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Statement on Congressional Passage of Legislation To Provide Funding for the United States Military
July 22, 2004

My most solemn duty as President is to protect the lives of the American people, and I have worked consistently for the largest defense buildup in a generation. America continues to be at war, and the legislation passed today by the Congress delivers the funding necessary to ensure that our troops are the best paid, the best equipped, and the best trained in the world.

I also commend the Congress for continuing to provide the resources necessary to support the critical missions of our troops in Afghanistan and Iraq. As I have said repeatedly, our troops will have what they need to do their job, and I am pleased that a bipartisan majority in the Congress continues to stand with me to support our military.

I look forward to signing this legislation into law.

Remarks to the National Urban League Conference in Detroit, Michigan
July 23, 2004

The President. Thanks for the warm introduction. It's really good to be here. You know, Marc, you're right, the National Urban League is a vital and important part of the American scene. And I think the reason why is, not only is the mission important but the people involved in the Urban League are dignified, decent American citizens. And I am honored to be in your presence.

I see some friends like Willard, who is—I don't know if you remember, Willard, but we were on the porch of the Governor's mansion in Texas. I'm not saying you drank all my beer, but—[*laughter*]. Never mind. [*Laughter*] That's unfair. [*Laughter*] But thanks for having me.

Marc, I appreciate your leadership. I've had the opportunity to work with Marc. I look forward to continue working with Marc. He's a good man. He cares deeply about the country, the people in our country. He is—he has had a lot of experience. He has, after all, been a mayor. It's a heck of a lot tougher job than being President. After all, you've got to fill the potholes—[*laughter*]—and empty the garbage. And he did a fine job as mayor. He's doing a fine job for this very important organization.

Speaking about mayors, the mayor of Detroit was here. He's cutting a ribbon, which most mayors do. He's a fabulous mayor, by the way. He's standing a little taller, as if he needed to, because the Detroit Pistons are now the NBA champs. I told him, I said—I asked Kwame if he took credit for it. He said, "Of course." [*Laughter*]

I appreciate so very much Mike Critelli, who is the chairman. Thank you, Mr.—Mike, it's great to see you again. And Charles Collins, senior—the vice chairman—these are distinguished gentlemen who are helping to lead a very distinguished board of directors. It was my honor to meet with members of the board before I came out here today. And I appreciate your service to our country.

Rick, thank you very much. Rick Wagoner is the CEO of General Motors,

who is sponsoring this conference. I appreciate you doing that. It's an important conference, and corporate America needs to stand up and help organizations that are out to help other people, and you've done so. And I know people here appreciate that.

I appreciate Reverend Ernest Ferrell's blessings. They asked me before the speech whether or not I would object to a prayer. I said, "Absolutely not." All of us need prayer, and I appreciate that.

And I appreciate Reverend Jesse Jackson. Thanks for coming, again.

And it's hard to run for office. Isn't it, Al? [*Laughter*] Al Sharpton is with us. But I appreciate you putting your hat in the ring. [*Laughter*] It's not an easy thing. It looks easy.

Democratic Presidential candidate Rev. Al Sharpton. It's not over.

The President. There you go. It's not over. [*Laughter*] Just don't declare right now. [*Laughter*] Welcome. Glad you're here.

Thank you all for coming.

The thing I like about the National Urban League is you believe in the future of the African American community. You've got this great faith that the future is going to be better, and I share that. That's what I'm here to talk about. I believe the same thing. I believe this country can and will be a place of opportunity and hope for every single citizen. It's not a given; there's work to be done. But it's a goal, and it's an important goal.

I don't care what party you're in, what city you live in, or what State you're from, the goal has got to be—America has got to be an hospitable, hopeful place for every single citizen. That's what I believe. That's kind of the heart of what they call compassionate conservatism, that the American experience must be alive and viable for everyone and that Government has a role to help people have the tools so they can help themselves. See, I believe in the human spirit; I believe if people have the opportunity and the ability, they will achieve their God-given talents. That's what I believe. And I think that's a proper role for the Federal Government, to help people.

