

Message on the Observance of New Year's Day, 2006

December 30, 2005

The New Year is a time of hope as we reflect on the past and prepare for the future.

The great strength of our Nation lies in the hearts and souls of the American people. This past year, Americans responded with an outpouring of compassion to help the people of the Gulf Coast region recover from one of the most devastating natural disasters in our Nation's history. We remember the victims of the past year's hurricanes and give thanks for the millions of people who opened their hearts, homes, and communities to those in need.

In the past year, we continued our work to spread freedom and peace. In 2005, Iraqis three times exercised their right to vote in free elections, and the Afghan people conducted successful parliamentary elections. In the coming year, America will continue to stand beside these young democracies and lay the foundation of peace for our children and grandchildren.

We appreciate the brave men and women in uniform who protect our country and advance freedom around the world. We are grateful to their families for their support and sacrifice, and we pray for all those who have lost loved ones in freedom's cause. Our Nation will always remember the heroes who have given their lives to protect us all.

As we celebrate the New Year, we give thanks to God for His blessings and ask for His guidance. We look with hope to the year ahead and the many new opportunities the future will bring.

Laura and I send our best wishes for a happy New Year. May God bless you, and may God continue to bless America.

GEORGE W. BUSH

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

The President's Radio Address

December 31, 2005

Good morning. Two thousand five has been a year of strong progress toward a freer, more peaceful world and a more prosperous America. This year we watched the Iraqi people defy the terrorists and suicide bombers and hold three successful elections, voting to choose the only constitutional, democratic government in the Arab world. We also saw the people of Afghanistan elect a democratic Parliament in a nation that only a few years ago was ruled by the Taliban.

These are amazing achievements in the history of liberty. As freedom and democracy take hold in a troubled region, we

are making the American people safer here at home and laying the foundation of peace for future generations.

The United States has a vital interest in the success of a free Iraq, so in the year ahead, we will continue to pursue the comprehensive strategy for victory that I have discussed with you in recent weeks. This strategy has security, political, and economic elements. First, our coalition is staying on the offense, finding and clearing the enemy out of Iraqi cities, towns, and villages, transferring more control to Iraqi units, and building up the Iraqi security forces so they can increasingly lead the

fight to secure their country. Second, we are helping Iraqis build the political institutions of an inclusive, unified, and lasting democracy. And third, our coalition is overcoming earlier setbacks and moving forward with a reconstruction plan to rebuild Iraq's economy and infrastructure. As we help Iraq build a peaceful and stable democracy, the United States will gain an ally in the war on terror, inspire reformers across the Middle East, and make the American people more secure.

During 2005, thanks to our tax relief, spending restraint, and the hard work of the American people, our economy remained the envy of the world. Our economy has been growing strongly for more than 2 years, and has added nearly 4½ million jobs since May of 2003. More Americans own their homes than at any time in our Nation's history. Inflation is low. Productivity is high, and small businesses are flourishing. Real disposable income is up. Consumers are confident, and early reports suggest good retail sales this holiday season.

To keep our economy moving forward, we must continue to pursue sound policies in Washington and be wise with taxpayers' money. We made real progress this year in restraining Government spending. Last February, I submitted to Congress the most disciplined budget proposal since Ronald Reagan was President. Working with the Congress, we ended or reduced about 90 lower priority or poorly performing Government programs, cut nonsecurity discretionary spending, and kept overall discretionary spending growth below the rate of inflation. We have now cut the rate of growth in nonsecurity discretionary spending each year I have been in office.

Before their holiday recess, both the House and the Senate also voted to cut mandatory spending by nearly \$40 billion.

This will be the first reduction of entitlement spending in nearly a decade. By being responsible with the taxpayers' money, we are funding our Nation's priorities, while staying on track to cut the deficit in half by 2009.

In the new year, we must also make permanent the tax relief that has kept our economy growing. We will work to expand free and fair trade, so America's farmers, workers, and businesses can enjoy the opportunities the global economy offers. We'll build on the progress we've made with this year's energy bill, so our Nation will be less dependent on foreign sources of energy. We will continue to promote an ownership society in which people have more control over their retirement and health care. We'll continue to improve education and job training programs, so our citizens have the skills necessary to compete and succeed in the 21st century. And we will show the compassionate heart of our Nation and provide the people of the gulf coast the help they need to rebuild after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

In 2005, America grew in prosperity, advanced the cause of freedom and peace, and enhanced our security. Our duties continue in the new year, and I'm confident that our Nation will meet the challenges that lie ahead.

Thank you for listening, and happy New Year.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:52 a.m. on December 30 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on December 31. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 30 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.