

our peoples based on justice and development. Unfortunately, those were lost opportunities.

Today, I think, begins a new era. The free trade area of the Americas and the free trade agreements in the hemisphere open a third opportunity we must not squander. The treaty with Peru has been studied and discussed at length. First with your administration, then it has been enhanced in the dialog with the U.S. Congress, which lead to an extension for the environment and on labor chapters, which will favor the poor, the population in the Andes, and their small enterprises.

Other Latin America countries should also benefit from the great American market and the investment opportunities. In that regard, Colombia is a country with great challenges ahead. The hurdles that are claimed to delay the agreement with Colombia will be swiftly solved if the treaty is approved, creating more jobs and investment and development. I take upon myself the Latin American responsibility to request Your Excellency and the U.S. Congress to pass this agreement as soon as possible.

This treaty will contribute to our fight against narcotraffic and global terrorism. This would be critical to reaffirm democracy, freedom, investment, and prosperity for the Colombian people that I love very much. The same could be said about Panama.

Let me finish, Your Excellency, reaffirming that we both are committed to peace and against nuclear proliferation that may threaten the future of our children. We both fight for freedom and democracy.

Your Excellency, you should be sure, as well as the Members of the Congress and the American people, that in Peru this treaty would not exclude the poorest of the Peruvian workers. On the contrary, using the words of the great Abraham Lincoln, it will be a free trade agreement of the people, by the people, and for the people.

Thank you very much.

[At this point, President Bush signed the bill.]

President Bush. Thank you all for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:52 p.m. in Room 450 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to former Office of Management and Budget Director Robert J. Portman; El Salvador's Ambassador to the U.S. Rene Antonio Leon Rodriguez; Honduras's Ambassador to the U.S. Roberto Flores Bermudez; Chile's Ambassador to the U.S. Mariano Fernandez; Mexico's Ambassador to the U.S. Arturo Sarukhan Casamitjana; Canada's Ambassador to the U.S. Michael Wilson; Guatemala's Ambassador to the U.S. Guillermo Castillo; the Dominican Republic's Ambassador to the U.S. Flavio Dario Espinal Jacobo; Colombia's Ambassador to the U.S. Carolina Barco Isakson; Panama's Ambassador to the U.S. Federico Antonio Humbert Arias; and South Korea's Ambassador to the U.S. Lee Tae-sik. H.R. 3688, approved December 14, was assigned Public Law 110-138. The Office of the Press Secretary released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Statement on the Resignation of Candida Wolff and the Appointment of Daniel Meyer as Assistant to the President for Legislative Affairs December 14, 2007

One of the most challenging jobs in any White House is managing the President's

relationship with Congress. There are 535 Members of Congress, 2 parties, and 46

committee chairmen, but only one Assistant to the President for Legislative Affairs. Candi Wolff has done a remarkable job of working with Congress and advancing my legislative agenda.

As my chief adviser on congressional affairs, Candi has helped bring about many significant accomplishments, including energy legislation, trade agreements, tax relief, vital national security measures, and the confirmation of two Supreme Court Justices. Her dedication and enthusiasm have resulted in policies that protect the American people, hold the line on spending, strengthen our economy, and support our troops. Candi has earned the respect of Members of Congress and her colleagues.

I have relied upon Candi's sound judgment, extensive experience, and thorough understanding of Capitol Hill as I have made decisions that affect the lives of all

Americans. As Candi's service at the White House comes to an end, I appreciate her years of hard work and friendship. Laura and I wish Candi, her husband Mark, and their two daughters Veronica and Claire, all the best.

I am pleased to announce that Dan Meyer will succeed Candi as Assistant to the President for Legislative Affairs. After serving as a House and Senate staffer for more than 15 years, including as chief of staff to the Speaker of the House, Dan knows how to help get things done in Congress. As a member of the legislative affairs office at the White House, he has been a capable leader who is well-respected by Members on both sides of the aisle and committed to reaching solutions on important issues. I am confident he will perform well in this new position. I look forward to continuing to work with him.

Statement on the Resignation of William McGurn and the Appointment of Marc Thiessen as Assistant to the President for Speechwriting *December 14, 2007*

As Assistant to the President for Speechwriting, Bill McGurn has worked tirelessly to help communicate my agenda to the American people and the world. Bill is a serious thinker and a gifted writer whose command of language and knowledge of history have helped shape a wide variety of my speeches. I have counted on Bill to help me prepare State of the Union Addresses, policy announcements, and speeches to the Nation. In all our work together, I have valued Bill's creativity, insight, and sound judgment. And I have appreciated his friendship, generous spirit, and sense of humor.

As he moves on to the next stage of his career, Bill can be proud of his service

at the White House. The son of a marine, Bill loves his country and has served it well. Laura and I have come to know Bill's wife Julie and their daughters Grace, Maisie, and Lucy, and we wish Bill and his family all the best.

I am pleased to announce that Bill's deputy, Marc Thiessen, will succeed him as Assistant to the President for Speechwriting. Marc has done superb work in the speechwriting office for more than 3 years. Before coming to the White House, he served as chief speechwriter to Secretary Rumsfeld. Marc is a talented writer and experienced communicator who will do an outstanding job in his new position. I look forward to continuing to work with him.