

the money, as money grew over time. And that's compared to 1.8 percent in the current Social Security system. And that 5.2 percent difference in interest makes a huge amount of money—makes a huge difference for you in the amount of money available over time.

So thanks for bringing it up. Elizabeth, anything else on your mind? You're awfully articulate. [Laughter]

Mrs. Fernandez. No, I just—thank you for the opportunity to be able to share our concerns, and thank you for your efforts in this area.

The President. Well, one of the things that Elizabeth said that triggered a thought here is that she said, "This is a complex issue. There's a lot of misinformation." And I understand that. There's a lot of moving parts, as they say, which says to me I better keep working on it. And I'm going to. I'm just getting started. This is an issue that—I'm going to spend a lot of time talking about this issue. I will spend as much time as necessary.

Congress has an obligation to act. I appreciate you saying I brought up an issue that I didn't need to bring up. I needed to bring it up. That's my job. The President's job is if—when he sees a problem, is to say, "Let's deal with it," not to shirk the duty, not to pass it on.

Fidel mentioned President Clinton—he started the process. I remember watching the townhall meeting you all had in Albuquerque in 1996, I think it was, and it was a fascinating discussion. Michael Boskin, who I think was on the commission then—I remember Mike, my buddy, talking about it. And I can't remember if you presented there or not.

Mr. Vargas. I was there.

The President. Did you present?

Mr. Vargas. No.

The President. Whew! [Laughter] I thought I might have dissed you there for a minute. [Laughter] But my only point is, is that that's what the President does. The President confronts problems, and now is the time to take this problem on.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you for being here. Chairman Thomas would not be here if he didn't realize this was a very vital issue to people from all walks of life. And he wouldn't be here if he didn't believe that it was important to work together in a collaborative spirit

to get something done. And so thank you for letting us advance the issue. I appreciate you providing the forum. I'm honored our panelists came here. Thank you all for being here again.

May God bless you all, and may God continue to bless our country.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:31 a.m. at the J.W. Marriott Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Hector V. Barreto, Administrator, Small Business Administration; Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; President Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan; and Michael J. Boskin, senior fellow, Hoover Institution, who participated in a national Social Security forum townhall meeting with President William J. Clinton in Albuquerque, NM, on July 27, 1998. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks at the Cinco de Mayo Dinner

May 4, 2005

The President. *Bienvenidos.* Laura and I are honored to host so many distinguished Hispanic Americans and Mexican leaders here in the *Jardin de Rosas*. [Laughter] Welcome to the White House. The way I see it is, *mi casa es su casa*. [Laughter] I always look forward to Cinco de Mayo, especially because it gives me a chance to practice my Spanish. My only problem this year is I scheduled the dinner on *el cuatro de Mayo*. [Laughter] Next year I'm going to have to work on my math. [Laughter]

I want to thank you all for coming. I particularly want to thank the Attorney General of the United States, Alberto Gonzales, for joining us. The Secretary of Commerce, Carlos Gutierrez, and Edi. SBA Administrator Hector Barreto and his wife, Robin. Anna Cabral and Victor—Anna Cabral is the Treasurer of the United States. Welcome, Anna.

Eduardo Aguirre, who is the Director of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

Audience members. [Inaudible]

The President. These guys said they want to get to know you, Eduardo. [Laughter] By the way, Eduardo has been announced and,

upon Senate confirmation, will become the U.S. Ambassador to Spain.

Mi amigo, el juez del sur de Texas, Ricardo Hinojosa. The U.S. Surgeon General and his wife, Diane—Dr. Richard Carmona.

El Embajador de Mexico, welcome.

El Embajador de Estados Unidos a Mexico, Tony Garza, *y su esposa nueva*, Maria. Welcome.

I want to thank Congressman Henry Bonilla and Sheryl for joining us today—welcome, Congressman. Congressman Henry Cuellar *de Texas*, welcome.

Josefina Vazquez Mota, Mexico's Secretary for Social Development, welcome.

I want to thank Christian Castro, recording artist, who is going to perform tonight. I appreciate Jaci Velasquez; where's Jaci? Jaci is somewhere. There she is. Thanks. She's going to emcee. I want to thank Mariachi Sol de Mexico.

Cinco de Mayo commemorates a joyful moment in Mexican history. Tonight we're proud to celebrate that moment together. The United States and Mexico are united by ties of family, faith in God, and a deep love for freedom.

More than 25 million men and women of Mexican origin now make their homes in the United States. And they're making our Nation more vibrant and more hopeful every day. Mexican Americans have enriched the American experience with contributions to music and dancing and the arts. Latino entrepreneurs are starting their own businesses all across America and are creating jobs and trading in freedom with businesses across borders. More Hispanic Americans own their own homes today than ever before. And Mexican Americans are firmly committed to leaving no child behind in America.

Mexican Americans are also strengthening our country with their patriotism and service. Thousands of Mexican Americans have sacrificed in the Armed Services for our freedom. And more than 8,700 men and women born in Mexico now wear the uniform of the United States military. These dedicated men and women are making America safer, and they're making the world safer. And they're carrying on the courage and devotion that inspired an outnumbered band of Mexican

soldiers to victory in the Battle of Pueblo on the cinco de Mayo, 1862.

Here at the White House, the triumph of Cinco de Mayo was recognized by President Abraham Lincoln. And through the generations, Americans have continued to look on our neighbor to the south with fondness and deep respect. Tonight we look to the future with confidence in our warm and growing friendship.

And so now it is my pleasure to offer a toast: May God bless the people of Mexico and all the sons and daughters of Mexico who call America home. *Que Dios los bendiga*.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:01 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of Commerce Carlos M. Gutierrez and his wife, Edilia; Treasurer of the United States Anna Cabral and her husband, Victor; Ricardo H. Hinojosa, chair, U.S. Sentencing Commission; Ambassador to the U.S. Carlos Alberto de Icaza Gonzalez of Mexico; U.S. Ambassador to Mexico Antonio O. Garza, Jr., and his wife, Maria; Congressman Henry Bonilla and his wife, Sheryl; and entertainers Jaci Velasquez and Mariachi Sol de Mexico. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Interview With Lithuanian National Television

May 4, 2005

Lithuanian Support for Freedom in Ukraine

Q. Mr. President, you thanked President Valdas Adamkus for his efforts spreading the freedom in neighboring countries. What else could Lithuania do spreading the freedom in this region?

The President. Well, first, I did thank the President for his good work in the Ukraine. I thought it was a really great moment when the head of Lithuania got involved and encouraged the whole world to take notice of the freedom movement in the Ukraine. And by the way, that's a—the second election was a really important moment in the liberty movement. And I thanked him for that, genuinely so. And I want to say it again: I thank him for that.