitutional amendment or statute defining marriage as a union of a man and a woman. These amendments and laws express a broad consensus in our country for protecting the institution of marriage. The people have spoken. Unfortunately, this consensus is being undermined by activist judges and local officials who have struck down State laws protecting marriage and made an aggressive attempt to redefine marriage.

Since 2004, State courts in Washington and California and Maryland and New York have ruled against marriage laws. Last year, a Federal judge in Nebraska overturned a State constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage, an amendment that was approved by 70 percent of the population. And at this moment, nine States face lawsuits challenging the marriage laws they have on the books.

Some argue that defining marriage should be left to the States. The fact is, State legislatures are trying to address this issue. But across the country, they are being thwarted by activist judges who are overturning the expressed will of their people. And these court decisions can have an impact on our whole Nation.

The Defense of Marriage Act declares that no State is required to accept another State's