The last 3½ years, we've worked hard on that. We've worked hard to make opportunity available and prosperity real and justice not a word. And I'm here to tell you, we're making good progress.

Progress for African Americans and all Americans require a healthy, growing economy. It's hard to realize dreams if you're in a recession; it's hard to realize dreams if jobs aren't being created; it's hard to realize dreams if the entrepreneurial spirit is flat, at best, and that's not the case today.

It says a lot about our country that we've recovered from a recession. Remember, the recession was started before September the 11th—as a matter of fact, right as I came to office. The stock market had been declining for 9 months. In other words, the indications weren't all that viable for the economy.

And then we got hit, and the attacks hurt. It hurt our psyche. It hurt our economy. It hurt the ability to find work.

And then we uncovered the fact that some of our citizens forgot what it meant to be a responsible citizen. See, we had some CEOs in corporate America that didn't tell the truth to their shareholders and their employees. That also hurt the economy. It took confidence away from a system that requires confidence. We acted. It should be clear now to all Americans that we're not going to tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America. We expect the high standard, and there will be enforcement of law to enforce that standard.

So the economy went through a lot. But we acted. See, I happen to believe if people have more of their own money in their pocket, they're going to spend, save, or invest, and when they do, that revitalizes economic growth and entrepreneurship. That's what the tax cuts were all about. That's why we raised the child credit. If you happen to have a 2-year-old son like Marc does, it enables you to be—have more

money in your pocket. We reduced the marriage penalty. What kind of Tax Code is it, by the way, that penalizes marriage? We ought to be encouraging marriage in the United States of America.

We reduced the 10-percent bracket; we reduced taxes on everybody. I think that's the fair way to do things. And as a result, the economy is growing. The economy, since last summer, has been growing at the fastest rate in nearly 20 years. That's the truth, and that's positive news. If people are looking for work, you've got to have an economy which is vibrant and growing.

And that's the case. We've added 1.5 million new jobs since August. There's more work to do, of course. Job opportunity isn't in every neighborhood and every corner of the country; I fully recognize that. But the economy today is strong, and it's growing stronger. And we've always got to remember why. I mean, inherent in the—in new job creation is small businesses. That's the most important part of new job creation. See, most new jobs are created by the small-business owners of America. And therefore, policy has got to recognize that. That's why we've got to have fair—a fair legal system that doesn't—these frivolous lawsuits make it awfully difficult for a small-business owner to thrive.

We've got to have affordable health care. We must have trade policy that enables small businesses to sell products overseas, that says we're going to level the playing field. Listen, we can compete with anybody, anyplace, anywhere if the rules are fair, which is precisely what this administration is doing. They need less regulation on small businesses.

But remember about the tax policy in terms of small businesses. Most small businesses pay tax at the individual income-tax rate. See, that's reality. Ask your friends and neighbors who are entrepreneurs. They will tell you they're either a sole proprietorship or a Subchapter S corporation, which means they pay tax at the individual income-tax rate. And so when you cut the individual income taxes, you're really helping small-business owners. It's an entrepreneur—we're stimulating growth, and the small-business sector of America today is alive and well. And more minorities are owning their own small businesses, and that's really good for the future of the country.

See, if you own something, you have a vital stake in the future of America. This administration promotes what I call the ownership society. When people tell me statistics, they say more people are owning their own small businesses and a lot of minorities are owning their own small businesses. That's really good news for the future of the country. It also happens to be really good news for the economy. The more small businesses there are, the more likely it is people are going to find work.

And there's more we can do to help people start their own businesses. The SBA has got a vital role—that's the Small Business Administration. Loans to African Americans were up by 75 percent from last year. That's positive. In other words, somebody said, "I need some help." They've come to the Federal Government. They said, "I've got an idea. I want to start my own business. I want to say, 'I'm the owner.' " And the Government says, "We want to help you." It's a legitimate role, to encourage ownership.

