

I'm going to sign here in 30 seconds does just that.

Again, I want to thank you all for being here to help honor these legislators that crossed the partisan divide to help protect this country from those who feel like they can sell illegal products and counterfeit and steal our—steal intellectual property. Good work. Thanks for coming. Now let's sign the bill.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:07 p.m. in Room 350 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. H.R. 32, approved March 16, was assigned Public Law No. 109–181.

### **Remarks on the Nomination of Dirk Kempthorne To Be Secretary of the Interior**

*March 16, 2006*

**The President.** Good afternoon. I'm pleased to announce my nomination of Governor Dirk Kempthorne to be the Secretary of the Interior. The Department of Interior is responsible for managing our national parks and public lands, conserving our natural resources, and pursuing environmentally responsible energy development on Federal lands and waters.

I've nominated Dirk to succeed an outstanding public servant, Gale Norton. As the Secretary of the Interior for the past 5 years, she was instrumental in establishing the Healthy Forests Initiative to protect communities from catastrophic wildfire and to improve the habitat. When Hurricane Katrina devastated the gulf coast region, she helped lead the efforts to restore offshore energy production so that Americans would not suffer further supply disruptions and price increases.

Future generations of Americans will be able to enjoy our great national parks and wildlife refugees because of Gale's untiring work. Gale was one of the original members of my Cabinet and the first woman in American history to hold the post of Secretary of the Interior. I appreciate her dedicated service, and Laura and I wish Gale and John all the best.

Dirk Kempthorne is the right man to build on this progress. As Governor of Idaho, he

worked closely with Gale on a variety of important initiatives. They worked together to resolve a longstanding water rights issue, to return responsibility to Idaho for managing the local wolf population, and to make the Healthy Forests Initiative a reality in Idaho.

As Governor, Dirk has been a responsible steward of Idaho's 30 State parks and recreational trailways that serve millions of visitors each year. He has launched the state-wide Experience Idaho Initiative, which will fund needed improvements within Idaho's State parks to preserve public spaces and expand recreational opportunities for visitors. Last August, I had a chance to enjoy those recreational opportunities firsthand when Dirk and I biked some of Idaho's trails together.

As Secretary of the Interior, Dirk will continue my administration's efforts to conserve our land, water, and air resources; reduce the maintenance backlog of our national parks; support historic and cultural sites through our Preserve America Initiative; and develop the energy potential of Federal lands and waters in environmentally sensitive ways.

Dirk brings wide experience to these important tasks. He has served at every level of government: as mayor of Boise, as Governor of Idaho, and as a United States Senator. While in the Senate, he chaired the Subcommittee on Drinking Water, Fisheries, and Wildlife, and he chaired the Armed Services Personnel Subcommittee.

He built bipartisan support to enact comprehensive reforms to the Safe Drinking Water Act. Dirk understands that those who live closest to the land know how to manage it best, and he will work closely with State and local leaders to ensure wise stewardship of our resources.

Dirk has had a long and abiding love for nature. When he and his wife, Patricia, were married, they chose to hold the ceremony atop Idaho's Moscow Mountain at sunrise. Dirk said, "I don't think there's a more beautiful cathedral than the outdoors."

I appreciate his willingness to take on this important post, and I ask the Senate to confirm him promptly as the 49th Secretary of the Interior.

Thanks for agreeing to serve.

[Secretary-designate Kempthorne made brief remarks.]

**The President.** Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:29 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to John Hughes, husband of Secretary of the Interior Gale A. Norton. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Secretary-designate Kempthorne.

**Statement on House of Representatives Action on Supplemental Funding Legislation**  
*March 16, 2006*

I applaud the House for its quick passage of legislation to provide vital resources for two of our Nation's top priorities. This bill will give our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan tools they need to prevail in the war on terror. The legislation also provides for additional resources for the people of the gulf coast as they continue the work of rebuilding their lives and communities. I urge the Senate to act promptly to pass legislation providing for these critical funds.

**Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting a Report on Activities in Belarus**  
*March 16, 2006*

*Dear Mr. Chairman: (Dear Representative:)* *(Dear Senator:)*

Consistent with the Belarus Democracy Act of 2004 (Public Law 108-347), I hereby transmit a report prepared by my Administration on the Belarusian sale or delivery of weapons and weapons-related technologies and on the personal assets and wealth of the senior Belarusian leadership.

Sincerely,

**George W. Bush**

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Henry J. Hyde, chairman, and Tom Lantos, ranking member, House Committee on International Relations; and Richard G. Lugar, chairman, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., ranking member, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations.

**Message to the Congress Transmitting a Report on the National Security Strategy of the United States**

*March 16, 2006*

*To the Congress of the United States:*

Consistent with section 108 of the National Security Act of 1947, as amended (50 U.S.C. 404a), I am transmitting a report prepared by my Administration on the National Security Strategy of the United States.

**George W. Bush**

The White House,  
March 16, 2006.

**Remarks at a National Republican Congressional Committee Dinner**

*March 16, 2006*

Thank you all. Please be seated. Thank you all for coming. Thank you for the warm welcome. Mr. Speaker, I can't tell you what a joy it is to work with you. America is very fortunate to have Denny Hastert as the Speaker of the House of Representatives. And I want to thank you all for coming tonight to make sure that he remains the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

We're here to not only thank you but to remind you and our fellow citizens, we've got a lot of work to do to lay the foundations for peace, and we've got a lot of work to do to make sure this country remains a prosperous country so that every single citizen can realize the great promise of America.

I bring greetings from the First Lady—that would be Laura. She sends her best regards to the Speaker and the leadership of the House of Representatives. She sends her best regards to you. I'm a lucky guy that she said yes when I asked her to marry me. She is a fabulous woman, a great mom, and she's doing a wonderful job as our Nation's First Lady.

I also bring greetings from the Vice President of the United States, Dick Cheney. You know, mine is an interesting job. I get to make a lot of decisions, and I have to rely on people to give me good, sound, steady advice. And Vice President Dick Cheney