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Jones, former California secretary of state; Gerald L. Parsky, chairman, Team California, California Republican Party Board of Directors; former U.S. Treasurer Rosario Marin; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Statement on Japan's Announcement of Reconstruction Aid to Iraq

October 15, 2003

I welcome Japan's announcement that it will provide $1.5 billion toward immediate reconstruction needs in Iraq. I applaud this bold step, which will help mobilize international support for efforts to build a stable, peaceful, and democratic Iraq. Japan recognizes that this effort is critical to security and peace not only in Iraq and the Middle East but also for Japan and throughout the world. Japan's own history shows the power of international cooperation to help a great people build democracy and prosperity and become a beacon of freedom that inspires all nations.

I also commend Japan's announcement that it is working on a larger aid package in preparation for the October 23–24 Madrid Donor's Conference. We look forward to working with Japan and other countries to make the Madrid Conference a success for the people of Iraq.

Statement on the Terrorist Attack on Americans in the Gaza Strip

October 15, 2003

I condemn in the strongest terms the vicious act of terrorism directed against Americans in Gaza today. We are working closely with the appropriate officials to bring the terrorists to justice.

Palestinian authorities should have acted long ago to fight terror in all its forms. The failure to create effective Palestinian security forces dedicated to fighting terror continues to cost lives. There must be an empowered Prime Minister who controls all Palestinian security forces, reforms that continue to be blocked by Yasser Arafat. The failure to undertake these reforms and dismantle the terrorist organizations constitutes the greatest obstacle to achieving the Palestinian people's dream of statehood.

The Americans who were attacked today were pursuing a vision for a better future for the Palestinian people. The U.S. Embassy officials traveling in Gaza were there to interview young Palestinian candidates seeking Fulbright scholarships to study in the United States. This is another example of how the terrorists are enemies of progress and opportunity for the Palestinian people.

On behalf of the American people, I send my heartfelt condolences to the families of the brave Americans who were killed and injured serving our country and its ideals.

Proclamation 7722—White Cane Safety Day, 2003

October 15, 2003

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Every day, millions of Americans who are blind or visually impaired use the white cane as they travel, attend school, or work. The white cane remains one of the most important and reliable tools for people who are blind or visually impaired. It increases the mobility of these citizens, facilitating their inclusion in all aspects of American life. Since 1964 on White Cane Safety Day, America has reaffirmed our commitment to achieving equal opportunity and full independence for those who are blind or visually impaired.

Today, more people with disabilities are attending school and working than ever before. However, much work remains to fully open the doors of opportunity for citizens who are blind or visually impaired. To meet these challenges, I have created the New Freedom Initiative, a comprehensive plan to assist Americans with disabilities by increasing access to educational and employment opportunities. This initiative is lowering barriers more so that Americans can participate fully in their communities, and live and work in dignity and freedom.

My Administration also continues to promote implementation of section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. This important

statute requires the Federal Government to make more of its electronic and information technology resources, including Government websites, accessible to people with disabilities.

As we recognize the contributions of people who are blind or visually impaired, we resolve to continue building a better America where all individuals are celebrated for their abilities and encouraged to achieve their dreams.

The Congress, by joint resolution (Public Law 88–628) approved on October 6, 1964, as amended, has designated October 15 of each year as "White Cane Safety Day."

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim October 15, 2003, as White Cane Safety Day. I call upon public officials, educators, librarians, and all the people of the United States to join with me in ensuring that all the benefits and privileges of life in our great Nation are available to blind and visually impaired individuals, and to observe this day with appropriate ceremonies, activities, and programs.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this fifteenth day of October, in the year of our Lord two thousand three, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-eighth.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., October 16, 2003]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on October 17.

Remarks at a Bush-Cheney Reception in Riverside, California

October 15, 2003

Thanks for the warm welcome. It's nice to be back in Riverside, California. I appreciate your hospitality. I appreciate your friendship, and thank you for your strong support. I'm proud to have it.

I understand there's been a couple of changes here in California since I was last time here. And tomorrow at the Mission Inn, I have the opportunity to congratulate the Governor-elect of the great State of California, and I'm looking forward to it.

I'll tell you what we're doing here tonight. We're laying the foundation for what is going to be a great national victory in 2004. And I appreciate you being on the team and want to tell you that I'm going to continue to count on your support when you go to your houses of worship or your community centers or your coffee shops, and you tell the people who haven't made up their mind yet that this administration will continue to work for what's right and best for every single American.

The political season is going to come in its own time. I am kind of loosening up—[*laughter*]—and getting ready. But I've got a job to do. I'm focused on the people's business, and there's a lot on the agenda in Washington, DC. I will continue to work hard to earn the confidence of all Americans by keeping this Nation strong and secure and prosperous and free.

My one regret is that Laura isn't with me tonight. That's your regret too, I know. [*Laughter*] You kind of got the short straw. [*Laughter*] She was in the Dominican Republic today and is flying out. Tomorrow we'll meet at March Air Force Base, and then we're on a very exciting journey to Asia. I'm proud that she's going to be on my side. I'm going to get a few pointers from her about diplomacy. [*Laughter*] You might remember that she recently took a trip to France. [*Laughter*] You probably saw the picture of her visit there. [*Laughter*] I went to France. [*Laughter*] The people were nice to me, but I certainly wasn't treated that well by Jacques Chirac. [*Laughter*] Laura is great. I'm really lucky that she's my wife. She's a great First Lady for our country.

I appreciate very much two Members of the United States Congress coming today. I know they flew out for this event. They're leaving in the morning for votes tomorrow, and that's Congressman Ken Calvert from this district—I appreciate you, Ken—and Congresswoman Mary Bono from the great State of California. Thank you, Mary.

I want to thank my friend Jim Brulte for being here today. I told him if he gets any skinnier, he's going to end up in a Subway