And that's what's happening right now in our society. We've rewarded $6 billion in new markets tax credits. Those are important. They promote economic and community development in low-income areas. And when you do that, the spinoff is more ownership of businesses. When there's a vitality in a neighborhood that has been—that needed help, new businesses spring up. That's all part of a vital tomorrow. Our plan is to help people help themselves, is to create an environment where the entrepreneur can flourish.

Marc, I read your comments, and the National Urban League is a partner in the $127 million reward we announced in May

this year just to do that, to create an environment where people have a chance to realize their dreams by owning their own business.

An interesting project that's going on inside inner cities, which makes life better but also helps the entrepreneurial spirit, is the cleanup of brownfields. Since I've come to office, we've cleaned up more than 1,000 brownfields. Those are old industrial sites which have been abandoned. They're not only eyesores; they're blights in the communities. They've been cleaned up. They're now viable pieces of property. Businesses are springing up—businesses around—businesses are springing up. An integral part of stimulating economic growth and activity to give people a chance to start and own their own company is wise policy in the inner city, such as brownfields cleanup policy. We've been aggressive with brownfields just like we have with empowerment zones.

What I'm telling you is, the role of Government is to create an environment where people from all walks of life have a chance to realize their dream. And that's precisely what's taking place in America. And the economy is better for it, and more people are finding work. And we must not go backward to the days of high taxes, high spending, more regulation, and more lawsuits if we expect more people to own their own business.

Secondly, we've got work to do to encourage and train a new generation of entrepreneurs. And that's why I'm pleased to announce today that we're joining with the Urban League to expand minority businessownership. It's an interesting project. You can't say to somebody, "You must be an entrepreneur." You can't say that. But you can say, "If you want to start your own business, we'll help you." And I want to thank Marc's leadership on this and the board's leadership in understanding the need to work with the Federal Government to set up what they call one-stop centers where minority enterprise can receive business training. It's one thing to say, "Let's go be an entrepreneur." But if you're not certain how to do it, people need help. You may have a great idea, but you're not sure how to keep the books. It's a practical application of Federal assets to help people understand how to own and run their own business. You can develop contacts there. You get advice on financing. It's practical ways to help people realize their dreams, is what we're talking about here.

The Business Roundtable, I'm pleased to say—those are the CEOs of big corporate America—the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation—he used to be the owner of the Kansas City Royals; he's a fine guy from Missouri—will support the work of the centers. And so, in other words, it's a collaborate effort. The Federal Government, the Urban League, and these other citizens are coming together and saying, "We're going to set up these centers to help people help themselves."

Progress for African Americans and progress for all Americans requires good schools. The system tended to shuffle kids through, and you know what I'm talking about. You know, the "hard-to-educate" were labeled that, and they just moved through; that's what was happening. We can play like it wasn't happening. It was happening. That's what you get when you get low expectations. It's what I call the soft bigotry of low expectations.

When I first came to the Urban League, I vowed to change that attitude in Washington. It was one of the things I said. I said, "Give me a chance to work the education system." And we have. We passed good law. Listen, the Government has got a funding responsibility. We have. We've increased Federal funding for K through 12 by 49 percent from 2001. I label that significant.

But you know what else has changed? For the first time, the Federal Government is asking the question, "Can our children actually read?" And see, I feel comfortable asking that question, because I believe

every child can read. You don't ask that question if you believe certain children cannot read; you say, "Okay, fine, shuffle them through"—the consequences of which, when people get out of high school, they're illiterate, they're lost, they're frustrated. They don't have a chance to realize the great promise of the country. We're changing that attitude in public schools.

We say we're going to have local control of schools. I really don't want the Federal Government trying to run the school systems of America. I think that would be cumbersome, too bureaucratic, stifling. It wouldn't encourage innovation; it wouldn't say to the school boards, "Be imaginative and strong and smart."

We stand with our teachers. But we're going to measure now in America, because we want to know. Our goal is for every child to be reading at grade level by the third grade, because we believe every child can do that. And now we want us to show—just please show us whether or not it's—whether or not you're achieving the objective. Because every child matters, see. If you don't measure, you do not know. If you don't take time to determine whether or not a child has got the skills necessary to succeed in America, you'll never find out until it's too late.

