

that the intelligence product is an important part of my strategic thought and important part of helping me get this Government to respond to do our most important duty, which is to protect you. I look forward to working with Mike. I'm comfortable in knowing this is a good man who cares about one thing only, and that's his country. And I thank his family for sup-

porting him as he returns to Government service.

And now I ask my Chief of Staff, Josh Bolten, to administer the oath of office.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:16 a.m. at Bolling Air Force Base. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Director McConnell.

Remarks Following a Meeting on Health Care *February 20, 2007*

I just had a very interesting discussion with people who are deeply concerned about the status of health care in America today. These men and women around the table are charged with designing products for businesses, both large and small, and individuals.

And I discussed my health care plan that would allow—would equalize the Tax Code so that the individual would be more likely to be able to purchase a plan, because I believe a good health care system is one that rewards the consumer, encourages the consumer, and makes sure the consumer has got the capacity to make viable choices. And when you have consumers in charge of their health care decisions, it is a force that is likely to keep the health care costs down.

And so part of our discussion was, how do we encourage the development of an individual market? And I thank you very much for your insights and your concerns about the current health—the state of health care today in America.

I have the duty to talk to the American people about what I think will be a better alternative than one in which the Federal

Government makes the health care decisions for the patient and the provider. And I laid out such a plan in my State of the Union.

And now I call upon Members of the Congress to analyze this plan very carefully, to recognize the best decisions are made between the patients and their providers, and to work with the administration in a bipartisan fashion to make sure that health care is accessible and affordable for as many Americans as is possible.

We have a duty here in Washington to take care of the poor, the disabled, and the elderly, and we're meeting that duty. And now we have a duty to make sure the health care system is responsive to the American people, and I look forward to working with Democrats and Republicans to do just that.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:53 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks in a Discussion on Health Care in Chattanooga, Tennessee
February 21, 2007

The President. Thank you all very much. Please be seated. Thank you. Thank you very much. I'm honored to be here. Jim, thank you. We just toured a pretty fantastic hospital. He talked about robotics that are being used to operate on. He said that I was on the machine, and he's right, but there wasn't anybody at the other end of the machine, you'll be happy to hear. [Laughter]

I want to talk today about health care. I see people wearing our uniform; I want to thank you for wearing the uniform. I am the Commander in Chief, and proudly so. I'm also the educator in chief. The job of the educator in chief is to try to educate people about different ways to solve major problems facing our country, and we've got a problem with health care. It's not affordable, and it's not accessible to too many of our people. And the fundamental question is how to deal with it. And so today we're going to have a conversation with experts. We've got people who call themselves experts, like me and the Secretary and the Governor. And we got people who are living experts because they're having to deal with the health care problems.

And so I want to thank you for joining us. I particularly want to say thanks to Michael Leavitt, who is the Secretary of Health and Human Services. I asked him to join my Cabinet. He came from the State of Utah, where he was a Governor. I happen to believe Governors know how to set agendas and know how to achieve results. You've got you such a Governor here in the State of Tennessee as well. And, Mr. Governor, we appreciate you joining us. Mike and—[applause].

I think you're going to find it interesting as we discuss the proper relationship between the Federal Government and States, as we design programs that help individuals be in charge of their health care decisions.

And so we're going to have a discussion with some of your fellow citizens here, and I want to thank you all for joining us. It seemed like a pretty good idea when you accepted—[laughter]—and then you got out here—look at all the people and cameras. Anyway, I think you're going to find it interesting. I know I'm looking forward to hearing what you all have to say.

I'm keeping pretty good company today, as you can see. Not only have we got the Governor; we've got the Lieutenant Governor with us today. Lieutenant Governor Ramsey is with us. Thanks for coming. There he is, yes, Ramsey.

I am very proud of you—the Senators you've got up there—that you sent up to Washington. The senior Senator, Lamar Alexander—appreciate you coming, Lamar. Proud to be here. He's a good, thoughtful guy, who, by the way, paid me and Laura a high compliment the other day in the newspapers in Tennessee when he noticed that we had worked hard to increase the budget of the National Park System, thereby directly benefiting the people who care about the parks in eastern Tennessee. And so thank you for not only helping us get that piece of legislation into the process; I'm looking forward to getting it passed during the appropriations process.

The other United States Senator is a fellow you know pretty well, a man who made his marks in paving the roads and filling the potholes, former mayor Bob Corker. Thanks for coming.

And finally, the United States Congressman—all he talks about is "Chatt-town," every time I see him. He says, "You remember Chattanooga, now, Mr. President, don't you?" [Laughter] "You came here when you were not in public office. We expect you to come back in public office." And I'm glad, Zach, that I finally listened to you when it came to my travel schedule.