

We're making great progress in one of our—one of the bottom areas that was heretofore relatively inaccessible. One of these days I'll take you down there. It's a beautiful place. It's a bodark grove—bodark tree is a native tree, real hard wood that grows these giant green, kind of apple-looking things. But I'll spend time doing that.

And then this afternoon—it gets dark here about 5:30 p.m., and so I'll probably watch a little University of Texas football tonight.

Q. What about the tree you planted yesterday?

The President. Tree plant, very good. My senior staff gave me a beautiful oak, 10-inch oak. And we planted her right outside the house. I haven't written my thank-you note yet, so I'll give them a verbal "Thanks for the tree." It is a beauty. And we planted about—I think we planted so far about 35 trees, live oaks and cedar elms here. And it's going to be a beautiful sight for when these trees—when they take off.

Did a little fishing yesterday, by the way. Not very successful. The water is cold; the fish are at the bottom. They're not biting very much. But just the fact that I was able to fish was a nice treat.

Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:58 a.m. outside the old residence at the Bush Ranch. In his remarks, he referred to President Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan; President Vicente Fox of Mexico; President Jorge Batlle of Uruguay; President Ricardo Lagos of Chile; President Fernando Henrique Cardoso of Brazil; Kenneth L. Lay, chairman and chief executive officer, Enron Corp.; Eugene Scalia, nominee to be Solicitor for the Department of Labor; and Secret Service Agent Walied Shater. Gen. Tommy R. Franks, USA, commander in chief, U.S. Central Command, referred to his wife, Cathy; and Hamid Karzai, Chairman, interim Grand Council of Afghanistan.

Statement on Signing the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2002 December 28, 2001

I have today signed into law S. 1438, the "National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2002." The Act authorizes the funding necessary to defend the United States and its interests around the globe. In particular, it provides the resources needed to continue the war against global terrorism, accelerate programs for defense against biological or chemical attacks, pursue an effective missile defense, properly support members of the Armed Forces and their families, and begin to transform our Armed Forces to meet the military requirements of the 21st century.

The Act provides important improvements in the quality of life for the members

of our Armed Forces, who have dedicated their lives to the defense of their fellow citizens. It provides for a substantial and well-deserved increase in basic pay, improved educational opportunities as an incentive to reenlist, and more resources to improve military housing. The legislation also addresses important needs of military families, such as improved job training and education opportunities for military spouses and access for home-schooled children of military families to facilities and programs of Department of Defense dependent schools.

The Act will assist greatly in the rebuilding and reshaping of the Armed Forces to

meet future challenges. In particular, it provides procurement authority for programs crucial to the projection of American military power in support of U.S. interests abroad, such as carrier-based strike aircraft, air superiority fighter aircraft, large-capacity cargo aircraft, and a fast attack submarine. The Act also authorizes funds to move forward with our program for an effective defense against ballistic missiles.

The legislation reflects my Administration's important initiative to establish a process for realignment and closure of unneeded military facilities. Such realignments and closures will allow the Government to use more effectively the taxpayer sources devoted to the national defense. As the Act requires, military value will be the primary consideration in recommending realignments and closures. Regrettably, the Act defers the start of the base closure and realignment process for several years, rather than providing for its immediate commencement to permit efficient restructuring promptly.

Section 1116 of the Act authorizes Federal agency employees to retain and make personal use of promotional items such as frequent flyer miles, upgrades, or access to carrier clubs or facilities received as a result of certain official travel. Agency regulations will ensure that, in connection with implementation of section 1116, employees fully observe applicable principles of ethics in Government and regulations that prevent unneeded or inefficient official travel.

The Act contains several provisions intended to improve the ability of members of the Armed Forces to exercise one of the most important rights that any citizen has—the right to vote. Section 1605 of the Act requires State Governors, in certain circumstances, to provide reports to the Secretary of Defense concerning the Secretary's recommendations on State voting laws, including what recommendations the Governor has made or will make to the State legislature on the Secretary's rec-

ommendations. Section 1605 shall be implemented in a manner consistent with proper regard for the role of the States, and their legislatures and Governors, in our Federal system.

Several provisions of the Act, including sections 525(c), 546, 705, and 3152 call for executive branch officials to submit to the Congress proposals for legislation. These provisions shall be implemented in a manner consistent with the President's constitutional authority to supervise the unitary executive branch and to recommend to the Congress such measures as the President judges necessary and expedient.

Section 1404 vests in the Secretary of Defense authority to appoint a chief operating officer for the Armed Forces Retirement Home, but purports to limit the qualifications of the pool of persons from whom the Secretary may select the appointee in a manner that rules out a large portion of those persons best qualified by experience and knowledge to fill the office. The Secretary shall implement section 1404 in a manner consistent with the Appointments Clause of the Constitution.

Under section 1002 of the Act, the Congress has stated that it incorporates a classified annex into the statute. That annex contains authorizations of appropriations for specified classified programs. My Administration discourages enactment of secret law as part of annual defense authorization acts and instead encourages appropriate use of classified annexes to committee reports and the joint statement of managers that accompanies the final legislation.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,

December 28, 2001.

NOTE: S. 1438, approved December 28, was assigned Public Law No. 107–107.