The philosophy of the No Child Left Behind Act says every child can learn, we expect every child to learn, and we expect you to show us whether or not every child is learning.

And it's paying off. The test scores, the accountability systems are beginning to show that African American fourth graders are catching up. There is an education gap in America, and so long as there is an education gap, we must be relentless in our pursuit for excellence.

By the way, the law says that if—we're going to detect problems early, before they're too late, and correct them; that's why we started measuring early. And there's money in the budgets that say, "If you need extra help, we'll help correct them." It says to parents that if the schools continue to fail, if they won't adjust, if a child is trapped in mediocrity, parents have different choices to make. See, this is all part of making sure we focus on the child, not the process, so no child in America is left behind.

And there's more to do. I'm working with Congress, hopefully over the next 4 years, for intensive reading intervention programs. It's one thing to start early, but there's a—you can imagine there's a group of kids that need to be saved now, before it's too late—eighth and ninth grade intervention programs. I know in Florida there's some great intervention programs. Willard, you'll probably take credit for them, but they—[*laughter*]—they're beginning to work well. They're good. It says we're not going to quit on any child. We're going to be involved.

We need to make sure a high school diploma means something. When a kid comes out of high school, an employer or community college—the college says that means something when they hold up a high school diploma.

And so we've got to make sure we continue to work not only in the early grades but in the later grades in public education so that people can say, "I've got something that means something." It's a certification for the ability to read, write, add, and subtract, to understand the sciences and maths as well. That's possible, see. You've got to think it's possible in the first place; otherwise, you wouldn't insist upon it.

Plus, I want to make sure the community college system is vibrant. I put money aside and will continue to do so for the community colleges. They're available, affordable. They're accessible. They're good things. They can change their curriculum to meet the needs of a local community. They actually train people for jobs which exist. They're good opportunities for kids coming out of high school. Look, education is the future of the country. And that's why, under my administration, we've increased

the number of men and women who will be receiving Pell grants to nearly one million, and why, under my budget, funding for historically black colleges is at an alltime high. It's what I said I would do when I was running for President, see. I told people I'd do that, and I've done it. And the country is better off for it, because education is the cornerstone of a hopeful tomorrow.

I was proud to support Mayor Tony Williams. He's my Mayor right now. I've got one mayor in Crawford and one mayor in Washington. [*Laughter*] Tony is the Mayor of Washington. He's a very good Mayor, by the way. He's a good man. Maybe you know him. But he and I—I work with Tony. And I signed a bill into law creating taxpayer-sponsored scholarships for students in Washington, DC. And let me tell you why. I believe this: If school choice is good for the wealthy, it's good enough for disadvantaged children in America. This is a good piece of legislation. It's a good piece of legislation which is going to help improve education for all children in the Nation's Capital.

Progress for African Americans and all Americans depends on more citizens living the dream of owning their own home. There's nothing better than somebody saying, "Welcome to my house. I'm putting out the welcome mat in my piece of property." And this has been a focus of this administration, because we want people owning their own home. It's a vital part of the American experience, isn't it.

So we're providing downpayment assistance, good counseling. Listen, people walk in, first-time home buyers, and they take a look at the contracts and the print's about that big, and they say forget it, you know? They get driven away by the complexity of the situation. Sometimes they get skinned by loan sharks, you know? And we're doing everything we can to make sure the loan application process is understandable and fair and open. We're proposing tax credits to encourage the building of more affordable housing, particularly in inner-city America. In other words, we want there to be a greater supply of homes.

Let me tell you something hopeful about the country. For the first time in our history, a majority of families and minority groups own their own homes. We're making progress. People are saying, "This is my home." And we must continue the progress we're making.

Progress for African Americans and all Americans depends on safe streets. Safe streets are important for any community, particularly important for communities in which parents feel like they've got to keep their kids locked in.

