

owner of a tax assistance firm is making a donation for every tax return he prepares. Worshipers at a Buddhist temple in Houston collected thousands of dollars in cash to send to their sister temple in Sri Lanka. Some people are selling personal items on the Internet and donating the cash to the charities. Many corporations are matching contributions by their employees. And several have shown exceptional generosity by donating large amounts of cash and products to the relief efforts.

Presidents Clinton and Bush will be speaking about the countless ways individuals and businesses can support this urgent cause. I ask every American to contribute as they are able to do so. For more information about how to make a donation, you can visit the USA Freedom Corps web site at www.usafreedomcorps.gov.

Americans have suffered sudden catastrophe many times in our own history, from massive earthquakes in Anchorage and San Francisco to destructive wildfires in the West to the series of hurricanes that struck Florida last year. From our own experiences, we know that nothing can take away the grief of those affected by tragedy. We also know that Americans have a history of rising to meet great humanitarian challenges and of providing hope to suffering peoples. As men and women across the devastated region begin to rebuild, we offer our sustained compassion and our generosity and our assurance that America will be there to help.

The Presidents and I will be going to the embassies of the countries affected to pay our Nation's respects. I'm so grateful that both President Bush and President Clinton have taken time out of their busy schedules to not only serve as a catalyst for people to give money to help but also to join me and Laura in paying our deepest respects to those nations that have been affected by the tsunamis. As well the Presidents will return to the White House compound to talk to members of the press about how to better effect this great relief effort that is now going on in our Nation.

Thank you all for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:15 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida.

The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks After Signing the Book of Condolence at the Indonesian Embassy

January 3, 2005

It's our honor to come today to pay our respects for those in Indonesia who suffered under this tremendous disaster. I appreciate the former Presidents joining me. I'm proud Laura is here too as we sign the condolence book.

We're also committed to helping the Indonesian Government and the people of Indonesia. Presidents Clinton and Bush have agreed to help tap into the great generosity of the American people by serving as cochairmen of what will be a massive private relief effort. Of course, I will continue to make sure our Government provides relief as well. I look forward to working with the Indonesian Government to help those who need food and medicine and water and shelter to get their lives back in order so that the great country of Indonesia can rise up from this disaster and provide the hope necessary for the people of that important country.

It's our honor to be here with our friend and ally. Mr. Ambassador, thank you for having us. May God bless the people of Indonesia.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:40 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Soemadi Brotodiningrat, Indonesian Ambassador to the United States.

Remarks After Signing the Book of Condolence at the Indian Embassy and an Exchange With Reporters

January 3, 2005

Q. Mr. President, you have come this far; are you planning to extend your visit someday to India? It could be before your Presidency—

The President. Well, I appreciate that very much. I was just telling the Ambassador, when I spoke to the Prime Minister I assured him that my intentions were to make it this year to India. In the meantime, though, our

country stands with the people who have suffered. We want the Indian Government, the Indian people to know that we'll help in any way we can. I've asked President Clinton and President Bush to lead an effort to raise private contributions to go to the families of those who have suffered and to help provide food, medicine, water, shelter, whatever the Indian Government thinks is necessary.

I want to thank the Indian Government for taking a lead in this issue. One of the first things that we did was to put together a core group of nations, nations that are capable of organizing relief efforts around the region. And the Indian Government has been especially strong as a part of this core group. And I told the Ambassador to thank the Prime Minister for his very strong leadership.

Our navies are coordinating together; our search and rescues are coordinating together. And now the American people and the American Government want to help where help is needed.

Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:01 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Ambassador to the U.S. Ranendra Sen of India.

Remarks at a Reception for Newly Elected Members of Congress and Their Spouses

January 3, 2005

The President. Thanks for coming. Welcome to the White House. Hope you're feeling pretty excited about what's about to take place. We are excited for you. After all, we ran together. [Laughter] And there's nothing like winning. [Laughter]

I want to welcome you all here. Laura and I are so thrilled you're here. We want to welcome your spouses. I particularly want to say a thanks to your spouse for having supported your run for the Congress or the Senate. Laura and I know how hard it is on a family to be in the political arena. It's the ultimate sacrifice, really—sacrifice your privacy, sacrifice time with your kids. But you're going to find it's worthwhile. Serving this great country is an unbelievable honor, and both

the elected official and the spouse are serving our great country.

The Vice President and I share something else in common with you, besides having run together in 2004, is that we've all run for the Congress. I'm the only one who never won. [Laughter] I ran in 1978, came in second in a two-man race. [Laughter] The Vice President won, as did Dan Lungren. Welcome back.

Representative Dan Lungren. Thank you.

The President. Thanks for agreeing to serve your great State and our country once again.

Also elected that year was a young attorney from Sacramento, California, named Bob Matsui. Bob went on to serve with distinction and integrity in the House of Representatives for more than 25 years. He was a principled advocate for the people of northern California, and he will be deeply missed.

We're also saddened to learn about the passing of former Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm of New York. She was a fine lady, a pioneer in education and public service, and the first African American woman elected to the Congress. Laura and I send our condolences to both the Chisholm and the Matsui families. May God rest their souls.

One of Matsui's colleagues was Lungren, as I mentioned, and he is typical of what is a pretty interesting group of folks who've run and won in 2004. I mean, after all, there are former House Members who are coming back to the Capitol with a new job—that would be Senators Coburn and Thune—and two Members of the Congress, like Dan, who has served once and are now returning, Inglis and McKinney. Welcome back.

There are some familiar names. After all, four new Senators have moved over from their House seats, and Senator Martinez was in the Cabinet. Welcome, Mel. It's good to see you and Kitty.

There are new Members of the House who were preceded in Congress by their mom or dad. That would be four Members of the House. I get a little nervous when that son follows the father. [Laughter] The State of Colorado has sent two brothers. I know something about having a brother in politics too. [Laughter] In the 2004 class, we've got