AUTHENTICATED
U.S. GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION
GPO

the United States Senate today. They got the highest rating by the American Bar Association, and they added to the diversity of the bench. This week Judge Julio Fuentes of New Jersey was also confirmed. So I think maybe we're, by fits and starts, moving toward our one America. And we will work with you more.

I look forward to seeing you all individually. Thank you very much.

Oh, wait. We've got to have a benediction, and this is my fault. Tell them to stop the music. [*Laughter*]

Deputy Chief of Staff Maria Echaveste. I would like to have Jake Swamp from the Mohawks lead us in closing prayer.

The President. Thank you, sir.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:30 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Sanford Cloud, Jr., president and chief executive officer, National Conference for Community and Justice; John Hope Franklin, former Chair, and Judith A. Winston, former Executive Director, President's Initiative on Race; Vinton G. Cerf, senior vice president of Internet architecture and technology, MCI WorldCom, and his wife, Sigrid; Eric Lander, director, Whitehead/MIT Center for Genome Research; and Bishop Chandler Owens, Church of God in Christ. The President also referred to West African immigrant Amadou Diallo, who died after being shot in the Bronx Borough of New York City by four police officers, who were acquitted of all criminal charges on February 25 in Albany, NY; and Mr. Diallo's mother, Kadiadou Diallo. Ms. Echaveste referred to Jake Swamp, founder, Tree of Peace Society. The conference was formally entitled, "The President's One America Meeting With Religious Leaders."

Statement on Debt Reduction
March 9, 2000

Today we reached another historic landmark in our fiscal turnaround. For the first time in 70 years, the U.S. Treasury Department completed a debt buyback. This buyback of debt is a striking reminder of the extraordinary progress we have made in putting America's fiscal house in order. In the last 7 years, we moved from the largest deficit in history to the largest surplus in history.

America is now on track to pay down nearly $300 billion in debt by the end of this year and to be debt-free by 2013. In this new era of surpluses, these debt buybacks will help us continue to pay down the debt, save money for American taxpayers, and lift the burden of interest payments off our children and grandchildren.

Statement on Senate Action on Judicial Nominations
March 9, 2000

Today the Senate finally confirmed, after 4 years, Judge Richard Paez and, after 2 years, Marsha Berzon to the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit.

Both of these candidates bring extraordinary experience and diversity to the bench. Both received the American Bar Association's highest rating. Both were approved by solid bipartisan majorities today, but unfortunately both were forced to wait far too long to receive votes.

This week the Senate also confirmed Judge Julio Fuentes of New Jersey, who becomes the first Hispanic to serve on the Third Circuit. Judge Fuentes had to wait a year for his vote, but when it finally came, he was approved unanimously by a vote of 93 to 0.

I want to thank the Senate for moving this process forward. But I want to repeat that dozens of qualified judicial nominees still await confirmation. Meanwhile, caseloads rise and