And so we're making progress there. We've increased Federal prosecutors. And I want to tell you something: Federal gun law prosecutions are up by 68 percent in the last 3 years. See, it's one thing to, you know, say we're going to pass laws. The thing is, you've got to enforce the law. If you're going to want safe streets, you've got to do a good job of enforcing the laws on the books, which is precisely what we're doing. And as a result, violent crime in America is down by 21 percent during my administration. That's positive for people. Property crime is down 13 percent.

But there's more than just fighting crime. We need to help the 600,000 men and women who are being released from prison each year. I went to the Congress in my State of the Union; I talked about a prison reentry program. I said, "Put some money up to help these souls come out. Let's make sure we're the country of the second chance. Let's make sure people have got a chance to get an education and a job. Let's make sure there's—if need be, let's make sure there's church families available to welcome a person back in community." And so this prison reentry program is a vital part of making sure America is a safe country.

Progress for this country, for African Americans and all Americans, depends on

the full protection of civil rights and equality before the law. My administration and its Justice Department has vigorously enforced the civil rights laws. The Civil Rights Division has opened a Federal investigation into the murder of Emmett Till. I'm the first President of the United States to ban racial profiling in Federal law enforcement. And to serve the cause of justice on the bench, the Federal bench, I have nominated outstanding men and women to the courts, including 6 superbly qualified African Americans for the courts of appeal and 11 for district courts.

Progress for African Americans and for all Americans depends on driving the drugs out of our neighborhoods. We put forth a comprehensive approach. We're doing everything we can to interdict drugs so they don't make it into the country in the first place. We have encouraged faith-based programs to help change hearts so people change habits. We've got money directed at the people who need the most help, which are the addicts of America—an intensive, focused, real effort to save lives.

But we're also working to reduce demand in the country. It's a community effort. We're bringing together all aspects of the community organizations to say to our youngsters, "Don't use those drugs." And we're making progress. From 2001 to 2003, youth drug use has declined by 11 percent. We're headed in the right direction. We're saying to our kids, "Be responsible with your bodies, be responsible with your behavior, and you have a chance to understand the great promise of America." It's a vital effort. This isn't a Republican cause or a Democrat cause. This is a community cause; this is an American cause; and it's important to work together.

Progress for all our citizens, including African Americans, depends on the spirit of compassion for others. Government can hand out money, but it cannot put hope in a person's heart or a sense of purpose in a person's lives. And we'll have the traditional programs of help, the safety nets. They're there. And that's an important part of Federal funding. But I strongly believe the Federal Government must welcome programs of faith into the compassionate delivery of help and service to those who hurt.

My community- and faith-based initiative recognizes the true strength of this country is in the hearts and souls of our citizens; that we recognize that oftentimes there's—a change of heart will change behavior, and governments can't change hearts. That changes when somebody who has heard a universal call to love a neighbor puts their arm around somebody who hurts and says, "I love you brother. I love you sister. What can I do to help you on your walk so your life is improved?" This community- and faith-based initiative is a vital part of this administration's program to help save lives. We've opened up Federal grants to the faith community for the first time. I shouldn't say "for the first time"—most vigorously, let me put it to you that way.

And so now we've had over a billion dollars go out the door to faith-based programs, programs all aimed at serving America by saving lives. And it makes sense. It just makes sense. It makes sense to tap into the great strength and spirit of the country.

The Associated Black Charities of Baltimore—ask them what it's like to be a partner with the Federal Government; or the Black Ministerial Alliance in Boston or the Metro Denver Black Church Initiative. These are all initiatives, all aimed at saying to somebody, "The future is better for you. Somebody loves you. We care, and we're going to help you. We're going to help mentor you. We'll save you from drugs and alcohol. We'll do everything in our power to save America one soul at a time."

We've done a lot in 3½ years. I ask you to look at the record of accomplishment. And I didn't do this alone. I've got a good administration, really good people. It's a diverse Cabinet. It's a Cabinet full of strong people. It's a Cabinet who are

serving our country first, people like Rod Paige. You've heard my talk about education. I hope you have a sense of my passion to make sure we get it right. I understand the importance of schools in America. I picked a good man to serve as the head of the Education Department, Rod Paige. He was—[*applause*].

