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after-tax income has grown by more than 8 percent per person since I took office. That means, on average, Americans have an income that is $2,100 higher this year than it was in 2001, after adjusting for inflation.

More Americans own their homes than at any time in history. Minority homeownership has reached record levels. Consumer confidence is at its highest point in nearly 40 years; productivity is high; inflation is contained; manufacturing activity is growing; and the small-business sector is thriving.

The economy has expanded for 17 straight quarters. And last year, the American economy grew at a healthy rate of 3.5 percent. That's the fastest rate of any major industrialized economy.

These gains are the result of the energy and the effort of American workers, small-business owners, and entrepreneurs. They are also the result of progrowth economic policies. The tax cuts I signed left $880 billion with our Nation's workers, small-business owners, and families. They've used that money to fuel our economic resurgence.

Not everyone in Washington agreed with the decision to let people keep more of their own money. On the day that Republicans in the House and Senate were finalizing the 2003 tax cuts, one Democratic leader said these cuts would, quote, "do nothing to create jobs." Facts have proven the critics wrong 5.1 million times over.

Tax relief has done exactly what it was designed to do—it's created jobs and growth for the American people. Yet some are now proposing that we raise taxes, either by repealing the tax cuts or letting them expire. These are the same politicians who told us that letting Americans—letting America's working families keep more of their own money would be irresponsible, reckless, and shameful. They were wrong then, and they are wrong now. Our economy grows when the American people make the decisions about how to save, spend, and invest their money. To keep our economy creating jobs and opportunity, Congress needs to show its trust in the American people and make the tax relief permanent.

Congress also needs to restrain spending so we can stay on track to cut the deficit in half by 2009. And if necessary, I will enforce spending restraint through the exercise of the veto. The American people expect their leaders to address other key leaders—that directly affect their family budgets and bottom line, especially health care and energy.

When the cost of energy and health care rise, families are squeezed and small businesses suffer. I proposed practical reforms that would make health care more available and affordable. I put forward an energy initiative that will make our dependence on Middle Eastern oil a thing of the past. I've also laid out a plan to make America more competitive by increasing our investment in scientific research, encouraging research and development in the private sector, and improving math and science education.

I urge the Congress to move forward on all these important priorities so we can keep America the economic leader of the world and allow more families and small businesses to realize the American Dream.

Thank you for your time.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:32 a.m. in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House.

Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.

April 1

In the morning, at the Bush Ranch in Crawford, TX, the President had an intelligence briefing.

April 3

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. He then had a telephone conversation with Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany. Later, he traveled to Cincinnati, OH, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Eugene Goss and Keith and Carolyn Maupin, parents of Sgt.

Keith Matthew Maupin, USA, who disappeared after being captured by insurgents in Iraq on April 9, 2004.

In the afternoon, at Great American Ball Park, the President greeted Major League Baseball officials and visited team clubhouses. Later, he participated in pregame ceremonies with soldiers wounded in Iraq and Afghanistan and with John Prazynski, whose son, Lance Cpl. Taylor B. Prazynski, USMC, was killed in Afghanistan on May 9, 2005. He then threw out the first pitch for an opening day game between the Chicago Cubs and the Cincinnati Reds. He then watched the game.

Later in the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC. While en route aboard Air Force One, he had a telephone conversation with Representative Tom DeLay of Texas to thank him for his service and wish him well in his retirement.

The President announced his designation of the following individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to attend the Inauguration of President Thomas Yay Boni of Benin on April 6: Karen P. Hughes (head of delegation); Wayne E. Neill; Ruth A. Davis; and Ward Brehm.

April 4

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, at the historic Evermay house, the President made remarks at a Republican National Committee finance luncheon. Later, he met with Republican Members of the Senate to discuss legislative priorities.

The President announced his intention to nominate Eric M. Bost to be Ambassador to South Africa.

The President announced his intention to nominate Lisa Bobbie Schreiber Hughes to be Ambassador to Suriname.

The President announced his intention to nominate David M. Robinson to be Ambassador to Guyana.

The President announced his intention to nominate Earl Anthony Wayne to be Ambassador to Argentina.

The President announced his intention to appoint the following individuals as members of the Board for International Food and Agricultural Development: Catherine Ann Bertini; Allen C. Christensen; Robert A. Easter; and Timothy A. Rabon.

April 5

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had breakfast with Republican congressional leaders to discuss legislative priorities. Later, he had an intelligence briefing. He then traveled to Bridgeport, CT, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Amargeet Singh.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC. Later, he met with Republican Members of Congress.

In the evening, the President and Mrs. Bush hosted a screening of the film "Voyage to Kure."

The White House announced that the President will welcome President John Agyekum Kufuor of Ghana to the White House on April 12.

The President declared a disaster in Tennessee and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms and tornadoes on April 2–3.

The President declared a disaster in Missouri and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms, tornadoes, and flooding from March 30 to April 3.

April 6

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Charlotte, NC, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Michelle Cornellier.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC.

The President announced his intention to nominate John A. Cloud, Jr., to be Ambassador to Lithuania.

The President announced his intention to nominate Lurita Alexis Doan to be Administrator of General Services.

The President announced his intention to nominate R. David Paulison to be Under Secretary for Federal Emergency Management at the Department of Homeland Security.

The President announced his intention to nominate John Clint Williamson to be Ambassador at Large for War Crimes Issues.

The President announced his intention to appoint Raymond Richard Geddes, Stephen

Odland, and Mary E. Peters as members of the National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Commission.

April 7

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he participated in a National Security Council meeting on Iraq. He then participated in an interview with business and financial journalists.

In the afternoon, the President had lunch with Vice President Dick Cheney.

Nominations Submitted to the Senate

The following list does not include promotions of members of the Uniformed Services, nominations to the Service Academies, or nominations of Foreign Service officers.

Submitted April 5

Eric M. Bost,
of Texas, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of South Africa.

Lisa Bobbie Schreiber Hughes,
of Pennsylvania, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Suriname.

David M. Robinson,
of Connecticut, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Co-operative Republic of Guyana.

Earl Anthony Wayne,
of Maryland, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Career Minister, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Argentina.

Submitted April 6

John A. Cloud, Jr.,
of Virginia, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Lithuania.

Lurita Alexis Doan,
of Virginia, to be Administrator of General Services, vice Stephen A. Perry, resigned.

R. David Paulison,
of Florida, to be Under Secretary for Federal Emergency Management, Department of Homeland Security, vice Michael D. Brown, resigned.

John Clint Williamson,
of Louisiana, to be Ambassador at Large for War Crimes Issues.

Withdrawn April 6

Robert M. Duncan,
of Kentucky, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Corporation for National and Community Service for a term expiring June 10, 2009, vice Juanita Sims Doty, term expired, which was sent to the Senate on April 4, 2005.

Checklist of White House Press Releases

The following list contains releases of the Office of the Press Secretary that are neither printed as items nor covered by entries in the Digest of Other White House Announcements.

Released April 1

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 4911

Released April 3

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Released April 4

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Scott McClellan