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Statement on Senate Confirmation of Tom Ridge as Secretary of Homeland Security
January 22, 2003

I applaud the Senate for acting quickly and in a strong, bipartisan manner to confirm the first Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security. With today's historic vote, the Senate has demonstrated our shared commitment to doing everything we can to secure our homeland. Secretary Ridge is an outstanding and dedicated public servant who understands my administration's top priority always will be the protection of the American people, and I look forward to continuing to work closely with him to fulfill this important responsibility.

Remarks at the Swearing-In Ceremony for Tom Ridge as Secretary of Homeland Security
January 24, 2003

The President. Good afternoon. Thank you all for coming. Welcome to the White House, and welcome to this historic moment. As of today, the law creating the United States Department of Homeland Security comes into effect. And now this Department has its first Secretary, Thomas Joseph Ridge.

Homeland Security becomes the 15th executive department of my Cabinet. It begins a vital mission in the defense of our country. We've learned that vast oceans no longer protect us from the dangers of a new era. This Government has a responsibility to confront the threat of terror wherever it is found.

And that is why we're taking the battle to America's enemies, disrupting their networks; we're destroying their camps. We've got them on the run, and we're going to keep them on the run.

And at home, we are taking every measure to protect the American people against a serious and ongoing threat. The Department of Homeland Security will lead a comprehensive and unified effort to defend this Nation. The Department will analyze threats, guard our borders and airports, safeguard critical infrastructure, and coordinate the response of our Nation to future emergencies.

Under the leadership of Tom Ridge, more than 170,000 dedicated Americans, dedicated professionals, will have the overriding mission of protecting their fellow Americans.

In October of 2001, when I established the office—the White House Office of Homeland Security, I knew immediately that Tom was the right man for the assignment. He's a decisive, clear-thinking executive who knows how to solve problems. He's a person of integrity and a person of good judgment. At the White House, he has done an outstanding job, and he's earned the gratitude of the American people.

This week he earned an unanimous vote of confirmation. And I want to thank the United States Senate for its swift action. This new Department will face many challenges in the year to come. The American people can be certain that the mission of homeland security will be carried out with focus and resolve, with the resources the task requires. And the American people can know as well that the Department is under

the command of a superb leader who has my confidence.

Congratulations, Tom, and thank you for serving our country.

Secretary Ridge. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:20 p.m. in the Cross Hall at the White House. The related Executive order of January 23 on actions in connection with the establishment of the Department of Homeland Security is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

The President's Radio Address
January 25, 2003

Good morning. This coming Tuesday, I will deliver the State of the Union Address to Congress and the American people. Our Nation faces many great challenges all at once. We will meet all of them with courage and steady purpose.

In 2003, we must work to strengthen our economy, improve access to affordable, high-quality health care for all our seniors, encourage compassion at home and abroad, and defend our Nation against the threats of a new era. The war on terror is an ongoing priority for our Nation. We will take every measure that is necessary to protect the American people from terrorist groups and outlaw regimes. The world depends on America's strength and purpose, and we will meet our responsibilities for peace.

Today I want to speak to you about a few key domestic priorities. When I address Congress, I will urge them to pass my plan to strengthen our economy and help more Americans find jobs. The tax relief already planned for later in this decade should be made effective this year, including income-tax reduction, marriage penalty relief, and an increase in the child tax credit. When Congress acts, I will direct the Treasury to return this money to taxpayers right away, which will provide immediate help to our economy.

We can also lay the foundation for future prosperity by encouraging investment and helping Americans to prepare for the new jobs a growing economy will bring. I will ask Congress to eliminate the unfair double taxation of dividends and raise the deduction limit for small businesses that invest in new machinery and equipment. And to help unemployed workers find a job as soon as possible, I propose new reemployment accounts. These accounts will assist with the cost of finding work, including training and child care and moving expenses, and provide a cash bonus to workers who find a job quickly.

Strengthening and improving Medicare is also a priority for my administration in the coming year. I will urge Congress to join me in keeping our commitment to America's seniors by working to modernize Medicare and include a prescription drug benefit to help seniors who are squeezed by rising drug prices.

As a prosperous nation, we have an obligation to help Americans who are struggling to build better lives for themselves. So I will propose new initiatives to bring the work of faith-based and community groups to the needs of our fellow citizens. All of these priorities will be reflected in the budget I submit to Congress in early February.

As we fund important priorities, however, we must also practice spending discipline in Washington. Spending restraint is important to economic growth and job creation. And it is critical to reducing the deficit caused by war and national emergency and