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that will grow worse with time. With every year that passes, we have fewer workers paying ever-larger benefits to ever-increasing numbers of retirees. In 2018, Social Security will be paying out more than it takes in. By the time today's younger workers retire in 2042, the system will be bankrupt unless we act now.

Fixing Social Security will require an open, candid review of the options. I will listen to anyone who has a good idea to offer, and I will work with Members of Congress to find the most effective combination of reforms. As we proceed, we will adhere to a few basic principles. We will make Social Security's finances permanently sound, not leave the task for another day. We will not increase payroll taxes. We will make the system a better deal for younger workers by allowing them to save some of their payroll taxes in voluntary personal retirement accounts, a nest egg they can call their own which Government can never take away.

Our second broad responsibility to the future is to preserve and pass on the values that sustain a free society. We must continue to build a culture of life that respects human dignity while advancing science. To promote the compassionate character of America, we will pursue initiatives to fight the scourge of HIV/AIDS, help our at-risk youth reject gangs and violence, and help prevent wrongful convictions in our courts. I will continue to nominate well-qualified judges who understand the proper role of courts in our democracy, and the Senate must fulfill its constitutional responsibility and give every nominee an up-or-down vote.

Finally, our commitment to human dignity and freedom at home also leads us to spread freedom and peace around the world. We remain at war against the forces of terror, and we will not rest until the fight is won. We will continue to hunt down terrorists abroad, so we do not have to face them here at home. Our budget will give our military all the tools they need for victory, and we will also honor the sacrifices of the fallen by increasing substantially the payments made to the families of our service men and women who have given their lives in the war on terror.

Recently, we have seen freedom's gathering momentum in Afghanistan, the Palestinian territories, Ukraine, and last Sunday, in Iraq. On that day, millions of brave Iraqis defied the threats of terrorists and cast votes to determine their nation's future. The whole world can now see that the assassins and car-bombers are doomed to fail, because they are fighting the desire of the Iraqi people to live in freedom. And when Iraq is democratic, at peace with its neighbors, and able to defend itself, our Nation will be safer, and our troops will return home with the honor they have earned.

The work ahead is not easy. But we go forward with confidence, knowing that America's best days are yet to come.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 9 a.m. on February 4 at the Omaha Hilton in Omaha, NE, for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on February 5. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 4 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks Following a Cabinet Meeting and an Exchange With Reporters

February 7, 2005

FY 2006 Budget

The President. This is my first Cabinet meeting of the year 2005. I welcomed new members of our Cabinet to the table and congratulated them on their confirmations. Today we discussed a lot of issues. I reminded them that the war on terror goes on, that—but mainly discussed the issue of the budget.

We're submitting our budget today. OMB Director Josh Bolten will be presenting the budget at noon. It is a budget that sets priorities. Our priorities are winning the war on terror, protecting our homeland, growing our economy. It's a budget that focuses on results. The taxpayers of America don't want us spending their money on something that's not achieving results.

It's a budget that reduces and eliminates redundancy. It's a budget that is a lean budget. People on both sides of the aisle have called upon the administration to submit a budget that helps meet our obligations of—our goal of reducing the deficit in half over a 5-year period, and this budget does just that. Discretionary spending is—will increase at a rate less than inflation. Plus, we've begun some reforms on the mandatory side. Congress needs to look at this budget, and Congress needs to act on this budget in a fiscally responsible way.

I'll be glad to answer some questions. Terry [Terence Hunt, Associated Press].

Visits by Israeli and Palestinian Leaders

Q. Mr. President, what do you hope to accomplish by inviting Prime Minister Sharon and President Abbas to Washington separately? And why do you think there's a better chance of success now, than early effort—earlier efforts like the Red Sea summit?

The President. First of all, Prime Minister [President] * Abbas comes to the table with a mandate from a lot of Palestinians. He has been through an election. He was endorsed by the Palestinian people.

Secondly, any meeting is part of a process, because in order to achieve the objective of two states living side by side in peace, there needs to be a level of trust between all parties—"all parties" being, obviously, Israel and the Palestinians but trust with the United States, trust with the United Nations, trust with Europe, trust with the parties who are going to be investing in a Palestinian state, for example. And so what you're watching is a process unfolding, where people are becoming more trustworthy.

