

Remarks at the National Peace Officers' Memorial Service May 15, 2006

Thank you all very much. Thank you. Thank you for the warm welcome, and thank you for the privilege of being able to join you today.

Every year on this day, our Nation flies flags at half-staff in grateful memory of the officers who have lost their lives in the line of duty. I emphasize the word "grateful," because we're a grateful nation for those who are willing to serve and to protect us all.

Once again, we added names to the National Law Enforcement Officers' Memorial. And once again, we are here to pay our most sincere respects to those whose names have been added.

I appreciate Chuck Canterbury's offer for me to come and speak—I really do—and I want to thank his service to the country by serving as president of the National Fraternal Order of the Police. I want to thank the members of my Cabinet who are here. I appreciate very much the Members of the United States Congress who have joined us, particularly Senator Frist and Senator Leahy. I want to thank Aliza Clark for her speech. I want to thank Ken Ford. I appreciate Vince Gill; he gave the best speech of the day. What a fantastic talent, and thank you for coming, Vince, to help heal the grief.

Family members of the fallen officers, you're welcome here to the Nation's Capital. We're really honored you're here. I wish there was some way I could heal the hurt in your heart. I wish there was a way that we could help dry up the tears. I guess the best way I can help is to say, we love you, and we thank you for the sacrifice of your loved ones. And as we thank you for the sacrifice of your loved ones, we've got to thank those law enforcement officers who are trying to help you deal with your grief.

The really interesting thing about the law enforcement community is there's such a strong bond between those who serve on the frontlines of fighting crime. They sit by your side here in this important event; they hold your hand; they put their arm around you; they're the brothers and sisters who are trying to help you overcome the pain you're going through. I want to thank those who wear the Nation's uniform, who are helping our families who are here deal with the grief, and I thank those who wear the Nation's uniform for working hard to make America a peaceful place for those of us who live here.

I know full well, as do all Americans, that in every community, whether it be a big community or a small community, there's a law enforcement officer on the job watching over the neighborhoods, ready for the next call. Each day in our country, more than 850,000 men and women go to work not knowing what the challenges might bring. Yet each day, they're committed to answering those challenges with courage and decisiveness.

One of those who answered the call was Harvey County, Kansas, Deputy Sheriff Kurt Ford. Though Kurt Ford had left the law enforcement in 2001, his heart really never left it. There's something about the law enforcement officer who is so committed to the job that his or her heart never leaves the job. He returned to service after the terrorist attacks on September the 11th.

In April, he and a team responded to a domestic violence call early on a Saturday morning. When they arrived at the scene, Officer Ford was shot. It turns out, Officer Ford had run toward danger to protect the vulnerable. And today we honor courage of people like Officer Ford.

The call came during the routine parts of the day, as it did to the Columbia, Missouri, Officer Molly Thomas-Bowden. When she was at a traffic stop, Officer Bowden was shot several times. Molly was married to a fellow police officer. She was known to all for her love of horses and her faithful and gentle spirit. Our Nation honors the service of people like Molly for her willingness to serve in making America a better place.

You know, the call can come when it's least expected, as it did for Officer Larry Cox of Chillicothe, Ohio. A 19-year-old veteran of the police force, Officer Cox was off-duty when he stepped up to help fellow officers in pursuit of a suspect. He wasn't even on duty, and yet he knew deep in his soul he needed to help fellow officers in need. And he was shot and killed.

Like many here who wear the uniform, Officer Cox worked with youngsters in the community in which they live. He was a DARE officer. One of the fifth graders he worked with said, "We feel like you're our best friend. We'll always remember you." "You're with God right now," is what the guy went on to say.

These officers are among the names of those we added. Every one represents an extraordinary person. Every one took an oath and carried a badge and committed his or her life to keeping the peace and protecting others. Every one has brought honor to our Nation. And together they live in our national memory as Americans whose courage and commitment has shown the true meaning of heroism.

And so this afternoon, on behalf of all Americans, I offer the respect of a grateful nation and pledge that their courage and sacrifice will never be forgotten.

May God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:43 p.m. on the West Grounds at the U.S. Capitol. In his remarks, he referred to Aliza Clark, president, National Fraternal Order of Police Auxiliary; Kenneth W. Ford, national chaplain, National Fraternal Order of Police; and entertainer Vince Gill. The Peace Officers Memorial Day and Police Week proclamation of May 11 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Address to the Nation on Immigration Reform May 15, 2006

Good evening. I've asked for a few minutes of your time to discuss a matter of national importance, the reform of America's immigration system.

The issue of immigration stirs intense emotions, and in recent weeks, Americans have seen those emotions on display. On the streets of major cities, crowds have rallied in support of those in our country illegally. At our southern border, others have organized to stop illegal immigrants from coming in. Across the country, Americans are trying to reconcile these contrasting images. And in Washington, the debate over

immigration reform has reached a time of decision. Tonight I will make it clear where I stand and where I want to lead our country on this vital issue.

We must begin by recognizing the problems with our immigration system. For decades, the United States has not been in complete control of its borders. As a result, many who want to work in our economy have been able to sneak across our border, and millions have stayed.

Once here, illegal immigrants live in the shadows of our society. Many use forged documents to get jobs, and that makes it