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Statement on Digital Television Conversion Delay Legislation
February 11, 2009

During these challenging economic times, the needs of American consumers are a top priority of my administration. This law, which was crafted in a bipartisan way and passed overwhelmingly in the House and Senate, ensures that our citizens will have more time to prepare for the conversion. Millions of Americans, including those in our most vulnerable communities, would have been left in the dark if the conversion had gone on as planned, and this solution is an important step forward as we work to get the Nation ready for digital TV. My administration will continue to work with leaders in Congress, broadcasters, consumer groups, and the telecommunications industry to improve the information and assistance available to our citizens in advance of June 12.

NOTE: The statement referred to S. 352, approved February 11, which was assigned Public Law No. 111–4.

Remarks at the Reopening of Ford's Theatre
February 11, 2009

Thank you. Please, everybody have a seat. I will be brief, though, I promise.

What a spectacular evening. Michelle and I are so pleased to be here to rededicate this hallowed space. We know that Ford's Theatre will remain a place where Lincoln's legacy thrives, where his love of the humanities and belief in the power of education have a home, and where his generosity of spirit are reflected in all the work that takes place.

This has been an extraordinarily fitting tribute to Abraham Lincoln that we've seen and heard from some of our most celebrated icons of stage and of screen, because Lincoln himself was a great admirer of the arts. It's said he could even quote portions of "Hamlet" and "Macbeth" by heart, as we've seen here this evening. And so I somehow think this event captured an essential part of the man whose life we celebrate tonight.

Now, as commemorations take place across this country on the bicentennial of our 16th President's birth, there will be reflections on all he was and all he did for this Nation that he served. But while there are any number of moments that reveal the exceptional nature of this singular figure, there is one in particular that I want to share with you.

Not far from here stands our Nation's Capitol, a landmark familiar to us all, but one that looked very different in Lincoln's time. For it remained unfinished until the end of the war. The laborers who built the dome came to work wondering whether each day would be their last, whether the metal they were using for its frame would be requisitioned for the war and melted down into bullets. But each day went by without any orders to halt construction, so they kept on working, and they kept on building.

When President Lincoln was finally told of all the metal being used at the Capitol, his response was short and clear: "That is as it should be." The American people needed to be reminded, he believed, that even in a time of war, the work would go on; that even when the Nation itself was in doubt, the future was being secured; and that on that distant day when the guns fell silent, a national capitol would stand, with a statue of Freedom at its peak, as a symbol of unity in the land still mending its divisions.

It is this sense of unity that is so much a part of Lincoln's legacy. For despite all that divided us—North and South, black and white—he had an unyielding belief that we were, at heart, one nation and one people. And because of Abraham Lincoln and all who've carried on his work in the generations since, that is what we remain today. And it is for that reason that we are able to gather here this evening.

Thank you, all of you, for a spectacular evening. Thank you for those who helped to