

get the financial help necessary to stay in homes. And that help comes in all different kinds of ways, but generally, it just means that the lending institutions are—help a creditworthy person stay in their home, and that's what we want to have happen.

Since the program started, 1.4 million people got mortgage relief so they can stay in their homes. And in the first quarter of this year, 500,000 households, 500,000 families were helped.

And I appreciate your leadership on that, Hank. It's been—our policy in this administration is, we—laws shouldn't bail out lenders; laws shouldn't help speculators; the Government ought to be helping creditworthy people stay in their homes. And one way we can do that—and Congress is making progress on this—is the reform of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. That re-

form will come with a strong, independent regulator.

The Secretary is briefing me on the progress being made on the Hill on this very important subject. Our fellow citizens have got to know that these major players in the mortgage markets, if reformed properly by Congress, will really help stabilize the markets and make it easier for people to stay in their homes.

And we look forward to working with Congress to get a good piece of legislation to my desk that helps our fellow citizens and helps us get through this housing issue.

So, Mr. Secretary, thank you for your briefing. I appreciate very much your leadership on the issue.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:15 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Remarks on the Earthquake in China *May 20, 2008*

Laura and I have come to the Chinese Embassy. Mr. Ambassador, thank you very much. Madam, thank you very much. We've come to express our country's condolences for those who mourn for the loved ones.

We stand ready to help in any way that the Chinese Government would like. We know there's great courage being displayed, Mr. Ambassador, as rescue workers search for those who may still be living.

This natural disaster is very hard on many of your people, and we understand

that. And we extend our deepest sympathies and pray for recovery and pray for the strength of those who are—whose lives have been torn apart during this terrible tragedy.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:13 a.m. at the Embassy of China. In his remarks, he referred to China's Ambassador to the U.S. Zhou Wenzhong and his wife Xie Shumin.

Statement on Senator Edward M. Kennedy *May 20, 2008*

Laura and I are concerned to learn of our friend Senator Kennedy's diagnosis. Ted Kennedy is a man of tremendous cour-

age, remarkable strength, and powerful spirit. Our thoughts are with Senator Kennedy and his family during this difficult

period. We join our fellow Americans in praying for his full recovery.

Statement on Senate Confirmation of G. Steven Agee as United States
Circuit Judge for the Fourth Circuit
May 20, 2008

Today Members of the Senate voted unanimously to confirm Justice Steven Agee to serve on the United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit. I appreciate their work on his nomination. Justice Agee is a man of integrity who is respected for his sound legal judgment and commitment to equal justice for all Americans. His work on the Supreme Court of Virginia and the Virginia Court of Appeals demonstrates that his rulings are based on the letter of the law. I am confident that he will serve on the fourth circuit with the same level of dedication and professionalism.

After I nominated Justice Agee on March 13, 2008, he received a hearing and a confirmation vote in less than 3 months. Unfortunately, many of my other judicial nominees have not received a timely confirmation process, and their nominations have been pending before the Senate Judiciary Committee for significantly longer.

Since the beginning of the 110th Congress, the Senate has only confirmed eight circuit court nominees. In the last 2 years of the past 3 administrations, the Senate has confirmed an average of 17 circuit court judges. I encourage the Senate to provide all judicial nominees with a swift and fair confirmation process.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With
Respect to the Stabilization of Iraq
May 20, 2008

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent the enclosed notice to the *Federal Register* for publication. This notice states that the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13303 of May 22, 2003, as modified in scope and

relied upon for additional steps taken in Executive Order 13315 of August 28, 2003, Executive Order 13350 of July 29, 2004, Executive Order 13364 of November 29, 2004, and Executive Order 13438 of July 17, 2007, is to continue in effect beyond May 22, 2008.

Obstacles to the orderly reconstruction of Iraq, the restoration and maintenance of peace and security in the country, and the development of political, administrative, and economic institutions in Iraq continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States. Accordingly, I have