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the progress you've made toward implementing the reforms necessary for consideration in NATO and the EU. I know this is a big concern to you. I want to thank you for sharing your thoughts with me about your country's desire to join NATO and your aspirations for the EU. I appreciate that very much. Thank you for your confidence.

All in all, I'm impressed by your leadership and welcome you to the Oval Office.

Prime Minister Buckovski. Thank you, Mr. President. I feel be here in the White House with President Bush—and the historic 10th anniversary of the U.S.-Macedonian bilateral relations, which I must say, have never been closer. We have agreed that today Macedonia is a success story in building a stable, multiethnic democracy in the Balkans.

I thanked President Bush for the continued U.S. support of our democracy, specifically for the U.S. role in the implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement, and to also express the gratitude of the people of Macedonian for U.S. recognition of our constitutional name, Republic of Macedonia.

And I told the President that we are proud to have our soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan, and that we intend to stay there as long as it is needed. We highly appreciate the leadership of President Bush—and advancing freedom and democracy throughout the world. We have both emphasized the importance of Macedonia's NATO integration and EU candidacy in cementing our progress and helping the region make the final step on the path of the Europe.

And finally, I told President Bush that Macedonia will continue to play a positive and constructive role in the Balkans, especially now, when Belgrade and Pristina, together, lead the international community, will start negotiation about eventual permanent status of Kosovo.

President Bush. Thank you. Appreciate you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:46 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at the White House Conference on Helping America's Youth

October 27, 2005

Thank you all. Thanks for the warm welcome to Laura. Please be seated. Thank you. I am the introducer—[*laughter*]—a rare role for me these days but one I've been looking forward to.

First of all, thank you all for coming. I want to thank Howard University for hosting this important summit. I love to be with the armies of compassion. At my State of the Union last year, I asked Laura to lead an initiative to help young people grow up to be successful adults. And since that State of the Union, she has taken me up on my request, and she has traveled the country to observe and find best practices and programs that are changing people's lives for the better.

And so she called this summit to serve as a catalyst to continue to rally decent, honorable people who are working hard to make sure young Americans have a chance to realize the promise of this country. She is a great leader of this cause, a wonderful wife, and a wonderful First Lady for our country.

Laura Bush.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:35 a.m. at Howard University. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady.

Remarks During a Tour of Areas Damaged by Hurricane Wilma in Pompano Beach, Florida

October 27, 2005

The President. I have come here with the Governor and the mayor of this area because I wanted to thank all the volunteers who have come down to help the people in need. And it's an amazing spirit after a disaster, and that spirit is the spirit of people willing to give of their time. I've also come to make sure the Federal response dovetails in with the State response. And people here—what I've

heard is people are concerned about gasoline. A lot of the gasoline—the lines that people are standing in will be alleviated by new ships coming in, and they'll be able to offload the gasoline to make sure the stations have got fuel. But a lot of the gasoline issue relates to the fact that electricity is not up and running.

I know people are frustrated because they don't have power on yet, but I've been told by Jeb and others that at least 6,000 people from out of State are working with the power people here in-State to get people's lines up as quick as possible. In other words, this is a priority. These people are working hard to get your electricity back on.

The mayor wanted me to make sure that I told the citizens here that water and ice are moving quite rapidly, and that one of her concerns is generators. And Jeb and I spoke to her about the generators that are being moved from a central location to parts of Florida that need the generating capacity to get their life up and running.

Things don't happen instantly, but things are happening. Right here on this site people are getting fed. Soon, more and more houses will have their electricity back on and life will get back to normal. In the meantime, the Federal Government, working with the State and local government, is responding as best as we possibly can.

Again, I'm impressed by the deep compassion and care of our fellow citizens. Out of these disasters oftentimes comes some good. And one of the good that comes out of a disaster is it gives people a chance to love a neighbor, to help somebody in need.

So thank you all for giving me a chance to come by.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:45 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida; and Mayor Kristen Jacobs of Broward County, FL. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Statement Announcing the Withdrawal of the Nomination of Harriet E. Miers To Be an Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court

October 27, 2005

Today I have reluctantly accepted Harriet Miers' decision to withdraw her nomination to the Supreme Court of the United States.

I nominated Harriet Miers to the Supreme Court because of her extraordinary legal experience, her character, and her conservative judicial philosophy. Throughout her career, she has gained the respect and admiration of her fellow attorneys. She has earned a reputation for fairness and total integrity. She has been a leader and a pioneer in the American legal profession. She has worked in important positions in State and local government and in the bar. And for the last 5 years, she has served with distinction and honor in critical positions in the executive branch.

I understand and share her concern, however, about the current state of the Supreme Court confirmation process. It is clear that Senators would not be satisfied until they gained access to internal documents concerning advice provided during her tenure at the White House—disclosures that would undermine a President's ability to receive candid counsel. Harriet Miers' decision demonstrates her deep respect for this essential aspect of the Constitutional separation of powers—and confirms my deep respect and admiration for her.

I am grateful for Harriet Miers' friendship and devotion to our country. And I am honored that she will continue to serve our Nation as White House Counsel.

My responsibility to fill this vacancy remains. I will do so in a timely manner.

Statement on the Launch of a Nationwide Effort To Respond to the South Asia Earthquake

October 27, 2005

Five distinguished private-sector leaders have agreed to launch a nationwide effort to encourage private donations for relief and reconstruction in response to the South Asia