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Remarks on Departure for the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland

December 21, 2005

Legislative Agenda

Thank you all. The Senate is debating two very important measures, and I urge the United States Senate to pass the defense appropriations bill. It is an important piece of legislation that provides necessary funding for our troops who are fighting in Afghanistan and in Iraq and who are serving our country around the world. It's an obligation of every Member of the United States Senate to provide necessary funding for our troops on the frontlines so that we can fight and win the war on terror.

And the second important piece of legislation is the PATRIOT Act. In order to protect America, the United States Senate must reauthorize the PATRIOT Act. The terrorists still want to hit us again. There is an enemy that lurks, a dangerous group of people that want to do harm to the American people, and we must have the tools necessary to protect the American people. The PATRIOT Act passed overwhelmingly shortly after the September the 11th attack. It has been an effective tool; it has worked.

And the same as we protected the American people using the PATRIOT Act, we've also protected their civil liberties. There is extensive oversight on this very important program. The PATRIOT Act tore down the wall between law enforcement and intelligence communities, which makes it easier to connect the dots before an attack. The PATRIOT Act also gave law enforcement tools to investigate terrorism that they have already got to investigate other types of crimes.

The PATRIOT Act is scheduled to expire at the end of this year. The terrorist threat is not going to expire at the end of this year. The House has voted to reauthorize the PATRIOT Act, and they left town, because they thought their—because their business is finished. The Senate is still debating this issue. A majority of the United States Senate supports reauthorization; a minority of Senators is filibustering and preventing the Senate from voting to renew the PATRIOT Act. The Senate Democratic leader recently boasted about killing the PATRIOT Act. This obstruction is inexcusable. The Senators obstructing the PATRIOT Act need to understand that the expiration of this vital law will endanger America and will leave us in a weaker position in the fight against brutal killers. It's important that the Senate act quickly on these two bills.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:11 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks to Caregivers at the National Naval Medical Center

December 21, 2005

Thanks for such a warm welcome. Laura and I are thrilled to be back at this unbelievable facility—unbelievable because of the buildings and the technology that's used here and the equipment but, more importantly, because of the decency and compassion and skill of our healers that work for our country.

So first we want to thank you all for helping do a really important job. And that is to be able to say to our country, at any time anybody gets hurt anywhere, they're going to get the best medical care possible. And that's done right here at Bethesda, as well as Walter Reed. And so we're here to thank the nurses and the docs and the healers and the volunteers who help put the smile on the faces of those who have been hurt as well as their families.

One of the great blessings of our country is the fact that there are millions of compassionate souls who are willing to try to make somebody's life better.

I want to thank Admiral Robinson and Dr. Winkenwerder, Admiral Arthur. I want to thank General Kiley and Lieutenant General Peach Taylor, as well as Major General Farmer. And thank Tom Travis, as well—happens to be his birthday, by the way. [*Laughter*] His wife said, "You're birthday gift is to say hello to the President," not a really good gift. [*Laughter*] Anyway. [*Laughter*]