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a boycott of the Montgomery bus lines by its black passengers and the formation of a local association of African Americans led by a young preacher named Martin Luther King, Jr. The boycott ended more than a year later after the Supreme Court struck down segregation on buses. What had begun as a simple act of civil disobedience ended up galvanizing the modern movement for civil rights.

By refusing to give in, Rosa Parks called America back to its founding promise of equality and justice for everyone. When the police officer boarded the bus and told the seamstress that he had to arrest her, he explained that the law was the law. Rosa and the black ministers who defended her invoked more than the law; they invoked the Constitution and pointed to a higher law. Our Declaration of Independence makes clear that the human right to dignity and equality is not a grant of Government. It is the gift of the Author of Life. And by holding our Nation true to the words of its founding document, Rosa Parks helped her fellow African Americans claim their God-given freedoms and made America a better place.

Eventually the civil rights movement would succeed in persuading Congress to pass more sweeping legislation that dealt with voting rights and discrimination in public places and school segregation, and the United States Congress should renew the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Dr. King liked to say that our Civil Rights Act was written in the streets by the citizens who marched for justice and equality. And on this day, we remember the great inspiration this movement drew from the quiet courage shown by an Alabama woman riding home on a Cleveland Avenue bus.

It is fitting that this America hero will now be honored with a monument inside the most visible symbol of American democracy. We hope that generations of Americans will remember what this brave woman did and be inspired to add their own contributions to the unfolding story of American freedom for all.

And now it's my honor to sign the bill that will make Rosa Parks the first African American woman to be honored with a statue in our Nation's Capitol.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:33 a.m. in Room 450 in the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Elaine Eason Steele, co-founder, Rosa and Raymond Parks Institute for Self Development; and civil rights leader Dorothy I. Height. H.R. 4145, approved December 1, was assigned Public Law No. 109–116.

## Remarks on Lighting the National Christmas Tree

*December 1, 2005*

Thank you all very much. Welcome to the Christmas Pageant of Peace. Laura and I are so honored to join you all. The lighting of the National Christmas Tree is one of the great traditions in our Nation's Capital. Each year, we gather here to celebrate the season of hope and joy and to remember the story of one humble life that lifted the sights of humanity.

Santa, thanks for coming. [*Laughter*] Glad you made it. I know you've got a lot of commitments this time of year. By the way, we have a lot of chimneys in the White House—[*laughter*]—if you're looking for something to do. I appreciate all our entertainers. Thanks for being here. This is a fantastic evening.

I want to thank Peter Nostrand, who is the chairman of the Christmas Pageant of Peace, and John Betchkal, all the members of the board. I appreciate Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton, other members of my Cabinet who are here. I appreciate the Members of Congress who have come.

I particularly want to give a special thanks to the National Parks Service Director Fran Mainella and all the good folks who work for the National Parks Service. Reverend Martin, thank you very much as well.

Christmas is a time to rejoice and to give thanks for the blessings of the season and for the blessings that surround us every day of the year. We also remember that we have a responsibility to help those in need. America is a compassionate and generous land, and acts of kindness toward others fulfill the spirit of the season.

As we approach Christmas in this time of war, we pray for freedom and justice and peace on Earth. In his Christmas Eve address

to the Nation in 1941, Franklin Roosevelt said that "Against enemies who preach the principles of hate and practice them, we set our faith in human love, and in God's care for us and all men everywhere." We ask for God to watch over our men and women in uniform who are serving overseas. Their families miss them, hold a seat open for them, and pray for their safe return. America's military men and women stand for freedom, and they serve the cause of peace. Many of them are serving in distant lands tonight, but they are close to our hearts.

As an expression of our hope for peace and happiness in this Christmas season, we light the National Christmas Tree. Jackie, Melissa, and Jenna Kantor of Bethesda are with us here. They started "Project Backpack" to give children displaced by Hurricane Katrina new backpacks filled with books and toys and school supplies. These girls are an example of the compassion that is found in the hearts and souls of Americans everywhere, and they have shown how much good can be done when we reach out to help a neighbor in need. And so Laura and I now invite them to join us to turn on the lights.

And would you help turn on these lights, as well, by counting down. Five, four, three, two, one.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:55 p.m. on the Ellipse at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to John J. Betchkal, president, Christmas Pageant of Peace; and Rev. Richard B. Martin, pastor, Church of the Nativity, Burke, VA.

## Remarks on the National Economy

*December 2, 2005*

Thanks to good old-fashioned American hard work and productivity, innovation, and sound economic policies of cutting taxes and restraining spending, our economy continues to gain strength and momentum.

Our economy added 215,000 jobs for the month of November. We've added nearly 4½ million new jobs in the last 2½ years. Third-quarter growth of this year was 4.3 percent. That's in spite of the fact that we had hurricanes and high gasoline prices. The unemployment rate is 5 percent, and that's lower than the average for the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s.

We have every reason to be optimistic about our economic future. I mean, when you think about the news that's come in—the jobs report, the recent report on strong economic growth, low inflation, strong productivity, lower gasoline prices, a strong housing market, increases in consumer confidence and business investment—our economic horizon is as bright as it's been in a long time.

The foundation for growth is strong. It's based upon low taxes and restrained Government spending, legal reform, incentives for saving and investment.

The small-business sector is vibrant. Most of the new jobs in America are created by the small-business sector, and our entrepreneurs are doing well. We got the best workforce in America—in the world. People are productive. They're hardworking. Our ingenuity and know-how and—is vibrant. This economy is in good shape.

We're not going to rest until every American who wants a job can find one. We're going to continue to work for good policies for our workers and our entrepreneurs. I'll continue to push for progrowth economic policies, all aimed at making sure every American can realize the American Dream.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:45 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

## Statement on the Resignation of Andrew S. Natsios as Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development

*December 2, 2005*

Andrew Natsios has served as a key member of my administration for more than 4 years. He has exemplified the compassion and generosity of the American people and our deep commitment to helping and improving the lives of those who are suffering. Under his leadership, USAID has implemented important reforms and helped us