You heard me talk about owning your own home; it's a vital part of this future of this country. Alphonso Jackson is the head of the Housing and Urban Development. Kay James runs the Office of Personnel Management. You know, the Government owns a lot of property. Steve Perry is the head of the GSA.

We've got a diverse cabinet, diverse administration, people who serve our Nation with dignity. You know, when it comes time to money, Alan Greenspan is a smart guy; so is the Vice Chairman, Roger Ferguson, of the Federal Reserve. Chairman of the FCC, the Federal Communications Commission, Michael Powell—in other words, what I'm telling you is I feel I have an obligation to reach out to people from all walks of life. I have met that obligation, and the Government is better for it.

And when it comes to national security, thankfully I've had a good team. We've had some big challenges in this country. And I've got a strong foreign policy, because the architects of that policy are people like Condi Rice and Colin Powell. These are good people. I've seen them under incredible pressure. I know their steadiness and their clear vision.

See, our most solemn duty is to protect the American people. That's our most solemn duty. It's a duty brought upon us not at our asking, because we were attacked unmercifully by people who hate what we stand for. They hate the fact that we can have free dialog just like this. They hate the fact that there's open discourse. They hate the fact that we're a free society where people can worship any way they see fit. They hate the idea that we welcome people who worship God and we welcome people who don't worship God. They can't stand the thought that we're a society that says if you choose to worship, you're equally American if you're a Christian, Jew, or Muslim.

And so they attacked us. And we have a duty, all of us have a duty, to respond. This is an American effort to protect ourselves. And Colin Powell and Condi Rice have provided valuable, valuable advice and counsel during these tough times.

And we're making progress. Listen, we're trying to do everything we can to protect our homeland. There's people from all walks of life working hard to protect the American people. There's no such thing as perfect security. I tell people we've got to be right 100 percent of the time; those who want to cause us harm have to be right once. But there's a lot of people working. It doesn't matter what your party is, they're working hard to protect the American people. And we've got a lot of people overseas working to protect us too, by bringing justice to the enemies before they strike again.

Our foreign policy is tough, and it's compassionate. It's tough, and we have to be tough. It's compassionate. We liberated over 50 million people who were brutalized by tyrants. We're proud to lead the armies of liberation. We're standing true to this great American ideal that freedom is the Almighty God's gift to each man and woman in this world.

We've begun the largest initiative ever to combat global AIDS. America is in the lead on dealing with the pandemic that ravages the continent of Africa. We're taking the lead because we're a compassionate nation. We feed more of the hungry than any nation on the face of the Earth. We're a compassionate nation.

We're also a wise nation when it comes to smart policy. I signed the African Growth and Opportunity Acceleration Act of 2004. It recognizes that the best way to help lift people out of poverty is to

trade; it's through the free flow of commerce. And it's working on the—this policy is working on the continent of Africa.

Problems come to our desk because of our influence in the world. We've dealt with Liberia. We're now dealing with the Sudan. The United States is working closely with the United Nations. As a matter of fact, the Secretary of State was recently with Kofi Annan, talking about this very subject. We're working closely with the African Union to bring relief to the suffering people in that region. We've made our position very clear to the Sudanese Government: They must stop the Janjaweed violence. They must provide access for humanitarian relief to the people who suffer.

Ours is a solid record of accomplishment. And that's why I've come to talk about compassionate conservatism and what I envision for the future. I'm here for another reason. I'm here to ask for your vote.

No, I know. I know—I know. The Republican party has got a lot of work to do. I understand that. [*Laughter*] You didn't need to nod your head that hard, Jesse. [*Laughter*]

Do you remember a guy named Charlie Gaines? Somebody gave me a quote he said, which I think kind of describes, maybe, the environment we're in today. I think he's a friend of Jesse's. He said, "Blacks are gagging on the donkey but not yet ready to swallow the elephant." [*Laughter*]

Now that was said a while ago. [*Laughter*] I believe you've got to earn the vote and seek it. I think you've got to go to people and say, "This is my heart. This is what I believe, and I'd like your help." And as I do, I'm going to ask African American voters to consider some questions.

