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NOTE: S. 2781, approved December 23, was assigned Public Law No. 108–497.

## Message on the Observance of Christmas 2004
*December 23, 2004*

For 2,000 years, Christmas has proclaimed a message of hope: the patient hope of men and women across centuries who listened to the words of prophets and lived in joyful expectation; the hope of Mary, who welcomed God's plan with great faith; and the hope of wise men, who set out on a long journey guided only by a slender promise traced in the stars. Christmas reminds us that the grandest purposes of God can be found in the humblest places. And it gives us hope that all the love and gifts that come to us in this life are the signs and symbols of an even greater love and gift that came on a holy night.

The Christmas season fills our hearts with gratitude for the many blessings in our lives. With those blessings comes a responsibility to reach out to others. Many of our fellow Americans still suffer from the effects of illness or poverty. Others fight cruel addictions, cope with division in their families, or grieve the loss of a loved one. Christmastime reminds each of us that we have a duty to love our neighbor just as we would like to be loved ourselves. By volunteering our time and talents where they are needed most, we help heal the sick, comfort those who suffer, and bring hope to those who despair.

During the holidays, we also keep in our thoughts and prayers the men and women of our Armed Forces—especially those far from home, separated from family and friends by the call of duty. In Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere, these courageous Americans are fighting the enemies of freedom and protecting our country from danger. By bringing liberty to the oppressed, our troops are defending the freedom and security of us all. They and their families are making many sacrifices for our Nation, and all Americans are deeply grateful.

Laura joins me in wishing all Americans a Merry Christmas.

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this message.

## Message on the Observance of Kwanzaa 2004
*December 23, 2004*

I send greetings to those observing Kwanzaa.

During Kwanzaa, millions of African Americans and people of African descent gather to celebrate their heritage and ancestry. Kwanzaa celebrations provide an opportunity to focus on the importance of family, community, and history, and to reflect on the Nguzo Saba or seven principles of African culture. These principles emphasize unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith.

Kwanzaa strengthens the ties that bind communities across America and around the world and reflects the great promise and diversity of America.