

Executive, or the performance of the Executive's constitutional duties. November 22, 2003.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,

NOTE: H.R. 2559, approved November 22, was assigned Public Law No. 108-132.

Remarks at the Thanksgiving Turkey Presentation Ceremony *November 24, 2003*

Thank you all. Welcome. Thanks for coming. Good morning, and welcome to the Rose Garden. In a moment you can come up and welcome our guest of honor, Stars the turkey. He looks pretty friendly. He actually looks well rested. You'd be well rested, too, if you had your own room in Hotel Washington here in Washington, DC. [*Laughter*] It sounds like Stars wants to give the speech.

I appreciate you joining me to give this turkey a Presidential pardon. Stars is a very special bird with a very special name. This year, for the first time, thousands of people voted on the White House web site to name the national turkey and the alternate turkey. "Stars" and "Stripes" beat out "Pumpkin" and "Cranberry." And it was a neck-to-neck race. [*Laughter*]

Under the official rules, the alternate turkey has an important role, not to be taken lightly. The rulebook states that an alternate turkey is chosen in case the national Thanksgiving turkey cannot fulfill his role in this ceremony. It's kind of like being the Vice President. [*Laughter*]

Our Nation's sense of gratitude is the source of great generosity of our people. Some of the boys and girls here today have done their part this year. Fifth graders from Flint Hill School collected the fixings and made sandwiches for people at the local homeless shelter. Through your compassion, you're showing the goodness of America, and we are really proud of you. Thanks for doing that.

I want to thank our Secretary of Agriculture for joining us today. Secretary Ann Veneman is doing a great job for our country. I want to thank Bob Wright, who's the chairman of the National Turkey Federation, for joining today. I appreciate Dr. Alice Johnson, who's the president. Thanks for coming, Alice.

Today marks a—and continues a long White House tradition. We're honoring the beginning of a holiday season. It speaks well for America that one of our most important holidays is set aside for sharing and appreciating our blessings. Our Nation was founded by people of great accomplishment, great courage, and great humility. They believed not only in themselves but also in the goodness of God's wisdom and God's plan for every life. This American quality has endured throughout the generations. Americans are, at our best, are a reverent and a grateful people. Even in times of hardship, we see all around us gifts to be thankful for, our families and friends, the beautiful land we call home, and the freedom granted to us all.

This year, as in other times in our history, we can be especially grateful for the courage and faithfulness of those who defend us. Every man and woman who wears our country's uniform is a volunteer, facing hardships and sometimes peril, because they believe in this country and our cause. We're thinking of them and their families. We think of the military families that have suffered loss. We can be grateful to live in a country that has produced such good

and brave people who stand between us and the dangers of the world.

On this holiday, we're reminded of our blessings. We're reminded of our responsibilities. Our Nation's sense of gratitude is the source of the great generosity and compassion of our people.

And now it's time to grant a little compassion to our guest of honor. I'm not sure why any turkey would want to reside at a place called Frying Pan Park. [Laughter] Maybe they explained the alternatives to him. [Laughter] In any case, off he goes.

By virtue of the Presidential pardon, Stars will live out his days there at Kidwell Farm in Virginia. And so he won't be alone, I hereby pardon Stripes as well.

Happy Thanksgiving to you. May God bless you and your families. Thanks for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:25 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. The Thanksgiving Day proclamation of November 21 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks on Signing the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2004 in Arlington, Virginia

November 24, 2003

Thank you for the warm welcome, and good morning. I'm honored to be here at the Pentagon with the men and women who are defending America and who are fighting the war on terror. America is counting on your skill and courage.

People in our military depend upon the support of the Congress and the President and the administration. Today, with the National Defense Authorization Act, our Government is meeting its obligations. We're sending a clear message: In a time of conflict and challenge, America stands with the United States military.

Mr. Secretary, you are doing a fantastic job for America. You lead with courage; you lead with clear vision; and you lead with strength. I appreciate General Dick Myers and the members of the Joint Chiefs who are with us. Thank you for your great service to our country. I want to thank the ranking enlisted personnel who are with us today, Sergeant Major John Estrada and Master Chief Petty Officer Terry Scott. I appreciate you all being up here as well. Thank you for your fine service. I want to thank the Department of Defense personnel who are with us today. Thank you

for working with the Secretary and Deputy Secretary Wolfowitz and others for making sure the Pentagon does its job and does its job well.

I want to thank the Members of Congress who are here. I particularly want to single out Chairman Warner and Chairman Hunter: John Warner of Virginia, United States Senate; Duncan Hunter of California, the House of Representatives. I want to thank both of you for working on this important piece of legislation, for solving issues inside the bill, and getting a good bill to this desk. Thank you—[inaudible].

I also thank Senator Carl Levin, who's the ranking member, Senator Susan Collins from Maine, and Congressman Tom Davis for joining us on this stage and for their leadership in this important piece of legislation. I want to thank the other Members of the United States Senate and the House of Representatives who have joined us. Thank you for supporting this piece of legislation.

It's an important signal we're sending, because, you see, the war on terror is different than any war America has ever fought. Our enemies seek to inflict mass