Does the Democrat Party take African American voters for granted? It's a fair question. I know plenty of politicians assume they have your vote. But do they earn it, and do they deserve it? Is it a good thing for the African American community to be represented mainly by one political party? That's a legitimate question. How is it possible to gain political leverage if the party is never forced to compete? Have the traditional solutions of the Democrat Party truly served the African American community?

That's what I hope people ask when they go to the community centers and places, as we all should do our duty and vote. People need to be asking these very serious questions.

Does blocking the Faith-Based Initiative help neighborhoods where the only social service provider could be a church? Does the status quo in education really, really help the children of this country? Does class warfare—has class warfare or higher taxes ever created decent jobs in the inner city? Are you satisfied with the same answers on crime, excuses for drugs, and blindness to the problem of the family?

Those are legitimate questions that I hope people ask as this election approaches. I'd like to hear those questions debated on talk radio. I'd like it debated in community centers, in the coffee shops. It's worthy of this country for this debate to go forward and these questions to be asked and answered.

I'm here to say that there is an alternative this year. There is an alternative that has had a record that is easy to see. If you dream of starting a small business and building a nest egg and passing something of value to your children, take a look at my agenda. If you believe schools should meet high standards instead of making excuses, take a look at my agenda. If you believe the institutions of marriage and family are worth defending and need defending today, take a look at my agenda.

If you believe in building a culture of life in America, take a look at my agenda. If you believe in a tireless fight against crime and drugs, take a look at this agenda. If you believe that our men and women

in uniform should be respected and supported 100 percent of the time, take a look at my agenda.

If you're struggling to get into the middle class and you feel like you're paying plenty of taxes, take a look at my agenda. If you're a small-business owner who is trying to expand your job base and are worried about excessive lawsuits, increasing taxes, and over-regulation, take a look at this agenda.

And finally, if you believe in the power of faith and compassion to defeat violence and despair and hopelessness, I hope you take a look at where I stand.

You see, I believe in my heart that the Republican Party, the party of Lincoln and Frederick Douglass, is not complete without the perspective and support and contribution of African Americans.

And I believe in my heart that the policies and actions of this administration, policies that empower individuals and help communities, that lift up free enterprise and respect and honor the family, those policies are good for the Nation as a whole. That's what I believe. And I'm here to thank you for giving me a chance to come and express those beliefs.

I'm proud to be with an organization that does so good—so much good for the American people. I'm honored that your chairman would extend an invitation to me. Thanks for coming. And may God bless you, and may God continue to bless the country.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:35 a.m. at the Detroit Marriott Renaissance Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Marc H. Morial, president and chief executive officer, National Urban League; Michael J. Critelli, chairman, and Charles M. Collins, senior vice chairman, National Urban League Board of Trustees; Mayor Kwame M. Kilpatrick of Detroit, MI; Rev. Jesse L. Jackson, Sr., founder and president, Rainbow/PUSH Coalition; and Secretary-General Kofi Annan of the United Nations.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting the Executive Order Blocking Property of Certain Persons and Prohibiting the Importation of Certain Goods From Liberia

July 23, 2004

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Consistent with subsection 204(b) of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, 50 U.S.C. 1703(b) (IEEPA), I hereby report that I have issued an Executive Order (the "order") in which, in view of United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1521 of December 22, 2003, and 1532 of March 12, 2004, I declared a national emergency with respect to the threat to the foreign policy of the United States constituted by certain actions, policies, and circumstances with respect to Liberia. These actions, policies, and circumstances include the undermining of Liberia's transition to democracy and the orderly development of its political, administrative, and economic institutions and resources by former Liberian President Charles Taylor and other persons, in particular their unlawful depletion of Liberian resources and their removal from Liberia and secreting of Liberian funds and property. These actions, policies, and circumstances also include the lack of universal implementation throughout Liberia of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed on August 18, 2003, and the related ceasefire. Finally, these actions, policies, and circumstances include the link between the illicit trade in round logs and timber products and the proliferation of