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Week Ending Friday, February 4, 2005

The President's Radio Address

January 29, 2005

Good morning. Tomorrow the world will witness a turning point in the history of Iraq, a milestone in the advance of freedom, and a crucial advance in the war on terror. The Iraqi people will make their way to polling centers across their nation. On the national ballot alone, voters will choose from nearly 19,000 candidates competing for seats in the Transitional National Assembly, in the country's 18 provincial councils, and in the Kurdistan National Assembly. This historic event will be overseen by the Independent Election Commission of Iraq and will mark the first genuine, nationwide elections in generations.

The terrorists and those who benefited from the tyranny of Saddam Hussein know that free elections will expose the emptiness of their vision for Iraq. That is why they will stop at nothing to prevent or disrupt this election. The terrorist Zarqawi, who plans and orders many of the car bombings and beheadings in Iraq, recently acknowledged the threat that democracy poses to his cult of hatred. "Of democracy in Iraq," he said, "we have declared a fierce war against this evil principle." He denounced as infidels all who seek to exercise their right to vote as free human beings.

Yet in the face of this intimidation, the Iraqi people are standing firm. Tomorrow's elections will happen because of their courage and determination. All throughout Iraq, these friends of freedom understand the stakes. In the face of assassination, brutal violence, and calculated intimidation, Iraqis continue to prepare for the elections and to campaign for their candidates. They know what democracy will mean for their country, a future of peace, stability, prosperity, and justice for themselves and for their children. One resident of Baghdad said, "This election represents what is possible. To me, it's the start of a new life."

This election is also important for America. Our Nation has always been more secure when freedom is on the march. As hope and freedom spread, the appeal of terror and hate will fade. And there is not a democratic nation in our world that threatens the security of the United States. The best way to ensure the success of democracy is through the advance of democracy.

Tomorrow's vote will be the latest step in Iraq's journey to permanent democracy and freedom. Those elected to the Transitional National Assembly will help appoint a new Government that will fully and fairly represent the diversity of the Iraqi people. This Assembly will also be charged with drafting a permanent constitution that will be put to a vote of the Iraqi people this fall. If approved, a new nationwide election will follow in December that will choose a new Government under this constitution.

As democracy takes hold in Iraq, America's mission there will continue. Our military forces, diplomats, and civilian personnel will help the newly elected Government of Iraq establish security and train Iraqi military police and other forces. Terrorist violence will not end with the election. Yet the terrorists will fail, because the Iraqi people reject their ideology of murder.

Over the past year, the world has seen successful elections in Afghanistan, Malaysia, Indonesia, Georgia, Ukraine, and the Palestinian territories. In countries across the broader Middle East, from Morocco to Bahrain, governments are enacting new reforms and increasing participation for their people.

Tomorrow's election will add to the momentum of democracy. One Iraqi, speaking about the upcoming vote, said, "Now, most people feel they are living in darkness. It is time for us to come into the light." Every Iraqi who casts his or her vote deserves the

admiration of the world. And free people everywhere send their best wishes to the Iraqi people as they move further into the light of liberty.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:50 a.m. on January 28 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on January 29. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 28 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. In his remarks, the President referred to senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Address to the Nation on the Iraqi Elections

January 30, 2005

Today the people of Iraq have spoken to the world, and the world is hearing the voice of freedom from the center of the Middle East.

In great numbers and under great risk, Iraqis have shown their commitment to democracy. By participating in free elections, the Iraqi people have firmly rejected the anti-democratic ideology of the terrorists. They have refused to be intimidated by thugs and assassins. And they have demonstrated the kind of courage that is always the foundation of self-government.

Some Iraqis were killed while exercising their rights as citizens. We also mourn the American and British military personnel who lost their lives today. Their sacrifices were made in a vital cause of freedom, peace in a troubled region, and a more secure future for us all.

The Iraqi people, themselves, made this election a resounding success. Brave patriots stepped forward as candidates. Many citizens volunteered as pollworkers. More than 100,000 Iraqi security force personnel guarded polling places and conducted operations against terrorist groups. One news account told of a voter who had lost a leg in a terror attack last year and went to the polls today despite threats of violence. He said, "I would have crawled here if I had to. I don't want terrorists to kill other Iraqis like they tried to kill me. Today I am voting for peace."

Across Iraq today, men and women have taken rightful control of their country's destiny, and they have chosen a future of freedom and peace. In this process, Iraqis have had many friends at their side. The European Union and the United Nations gave important assistance in the election process. The American military and our diplomats, working with our coalition partners, have been skilled and relentless, and their sacrifices have helped to bring Iraqis to this day. The people of the United States have been patient and resolute, even in difficult days.

The commitment to a free Iraq now goes forward. This historic election begins the process of drafting and ratifying a new constitution, which will be the basis of a fully democratic Iraqi Government. Terrorists and insurgents will continue to wage their war against democracy, and we will support the Iraqi people in their fight against them. We will continue training Iraqi security forces so this rising democracy can eventually take responsibility for its own security.

There's more distance to travel on the road to democracy. Yet Iraqis are proving they're equal to the challenge. On behalf of the American people, I congratulate the people of Iraq on this great and historic achievement.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1 p.m. from the Cross Hall at the White House. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks at a Swearing-In Ceremony for Margaret Spellings as Secretary of Education

January 31, 2005

Please be seated. Thanks for coming. Laura and I are pleased to be here at the Department of Education with Margaret Spellings. Madam Secretary, thanks for inviting us over.

I have known Margaret for a long time, before we both came to Washington. When I was the Governor of Texas, she was the senior adviser for education, and at the White