I have been impressed by Prime Minister [President] * Abbas' commitment to fighting off terror. I've been impressed by what he is—his public statements. I've also been impressed by the fact that Israel helped the Palestinians have an election, went out of their way to make sure that people were allowed to go to the polls. And the meetings just indicate that there's more work to be done, and I look forward to meeting with them.

Steve [Steve Holland, Reuters].

FY 2006 Budget

Q. Thank you, sir. How hard is it going to be to get Congress to go along with your budget when it cuts some popular programs that Congress has refused to go along with in the past?

The President. Well, that's a great question. I look forward to explaining to the American people why we made some of the requests that we made in our budget. I fully understand that sometimes it's hard to eliminate a program that sounds good. But by getting people to focus on results—I was saying to Members of Congress, "Show us the results as to whether or not this program is working"—I think we'll get a pretty good response.

I will tell you, we go into this process upbeat because we've worked closely with the Congress the last four budget cycles. And the Congress appropriators—Congress and the appropriators met our budget requests. I mean, there's a collaborative effort. We've had a history of being successful in terms of passing good, strong budgets, and so I'm very optimistic that we can do so again this year. Josh Bolten will be up, outlining the budget, our Cabinet Secretaries will be talking about certain aspects of their respective budgets, and I think people will see that it's a commonsense approach to the budgets.

April [April Ryan, American Urban Radio Networks].

Q. Yes, Mr. President. I'm ready, too. [*Laughter*]

The President. Did somebody tip you off that I might call upon you, or is it just——

Q. I've been watching you lately. [*Laughter*]

The President. All right. [*Laughter*]

Q. First of all, you're talking about equality and keeping everything on a level playing field for everyone. Many people are saying that this budget proposal is not even. You're cutting out many programs for the disadvantaged. And also, what was one of the main programs that you cut that you really had a hard time in cutting as you looked at things that were copies of another?

* White House correction.

The President. I'm going to let Josh answer the degree-of-difficulty question because we've—we're asking for Congress to cut and/or reduce 150 different programs. The important question that needs to be asked for all constituencies is whether or not the programs achieve a certain result. Have we set goals, and are those goals being met? And the poor and disadvantaged absolutely ought to be asking that question too. In other words, what is the goal of a particular program? And if that goal isn't being met, the question ought to be asked, why isn't the goal being met?

And that's the questions we've been asking. And after a while, we get tired of asking that question. So, finally, it is to take resources and direct them to programs that are working. And that's what you'll find in the education budgets and the health budgets, for example. And those are very legitimate questions, and the people deserve to have them answered, which this administration will answer in a forthright fashion.

Thank you all for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:15 a.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) of the Palestinian Authority. A reporter referred to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of Israel. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Proclamation 7868—National African American History Month, 2005

February 7, 2005

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Throughout our Nation's history, the contributions of African Americans have stirred our Nation's conscience and helped shape our character. During National African American History Month, we honor the determination and commitment of generations of African Americans in pursuing the promises of America.

The theme of National African American History Month this year, "The Niagara Movement: Black Protest Reborn, 1905–2005," honors the grassroots movement of 1905 to 1910 that was organized to fight racial discrimination in America. Led by W.E.B. DuBois, the movement called for voting rights for African Americans, opposed school segregation, and worked to elect officials committed to fighting racial prejudice. Americans today carry on this movement as our Nation strives to live up to our founding principle that all of God's children are created equal.

It is important to teach our children about the heroes of the civil rights movement who, with courage and dignity, forced America to confront the central defect of our founding. Every American should know about the men and women whose determination and persistent eloquence forced people of all races to examine their hearts and revise our Nation's Constitution and laws. As we celebrate African American History Month, we remember how great the struggle for racial justice has been. And we renew our efforts to fight for equal rights for all Americans. We have made great progress, but our work is not done.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim February 2005 as National African American History Month. I call upon public officials, educators, librarians, and all the people of the United States to observe this month with appropriate programs and activities that honor the history, accomplishments, and contributions of African Americans.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this seventh day of February, in the year of our Lord two thousand five, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-ninth.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., February 9, 2005]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on February 10.